

Australian Curriculum: Geography

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ACARA was pleased to announce that following the meeting of the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) on Friday 10 May 2013, the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography was endorsed for publication. The curriculum has been available online from Monday 20 May 2013 at – www.australiancurriculum.edu.au.

This was another significant moment in Australian education. The endorsement and publication of Geography builds on the work already completed by ACARA and continues to provide students with the opportunity to learn from a world class, modern national curriculum.

Geography is the first subject of the Phase 2 suite in the Australian Curriculum to be published after English, Mathematics, Science and History. This subject is part of the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area which also includes History, Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business. The Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography received commendation for the way in which each of the cross-curriculum priorities and the general capabilities have been represented.

The Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography has been developed with a two strand approach to be consistent with the other subjects of the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area:

- Geographical Knowledge and Understanding
- Geographical Inquiry and Skills

The curriculum content identifies what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn. Curriculum content is presented as 'content descriptions', and these specify what young people are expected to learn and what teachers are expected to teach across the years of schooling. The content descriptions are accompanied by 'content elaborations' which, as support material, will provide illustrations and/or examples of the content descriptions. The *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography* is written as one 'unit' of study across Foundation to Year 6, and two 'units' of study at each year level across Years 7 to 10. An integrated

approach taken across the year levels towards representing content related to human and environmental geography.

The *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography* curriculum has seven underpinning concepts weaving throughout the content. These concepts are gradually introduced across Foundation to Year 6, therefore, particular year levels emphasise one or more concepts. By the time students commence the study of Geography at a Year 7 level, they are thinking about and investigating all seven concepts in an integrated way. The underpinning concepts are integral to the development of geographical understanding and ability to think geographically. The seven underpinning **concepts** are:

- Place;
- Space;
- Environment;
- Interconnection;
- Sustainability;
- Scale; and
- Change.

The *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography* uses an **inquiry approach**, and encourages the use of **fieldwork** and **spatial technologies** to assist students in making meaning of their world and enabling them to respond to questions in a geographically distinctive way.

Through the study of Geography, students will:

- develop a wide range of general skills and capabilities, including information and communication technology skills, an appreciation of different perspectives, an understanding of ethical research principles, a capacity for teamwork and an ability to think critically and creatively. These skills can be applied in everyday life and at work.
- explore, analyse and understand about the characteristics of the places that make up our world. Through this, they will develop a sense of wonder, curiosity and respect about places, people, cultures and environments throughout the world.

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- learn to question why the world is the way it is, to reflect on their relationships with and responsibilities for that world, and to propose actions designed to shape a socially just and sustainable future.

The **cross-curriculum priority** 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures' is exemplified across Years F-8 in particular, so that students will gain a deep understanding about the importance of Country and Place in relation to the geographical concepts of place, environment and interconnection. For example, the relationships people have with place and their interconnection with the environments in which they live are emphasised, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority provides students with the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of this by investigating the thousands of years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connection to land, water and sky, and the knowledge and practices that developed as a result of these experiences.

Sustainability, one of the seven underpinning concepts in the *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography* provides an obvious focus for strengthening the cross-curriculum priority of 'Sustainability'. Particular emphasis is given to students being able to develop a futures-orientation towards protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. For example, a holistic understanding of human dependence on the environment to support an integrated approach between human and environmental geography is emphasised, and through this priority, students will learn to apply their geographical understanding to explore how worldviews influence these relationships and interactions with the environment.

The **cross-curriculum priority** 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia' is exemplified through focusing geographical content towards particular countries of the Asia region. This is to ensure that students learn about and recognise the diversity within and between the countries of the Asia region. They will develop knowledge and understanding of Asian societies, cultures, beliefs and environments, and the connections between the peoples of Asia, Australia, and the rest of the world

In the *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography*, across Years F-6, students will **focus** on the local area (F-2), extending out to a study of Australia and its neighbouring countries (Year 3), South America and Africa (Year 4), Europe and

North America (Year 5), and the Asia region (Year 6). Across Years 7-8, apart from Australia and countries of the Asia region, students will also have the opportunity to specifically focus on either West Asia (Middle East) and/or North Africa, in addition to Europe, the United States of America and China. Throughout Years 9-10 there is less specificity about areas of the world to study but students are encouraged to focus on the Pacific Islands, Africa or South America in relation to human wellbeing. It is important to note that across all year levels, areas of the world other than those specified can be included for study as appropriate.

Engaging educators and the wider community in the consultation process has been crucial to ensuring that ACARA delivers a world class Australian Curriculum for Geography. ACARA is very appreciative of the responses received from the lead writer and expert advisory group; the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA), its member associations and affiliate associations; state and territory curriculum authorities, individuals and other stakeholder groups. These groups have provided invaluable assistance in developing a curriculum since the process began in 2009. ACARA would also like to thank the teachers who intensively engaged with the draft *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography*. These teachers provided both student work samples and invaluable feedback on the useability of the curriculum for classroom teachers.

It is the responsibility of curriculum authorities in each state and territory across Australia to communicate with schools about the timeline and related decisions about implementation of the Australian Curriculum in Geography

ACARA looks forward to your continued interest and engagement with the Australian Curriculum as part of implementation. If you require further information about the *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography*, please contact Susan Caldis, SPO Humanities and Social Sciences, via email susan.caldis@acara.edu.au or telephone (02) 8098 3150.

