

# F–10 curriculum planning and reporting guidelines

February 2014



**Published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority**

Level 1, 2 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000  
February 2014

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2014

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# F–10 curriculum planning and reporting guidelines

## Executive summary

In Victoria, the curriculum is set out in AusVELS, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards that incorporate the Australian Curriculum.

These guidelines provide advice for Victorian schools on the effective use of AusVELS to develop whole-school curriculum plans and to report student learning achievement. Specific sectoral requirements related to curriculum provision and reporting are the responsibility of and published by the relevant sectoral authorities.

The school curriculum is a statement of the purpose of schooling. It defines what it is that all students have the opportunity to learn as a result of their schooling, set out as a series of learning progressions. Enabling students' progress along this learning continuum is the fundamental role of teachers and schools.

The content of the curriculum includes both knowledge and skills. These are defined by domains which include discipline-based learning areas and general capabilities, that is, the knowledge and skills that are transferrable across but not defined by the learning areas. These general capabilities enable students to develop particular values, dispositions and self-efficacy to become 'successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens'.<sup>1</sup>

There is a distinction between the curriculum and a school's teaching and learning program.

The curriculum is the common set of knowledge and skills that are required by all students for life-long learning, social development and active and informed citizenship.

As such, the curriculum is a part or subset of the school's teaching and learning program which is the school-based plan for delivering, expanding and extending this common set of knowledge and skills in ways that best utilise local resources, expertise and contexts. Schools have considerable flexibility in the design of their teaching and learning program. This enables schools to develop particular specialisations and areas of expertise and innovation while ensuring the curriculum is delivered.

The AusVELS curriculum has been designed on the assumption that it is a statement of the common set of learning, not the whole school teaching and learning program for every school. This is to ensure there is time for schools to include in their teaching and learning program areas that reflect school or systemic priorities and for students to pursue specific interests and develop particular expertise.

These guidelines set out an approach to curriculum planning and provision structured by broad stages of schooling and, within those stages of schooling, two year bands of schooling.

This approach enables schools to focus at the Foundation (Years F–2) stage on five learning domains: English, Mathematics, The Arts, Health and Physical Education and Personal and Social Capability.

Schools then broaden their focus and ensure that in each two year band of school at the Breadth (Years 3–8) stage student learning includes each of the learning domains, with a focus on English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education and Languages every year.

In the Pathways (Years 9–10) stage, schools ensure students both receive a broad education and begin to plan their senior secondary program of study, which they can commence in Year 10.

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<sup>1</sup> *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, 2008  
<[http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/National\\_Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Educational\\_Goals\\_for\\_Young\\_Australians.pdf](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf)>

While the provision of data on student achievement to sectoral authorities will be determined by prescribed templates, schools should have considerable flexibility in how they report student achievement to parents.

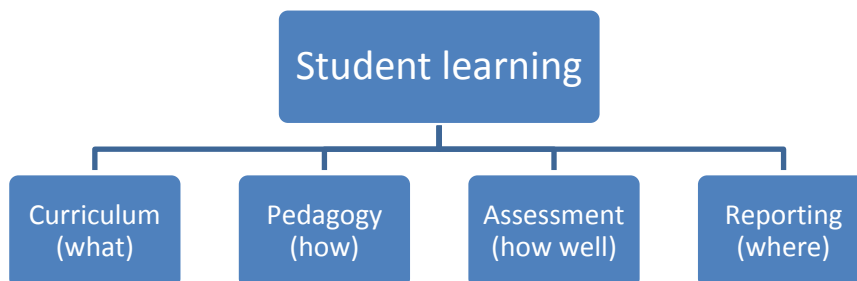
There will not be a centrally prescribed single template for reporting student achievement to parents.

Following the Foundation stage, schools will be expected to report student achievement to parents every year in English, Mathematics and Science against common achievement standards, including an indication of student progress against the age-related expected level of achievement. For the other learning domains, schools should report against common achievement standards and in relation to what has been taught in a particular semester or year and individual learning targets.

The school's teaching and learning program reflects the vision, direction and purpose of each individual school as determined by the engagement of teachers, students, parents and the local community. For this reason, schools should publish their school teaching and learning program as part of the information they provide to current and prospective students and parents and to the local community.

## Introduction

1. The curriculum is a statement of the purpose of schooling.
2. The curriculum defines what it is that all students have the opportunity to learn as a result of their schooling. According to Marzano<sup>2</sup>, the provision of a 'guaranteed and viable curriculum' is one of the factors that has most impact on student learning.
3. A high-quality curriculum is not a collection of disconnected items of knowledge but rather a set of progressions that define increasingly complex knowledge, skills and concepts grouped and defined by learning areas and general capabilities.
4. This identification of the purpose of schooling through the definition of what is to be taught and learnt provides a necessary framework for decisions about the structure of the teaching and learning program at each level of whole school, individual year levels and daily programs.
5. It unclutters the curriculum by making clear what is most important for all students to learn.
6. It enables teachers to identify the point of learning progression of each individual student and to plan for the appropriate next steps in learning.
7. Subsequent decisions about how this progress of student learning is reported to students themselves, to parents and carers and sectoral authorities are critical. This reporting provides the means to identify where and what kinds of interventions are necessary to support student learning.
8. Engaging in this learning process is the responsibility of students.
9. Enabling students' learning progress is the role of teachers and schools. It is enabled through effective pedagogy, assessment and reporting, as illustrated here.



10. In this representation, student learning is produced, shaped and affected by four connected components. Each of these components plays a separate and distinct role in the process of student learning and each is interconnected with all of the others.
11. The first is the **curriculum** that defines *what* it is that students should learn, and the associated progression or continuum of learning.
12. The second is **pedagogy** that describes *how* students will be taught and supported to learn.
13. The third is **assessment** that identifies *how well* a student has (or has not) learnt specified content.
14. The fourth is **reporting** that explains to the student and the teacher *where* a student is on a learning continuum at the end of a specified period of schooling, and where this places them in relation to their own learning goals and/or the learning of their peers.

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<sup>2</sup> Marzano, R. (2003) *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA

15. These guidelines focus on the first and fourth components, curriculum and reporting.
16. The school curriculum is at present the subject of considerable public debate.
17. Some argue that any attempt to mandate content in the contemporary school curriculum is immediately out-of-date. It is argued that the definition of curriculum content (declarative knowledge) is a dated concept, rendered obsolete by the now-ubiquitous access provided by digital technologies to information. The only curriculum appropriate for such an age, it is argued, is one based on defining the skills of information gathering, synthesising and evaluating; problem-solving; team work; creativity and innovation (procedural knowledge).
18. Others propose that the content of the curriculum should be self-directed by the learner, a view popularised most recently through the work of Professor Sugata Mitra and Sergio Juárez Correa.
19. In contrast, yet others argue for new content to be added to the curriculum and for tighter prescription to be exercised over the curriculum content in schools. For example, the president of the World Anti-Doping Agency, John Fahey, recently called for every Australian school student to be taught about the dangers of performance-enhancing drugs, saying children are risking their health by taking steroids and sports supplements. 'We need to get that message into the curriculum at schools', he said. Deborah Trevallion, a teacher educator at The University of Newcastle, argues that, 'Education about design is crucial and understanding of design and its function needs to be integrated at all levels of ... school education'. Edward de Bono, in his recent book *Think! Before It's Too Late*, argues that "'operacy" (the skill of operating, or getting things done) should be given the same attention as literacy and numeracy in the school curriculum'. Professor Jeffrey Rosenfeld, Director of Neurosurgery at the Alfred Hospital, believes it is the responsibility of schools to teach 'self-restraint to young men' as a way of dealing with the current 'epidemic' of street violence.
20. This renewed focus on the 'what' of learning is welcome. The attention of most education reform is on the 'how' of learning, finding new ways to engage students in the process of learning. Of course this is of critical importance: without an effective 'how' of learning, the 'what' of learning becomes irrelevant. Without, however, a clear and considered specification of what students should learn, the how is a process without purpose.
21. These guidelines are based on two clear propositions.
22. The first is that it is essential for educators to define a minimum and limited set of declarative and procedural knowledge and skills that all students should acquire, irrespective of their personal inclinations. This is not to limit what students can learn. Rather, it is to ensure that every young person is able to develop the foundational knowledge, skills and dispositions that enable future self-directed learning, social development and active and engaged citizenship.
23. The second is that the rise of digital technologies has generated a higher level of demand for the capacities to access, analyse and synthesise information, that is, to transform information into knowledge. This in turn means the definition of the knowledge and skills essential to develop these capacities has become more not less important.
24. There is a further argument that the *what* of learning cannot be separated from the *how*, that is, that the process of learning itself constitutes procedural knowledge.
25. These guidelines are based on the proposition that the content or the *what* of the curriculum, both procedural and declarative knowledge, can and needs to be explicitly defined rather than left as an implicit component of the learning experience.
26. Reaching a determination about what it is that students should learn is no simple process, as the views cited earlier illustrate. It is a challenge that has been met in different ways at different times.



## Section 1: Curriculum design

### A brief history of curriculum development in Victoria

1. There are wide and divergent views on both the nature and content of the school curriculum.
2. In 1872, the Education Act set out a list of subjects to be taught 'which included reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, drill and (where practicable), gymnastics and sewing and needlework in addition for girls'.<sup>3</sup>
3. The curriculum remained centralised through the first half of the twentieth century, in part through the longstanding prescription of the eight Victorian School Readers.
4. The 1970s saw a major shift away from a centralised, prescribed curriculum to a strong focus on school-based curriculum development. This emphasis on school-based curriculum development was maintained and reaffirmed in the 1988 Victorian Curriculum and Organisation Framework, although this document also emphasised the importance of what it termed a 'balanced curriculum' that gave attention to seven curriculum areas:
  - Language and mathematics;
  - The world and its people;
  - Participation in the Australian environment;
  - Literature and the arts;
  - Personal fulfilment;
  - Technical competence; and
  - Science, technology and the environment.
5. These Frameworks documents were the precursor to a new mandated primary and lower-middle secondary school curriculum, the Victorian Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF), which was introduced in 1995 and drew on the work first undertaken to develop an embryonic national curriculum, the National Statements and Profiles.
6. The CSF was implemented from 1995 to 2000, when it was reviewed and republished as CSF II. The revisions attempted mainly to address the criticisms that had emerged in the implementation of the original CSF that the documents did not have a sufficient degree of specificity to enable accurate judgments of student achievement to be made.
7. In 2003 work began on the development of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), which would 'identify and develop a broad framework of 'essential learnings' for all Victorian students'.<sup>4</sup>
8. This was largely in response to a view that in CSFII the curriculum had become too atomised and too detailed which in turn had resulted in a loss of the key ideas in each subject. CSFII was also criticised on the grounds that it gave insufficient attention to those areas of generic skills, interdisciplinary learning and personal and social capabilities that sat outside the more traditional subject disciplines but were regarded as the new 'learnings' essential for the twenty-first century.
9. The VELS was published in 2005 and was based on the premise that there are three components of any curriculum which are necessary to enable students to meet the demands of the contemporary, globalised world:
  - the processes of physical, personal and social development and growth;
  - the branches of learning reflected in the traditional disciplines; and
  - the interdisciplinary capacities needed for effective functioning within and beyond school (Overview to *Victorian Essential Standards*, p. 1)

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<sup>3</sup> *A History of State Education in Victoria*, Sweetman, E., Long C.R., Smyth, J., 1922, Education Department of Victoria.

<sup>4</sup> *Victorian Essential Learning Standards*, Department of Education and Training, 2003.

10. It was an important new framework that not only mapped out student progress in interdisciplinary learning and personal and social capacities as well as discipline-based learning areas, but also gave them equal status in the curriculum as discrete areas of learning.
11. Shortly after the publication of the VELS, work re-commenced at the national level on a national curriculum. A new National Curriculum Board was established in 2008, which expanded to become the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in 2009.
12. The third iteration of national goals of schooling were agreed to and set out in the 2008 Melbourne Declaration.<sup>5</sup> In a statement that clearly reflected the influence of the VELS, the Melbourne Declaration set out the framework for a new national curriculum that would include:
  - *a solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built;*
  - *deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications; and*
  - *general capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise.*
13. The Melbourne Declaration set out eight learning areas as the basis for the curriculum:
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Sciences (including physics, chemistry, biology)
  - Humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship)
  - The Arts (Performing and Visual)
  - Languages
  - Health and physical education
  - Information and Communication Technology and Design and technology
14. It also stated that ‘a focus on environmental sustainability will be integrated across the curriculum and all students will have the opportunity to access Indigenous content where relevant’, and that one of the goals of schooling would be to enable students to ‘communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia’.

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[http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/National\\_Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Educational\\_Goals\\_for\\_Young\\_Australians.pdf](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf)).

15. This was the blueprint for the Australian Curriculum, which has since been developed using the following design structure.

Learning areas	General capabilities	Cross-curriculum priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Health and Physical Education</li> <li>• Languages</li> <li>• Humanities and Social Sciences (History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business)</li> <li>• The Arts (Performing and Visual)</li> <li>• Technologies (Design and Technologies; Digital Technologies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical and creative thinking</li> <li>• Personal and social capability</li> <li>• Intercultural understanding</li> <li>• Ethical Understanding</li> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Numeracy</li> <li>• ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures</li> <li>• Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> </ul>

### Implementation of the Australian Curriculum in Victoria

16. Responsibility for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum remains with each of the States and Territories.
17. There are four key factors that have shaped the approach taken to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in Victoria.
18. The first is the Victorian government's view that schools should retain their primary responsibility for the development and provision of teaching and learning programs, not through a rules-based approach but by building on Victoria's history of school-based curriculum development and reflecting the Victorian government's commitment to increased school autonomy.
19. The second is that the relatively decentralised approach taken to curriculum provision in Victoria has not always been accompanied by a sufficient level of advice and support to schools to enable the development of system-wide high-quality teaching and learning programs. This has led to wide differences in the quality of teaching and learning programs.
20. The third is that the implementation of the new curriculum should drive a new focus on the establishment of higher expectations of student achievement for every student.
21. The fourth is that schools and teachers should not be required to go to two different locations and use two different curriculum documents to construct a school curriculum.
22. These factors have together led to the development of AusVELS as a single coherent curriculum for Years F–10 that incorporates the Australian Curriculum and ensures the maintenance and strengthening of particular Victorian priorities and approaches to teaching and learning that can be summarised as follows:
- (i) the learning areas or disciplines are the cornerstone of the curriculum;
  - (ii) the knowledge and skills now categorised as the General Capabilities require explicit attention in the development of teaching and learning programs within the curriculum;
  - (iii) the curriculum is a developmental learning continuum rather than a series of distinct learning blocks;
  - (iv) the content of the curriculum (the 'what') is mandated through the learning areas and the general capabilities, but the provision of the curriculum (the 'how') is a matter for local schools and their communities.

## Subject-based disciplines

23. AusVELS maintains the central place of subject-based disciplines in the curriculum through the learning area structure. Disciplines have been defined as:  
*a field of inquiry about some aspect of the world – the physical world, the flow of events over time, numeric structures, and so on. A discipline of knowledge offers a lens through which to view the world – a specialized set of techniques or processes by which to interpret or explain various phenomena. Beyond that, a discipline also provides a sense of community for people with a shared special interest as they seek to stretch the limits of what is already known in that field.*<sup>6</sup>
24. In the AusVELS design, subjects are referred to as learning area domains. This is to enable the inclusion of the content defined by the general capabilities within a common curriculum structure, as discussed in the following section.
25. Ivor Goodson famously argued in the early 1980s that school ‘subjects’ were the product not of a consensus about what was most important to learn but a result of ‘competing efforts to accumulate status, resources and territory’.<sup>7</sup> More contemporary arguments are that a discipline-based approach to curriculum design is dated and therefore mistaken, the product of an understanding of schooling based on an earlier age now made redundant by Google. Why, it is argued, should required learning be specified and mandated when (a) information multiplies so rapidly, (b) the knowledge relevant for the future has not yet been created and (c) information is readily available through a click on a search icon in ways inconceivable just two decades ago?
26. The AusVELS structure is a clear and deliberate reaffirmation of the importance of a discipline-based approach to learning, where disciplines are regarded as both enduring and dynamic.
27. The enduring nature of the disciplines rests in the different epistemologies or ways of understanding and associated skills they provide for learners. That is, each of the disciplines, for example, Mathematics, Science, The Arts and History, provides and is defined by a unique way of seeing, understanding and engaging with the world. The dynamic nature is in the constantly developing content with which students engage in and through the disciplines.
28. The reaffirmation of the importance of the disciplines is evident in the following observations from arguably the most significant educational sociologist of the past fifty years, Michael Young:  
*Subjects and disciplines have a long history, taking us back 150 years and earlier ... However, this ... is as much an argument for rather than against a subject-based curriculum. The relative stability of subjects and their boundaries is partly why parents trust schools and partly why employers ... prefer subject-based ... qualifications when recruiting new staff. It is also why new fields of knowledge take on many of the features of subjects and their links with disciplines if they are successful in becoming part of the school curriculum.*<sup>8</sup>
29. The learning area domains are used as the basis of the current regulatory curriculum requirements for all registered schools as set by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA):

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<sup>6</sup> Beane, J. A. *Curriculum Integration and the Disciplines of Knowledge*, in Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 76, No. 8, April 1995.

<sup>7</sup> McLaren, P. Foreword to the Third Edition of *School Subjects and Curriculum Change*, Goodson, I. Routledge, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Young, M. *The Curriculum ‘An entitlement to powerful knowledge’ : A response to John White*, 2012 <<<http://www.newvisionsforeducation.org.uk/2012/05/03/the-curriculum-%E2%80%98an-entitlement-to-powerful-knowledge%E2%80%99-a-response-to-john-white/>>>

*A framework must be in place for the organisation, implementation and review of a school's curriculum and teaching practices and to ensure that, taken as a whole, the learning areas are substantially addressed:*

*The eight learning areas are:*

- *English*
- *Mathematics*
- *Sciences (including Physics, Chemistry and Biology)*
- *Humanities and social sciences (including History, Geography, Economics and Business, Civics and Citizenship)*
- *The Arts*
- *Languages*
- *Health and physical education*
- *Technologies (including digital technologies and design and technologies)*<sup>9</sup>

30. This does not mean that schools are required to structure their teaching and learning programs and timetables based on 'subjects'. In the early years of schooling, for example, schools may choose to structure teaching and learning programs around the five outcomes of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)<sup>10</sup>:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators.

This can support and facilitate the joint development of learning programs between early childhood providers and schools and can inform the development of effective transition statements to support children's learning as they move from early childhood to school settings.

31. In the middle years of schooling, schools may choose to adopt a vertical structure, to include an elective structure or to design their curriculum around an integrated inquiry-based approach to learning.
32. Neither does it mean that all students must undertake learning to the same level of complexity or demand in each of the domains (this is discussed further in the section on Reporting, paragraphs 16–20).
33. It does, however, mean that all students should have the opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills defined by each learning area domain. This is particularly important when the curriculum is structured using an inquiry-based approach. This approach can risk an exclusive focus on constructing engaging learning contexts at the expense of clearly defining learning objectives drawn from the learning area domains.
34. Further, learning opportunities can be provided by the school directly or in partnership with an external provider or providers, especially where expertise is required that may not be directly available through the school in areas such as Languages, The Arts and Technologies. This may mean the teaching and learning program is delivered out of normal school hours, such as through Saturday morning community language schools. Schools are encouraged to fully utilise such partnerships and to develop them as an integral part of the school's teaching and learning program, consistent with current teaching workforce regulations.
35. Whatever the mode of delivery, schools should be able to demonstrate how the teaching and learning program includes the content of the learning area domains
36. This means that when an elective structure is in place, schools should be able to demonstrate how the school timetable ensures every student is able to access the full range of learning area domains and not completely 'self-select' out of particular learning domains.

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<sup>9</sup> See [http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/registration-schoolguide\\_1.pdf](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/registration-schoolguide_1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/edcare/veylldframework.pdf>

37. The argument is often made that the curriculum is overcrowded, with too much content included. The basis of AusVELS is that it provides a curriculum design that identifies the knowledge and skills that are important for effective citizenship and social engagement. It provides a map of progression of learning that guides teachers in their engagement of students in deep learning in each learning domain and so privileges the importance of depth of learning rather than superficial exposure to an ever-expanding breadth of content.

### Conceptualisation of general capabilities

38. A key innovation of the VELS valued by Victorian educators is the representation of the kinds of learning now characterised under the category of 'general capabilities' as discrete and identifiable domains of knowledge and skills that can be taught, learnt and assessed. Both the Australian Curriculum and the new AusVELS structure build on and further develop this conceptualisation.
39. This conceptual framework is reflected in the AusVELS design by the positioning of the general capabilities as domains in their own right rather than simply indicating how they might be drawn out in different learning areas.
40. There is a view that acknowledges the development of these capabilities as an important role of schooling but regards them either as forms of pedagogy or as attributes that students acquire through a process of osmosis. That is, if the right conditions of learning are put in place and the right learning experiences provided, students will naturally pick up, acquire and develop these attributes. And of course for many students this is the case.
41. But this same argument was used for many years in relation to the acquisition of literacy skills, that is, that if the right learning conditions were put in place, all children would learn to read. That view has been almost universally rejected in favour of one that recognizes the importance of explicit instruction within a context of rich, meaningful learning conditions.
42. The Victorian position on the general capabilities is precisely the same and is supported by a well-established body of research: the general capabilities are a set of discrete knowledge and skills, not a statement of pedagogies, and students benefit from explicit instruction in these areas.
43. For this reason, the symbols used on the Australian Curriculum website to indicate opportunities in the curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science and History for students to acquire the general capabilities have not been included in AusVELS. Rather, the General Capabilities are represented in the curriculum as distinct domains of learning for the purposes of curriculum planning, assessment and the reporting of student achievement.
44. This is not to propose that a capability such as Critical and Creative Thinking can or should be assessed in a form separated from the subject-based learning in which students are engaged. Rather, it is to argue that the metacognitive capacities that students develop and demonstrate in different, specific, discipline-based contexts can be assessed and an on-balance judgment made about the level of achievement students have achieved when measured against the Critical and Creative Thinking continuum.
45. The proposal that schools should assess and report on the areas of learning defined by the general capabilities, and previously by the Interdisciplinary and Personal, Physical and Social Learning strands of the VELS, is sometimes challenged. However, as Masters notes:

*[There are] concerns about the extent to which the current school curricula are developing the knowledge and skills necessary for work and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Employers in particular, have expressed concerns about how well prepared school leavers are for today's workplaces and have emphasised the need for employees who can work collaboratively in teams, use technology effectively and create new solutions to problems. These concerns have led to new levels of effort to identify, develop and assess a broader range of skills and attributes within the school curriculum ... : ways of*



*thinking (including creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and learning); ways of working (including communication and collaboration); tools for working (including information and communications technology and information literacy); and skills for living in the world (including citizenship, life and career, and personal and social responsibility). Inherent in initiatives of this kind is the view that assessment has a pivotal role to play in focussing the attention of schools and school systems on the development of broader life skills and attributes.*<sup>11</sup>

46. It may be argued that this position sits in opposition to that advocated by Michael Young cited earlier at paragraph 28. This, however, is the precise strength of the AusVELS design: it provides a conceptual model that enables the curriculum to include both learning areas and general capabilities rather than setting up a false binary between these two categories of knowledge and skills.
47. There are at present seven general capabilities listed as part of the Australian Curriculum:
  - Critical and creative thinking
  - Personal and social capability
  - Intercultural understanding
  - Ethical understanding
  - Literacy
  - Numeracy
  - ICT
48. The conceptual position that will inform the next iteration of the AusVELS structure (see p. 19) is that the following four general capabilities – Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability, Intercultural understanding and Ethical understanding – are constituted by a discrete set of knowledge and skills that are located apart from any of the learning areas.
49. Further, the inclusion of Intercultural understanding as a general capability reflects the work underway in Victoria to ensure that the school curriculum provides students with the opportunity to develop a global orientation through the development of teaching and learning programs characterised by an international orientation. Consistent with this is the Victorian government's languages plan as set out in the Victorian government's *Vision for Languages Education*.<sup>12</sup>
50. Literacy, numeracy and ICT, however, are all areas of skills and knowledge where students clearly learn and apply across the curriculum what is defined by but not taught only in the learning areas of English, Mathematics and Technologies.
51. There is considerable research that sets out the importance of the teaching of literacy and numeracy and ICT in the context of the different learning areas. It is therefore both appropriate and necessary that the literacy, numeracy and ICT requirements for each discipline be embedded in the curriculum of each discipline.
52. Given the inclusion of a Literacy stand in English and the proficiency strands of *Understanding, Fluency, Problem Solving, and Reasoning* in Mathematics, it is unnecessary to define Literacy and Numeracy as distinct domains.
53. The Literacy and Numeracy general capabilities are therefore treated within the AusVELS curriculum construct as teaching and learning resources but not as domains against which teachers should report student progress. Student progress in these areas should be reported against the achievement standards of the English and Mathematics domains (a final decision on the place of the ICT general capability will be reserved pending the finalisation of the Digital Technologies component of the Australian Curriculum).

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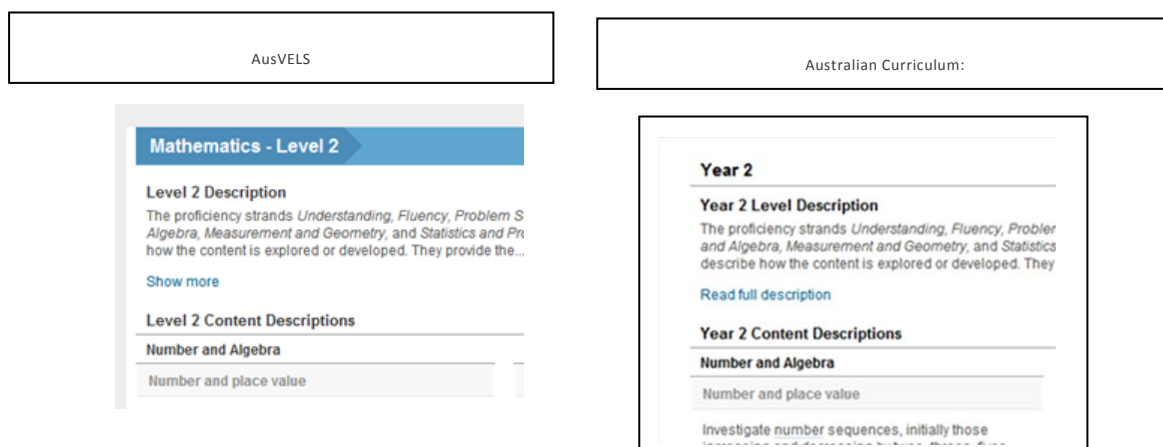
<sup>11</sup> Masters, G. N. *Reforming Educational Assessment: Imperatives, principles and challenges*, ACER, 2013, pp. 4-5

<<http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=aer>>

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/departments/pages/languagevision.aspx>

## Curriculum as a developmental continuum

54. A key difference between the Australian Curriculum and AusVELS is that where the Australian Curriculum is organised by Year Levels, the AusVELS design is structured by levels of learning.



55. This decision was not made from a pedantic desire for a point of difference with the Australian Curriculum. Rather, it reflects and is deliberately designed to reinforce and maintain a fundamental approach to both curriculum design and pedagogy that has characterised all curriculum documents in Victoria going back to the Frameworks documents through the CSF, CSF II and the VELs, and is the basis of the NAPLAN assessment and reporting program. That is, that the curriculum should be regarded as a developmental continuum or pathway of learning.
56. This is particularly true in the learning areas of English and Mathematics and, increasingly, Science, where there is a well-established evidence base about how learning typically progresses.
57. How the curriculum is conceptualised affects what happens in the classroom, especially when consideration is given to the consistent empirical evidence that shows that in any mixed-ability class there is typically a five-year range of achievement apparent. As reported by Meiers in an ACER study, 'the top 10% of students in ... each year [a]re working at approximately five year levels ahead of the bottom 10%'<sup>13</sup>.
58. This self-evidently means that, for example, not all the students in a typical Grade 5 class will be studying the nominal Grade 5 curriculum. Some will still be acquiring the curriculum content and skills below that, some will be acquiring the content and skills defined for that level and some will be acquiring a level of content and skills well beyond that defined for Grade 5.
59. The curriculum within the AusVELS design is not set out according to nominal year levels that equate to particular school grades but to developmental levels that point to current levels of achievement and allow for appropriate planning for expected levels of achievement. In this, the AusVELS design facilitates the increased focus in Victorian schools on the concept of the development of personalised learning programs for all students, where the curriculum is planned in relation to the actual learning level of each student rather than their assumed level of learning. This is consistent with Vygotsky's now widely-cited concept of the 'zone of proximal development'<sup>14</sup>, recently re-expressed by Masters (2013, p. 2):

<sup>13</sup> Meiers, M., *Growth in Literacy and Numeracy: A Longitudinal Study on the ACER Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy Study (LLANS)*. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association 2004 Annual Meeting, April 12-16, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Vygotsky, L.S., 1978, *Mind in Society*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.



*It is well understood at the level of the classroom that successful learning is more likely when individual learners are given learning opportunities appropriate to their current levels of achievement and learning needs.*

60. This does not mean, however, that the learning expectations of any students should be lowered.
61. In relation in particular to the foundational curriculum areas of English, Mathematics and Science, there is clear evidence about the level of learning achievement that is necessary for students to continue their learning progress. These are set out in the achievement standards for these learning areas. It should be the goal of every school to ensure that the progress of every student is monitored against these achievement standards in order to ensure that every student can continue their learning progression.

### Cross-curriculum priorities

62. The AusVELS curriculum design does not represent the Australian Curriculum cross-curriculum priorities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia; and Sustainability) as distinct or separate areas of learning. This should not be interpreted as meaning they are regarded as unimportant. The reverse is the case.
63. The knowledge and skills that students should be expected to develop about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders histories and cultures has a particular and enduring importance.
64. The identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a priority does not represent the addition of further content into the curriculum. Rather, it provides a design for thematic learning that enables students to make connections about what they learn in separate learning areas of the curriculum and to construct a coherent understanding of this fundamental component of Australian history and culture.
65. Student learning about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures will be supported through the development of support materials in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI) and through the development of the VAEAI Centres for Cultural Learning.
66. Similarly, student learning about Asia and Australia's place in Asia, and Sustainability, is embedded in the curriculum of the learning areas. For example, in relation to Sustainability, learning about the interpretation of statistical data is in Mathematics, learning about ecosystems is in Science, learning about analysis of argument is in English and History, learning about affective responses to the environment is in The Arts, learning about the design of innovative solutions is in Technologies, and so on. Support materials to assist teachers and students in making these connections across the curriculum will be developed.  
\* \* \*
67. The AusVELS curriculum design, then, provides a structure for a curriculum that includes both discipline-based learning areas and general capabilities.
68. There remains the question about the extent to which the same teaching and learning program developed from this curriculum should be mandated for all students.
69. It is a question that goes to the heart of curriculum design policy and is reflected in different ways in different international jurisdictions. Some, such as France and many of the states in the United States, set highly prescribed teaching and learning programs for every school through the mandated use of set text books that prescribe exactly what every student will learn in what order. The apparent advantages of this are clear, in that it appears to guarantee every student receives the benefit of the same learning. Whether it actually contributes to better learning outcomes, however, is less clear. The 2009 PISA data for Reading, for example, had Australia ranked 9, the United States 17 and France 22.

70. Others, such as New South Wales, set a more prescribed, detailed syllabus-style curriculum than Victoria. Yet others, such as Finland, set a curriculum that is broader and prescribes less detailed content than Victoria.
71. These differences can be illustrated in a table such as Table 1 following which locates different aspects of Victorian curriculum provision and the Australian Curriculum along this continuum.

**Taxonomy of curriculum design**

What			What and how
Outcomes (Finland, Hong Kong, IB)	Standards (Singapore, VELs)	Content (NSW, UK)	Teaching Plan (Qld, US)
Statement of expected levels of learning and achievement at end of schooling (or broad stages of schooling)	Set of standards, generally at single year or two year intervals, which schools use to plan learning programs and assess student achievement	Set of standards and prescribed content generally at single year or two year intervals, which schools use to plan learning programs and assess student achievement	Detailed (week-by-week) teaching plan with detailed content and teaching strategies
Relies on highest degree of teacher capacity and school-based curriculum planning, which generates commensurate risk	Relies on high degree of teacher capacity and school-based curriculum planning, which generates commensurate risk	Less reliance on teacher capacity and school-based curriculum planning,	Minimum reliance on teacher capacity and school-based curriculum planning
Provides highest degree of school autonomy to meet individual learning needs;	Provides high degree of school autonomy to meet individual learning needs	More limited autonomy to design individual learning programs	No autonomy to design individual learning programs
Requires schools to identify and source teaching and learning support materials: encourages innovation	Requires schools to identify and source teaching and learning support materials: encourages innovation	More resources can be centrally developed: increases efficiency but limits innovation	Text books or other teaching resources mandated: constrains innovation
Limited accountability until end of schooling/stage of schooling	Accountability at each year/two year interval	Accountability at each year/two year interval	Accountability at each year/two year interval

72. The challenge is to reconcile the twin demands of providing a learning program that maintains a focus on a common entitlement to core knowledge and skills and high expectations of every student while also allowing students opportunities to develop and pursue areas of individual interest and expertise.
73. This issue has come into greater focus in recent years as a result of advances in knowledge about effective teaching and learning, particularly in relation both to the importance of identifying and building on students' actual rather than assumed existing knowledge and the impact on student learning of high expectations on the part of teachers.
74. Another perspective on this issue is that of innovation and personalisation. If too much of a school's teaching and learning program is taken up meeting all the requirements of a common curriculum, opportunities for innovation and personalisation can be stifled. These include opportunities for schools to structure their teaching and learning programs differently (for example, to provide specialist programs) and to offer opportunities for students to pursue particular areas of interest or expertise. Too little emphasis on a common curriculum, however, creates a risk that students or schools will pursue areas of ephemeral interest rather than enduring value and that core fundamental requirements for all further learning will be given insufficient attention.
75. *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community* commits to the provision of greater levels of autonomy within a framework of common achievement standards, including the capacity to develop areas of specialist provision, in order to provide this capacity for innovation while ensuring every student is provided with the opportunity to acquire the foundational skills and knowledge that will equip them for effective citizenship.

76. The following guidelines are a framework that provides an effective balance between ensuring that every student is provided with the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to which they are entitled and that schools are provided with the flexibility to develop innovative teaching and learning programs that best meet the needs of individual students.

### Guidelines

77. The content descriptions and achievement standards for the first four domains developed as part of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum, English, Mathematics, Science and History, were approved in December 2011 by all state, territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education. Work is underway in all the other domains.
78. These remaining domains will be integrated into the AusVELS design at the time when they are all complete rather than as they are completed on an individual basis, subject to review by the VCAA to ensure they reflect Victoria's standards and priorities.
79. A second iteration of AusVELS will be published that includes new general capabilities based on those developed as part of the Australian Curriculum, recognising that these build on the inclusion of the Personal and Social Development and Interdisciplinary Learning strands in the VELs.
80. The curriculum design of AusVELS will change from the triple-helix model to a double-helix model, that is, Learning Areas and General Capabilities (see Appendix A for a comparison of the current AusVELS structure to the proposed new iteration).

Learning areas	General capabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Health and Physical Education</li> <li>• Languages</li> <li>• Humanities and Social Sciences (History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business)</li> <li>• The Arts</li> <li>• Technologies (including Design and Technologies and Digital Technologies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical and creative thinking</li> <li>• Personal and social capability</li> <li>• Intercultural understanding</li> <li>• Ethical understanding</li> </ul>

81. It is proposed that curriculum planning at the school level commence in 2014, with initial implementation of new teaching and learning programs to commence from the start of the 2015 school year, with full school curriculum plans and implementation to be in place in all schools from the start of the 2017 school year.
82. Whole-school curriculum plans will be based on a stages of schooling approach based on three stages: Foundation (F to Year 2), Breadth (Years 3 to 8) and Pathways (Years 9 and 10).
83. This maintains a focus on the importance of the provision of the whole curriculum to every student, but across stages of schooling rather than at every year level.
84. This approach should not be interpreted as meaning schools should be required to provide these areas of learning as discrete timetabled subjects. Rather, the focus should be on ensuring that the teaching and learning program as a whole provides the content set out in the AusVELS domains and enables the reporting of student achievement against the associated achievement standards. The way in which the school curriculum is structured and delivered is a matter for an individual school or network of schools.

85. Schools should engage with parents and their local communities in developing the teaching and learning program and should document and publish their teaching and learning program. This enables opportunities for learning outside the immediate school environment to be identified and incorporated in their teaching and learning program.
86. Decisions about the teaching and learning program within that structure and individual student learning programs are the responsibility of the school principal and teachers.
87. This is particularly the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Schools must ensure that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student has an individual learning plan.
88. If a school proposes for any student an individual learning program that departs from the provision model set out in the whole-school curriculum plan, then that decision should be made in conjunction with the student and the student's parents/carers, and must be approved by the school principal.
89. While this applies to all students, it is also consistent with schools' responsibilities set out in the Disability Discrimination Act, Disability Standards for Education – Curriculum development, accreditation and delivery, which state:
  - Education providers must take reasonable steps to ensure that a course/program is:
    - designed to enable learners with disabilities to participate in learning experiences (including assessment and certification)
    - planned in consultation with the learner and associate, and
    - has taken into consideration whether the disability affects the learner's ability to participate in the learning experiences on the same basis as learners without disabilities.
  - Learners with disabilities have the right to:
    - participate in courses and programs that are designed to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, including relevant supplementary programs, on the same basis as learners without disabilities. (Disability Standards for Education, Part 6, Section 6.1.)
    - have reasonable adjustments to ensure they are able to participate in education and training on the same basis as learners without disabilities.

### Foundation (Years F–2)

90. The following are the essential elements of every school's curriculum plan for the Foundation Years (F–2). They can be structured within a teaching and learning program based on the VEYLDF outcomes (Identity, Connection, Wellbeing, Confidence and Communication) and provide both a common core and flexibility for schools to draw on all the AusVELS domains to build a curriculum that meets local needs and expectations:
  - (a) A structured teaching and learning program in English and Mathematics at each year level
  - (b) Substantial attention to Health and Physical Education
  - (c) The provision of a Languages program
  - (d) Substantial attention to The Arts
  - (e) Substantial attention to Personal and Social Capability
  - (f) A learning program that draws on the AusVELS domains of:
    - Humanities
    - Science
    - Technologies
    - Critical and creative thinking
    - Ethical understanding
    - Intercultural understanding.

### Breadth (Years 3–8)

91. In the Breadth Years 3–8, students have the opportunity to fully engage with all AusVELS domains. Schools should provide:
- A structured teaching and learning program in English, Mathematics and Science at each year level
  - A Health and Physical Education program
  - A Languages program
  - A Humanities program that includes in each two-year band of schooling the teaching and reporting of student learning in History, Geography and Civics and Citizenship and, from Year 5, Economics and Business.
  - An Arts program that at each of Years 3 and 4 includes all five Arts disciplines and at Years 5–6 and 7–8 consists of at least two Arts disciplines, one from the Performing Arts and one from the Visual Arts.
  - A Technologies program that includes in each two-year band of schooling both Design and Technologies and Digital Technologies
  - A learning program that includes teaching the content and measuring progress of student learning against each of the general capabilities at least every two years:
    - Critical and creative thinking
    - Personal and social capability
    - Ethical understanding
    - Intercultural understanding.
92. This does not mean that schools are required to construct a learning timetable based on these subjects or learning areas. It does, however, mean that the content set out in these learning areas must be provided. This approach is intended to emphasise that the purpose of curriculum planning is to ensure students are able to engage with and learn the defined content, not follow a centrally-prescribed curriculum structure.

### Pathways (Years 9–10)

93. In the Pathways Years 9–10 students have the opportunity to engage with all the AusVELS domains. The school curriculum plan should demonstrate how, across these years of schooling, schools provide:
- A structured teaching and learning program in English, Mathematics and Science at each year level
  - A Health and Physical Education program
  - A Languages program
  - A Humanities program that includes in this band of schooling the teaching and reporting of student learning in History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business
  - An Arts program that includes in this band of schooling learning in at least one Arts discipline
  - A Technologies program that includes in this band of schooling both Design and Technologies and Digital Technologies
  - A learning program that includes teaching the content and measuring progress of student learning against each of the general capabilities at least at the end of this band of schooling:
    - Critical and creative thinking
    - Personal and social capability
    - Ethical understanding
    - Intercultural understanding.
94. The school curriculum plan should recognise that in these years of schooling some students begin to focus on areas of specialisation related to both their future schooling and intended pathways beyond school.
95. This can include commencement of aspects of their senior school qualification, including VET qualifications.

96. The learning program for these Pathways Years in a range of domains can therefore be based on those set out in AusVELS or, where a student has already demonstrated achievement of the knowledge and skills at Level 10, senior secondary studies drawn from equivalent learning areas.
97. The learning program for these Pathways Years may also, therefore, reflect different intended levels of achievement. Where a school specialises in The Arts, for example, or provides a specialised pathway in The Arts, it is to be expected that students who participate in that learning program will demonstrate a higher level of achievement in The Arts than those who do not.
98. Schools may now also choose to use Foundation VCAL as an alternative curriculum design for students in Year 10. Foundation VCAL is structured around four strands:
- Literacy and Numeracy Skills
  - Industry Specific Skills
  - Work Related Skills
  - Personal Development Skills
99. This is intended to provide a structure which, for some students, will enable greater attention to be placed on the foundational learning skills of literacy and numeracy as defined by the English and Mathematics domains in AusVELS that in turn will enable better access to the senior secondary curriculum.
100. It will remain a requirement that schools report the learning achievement levels of students undertaking a Foundation VCAL program at Year 10 against the AusVELS achievement standards for English and Mathematics and that students are provided with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in the other six learning areas in the context of their VCAL program.

\* \* \*

101. This set of guidelines about curriculum provision can be summarised as follows:
- (a) In Victoria, the curriculum is set out in AusVELS, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards that incorporate the Australian Curriculum. AusVELS is the set of curriculum content and achievement standards that provides the design for whole-school curriculum planning and the reporting of student learning.
  - (b) The second iteration of AusVELS, to be implemented from 2015, will be based on a simplified two-strand model of Learning Areas and General Capabilities.
  - (c) All schools should develop a whole-school teaching and learning program.
  - (d) Curriculum content will not be mandated in Victoria on a year-by-year basis. Instead, schools can base their teaching and learning programs on two-year bands of schooling from Grade 3 on.
  - (e) Decisions about individual student learning programs remain the responsibility of the school. If a school proposes for any student an individual learning program that departs from the provision model set out in the whole-school curriculum plan, that decision should be made in conjunction with the student and the student's parents/carers, and must be approved by the school principal.
102. In order to effectively support schools meet these requirements, examples of whole-school curriculum plans that demonstrate different ways in which full access to the AusVELS curriculum can be provided for all students will be developed in partnership with schools and made available through the Curriculum Planning Resource website.



## Section 2: Reporting student achievement

### Context

1. Reporting student achievement has, until recently, changed remarkably little over the past one hundred years. Following is a reproduction of a student report from a Victorian regional school in 1923. It includes many elements identical to contemporary reports: a five point scale of achievement, data on attendance, a distinction between formative ('Home work' and 'Work in class') and summative ('Examination work') assessment, comments from the teacher, the signature of the principal (using the embryonic technology of the rubber stamp!) and an account of achievement subject by subject. The report also represents an attempt to address the demand for both standards-reference reporting (through the use of grade) and norm-referenced reporting (through the use of a rank order).

NOTE—Reports are sent out at the end of each term, and should be returned, duly signed by the parents or guardians, as soon as possible. No comment is made upon conduct unless it has been such as to call for special remark.

KEY TO LETTERING—

A	signifies	First Class
B	..	Of more than average quality, but not first class
C	..	Of average quality
D	..	Below average, but not bad
E	..	Bad work

The sign + after a letter indicates that the pupil's work is well up in the particular class.  
The sign - indicates that the work is just good enough to secure admission into the class.  
If no sign is added, the work may be taken as of average quality in that class.  
At the end of the year, a certificate is awarded on the whole year's work.  
An honours certificate is awarded to every pupil who obtains at least 80% in the general work for the course, and a pass to every pupil who obtains from 50% to 79%.

H, honours; P, pass; N, not awarded.

TERM 1., 1923

ATTENDANCE: Absent 0 days. Late — times.

HOME WORK: { Writing Work C  
Learning Work C-

WORK IN CLASS: C

EXAMINATION WORK: D

PLACE IN FORM OF 30 PUPILS 28

SPECIAL REMARKS:  
Must work hard to keep up to the standard of the form.  
Henry W. Byrne, Head Master  
D. Form Teacher

Signature of Parent or Guardian  
Date June 5<sup>th</sup> 1923

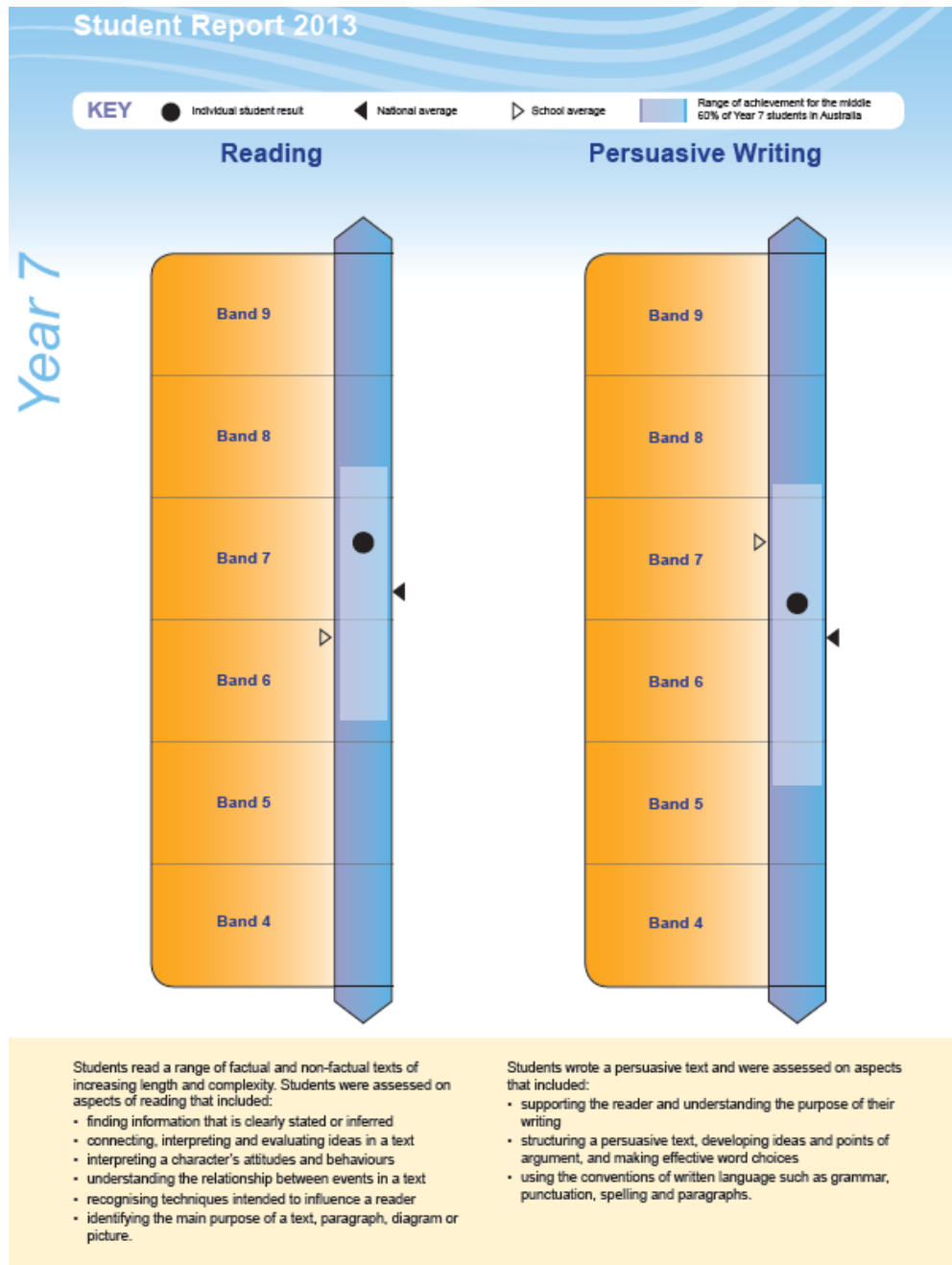
Please return on or before first day of second term.

2. The current reporting requirements are based on the Education Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth government and require that schools report student achievement to parents twice a year using a five point scale or equivalent. Schools must also comply with this requirements of the VRQA:  
A school must ensure that there is ongoing assessment, monitoring and recording of each student's performance and provide each student and parent with access to accurate information about the student's performance. Access to information must include at least two written reports to parents per year.<sup>15</sup>
3. The difficulties in determining the most effective ways of reporting student achievement are a product of attempts to meet competing demands.
4. Most parents and students want a report that provides an objective measure of student achievement against a scale that presents clear information about learning progress.
5. But parents and students often also want further information, typically about how the location of an individual student's progress matches against the 'normal' expectations of that student's

<sup>15</sup> See [http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/SchIRevBodies\\_1.pdf](http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/SchIRevBodies_1.pdf)

age group and about how the individual student compares to their peers in their class or year level. The report illustrated earlier attempts to reconcile these demands by providing both a grade (nominally the objective or standards-based measure) and a rank (the norm-referenced measure).

6. The individual report students receive following the NAPLAN tests (see the example following) is also an attempt to reconcile these demands, by providing both standards-referenced and norm-referenced information about student achievement.





7. Most parents and students also want a report that is easily understood. The attraction of the A–E method of reporting is that it is apparently a simple and effective method. The problem, however, is in establishing comparability. What one teacher regards as work that deserves a B grade (or, as in the report cited earlier, work that is ‘of more than average quality, but not first class’) will not always be the same as the view held by another teacher. Moderation processes to ensure comparability are well established, but to be effective these are often both expensive and time-consuming.
8. The way in which schools and teachers have attempted to address this in the past is by placing less emphasis on summative forms of reporting such as grades and more emphasis on descriptive reports that attempt to describe the work a student has completed over the reporting period and the learning they have demonstrated through that work.
9. When done well, descriptive reporting can provide rich information about student progress. Descriptive reports have also, however, been criticised on the grounds that they are opaque, do not provide any information about the level of student achievement in relation to their peers, and can be both repetitive and de-personalised (the same report being written for many students in the same class).
10. An example of a current mandated reporting format is provided here:

**Semaphore College**

**STEVEN BARDEN**

VSN: 200912345  
Year 3 Semester 1

Learning Area		Rating	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Health and Physical Education		B			○-----●		
Interpersonal Development		D		○-----●			
Personal Learning		C			●		
The Arts		B		○-----●			
English	Reading and Viewing	C			●		
	Writing	C			●		
	Speaking and Listening	C			●		
Mathematics	Number and Algebra	A				●	
	Measurement and Geometry	B				●	
	Statistics and Probability	C			●		
Science		A				●	
Information and Communications Technology		A				○-----●	
Design, Creativity and Technology		C		○-----●			

**Work habits**

	Needs Attention	Acceptable	Very Good	Excellent
Effort	----- ----- ----- -----			
Class Behaviour	----- ----- ----- -----			

As new Australian Curriculum subjects are introduced and taught in AusVELS, your child will receive an achievement grade only at the end of the first semester, and an achievement grade and representation of six months progress at the end of the year.

**Ratings:**

- A Well above the standard expected at this time of year
- B Above the standard expected at this time of year
- C At the standard expected at this time of year**
- D Below the standard expected at this time of year
- E Well below the standard expected at this time of year

**Legend:**

- Your child's achievement 12 months ago
- Your child's achievement this semester
- .... Your child's progress
- The expected level of achievement

11. This format is designed to strike a balance between these competing demands.
- Schools must report student achievement twice a year to parents.
  - Each report must include information about each of the learning domains of AusVELS.
  - Each report must show actual individual student achievement and that achievement *in relation to the standard of achievement expected of that student's year level cohort*. This is done through a graphic representation of student achievement in relation to an expected level of achievement.
  - It is also expected that the report will include individual comments in relation to student learning progress.

It also includes information about student behaviour and effort in class.

12. The current mandated reporting format, however, has meant that, with the exception of the individualised learning plans for students with learning disabilities, reporting student achievement has been based on a one-size-fits-all approach that has not always provided every parent with a simple, common sense report that provides up to date relevant information about student progress.

13. The current report format has been specifically criticised on three grounds. The first is that the use of the A–E scale, where C represents a 'satisfactory' or 'expected' level of achievement does not sufficiently recognise student work at a high level. This can be the case where the link made between the teaching and learning program and reporting in some schools is interpreted to mean students cannot achieve a B or an A result unless they undertake an accelerated learning program. Similarly, especially for students with additional learning needs, this model of reporting may not adequately reflect the progress a student has made. For some students, while they may have made considerable learning progress in a year, the letter grade they receive will still be a D or E because their level of achievement is not at the nominally expected level for that cohort. One result of this model is that many students receive the same grade year after year in a way that does not adequately reflect the learning progress they have made. This is one example of the observation made by Masters (2013, p. 4):

[A]ssessment results usually fail to convey the progress that individuals are making in their learning (most clearly illustrated when a student is awarded the same grade year after year).

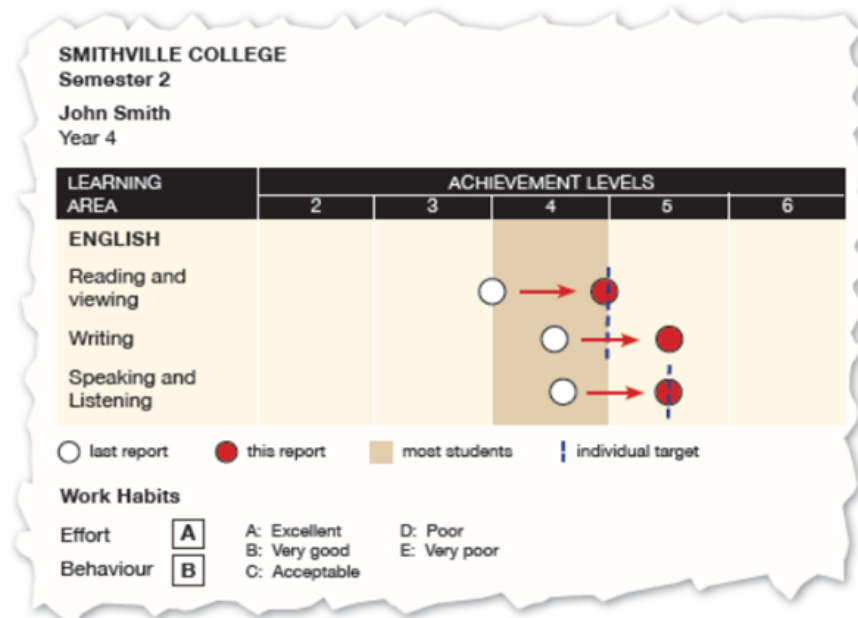
14. The second is that the current report format only provides for a comparison of student achievement in relation to the expected level of achievement for that age or year level cohort. It does not provide the capacity to measure student achievement against individual learning goals or targets.
15. The third is that it does not give sufficient attention or prominence to both extra-curricula participation and achievements and student self-assessment.
16. A further set of issues relates to the curriculum guidelines discussed in Section 1.
17. If schools are provided with more flexibility in relation to curriculum provision, then necessarily more flexibility will be required in relation to the reporting of student achievement in the domains other than English, Mathematics and Science.
18. Reporting student achievement against the AusVELS achievement standards in English, Mathematics and Science should be provided for every student (while the teaching and learning program in F–10 should include the F–10 Science curriculum, reporting student achievement against the Science achievement standards will commence in Grade 3), and this reporting should include information about the age-related expected level of achievement, except in specific instances of individual students where this has been determined by schools in partnership with parents.
19. The rationale for this position is that literacy, numeracy and now scientific knowledge and skills are the necessary foundations of successful life-long learning, and the English,

- Mathematics and Science achievement standards serve as accurate indicators of learning achievement in literacy, numeracy and scientific knowledge and skills respectively.
20. As schools begin to develop and provide different learning pathways, however, this will mean that the progress and extent of student learning in other curriculum areas will differ.
  21. If schools are to develop teaching and learning programs that are both differentiated between schools (for example, one school may place greater emphasis on a languages program while another may specialise in sport and physical education) and between students (for example, providing some students the opportunity to progress more quickly in their learning in particular areas), then a correlate must be that not all students will be expected to achieve the same level of attainment in all subject areas.
  22. For example, students participating in a bilingual program may be expected to reach a higher level of achievement in Languages than students not participating in that program. In this instance, it is more appropriate to set different goals and expectations for these two cohorts than apply the same expected standard to both.
  23. Similarly, a school may choose to provide students with the choice of whether to pursue sustained study in one of the disciplines within The Arts or to undertake a learning program made up of different Arts disciplines. Again, it is self-evident that the expected level of achievement within particular disciplines will be different according to the choices students have made.
  24. The level of attainment will depend to a significant degree on the time-on-task provided through the teaching and learning program. For example, the level of language attainment for students in a school that provides a bilingual program in German is likely to be higher than the level of language attainment achievable by students studying German for 150 minutes per week.
  25. This principle will hold true at both the cohort and individual student level.
  26. The expected level of achievement for a cohort will in part be determined by the teaching and learning program, which includes decisions about opportunities for learning and time allocated to different learning areas.
  27. The expected level of achievement for an individual can also vary, both from the cohort and across learning areas, depending on aptitude in different areas, prior learning experiences and particular learning needs. Expected levels of achievement can, in some circumstance, also vary within learning areas, especially in the early stages of learning. For example, some students progress more quickly in learning oral language than print language in English.
  28. In order to encourage both the pursuit of excellence in the learning areas where students excel and the maintenance of effort in areas where they do not, the capacity to provide and report on student achievement measured against individual learning goals and targets is very important. As Masters (2013, p. 6) points out, 'the fundamental purpose of assessment is to establish where students are in their learning at the time of assessment'.
  29. Given this range of variables, schools should have the capacity to report against both what has been taught and, where appropriate, against individual learning targets rather than against the same nominal norm-referenced standard across all learning areas.
  30. This flexibility should be extended to enable schools to vary the way they report student learning across the domains of the curriculum. Two different examples are provided.
  31. Where Example 1 maps student achievement against a learning continuum of five achievement standards, Example 2 describes how well a student has mastered a particular aspect of learning within that continuum.
  32. The teacher is still able to use the continuum of learning set out in the curriculum to identify the next stage of learning progression for each individual student, but the focus for the purpose of reporting student achievement is on the extent to which a particular set of

knowledge and skills has been demonstrated (the quality of work within an expected range of achievement) rather than on each student's progression on the continuum of learning.

Example 1:

## Sample student report option



Example 2:

LEARNING AREA	DEMONSTRATED LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS				
	Excellent	Very good	Good	Moderate	Minimal
<b>HISTORY</b>	A	B	C	D	E
Goldfields unit		✓			

33. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach to reporting, these guidelines locate the locus for decision-making about reporting student achievement at the school rather than the system level, and provide schools with the capacity to adjust their reporting to reflect their teaching and learning program. This is consistent with the view put by Masters (2013, p. 7):  
*Once information is available about where a student is in his or her learning, that information can be interpreted in a variety of ways, including in terms of the kinds of knowledge, skills and understanding that the student now demonstrates (criterion- or standards-referencing); by reference to the performance of other students of the same age or year level (norm-referencing); by reference to the same student's performances on some previous occasion; or by reference to a performance target or expectation that may have been set.*
34. A further set of challenges to current practice has emerged in recent times through the rapidly increasing use of digital technologies to provide students and their families and carers with online access to examples and portfolios of student work and ongoing assessment of student progress by students themselves and by teachers.
35. This, it is argued by some, has rendered the concept of twice-yearly reports to parents obsolete.
36. There remains, however, value in providing summative assessments as well as formative assessments, particularly in relation to tracking student progress. Student progress in learning

is often better determined over a longer period of time as this provides important opportunities for consolidation of learning that are not available through single task assessments that by definition form the basis of formative assessments.

37. Schools will be free to develop protocols to provide parents and carers with ready access to assessments of student work and to student work itself through online digital technologies. There will remain, however, a requirement that schools provide a summative report of student learning to parents and carers twice a year.
38. Schools will be encouraged to report to parents on extra-curricula activities undertaken by students including programs such as debating, school productions, leadership programs, sporting endeavours and community service and engagement. This will not, however, be a mandated component of the school report. In part, this is in order to avoid diminishing the importance of such activities by providing an incentive for students to participate for the sake of certification rather than genuine commitment and engagement.
39. Similarly, consistent with increasingly common practice, schools will be encouraged to include self-assessment by students as part of the process of reporting to parents. Self-assessment can be a powerful tool for learning. As with the reporting of extra-curriculum activities, however, making self-assessment a compulsory part of the reporting process can lead to an emphasis on compliance rather than the authentic use of self-assessment as part of the process of learning.

## Guidelines

40. From 2015, schools will report student achievement against the set of achievement standards set out in the eight learning areas and four general capabilities of AusVELS, consistent with the whole-school teaching and learning plan.
41. The exception will be the early years, Foundation to Year 2, where schools should report on four learning areas and one general capability: English, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, The Arts and Personal and Social Capability. This is in order to ensure that schools focus on the core priorities in the early years: literacy, numeracy, physical activity and health knowledge, engagement in The Arts and developing the capacity to manage themselves and to learn and manage social relationships in the social environment of the school.
42. Schools are responsible for reporting student achievement against the content of the curriculum. This does not mean that schools are constrained in how they structure or deliver their curriculum. Approaches such as using the VEYLDF outcomes as a teaching and learning structure in the early years, enquiry-based learning, integrated curriculum, team teaching, vertical structures and other innovations will all be possible. Schools will be accountable for reporting against the content of the curriculum, not the delivery of a particular curriculum structure.
43. The reporting of student achievement will be consistent with the guidelines for curriculum provision. That is, it will not be mandatory for schools to report each semester on each domain. Schools should, however (with the exception of the Foundation stage), report on student achievement in each domain in the course of each two year band of school, in accordance with the whole-school teaching and learning plan.
44. The exception to this general principle will be that reporting student achievement against the common achievement standards in English, Mathematics and Science should occur for every student every year (while the teaching and learning program in F–10 should include the F–10 Science curriculum, reporting student achievement against the Science achievement standards can commence in Grade 3), and that this reporting should include information about the age-related expected level of achievement, except in specific instances of individual

students where this has been determined by schools in partnership with parents to be unnecessary.

45. Schools will have a much greater degree of autonomy and flexibility in determining how they will report on student achievement to parents.
46. Therefore, a single common report format will no longer be mandated.
47. Rather, schools will have the flexibility to determine, in partnership with students, parents and the local community, the timing, frequency and format of the reports. For example, school communities may decide to:
  - report on English and Mathematics using a graphical representation like the NAPLAN reports so parents can compare student performance on NAPLAN with teacher assessments
  - in the early years of schooling, report on student progress in relation to the VEYLDF outcomes alongside reporting student achievement in relation to the AusVELS achievement standards
  - place greater emphasis on reporting at all level on aspects such as effort, improvement and behaviour. A–E scales could be used for this purpose
  - retain the use of A–E reporting for reporting academic achievement but use it to indicate how well a student has performed against a particular standard rather than along a continuum of achievement
  - opt for reporting using a percentage result rather than a broad A–E judgment.
48. It is important that schools have the flexibility to report against individual learning goals in individual learning areas as well as against age- or year-level cohort expected levels of achievement where that is determined by a school community to be desirable.

\* \* \*

49. This set of guidelines about reporting can be summarised as follows:
  - (a) Schools have the flexibility to choose, in partnership with their school community, the way in which they will report student achievement. There will no longer be a single mandated report format.
  - (b) Schools report, both to parents and, where directed, to the relevant sectoral authorities, on student achievement in English, Mathematics and Science against the common achievement standards, indicating the level of attainment reached by each student and the age-expected level of attainment (except in specific instances of individual students where this has been determined by schools in partnership with parents to be unnecessary).
  - (c) Schools will not be required to report student achievement against the other domains each year, but should, following the Foundation year, report student achievement against all domains in each two-year band of schooling.

## Summary of key guidelines

The following are the key guidelines:

- Defined curriculum content is the basis for student learning.
- Curriculum planning will be based on two year bands of schooling rather than each year level.
- Schools should develop and publish a whole-school curriculum plan that documents their teaching and learning program.
- Schools must report student learning against the common achievement standards.
- Schools will be able to report student learning to students and parents in formats that best suit local school communities rather than through a single centrally prescribed format.

## Further information

- The Curriculum Planning Resource website is available at <http://curriculumplanning.vcaa.vic.edu.au/home>
- The AusVELS curriculum is available at <http://ausvels.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>
- The Victorian Government's paper, *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community*, is available at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) website <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/pages/learningcomm.aspx>
- The *Compact* is available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/governance/Pages/compact.aspx>
- The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) is available at <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/earlyyears/index.aspx>
- The Australian Curriculum is available at <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>



# Appendix A

## Current AusVELS structure

<b>Physical, Personal and Social Learning</b>	<b>Discipline-based Learning</b>	<b>Interdisciplinary Learning</b>
Civics and Citizenship	The Arts	Communication
Health and Physical Education	English <sup>AC</sup>	Design, Creativity and Technology
Interpersonal Development	The Humanities	Information and Communications Technology
Personal Learning	The Humanities - Economics	Thinking Processes
	The Humanities - Geography	
	The Humanities - History <sup>AC</sup>	
	Languages	
	Mathematics <sup>AC</sup>	
	Science <sup>AC</sup>	

<sup>AC</sup> marks domains that are part of the Australian Curriculum

## Proposed AusVELS structure: second iteration

<b>Learning areas</b>	<b>General Capabilities</b>
The Arts	Critical and creative thinking
English	Ethical understanding
Health and Physical Education	Intercultural understanding
The Humanities	Personal and Social Capability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economics and Business</li> <li>Geography</li> <li>History</li> <li>Civics and Citizenship</li> </ul>	
Languages	
Mathematics	
Science	
Technologies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and Technologies</li> <li>Digital Technologies</li> </ul>	