



NSW English Teachers' Association

Draft Australian Curriculum: English Response to ACARA

The English Teachers' Association is a voluntary group of professionals with a membership of 1,600 individual English teachers and 300 English faculties in New South Wales. We welcome the opportunity for this consultation. The ETA has conferred at length and in detail with members across the state many of whom met in discussion groups in their own regions and others who submitted individual responses online.

To compile this response the ETA

1. held and funded a full day's consultation day on 20th March in 9 locations across the state linked by video conference. Members discussed survey questions in their groups and each group submitted a response.
2. The survey was subsequently uploaded on our web site for extended consultation and the data gathered from 273 respondents by 30th April
3. The responses and comments were compiled into a draft response.
4. The draft response was sent out to members on 11th May for final comment before submission to ACARA.

Nine hundred and thirty eight (938) English teachers in NSW have contributed to and endorse the contents of this document.

SUMMARY

Members appreciated the efforts of the writers and their detailed articulation of aspects of English. They were, however, clear and consistent in their view that the *Draft Australian Curriculum: English* does not reflect a world class curriculum nor does it adequately prepare students for living and working in the 21st century as it does not embody notions of change, flexibility, problem solving and creativity. They also believe that the document does not represent the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English* paper which values Quality Teaching, individual student achievement, flexibility and choice for teachers, equity and opportunities for students. For these reasons, amongst others, ETA submits that the relevant MCEETYA commitments to action as professed in their four-year plan 2009 – 2012 have not been achieved in this draft curriculum.

Members' views are summarised below under headings that reflect the frequency and intensity with which these issues were raised.

1. The structure of the curriculum and conceptualisation of the subject

Members acknowledged that while it is fair to suggest that English does have a historic concern with language, literature and literacy, this does not mean that these can work as discrete organisers of syllabus content points.

They believe that the decision to organise content into discrete strands emphasising their separation by three columns is a serious flaw and works against integration of content into a coherent and readily mapped developmental program of teaching and learning. As one commented:

In an interview with Professor Peter Freebody last year (2009 AATE Conference in Tasmania), the Finnish Director of Curriculum for Mother Tongue, Pirjo Sinko, praised Australian English curricula for their integration of language, literacy and literature. She commented that the integrated Australian approach was considered internationally to be best practice. Over the past few years at my school in metropolitan Sydney I have hosted researchers from Singapore and Hong Kong wanting to see how we achieve the

integration of language strands and how we teach using collaborative, enquiry-based techniques. These overseas education systems are trying to move away from content-heavy, teacher-centred drill-and-practice English lessons. Why, then, are we abandoning practices that the rest of the world recognises as being important, effective and desirable? How can we have a 'world class curriculum' if we are actively moving away from it?

Members are disappointed that even though the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English* paper and the draft curriculum's own rationale emphasise the importance of integration, there has been no attempt to integrate the components of the subject. Any attempt to read the document across the strands is frustrated. Members identified examples of where the content descriptions in fact work against the three strand structure, so highlighting the rather arbitrary and forced nature of the decisions made for some of the content placement. Sub-headings within strands do not correlate and individual content points remain isolated and unconnected, and therefore undeveloped.

A second related concern with the coherence of the draft Australian Curriculum was that the recursive nature of teaching and learning in English, which should be a core structural element of all syllabus documents, has been lost. Members were unable to find a developmental structure for particular content points both in terms of content being developed within a Year across the three strands and in terms of development across the Years 7-10. Some elements of the content disappeared for a few years and others simply petered out. They did recognise, however, that there is evidence of sequencing in some of the broad content descriptors at the beginning of each year particularly in the sections dealing with "Student interactions with others". (Interestingly these sections are the ones dealing with process rather than content.) The sections outlining what students should read also identify a clear progression. Members appreciated the way these indicated increased levels of abstraction in the secondary school. However these do not map directly into the content and so despite this attempt at coherent progression, a clear developmental path through the mass of detailed content is not discernible.

Members would like to see a clear scope and sequence of learning so that they can chart student development over several years in key integrated areas of the discipline.

Regarding each of the strands, members see the

- **Literature** strand as being more reflective of an eclectic and contemporary understanding of English than the other two. It also uses words like *imagination* and *creating*, which are undervalued and underused elsewhere in the curriculum. The Literature strand requires students to critically reflect and evaluate - higher order skills - and therefore a positive aspect of the draft curriculum. They are also pleased that the Literature strand acknowledges the ethical and aesthetic elements of English.
- **Literacy** strand as potentially opening up some more complex understandings of the literacy project of English than are currently served by NAPLAN (such as creating and imagining). The sense of English playing a role in promoting cultural understanding is present and welcomed. However, if the students' out-of-school cultural practices are not duly acknowledged and celebrated, this can only detract from the engagement of many students with the curriculum. Literacy does have a sense of development from lower order cognitive skills towards evaluation and critique and creation. However, this is not enough to counterbalance the absence of such a sense from the Language strand, which detracts from the overall quality of the curriculum (see below). Members were pleased to see captured different ways of reading and an understanding of meaning as multiple and open to evaluation and judgement.
- **Language** strand as dry and prescriptive. They see it as disconnected from students' lives and learning in and for the contemporary world. The language strand does not adequately address the way ICTs have changed understandings of learning & students' use of language and creation of texts in the digital age. The level of detail and decontextualisation of language from processes of using it is not helpful to students' learning through language.

Members strongly objected to what they saw as the representation of English in the draft curriculum as a “service subject” for other curriculum areas. They were particularly incensed that this role was given priority through the first statement of purpose in the Rationale where the value of English to *other* subjects in its “foundation for study across all curriculum areas”(p1) is highlighted. They acknowledged that while the language and literacy strands may be helpful in supporting the literacy of other disciplines, the primary value of English should be in itself for its students. In NSW, English is seen as the way students come to understand themselves and their world through texts. This is critical to students’ capacity to function in and contribute to society. These purposes were viewed by members to be more important than the discipline’s service to other subjects.

This view of English as mainly functional seems borne out by the fact that the Literature content is visually overwhelmed by the weight of content allocated to the other strands. While members appreciate the importance of explicit teaching of language, the extensive list of content in this strand, combined with the specificity of the Literacy strand tends to skew the nature of the discipline away from a rounded English course towards a course in functional literacy.

Members also commented that the content of the Literature strand was more broadly expressed and required higher-order thinking than the other two. This suggests that to allow for effective integration Literature is well placed to be the organising strand, with the others dovetailing into it. This would allow for a more cohesive, challenging and stimulating course.

The closer relationship between Language and the other two strands would assist in addressing another concern expressed by members that grammar content in the document needs to be supported by clear articulation of the ends for which grammatical structures can be used. There need to be more explicit links between instruction around language, forms, features, structures of texts and reasons for teaching these.

Some members identified what they saw as a narrowing of the subject, which potentially compromises the depth of student learning in English. They suggested that key historical elements of the subject are missing from the draft curriculum. These elements have seen a strong focus in the past on ethics, dialogue and ways of knowing, deepening students’ understandings of the self, others and the experience of being in the world, as well as the role of language and literature in all of this.

Many members commented on the disconnection between content and classroom practice. Research in this area has indicated that English teachers conceptualise their practice to a significant degree within the frames of reference provided by the characteristic pedagogies of historic models – or discourses – of the subject (see, for example, Peel, Patterson and Gerlach, 2000). Certainly, members identified an implied pedagogy in parts of the draft curriculum, suggesting that the issue of pedagogy cannot be avoided. This, of course, is not just a matter of curriculum history – it goes to the heart of what is required of teachers in improving learning outcomes for students. Recent Australian research (Sawyer, Brock and Baxter, 2007) has indicated that highly effective English teaching is characterised by a “principled eclecticism” that consciously draws on the pedagogies made available to teachers by historic understandings of the subject. On the evidence of the research base for how English teachers understand their practice and subject, it would seem impossible for a truly “world class” curriculum to not engage in a detailed and sustained way with English subject models. Certainly, one that does not do so is not providing the sort of guidance that teachers will find immediately recognisable and most helpful.

2. Catering for the needs of all students.

Members believe that the draft curriculum fails to cater for the full range of students. They commented that its prescriptive nature, particularly the predominance of prescribed lower order literacy and language content descriptions, makes it difficult for teachers to be flexible in delivering the content in a way that both engages their students and meets their diverse needs. English teaching must start with an understanding of where the students are at, and build from there. The lack of recognition in the draft of what students bring to the classroom is a major weakness in terms of diversity and age-appropriateness. Despite some recognition of the needs of students and their diverse backgrounds in the General Capabilities section, this is almost entirely absent from the course content descriptions. These do not identify or

provide for such groups as ESL students, Life Skills students, Gifted and Talented students and students with other special needs. The lack of understanding of the recursive nature of English teaching and student learning will disadvantage students who need reinforcement and remediation of their skills.

Because the draft curriculum does not adequately conceptualise the needs of students, individualized learning is lost as a curriculum principle. Teachers insist that the draft curriculum has not realised the ambitions of the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English* paper in its recognition of the importance of catering for student diversity

3. The role and status of the student

Members uniformly criticised the radical shift from a curriculum where the student as learner is central, to one that is a prescriptive, regimented content-based curriculum which implies a teacher-centred pedagogy and student as passive learner. This shift is immediately evident in the stem of the content descriptors: “Students will be taught...”. The construction of the learner as passive is also evident in the document’s failure to value such important aspects of learning as collaboration, negotiation of content and the development of independent learning. This is despite the commitments to action in MCEETYA’s Four Year Plan (2009-2012) to “student motivation and engagement” and to “providing students with opportunities to negotiate and be active participants in their learning” (p.14)

There is no allowance for or recognition of the pleasures of the subject and of learning. If we are trying to foster a culture of life-long learning in Australia, learning needs to be seen as valuable and pleasurable in itself. Students need to be taught how to reflect on their own processes of responding to and creating texts and on their own processes of learning. This is fundamental to their understanding of themselves as consumers and creators of text and as learners.

4. The predominance of lower order thinking

Members expressed concern at the limited range of higher order thinking in favour of content detail particularly in the Language strand. An analysis of the document mapped against Bloom’s taxonomy ([Appendix 3](#)) shows a disturbing preponderance of lower order skills. Content in English has historically been understood as what students are expected to know *and* to be able to do. Such an emphasis on knowledge and understanding as expressed in the draft curriculum runs counter to past emphasis on studying language in a broadening range of contexts and for real purposes.

This seems to be at variance with expectations arising from results in the international (PISA) tests in 2006 where “Australia’s rank dropped ...primarily because of a decline in performances at the highest level”. Professor Barry McGaw proposes that “a reasonable suspicion would be that constant attention to basic skills, plus somewhat erroneous assertions in many public comments that “Australia’s problem lies among its low performers” or “in its long tail” have created too much focus on minimum performance requirements and insufficient attention to the highest performers. (McGaw, <http://www.sisr.net/apo/mcgaw.pdf> p.5).

This also seems to fly in the face of another of MCEETYA’s commitments to action: students’ development of “Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications” p.14.

Members also noted a lack of a clear articulation between the draft curriculum and research in the area of quality teaching and productive pedagogies. Many responses stated that the draft curriculum does not compare favourably to the NSW DET Quality Teaching Framework, which draws on a research evidence base to promote in-depth teaching and learning.

5. Creativity and the imagination

The lack of coherence of the curriculum is exacerbated by the division between receptive and productive ways students engage with texts. Reading is a creative act as much as it is a receptive and critical one. In the document, *Creating* is given its own sub heading in Literature and separated out from acts of reading that are described under other headings, most notably *Appreciating*. *Creating* seems to be questionably and indistinctly constructed as an element of and/or precursor to writing and is only one in five elements of the course. *Creating* is

actually a part of every process, including criticism, and is one of the key aspects of learning for the 21st century. The distinction between the critical and creative is not in line with current theory or actual practice and tends to devalue the imagination as an integral component of work in English.

6. Achievement standards

Members see the achievement standards as “concept-driven” and so “lend[ing] themselves to improving student outcomes. However, they say that while they make sense in themselves, it is difficult to see how these track back to the content. This difficulty is exemplified in [Appendix 1](#) which attempts to map the Achievement Standards against Content Descriptors in Year 10. Members also wondered whether organising the standards around the modes is an attempt at integrating the three discrete strands. If so, they believe it is unsuccessful identifying the following reasons.

- Content is described in detailed dot points which do not relate to an integrated view of the subject. Members commented that because the document lacked a coherent philosophy of the subject and learning within the discipline, the draft achievement standards could not be seen as the expected consequence of the study of English.
- The visual modes (viewing and creating/representing/designing) have been omitted when they are featured within the content and pointed out that this is also inconsistent with the Rationale that lists six modes: listen, read and view, speak, write and create. These seem to be clear indications that the visual is to be assessed in all three strands. Members suggest that the achievement standards recognise this in the designation of the modes by such terms as: listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and representing/designing.
- As pointed out by members, the use of modes as organisers for the achievement standards highlights gaps in the content descriptors, particularly in regard to speaking, which is measured in the content descriptors but not developed as a tool for learning through the curriculum content.

7. ICT

Members believe that ICT skills are not closely integrated into the content and are not of a sufficiently high order. They are limited to a mechanical knowledge of ICT resources and don't demand their use by students to apply and create. Students must be able to competently evaluate, use and create ICT resources – another reason for extending to all six language modes in the Achievement Standards. Furthermore, ICT is a key teaching strategy to engage students in the study of English and its potential in this area has not been addressed.

8. The language of the document

Members criticised the document for shrinking away from professional discourse in favour of non-specialised and as a result imprecise language. They claim that the language of the document does not acknowledge terms that have grown out of decades of research and theoretical discussion that are understood by the profession. Such vague terms as “standard grammatical terminology” (p.4) may appeal to lay people but does not draw on the professional knowledge of teachers in any meaningful way. The use of the term “multimodal literary texts” in the Language strand is another instance where the meaning is confused, as professional understandings of what is literary relate to notions of quality and genre, and are inappropriately conflated with whether a text is being created using a particular, as opposed to multiple language modes. Similarly the use of “valuing” and “appreciating” interchangeably and the variable detonations of “reflecting” and “create” leave teachers uncertain about the philosophical underpinnings and pedagogical possibilities of the discipline they are supposed to teach.

9. Suggestions for improvements to the organisation of the learning area(s).

In [Appendix 2](#) we provide a different way of conceptualising the subject based on a new synthesis of historically understood and internationally acknowledged reasons for studying English (cf. Ellis, Fox and Street, 2007). These four main purposes are mapped against the current content descriptions and achievement standards. This conceptualisation reflects current understandings of the subject against which the current content descriptions could stand. However, should this suggested re-conceptualising be seen as too far removed from

the draft curriculum given the timeframe, we strongly suggest that Literature, broadly understood, should be the centrally organising strand in which the other strands are implicated. Making Literature the core will make programming easier in terms of teachers' current practice.

Another possibility for integration could be to combine the strands under the headings 'learn to' and 'learn about'. In NSW at present, skills and knowledge are divided in this way in the Years 7-10 English Syllabus. This is not in itself a unifying principle, of course – in fact it is another form of division at one level. However, the content points in the 'learn to' and 'learn about' sections of the Syllabus strongly reflect each other and it is this consciousness of having skills and knowledge reflect each other that creates an integrated curriculum. 'Learn to' and 'learn about' also bring both student and teacher into the document and provide a sense of how the curriculum aims can be achieved. If national consistency is sought, they provide a classroom framework intelligible across the country.

The rest of the document contains the more detailed comments by members in the order of the ACARA survey.

1. CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS

1. The draft content descriptions are clear and unambiguous; i.e. explaining in understandable language what is to be taught.

Members found the document easy to read and the language “understandable”, but commented that “simple language doesn’t equal clarity”. Indeed, the attempts to avoid the language of the profession and contemporary understandings of the discipline of English have left “lots of uncertainty”.

The lack of professional educational language reduces clarity and substance for teachers and has the potential for ambiguity and misunderstanding.

Some terms which have a history in research and professional discussion are used in different ways throughout the document – often in ways not acknowledging that there are complex professional understandings relating to them.

- *Reflecting*

In Kindergarten Literature 1, students are required to reflect on texts. The content elaborations show that here “reflecting” is listening and joining in.

In Year 10 Literacy 5, “Reflecting on Texts” requires students to analyse, challenge, compare, identify, discuss and explain. There is a confusingly large range of actions under the umbrella of “reflecting”, and only “discuss” comes close to dictionary definitions of reflection as an act of serious thought and contemplation. At no point is the important metacognitive aspect of this word included, implied or even hinted at by the content descriptors.

- *Creativity and creating* are similarly loosely used.

The term “create” is used in the Rationale of the document with a very specific meaning, viz. to refer to the production of visual/multimodal language “Through studying English students learn to listen, read and view, speak, write and create” This is repeated on p. 2 in the description of the Literacy strand. However, throughout the document the term is used in a much more general sense (“creating texts”). Moreover, when the achievement standards are presented, both “creating” and “viewing” disappear and “listening and speaking” are collapsed together.

Furthermore, searching on “creativity” produces content about using correct spelling, grammar and punctuation (Kindergarten Literacy 8), editing skills (Year 1 Literacy 9), comprehension strategies (Year 5 Literacy 6), discussion and analysis of literature (Year 7 Literature 3) and developing logical arguments in response to literary texts (Year 10 Literature 8).

Again, under the heading “Creating Texts” (Year 9 Literacy 16), the content description

relates to grammar and punctuation, not to the act of creating or being creative. The content elaborations specify “the use of sentence boundary punctuation, capitalisation, the use of apostrophes for contractions and possession, commas for lists and clauses, hyphens, bullet points, quotation marks, referencing conventions, points of ellipsis, colons, dashes, brackets and semi-colons.” Worthy as this extensive list may be, it has only a tangential connection to what most English teachers would consider “creating texts”, and one needs to go to the elaboration to find specifically what the curriculum writers had in mind.

- *Reading and writing*

These words are not addressed in the glossary and are an important focus of the lack of coherence in the document. While the definition of texts specifies that they can be “written, spoken or multimodal and in print or digital/online forms,” there is no consistency around how students engage with these texts in their various modes and media. Is the definition of reading to include reading the visual and the definition of writing to include students’ visual and graphic representation of ideas?

The Rationale lists six modes: “listen, read and view, speak, write and create”. This lack of attention to the visual modes is particularly significant for the Achievement Standards where the visual modes have been omitted even while they are featured within the content.

- *Grammar*

Members are uncertain about the grammars referred to in the document – the terminologies for functional and traditional / Latinate grammar are switched throughout. The explanation offered in the document: “The Australian Curriculum: English uses standard grammatical terminology” (p.4) was once again seen as a way of avoiding specificity and a regrettable cause of uncertainty. Moving between the glossary, the content and the elaborations, one finds inconsistencies in grammar definitions.

- *Valuing and appreciating* appear to be used synonymously, even though they are quite different actions and “valuing” is shown in the glossary as a subset of “appreciating”.

- *Multimodal literary texts*

The use of this term in the Language strand inappropriately conflates literature and medium. While members understand that specific statements like this are there to ensure inclusion, they believe that this only adds to the lack of coherence and theoretical awkwardness of the document. Professional understandings of what is “literary” relate to notions of quality and genre, not whether a text is being created using a particular or multiple language modes.

Members recommend that the document use more generic terms as regular descriptions of all work with all texts. Such terminology as “a range of texts in different modes and media” appearing through the document achieves coherence as well as allows for the intended variety. Levels of specificity should appear as examples outside of the mandatory elements of the curriculum to illustrate the rich potential of such language.

Members expressed concerns about the ambiguity of headings and content descriptions and about disconnections between headings, descriptions and elaborations. The headings often bear little identifiable relationship to the content descriptions, and content elaborations are needed to understand what the content descriptions mean. Thus, we find

- in Yr7Literacy13, content description about direct speech, brackets and commas, but elaboration about ellipses, text citation and colons.
- The Yr9Literature6 CD is a general statement about the ability to use existing texts for a range of purposes and effects. The elaboration narrows this concept to a transformation of print to multi-media, intended to amuse those with prior knowledge of the original text.
- The Yr9Literacy7 CD is “Evaluate online research tools ... for objectivity, reliability and completeness.” The elaboration simply requires students to keep a log and offers no details about the processes of evaluation for reliability.

In brief, members felt strongly that the attempt to use plain English in a document where clarity and precision are required has resulted in ambiguity, semantic slippage and a denial of professional knowledge. They believe that this was not the intention behind the injunction in the Shape paper that the curriculum be written “without excessive jargon”. (p.15)

The curriculum should be written in the language of the profession with full acknowledgement of the understandings expected in professional practice. The primary audience for this curriculum is English teachers and the document needs to speak to them clearly and unambiguously to provide the direction they require.

2. Are coherent, ie clearly articulated across strands and year levels

Respondents acknowledged that, on balance, it is fair to suggest that English does have a historic concern with language, literature and literacy. However, the efficacy of this triform as discrete organisers of syllabus content points was overwhelmingly called into question. In short, respondents found the *Australian Curriculum: English* to be fundamentally incoherent.

The goal of the integration of the three strands (language, literature, literacy) in teachers’ programming, which was stressed in the Shape paper and is also emphasised in the draft Australian curriculum, was determined by respondents to be unachievable in practice. Moreover, the present organisation and layout of the draft curriculum was found actually to work against an effective interrelationship. As one group response bluntly put it, capturing the thinking and emotion evident in other responses: “working with this curriculum will be a nightmare. It’s time consuming and frustrating.”

The general tenor of responses was that

[Integration] will be near impossible: time consuming and ineffective. The curriculum needs to be re-designed to allow integration of the strands.

Objections to this structure essentially took two forms, relating to:

- the practical difficulties created in devising teaching programs and lesson plans and
- the manner in which the apparently random allocation of content poses a challenge to, and even undermines, teachers’ existing understandings of their subject and their current practice.

With regards to the first objection, a representative comment was that

The layout and numbering in the NC is not conducive to teaching the three strands in an integrated fashion. The ordering of language, literature and literacy apparently presents a hierarchical and problematic sequence.

The concerns about the difficulties in reading the content reflect evident uncertainty about how to find a starting point and then a way through the content, as if the content should be read from the left-hand column, then across to right. The decision to organise content by three columns, which does not immediately suggest integration, was seen as a serious flaw. A widely expressed concern was that the literature content is overwhelmed or subsumed by the weight of content allocated to the other strands, as captured in this comment:

Language and Literacy are focussed on at the expense of Literature due to the imbalance of Content Descriptors under each, across year groups.

Related to this concern was the fact that members identified examples of where the content descriptions in fact work against the three strand structure, highlighting the rather arbitrary and forced nature of a good deal of the content allocation. To take just one apposite example,

- Yr 7 Literacy content point 4 (Reflecting on texts) reads: “Interpret and analyse texts critically for different perspectives including identifying how aspects of subject matter and particular language choices contribute to the representation of characters, places and events”. This example indicates how the separation of language, literature and literacy in determining content is not viable – all three are obviously evident and working together in this particular content point, highlighting that the “literacy” of English is deeply implicated

in reading and responding to literature and knowledge and use of language. The three strands cease to make much sense once particular content is allocated.

Respondents have suggested that such an example highlights that content allocation appears to have been as much a matter of convenience or space filling as it has been a matter of pedagogy, and is in fact not validly grounded in current practice.

From a NSW perspective, teachers were very supportive of a structure that works from the end point which might be labelled an outcome. (This, however, does not mean respondents were arguing for the use of the word “outcomes”.) The closest suggestion of outcomes comes in the section “Achievement Standard”, which is organised under the subheadings as Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing. These modes are not directly referred to in the strands and yet they form the expected and assessable learning endpoints – i.e. outcomes. In order for the draft Australian curriculum to be a coherent document there needs to be much greater clarity about the relationship between the strands and what is expected to be the outcome of teaching and learning i.e. the achievement standards. [Appendix 1](#) highlights the serious level of disconnection between the achievement standards, the modes and the content by taking the example of Year 10.

In New South Wales there is further elaboration of the stated outcomes, described as “learn to” (i.e. skills and application) and “learn about” (knowledge to be applied). This structure was supported precisely because it provides the integration (of language, literature and literacy) that the draft Australian curriculum structure has not achieved, and also because it draws together (what the NSW curriculum labels) “learning about” and “learning to do” as interdependent and inter-related processes. The idea that process (or “doing”) is a form of, and a way to master, knowledge and skills (i.e. content) is one that respondents strongly supported, and which many were concerned was now lost in the draft Australian curriculum. The separation of “knowing” from “doing” in the draft curriculum was viewed as a retrograde step for English in NSW, as captured in this comment:

The national curriculum loses the processes of English: learn about, learn to. There is the danger of teaching to content in an atomised way, and losing focus on the skills associated with the processes of English.

It needs to be stressed that respondents believed that reading the draft curriculum in even a random fashion is likely to throw up similar examples of content incoherence throughout the document. In particular, the placement and substance of Yr 7 language content point 1 (Language in Asia) was seen as befuddling and even a source of exasperation:

Many of us are not trained as linguistic experts and certainly are not trained to teach Asian texts or the effect of English language in Asia.

Puzzling to teachers was why this language content point is not then picked up in the other Yr 7 strands, and further explored, e.g. the literature strand moves to “1. Choices and techniques” (which is surely the domain of the language strand?) and makes no immediate and direct reference to Asian literature in English. However, it is in Yr 9 that the elaboration for “1. Appreciating” stresses the importance of “texts written by and about people of Asian background.”

In short, the document simply cannot be read cross ways, which is presumably necessary for integration of the strands to be achieved. Sub-headings within strands do not correlate and individual content points remain isolated and unconnected, and therefore undeveloped.

Also of concern was the manner in which content misplacement and consequent incoherence undermines the intellectual basis of the curriculum by actually working against the relevant strand organiser. An apposite example is the notion of intertextuality being allocated to Year 9 language, when it is better placed in the literature strand, or perhaps even the literacy strand. Exploring relationships between texts goes beyond a concern with the dialogic nature of language and moves students into consideration of textuality, while also being a particular strategy for or mode of reading.

A similar mismatch occurs in Yr 9 with the placement of Literature content “2. Appreciating” which refers directly to “a range of language devices” as the learning goal.

Clearly, the distinctions between language, literature and literacy are blurred in such examples, once more indicating the redundancy of the three strands. Members have pointed out that the writers of the curriculum evidently could not write to these strands in a clear and distinct way, which would suggest the strand structure is fundamentally flawed.

Members questioned how, given the evident problems experienced by the curriculum writers, they will be able to program the draft Australian curriculum in a coherent and efficient manner:

If the document were structured differently and more cohesively to show the integration of the strands, with skills mapped clearly and assessment made clear, then programming would be straight forward. The purpose and role of the 'Elaborations' are unclear and confusing. There is a need for more guidance for how units of work are to be generated from the national curriculum and how long each should be taught for.

A second related concern with the coherence of the draft Australian Curriculum was that the recursive nature of teaching and learning in English, which should be a core structural element of all syllabus documents, has been lost. This indicates that members were unable to find a developmental structure for particular content points, both in terms of particular content being developed within a Year across the three strands and in terms of development across the Years 7-10. As one group put it:

[the draft curriculum] clearly states the content for each year level; however, provision for revision or development of particular content is lacking.

With regards to this second concern, which relates to existing subject understandings and existing practice, some respondents suggested that the curriculum should be more directly and concretely organised around literature (broadly defined) as the “heart” and centre of the English curriculum. There was support for the idea that the literacy and language content should be more closely related to the literature content, developing or “growing out” from what is currently labelled the literature strand. For example, one group response asked

Are we moving away from the teaching of English literature and English studies to teaching English language?

Another suggested

Many of the things in the Language and Literacy strands, of course, are dependent upon the Literature strand. Some of us think that the Language and Literacy strands should underpin the Literature strand.

A third group response stated

Language and Literacy are focussed on at the expense of Literature.

Given that the content descriptors for Literature are expressed more broadly than the other two strands, this may be a way towards integrating the currently discrete elements of the curriculum.

3. Are sequenced appropriately, ie in an order consistent with your experience

Members thought that “the structure of the NC makes it difficult to identify a progression of outcomes and achievements from year group to year group” and that the “document needs a stronger sense of scope and sequence ordering”.

There is some evidence of sequencing in some of the broad content descriptors at the beginning of each year particularly in the sections dealing with “Student interactions with others”. Interestingly these sections are the ones dealing with process rather than content. The sections outlining what students should read also identify a clear progression. Members appreciated the way they indicated increased levels of abstraction in the secondary school but believed that the way this development is charted privileges the critical over the imaginative as for example, in year 10 students read texts with “themes and issues involving high levels of abstraction, higher order reasoning and intertextual references.”

It has been suggested that more work be done at this level to give teachers a clearer sense of an overview for each year and progression from year to year and to provide a developmental structure into the senior years for the imaginative and creative.

Members see the achievement standards as “concept-driven” and so “lend[ing] themselves to improving student outcomes but that “the content descriptions are minimal and atomistic items of content” and do not seem to grow out of these. They see the content as “very prescriptive” yet “not account[ing] for recursiveness of learning” so critical in student development. Comments in this regard included

Connection between each year is missing. Assumes students have mastered each skill at every previous year, scope and sequence is unclear and fragmented.

once a concept or skill is introduced in one year it is not reiterated

Another concern is that some concepts/ideas seem to “peter out or are dealt with perfunctorily”. For example, E5LTR3 requires that students be taught to

Appreciate how the narrative point of view can work for particular effect.

This is a highly complex understanding for Yr 5 and yet does not seem to be picked up again at all in later years. Indeed ‘point of view’ is not considered as an element of narrative but as denoting opinion or possibly perspective as in E8LCY5

Evaluate texts by critically reflecting on the author's point of view, validity of content and credibility of sources, including evidence to support point of view.

Respondents also point out that

there is consistency in some areas (e.g., grammar and punctuation), but not in others (e.g., ICT use); the lack of integration between the elements makes it more difficult to link them conceptually and in practice.

They appreciated the use of sub headings but commented that they could be more useful in mapping the content if there were some consistency within the strands and relationships across the strands.

4. Are pitched appropriately, ie sufficiently challenging for students at each year level

Members appreciated the work done to identify with some specificity the learning expected of students and they acknowledge the difficulty of differentiating from year to year. However, they also point out that this level of prescription can have the effect of excluding some individuals and groups. English teaching must start with an understanding of where the students are at, and build from there. The lack of recognition in the draft of what students bring to the classroom is a major weakness in terms of age-appropriateness. As one group stated:

The draft does not adequately represent students' cultural contexts or their diversity: no direct recognition of and structures to cater for ESL students, life skills students, gifted and talented etc.

The content descriptions also put content dot points ahead of students as the starting place for planning and programming. The prescriptiveness, particularly of the language and literacy strands makes it difficult, not only for teachers to interest students, but also importantly for teachers to cater for the diversity of student backgrounds and needs.

Knowledge is reified ahead of the growth and development of students, in all their diversity, with consequently, no direct recognition of and structures to cater for ESL students, life skills students, GATS etc.

This predominance of very specific literacy and language content descriptions is too dry and disconnected from the students' interests and lives. Generally this dryness and lower order thinking of some of the language and literacy descriptions seem out of place with some of the more challenging higher order skills required in the Literature strand and some other descriptions in the two other strands. The specificity of the textual features to be introduced in each year will also make it very difficult for teachers to choose appropriate texts to stimulate

student interest. Yet despite all this detail, there seems to be little differentiation at either the higher or lower ends of ability. Nor is there any content specific to ESL and Life-skills students. For this reason, members again highlighted that the draft curriculum does not favourably compare to the existing NSW 7-10 syllabus, which includes references (e.g. ESL scales and modified content for Life Skills students) to guide and assist teachers in curriculum differentiation and planning for individualised instruction.

This prescriptiveness and overwhelming number of the language and literacy content descriptions makes it difficult for independent learning skills to be developed and the draft has minimal recognition of metacognition as an important element of English education.

Some more specific comments about content descriptions:

- Asian language seems ill-defined and uncomfortably placed in Year 7. The history of English in Year 10 is also awkwardly placed. How will this interest students who are looking for technical education?
- Placement of parody and humour in Year 7 seems odd. While students should enjoy humorous texts, how humour works, parody and satire are difficult for students at any time.
- E7LCY4 'Analysing texts critically for different perspectives' is an important skill but is this for all Year 7 students at this stage? Similarly E7LCY6 is very difficult for less capable students.
- Poetic features are largely limited to Year 9. This seems to diminish poetry and analysis of it in the Curriculum.
- Use of personal pronouns to involve or distance an audience would seem a rather basic skill to be introduced in Year 10.

5. Cover the important content for this learning area

Our members see the Literature strand as being more reflective of an eclectic and contemporary understanding of English than the other two. It also uses words like *imagination* and *creating*, which are undervalued and underused elsewhere in the curriculum. The Literature strand requires students to critically reflect and evaluate - higher order skills, and therefore a positive aspect of the draft curriculum. They are also pleased that it acknowledges the ethical and aesthetic elements of English.

The Literacy strand potentially opens up some more complex understandings of the literacy project of English than are currently served by NAPLAN (such as creating and imagining). The sense of English playing a role in promoting cultural understanding is present and welcomed, even if the students' out-of-school cultural practices are not duly acknowledged and celebrated. (This can only detract from the engagement of many students with the curriculum.) Literacy does have a sense of development from lower order cognitive skills towards evaluation and critique and creation. That there are different protocols of reading, and an associated understanding of meaning as multiple and open to evaluation and judgement, is captured.

The Language strand has not met with the same level of approval. While members appreciate the importance of explicit teaching of language, they believe that the level of detail and decontextualisation of language from processes of using it "is not appropriate to a curriculum document and more in line with headings in a text book". The extensive list of content in this strand, combined with the specificity of the Literacy strand tends to skew the nature of the discipline away from a rounded English course towards a course in functional literacy. As one group commented:

The Language strand is dry & prescriptive. It is disconnected from students' lives & learning in and for the contemporary world. The language strand does not adequately address the way ICTs have changed understandings of learning & students' use of language and creation of texts in the digital age. Visual language & literacy are underplayed. The cultural contexts of students is largely ignored in the three strand

contents - not enough credence is given to their out of school cultural practices and language use. Creativity is downplayed in favour of functionality;

6. Please identify any content that you believe should be included in the Australian Curriculum that is not currently, and give reasons for your selection.

The following areas have been identified as needing further development in the curriculum.

- The pleasures of learning and learning how to learn: If we are trying to foster a culture of life-long learning in Australia, learning needs to be seen as valuable and pleasurable in itself. Students need to be taught how to reflect on their own processes of responding to and creating texts and on their own processes of learning. This is fundamental to the development of student learning and their understanding of themselves as consumers and creators of text and as learners.
- There is no reference to enjoyment of reading, a critical factor in encouraging students to read and develop their English skills.
- Creativity and design: Creativity is downplayed in favour of functionality; in fact, creativity is inconsistently understood in the document, and underemphasized. In the Rationale it is listed as one of the modes, “listen, read and view, speak, write and create” (p1) so implying that it is the active form of *view*. However, this meaning is not carried through the document.
- Visual language and visual literacy are underplayed. The visual needs to be valued in the description and assessment of the modes. Unless it is moved from an add-on and is integrated into the curriculum’s understandings of how we relate to texts, we will not be preparing students for living and working in the technologically advanced 21st century. This can be done by extending the modes in the Achievement Standards to include all six identified in the Rationale.
- Purposes for grammar: The insistence on grammar in the document needs to be supported by clear articulation of the ends for which grammatical structures can be used. There need to be more explicit links between instruction around language, forms, features, structures of texts and reasons for teaching these.
- ICT: Members believe that ICT skills are not closely integrated into the content and are not of a sufficiently high order. The draft curriculum does not take into account that ICT is now a key teaching strategy to engage students in the study of English. The document limits itself to a mechanical knowledge of ICT resources and doesn’t demand their use to apply and create. The language strand in particular does not adequately address the way ICTs have changed understandings of learning & students’ use of language and creation of texts in the digital age. Students must be able to competently evaluate, use and create ICT resources. Members are keen to see ICT fully integrated into the curriculum and suggest that one way to do this is to describe student engagement with texts using such terminology as “a range of texts in different modes and media”.

The seamless integration of ICT into the curriculum is another reason for Achievement Standards’ encompassing all six modes.

- Connectedness to the background and prior learning of the student is missing. Learning doesn’t seem to build on prior knowledge or experiences. This must be present because learning only occurs when it is relevant to the students and builds on prior knowledge.
- The literature content is too focused on analysis and does not allow for students to engage in personal evaluation of texts. Inexplicably, there does not seem to be any explicit reference to writing responses to literature – an oversight that simply must be rectified. Furthermore, the content of this strand is limited to 16% of the course, removing the conventional focus of the subject. In this way, the course is reduced to a “communications” course rather than an English course.

- Lack of direction regarding assessment of and for learning needs to be addressed in order to inform programming.
- Collaboration: While some may see this as a pedagogical issue, there is a strong argument for inscribing it into a curriculum which uses Speaking and Listening as a strand for assessing standards of achievement.

2. ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

14. Clear and unambiguous, ie explaining in understandable language what students are expected to learn

Members commented that the language of the achievement standards is clear and that

It is good to see the use of verbs and a conceptual base.

However, they also commented that while

The achievement standards make sense in themselves but it is difficult to see how these track back to the content.

This difficulty is exemplified in [Appendix 1](#) which attempts to map the Achievement Standards against Content Descriptors in Year 10. The problem arises because content is described in detailed dot points which do not relate to an integrated view of the subject. Members felt that because the total document lacked a coherent philosophy of the subject and learning within the discipline, the draft achievement standards could not be seen as the expected consequence of the study of English.

One group also pointed out that

the document does not provide clear direction for assessment. Without clear criteria, programming is problematic and professional judgement is limited.

15. Coherent, ie clearly articulate across year levels

Members agreed that there was coherence in the expression of achievement across the years, but questioned why the standards have been differentiated based on modes and wondered if this was an attempt at integrating the three strands. The difficulty here is that this structure

[makes] backward mapping difficult because of the lack of coherence between the achievement standards and content.

Questions about what outcomes are being achieved for which students and to what extent the statements of achievement reflect the strands. Shift away from the centrality of the student and recalls the way we taught years ago. Need for more directed focus on the line between the strands and achievements. Achievement standards should be foregrounded and strands should flow from these. Representation is not included in the modes.

They also commented that content focus on language is not reflected in the achievement standards. They asked:

How are these 'verbless' content descriptions to be assessed?

without the verbs to contextualise learning, what are teachers expected to do, and how will this become deeper or more complex for students from year to year?

When this strand is included explicitly, it seems bizarre and arbitrary, for example, "points of ellipsis"(p 25) – why is this privileged?

They believe that the use of modes as organisers for the achievement standards highlights gaps in the content descriptors as in the case of speaking:

speaking is measured yet not developed as a tool for learning,[the interpersonal] communication aspect of speaking is limited.

They also questioned why the visual modes (viewing and representing/designing) have been omitted when they are featured within the content. They also point out that this is inconsistent with the Rationale that lists six modes: listen, read and view, speak, write and create. These seem to be clear indications that the visual is to be assessed in all three sections and members suggest that the achievement standards recognise this in the designation of the modes by such terms as:

listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and representing/designing.

This will assist in ensuring that ICT is seen as integral to the English curriculum and not simply an addendum to it.

16. Sequenced appropriately, ie in an order consistent with your experience

Members recognised the difficulty of identifying distinct stages of development from year to year. The progression of standards seems clear and reflects students' increasing achievements and their cognitive development.

However, they did express concerns that the year-based division was too rigid to cater for individual needs. The comments below point to the issues raised:

The NSW curriculum, organized around stages, goes significantly further in allowing teachers to acknowledge and cater for different rates of progress.

[W]e are more in favour of a stage based system to cater for individual needs, particularly of boys maturing late.

NC year levels harder to manage than NSW stages for small schools - reduces flexibility.[as opposed to stages for example which allow programming whereby Yr 7 and 8 students can be working together in one room.]

17. Pitched appropriately, ie sufficiently challenging for students at each year level

As with the content descriptions, the student's role in his or her own learning is missing. Higher-order skills such as metacognition are absent, presumably because of the structuring of the achievement standards around modes rather than skills. Nor is there any reference to a student's growing independence in learning.

Whatever happened to students as thinkers? The NC is missing the concepts of metacognition, self-directed and group learning. The document fails to cater for the wide spectrum of student learning.

The NC places the student in a passive role, as receivers of information rather than participants [in active and purposeful language use and knowledge creation], they "learn about" but there is little reference to "learning to": students learn knowledge rather than critical thinking skills. Learning about language is not going to improve a student's ability to engage with the material in terms of critical thinking skills.

18. Please provide any other comments you would like to make about the draft achievement standards.

19. The annotated work samples help illustrate and exemplify the achievement standards

Members note that there are only 3 provided from K – 10: 1 for Yr 6 and 2 for Yr 7 and that these do not indicate anything about how well the student is achieving the standards. They questioned whether they should assume that this standard is acceptable by the end of Year 7 and commented that many English teachers expected a lot more from their students by this stage.

20. How can the work samples be improved so that they better illustrate and exemplify the achievement standards?

It would be helpful to have something like the descriptors for NSW School Certificate, so that students and teachers could gauge progress and relative achievement.

3. THE DRAFT STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

21. The organisation of the learning area(s) provides a coherent view of the key elements and features of the curriculum

While the screen layout of three columns divided into sub-headings does provide a semblance of order, this is simply a matter of layout and formatting. What the document does not achieve is a coherent view of the discipline of English or an underlying philosophy of learning. In its avoidance of “big picture” concepts and issues it privileges instead the minutiae of language and literacy. In Years 7 to 10, there are 59 Literacy CDs, 48 Language CDs and only 26 Literature CDs. Members do not know if this skewing towards the mechanics of English should be reflected in programming, with proportional time allocations in the classroom. They are concerned that this apparent imbalance weights the subject more towards a literacy or communications course.

Are we just trying to provide a utilitarian model? Surely not.

Members strongly objected to the draft curriculum’s structural incoherence and, in particular, its fracturing of the subject. Our most common response was that the curriculum read as if it had been “written by three people or groups who had never met or worked together”. Most commented that

The curriculum would be very difficult to use as a tool for programming and planning. The layout which lists the 3 strands side by side implies that there is connection across the strands when there is not. It is suggested that these connections are shown.

Above all else, however, the fracturing of the subject occurs in the strands which exist independently of each other and though both the Shaping Paper for English and the draft curriculum’s own rationale emphasise the importance of integration, there has been no attempt to integrate the components of the subject.

This atomisation of the subject is the document’s fundamental flaw from which most other problems flow. The key indication of this is the fact that the Literature and Literacy strands have their content descriptions organised around verbs: we *draw* conclusions and *reflect* on texts in Literacy, we *appreciate* and *create* in Literature, but Language just sits as a list of topics. What is the relation of this list to the activities implied in the other strands? The strongly implied pedagogy is a subject in which aspects of language are taught on one day of the week and the rest of the curriculum at other times with no sense of a coherent whole in which the various aspects of the curriculum exist and work together. Members saw this as promoting, as one group neatly put it, a ‘tick-a-box’ approach, which is likely to compromise quality teaching and learning in English:

Textbook teaching, page by page, here we come.(again)

This disunity is also caused by the division between the receptive and productive components of our engagement with texts.

Takes away the relationship between responding, composing text and context. Does not acknowledge the different roles taken on by a reader.

Reading is a creative act as much as it is a receptive and critical one. When we read we conjure up worlds and ideas yet there is no recognition of the two-sidedness of this process. Creating is separated out from reading and is constructed as an element of?/ precursor to? writing. This is not in line with current theory or actual practice.

It is interesting that the graphic at the beginning of the Organisation section of the curriculum puts “making meaning” at the centre of the subject. Unfortunately, this is not developed through the curriculum document itself. The beauty of the “making meaning” core is that it fuses knowing and doing. This would solve many problems with the curriculum that have been identified by members, particularly those involved with the learner and the processes of learning.

Moreover, as we argue below, it may be impossible to create an integrated subject in this three-strand structure in any case. This is a point we have made in earlier consultations and our concerns have been borne out by the document as integration remains an unresolved problem. This fracturing of the subject, its lack of integration, is likely to be at the expense of students’ engagement. This is made even more probable as the needs of students in particular contexts are not the driving force of teaching in the draft curriculum - the prescribed content is.

The whole should be greater than the sum of its parts.

The draft national curriculum fails to achieve this.

22. Please provide any suggestions you have for improvements to the organisation of the learning area(s).

In [Appendix 2](#) we provide a different way of conceptualising the subject based on a new synthesis of historically understood and internationally acknowledged reasons for studying English (cf. Ellis, Fox and Street, 2007). These four main purposes are mapped against the current content descriptions and achievement standards. This conceptualisation reflects current understandings of the subject against which the current content descriptions could stand. However, should this suggested re-conceptualising be seen as too far removed from the draft curriculum given the timeframe, we strongly suggest that *Literature*, broadly understood, should be the centrally organising strand in which the other strands are implicated. Making *Literature* the core will make programming easier in terms of teachers’ current practice.

Another possibility for integration could be to combine the strands under the headings ‘learn to’ and ‘learn about’. In NSW at present, skills and knowledge are divided in this way in the Years 7-10 English Syllabus. This is not in itself a unifying principle, of course – in fact it is another form of division at one level. However, the content points in the ‘learn to’ and ‘learn about’ sections of the Syllabus strongly reflect each other and it is this consciousness of having skills and knowledge reflect each other that creates an integrated curriculum. ‘Learn to’ and ‘learn about’ also bring both student and teacher into the document and provide a sense of how the curriculum aims can be achieved. If national consistency is sought, they provide a classroom framework intelligible across the country.

An alternative design, with a view to assisting teachers in differentiating the curriculum, might helpfully articulate content as minimum to desirable, perhaps in three levels: (all students) must, (some students) should, (some students) could.

23. The content descriptions together with the achievement standards provide clarity about the depth of teaching and learning required

The draft curriculum describes content to be conveyed to and understood by students, but offers no clues about the best teaching and learning practices. Ostensibly, this is to avoid engaging with the question of pedagogy, as this is apparently seen as a matter for individual teachers. However, this is a surprising direction to take, given that research has indicated that English teachers conceptualise their practice to a significant degree within the frames of reference provided by the characteristic pedagogies of historic models – or discourses – of the subject (see, for example, Peel, Patterson and Gerlach, 2000). Certainly, members identified an implied pedagogy in parts of the draft curriculum, suggesting that the issue of pedagogy cannot be avoided. This, of course, is not just a matter of curriculum history – it goes to the heart of what is required of teachers in improving learning outcomes for students. Recent Australian research (Sawyer, Brock, & Baxter, 2007) has indicated that highly effective English teaching is characterised by a ‘principled eclecticism’ that consciously draws

on the pedagogies made available to teachers by historic understandings of the subject. On the evidence of the research base for how English teachers understand their practice and subject, it would seem impossible for a truly “world class” curriculum to not engage in a detailed and sustained way with English subject models. Certainly, one that does not do so is not providing the sort of guidance that teachers will find immediately recognisable and most helpful.

For example, the verbs used to describe student experiences in the achievement standards are largely of the lower-order ‘describe’, ‘know’, ‘recognise’ and ‘understand’ variety. What is missing, but is essential for effective teaching and learning, is a comprehensive range of hierarchical driver verbs to show what different achievement levels from year to year should look like. Such verbs can be derived from consideration of the characteristic pedagogies of the different subject models.

The disconnection between content and classroom practice is particularly evident in the Language strand, where there are no verbs to indicate how students might be expected to apply, synthesise or evaluate the knowledge imparted to them. Without a verb it is difficult for teachers to know how much attention and time to give each dot point: for example, if ‘strength of feelings ... can be adjusted through choice of vocabulary ...’ (Year 7 Language 2) it would appear to be enough to simply tell students this, or perhaps just give them a few examples. Without directions on what students should actually do with the content in the Language strand, is it reasonable just to pre-test for knowledge and then move on?

In some respects the NC runs contrary to sound pedagogical practice. Especially in relating/connecting learning to student experience. This is profound in the Language strand. A narrower understanding of pedagogy seems evident. Language strand promotes transmission.

Members expressed concern about the restrictive nature of the implied pedagogy they identify in the draft curriculum and the lack of any sense of teachers and students in the document. Their comments include:

The NC devalues the role of the teacher and implies that anybody could teach English. Teachers will find it hard to make judgements and negotiations about teaching and learning programs, as the NC lacks diversity and focuses predominantly on lower-level cognitive skills.

This curriculum focuses on teachers’ delivery of a program, rather than how teachers nurture and challenge the intellectual growth, development, enjoyment and skills of their students.

Does this document lead to a more teacher-centred pedagogy? The richness of possibilities for pedagogy seems to be present in the Rationale and Aims, less so in the Content Descriptions.

This limits an educational experience for the teacher and students. This document reflects teachers’ knowledge of the content of English, however, it does not reflect our knowledge of pedagogy and how individuals learn and the various ways teachers teach to meet these differing needs.

25. The Rationale and Aims of the learning area(s) provide a clear foundation and direction for the curriculum.

The Rationale of the *Australian Curriculum: English* is a strange beast. As its head is the tripartite structure of language, literature and literacy defined as ‘the core’, its body describes a ‘nation-building’ enterprise and as its tail is the learner and the learning. It is only at the very end of the rationale that the key reason for students undertaking the study of English is addressed: that is for students to learn about themselves and the world through their active engagement with texts.

The Rationale tends to describe the draft curriculum rather than offering a justification for its place in a curriculum for Australian students or indeed why the document that follows takes the form that it does. There seems to be an expectation that the tripartite structure is a given

and that it is uncontested and that the study of English can be approached through these three strands. The rationale fails in its primary purpose viz. to provide convincing reasons for and explain principles behind the decisions taken to develop the document in this form.

Members expressed concerns about English being identified as a “service subject” for other curriculum areas. While the language and literacy strands may be helpful in supporting the literacy of other disciplines, the first statement of purpose in the rationale focuses on the value of English to *other* subjects in its “foundation for study across all curriculum areas”(p1). Where is the statement of value of English in itself? In NSW, English is seen as the way students come to understand themselves and their world through texts. This is critical to students’ capacity to function in and contribute to society. These purposes are surely more important than the discipline’s service to other subjects.

The terms and language used in the Rationale are not followed up in the content descriptions. In particular, the aspects of the affective domain referred to in the Aims (‘develop interest and skill in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts [and] an informed appreciation of literature’) are largely absent from the curriculum itself.

The definition of language in the description of the Content Strands is very restrictive. Where it focuses on aspects of language, it confines itself to spelling, punctuation and grammar (“They learn about patterns of English usage and grammar at the levels of the word, the sentence and the extended text, and they learn the connections between these levels. They learn about spelling and the purposes of punctuation”). The language which teachers deal with in classrooms every day is far more complex than this: it is students’ means for communicating and understanding themselves, others, the world and for learning. Furthermore, the complexities of language in film, media, literature and the multimodal are not captured by a simple concern with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

26. The following general capabilities are clearly evident in the content descriptions and achievement standards

These issues have been incorporated into other areas of the ETA response

27 Literacy

28 Numeracy

29 Information and communication technologies

30 Thinking skills

31 Creativity

32 Self-management

33 Teamwork

34 Intercultural understanding

35 Ethical behaviour

36 Social competence

37 Please provide any further comments you would like to make on the incorporation of general capabilities into the Australian Curriculum.

38 Indigenous history and culture

39 A commitment to sustainability

40 Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia

Members were rather taken aback at why Australia's engagement with Asia needs to be isolated at all in an English curriculum as they see a geographical description as inappropriate to the practice of the discipline.

This is clearly a trade "engagement", above all else, and in my view such an "engagement" belongs in a social studies curriculum.

Instead, they would rather see subject English considering the nature of students
The Asian population of my school is about one per cent, compared to the Pacific Islander/NZ population of about 35%. That does not mean I would not teach texts that include Asians...it means I would also like to teach texts from all other countries with which Australia (should it not read "Australians"?) is "engaged" beyond trade agreements and commercial interests.

or factors significant to the development of English as defining categories

Students learn about cultural differences underpinning ... societies because we still live in ..[the] world. Any teaching of the "history" of English should not be taught without the "rise" of English and its connection to colonisation, publishing and dominant centres and margins of the language. Therefore, it is not only Australia's engagement with Asia that needs to be addressed, but Australia's engagement with "world literatures in English".

Other members questioned what might be considered texts that reflect Australian engagement with Asia. Are these Asian texts translated into English? Asian texts written in English? Texts by Australians of Asian heritage? In all case, the terms "world literature" or "Australian literature" are more appropriate.

41 Please provide any further comments you would like to make on the incorporation of the cross curriculum dimensions into the Australian Curriculum.

Digital layout:

42. The Australian Curriculum consultation website is easy to navigate.

The web site offers some useful ways of navigating the curriculum. The searches through the box at the top of the screen allows a reader to track certain key words and ideas through the document and the filters may be helpful in preparing aspects of programming.

Difficulties and irritations lie in the fact that one

- needs to log in each time one wants to work with the document on the screen.
- Cannot run a normal word search (Cntrl F)

43. All parts of the draft Australian Curriculum can be easily accessed on the website.

44. How can the layout of the Australian Curriculum consultation website be improved to enable easier access and navigation?

The content descriptors and elaborations are not differentiated by year so that in scrolling down one easily loses which year one is reading. This could be corrected by either

- a navigation bar down the side identifying which year is appearing on the screen or
- incorporating the year more frequently in the text of the curriculum.

4. THE DRAFT K—10 AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

45. Sets challenging yet realistic standards

Members were not able or willing to support this claim. The reasons for this have been dealt with in other areas of the response notably questions: 46, 47 and [Appendix 3](#).

46. Enables the pursuit of in-depth teaching and learning

Respondents recognised a challenge for the curriculum writers in balancing the need for detailed and unambiguous content prescriptions with a significant element of cognitive challenge and the capacity for teachers to develop meaningful and engaging activities that allow students to apply their learning in 'real world' contexts. This was seen as a particular challenge for the language strand prescriptions, given the focus found here on discrete grammatical items.

Overwhelmingly, respondents were of a mind that this challenge has not been adequately met in the draft curriculum. A recurrent theme in responses was that the

Omission of higher order thinking skills does not cater for more capable students.

One group, for example, stated that

You need to look deeply into the document to find any reference to higher order thinking and applications of knowledge, including synthesis. If they are written in the Rationale and Organisation sections, they do not appear enough in the draft curriculum.

This evident lack was typically attributed to the language strand:

Emphasis on grammar leaves the teacher less scope/time to deal with higher-order aspects.

Even those respondents – one group - who indicated that they found the specificity of the language strand helpful, suggested that

we like the fact that it is specific, but it is overly prescriptive. Comes back to the over emphasis on the lower order thinking skills.

The lower-order nature of the draft Australian Curriculum, in comparison to the current NSW syllabus, is highlighted in [Appendix 3](#), which maps both curriculums against Bloom's taxonomy.

A strong concern of respondents was the assessment implications of what they perceive to be a curriculum that is tending towards lower order cognition and skills application. One response captured a common sentiment in a sustained manner:

The national curriculum implies that the teacher is the source of all knowledge; there is nothing about students 'learning to learn', surely a key indicator of a 21st century curriculum; the draft curriculum content contradicts the pedagogical aims of the Rationale; the implied pedagogical basis appears to be from the mid-20th century, and is best suited to an educational system delivering content for a high-stakes testing regime.

Other respondents identified what they saw as a narrowing of the subject, which potentially compromises the depth of student learning in English. They suggested that key historical elements of the subject are missing from the draft curriculum. These elements have seen a strong focus in the past on ethics, dialogue and ways of knowing, deepening students' understandings of the self, others and the experience of being in the world, and the role of language and literature in all of this. Some group responses made this argument in a most cogent manner:

the 'teacher is expert' philosophy of the draft curriculum means it is content driven, does not promote collaborative approaches with students in the classroom. Relational learning is lost, the curriculum doesn't acknowledge the role of empathy, and the links between ethics and pedagogy are not well defined.

What is going to be relevant in 2030? Surely values are going to be important as time goes on. With the internet and availability of technology,... [students] are exposed to so much. Surely they will need discernment. If we are really going to build a nation, we need to consider values in some depth. These are not as easy to measure as grammar and other skills but they are crucial.

Another constant theme, most probably stemming from members employed by the NSW Department of Education and Training, is the lack of a clear articulation between the draft curriculum and research in the area of quality teaching and productive pedagogies. Many responses stated that the draft curriculum does not compare favourably to the NSW DET Quality Teaching Framework, which draws on a research evidence base to promote in-depth teaching and learning. Responses of this nature emphasised such weaknesses in the draft curriculum as

deep knowledge is glossed over, high achievers are compromised

and

no metacognition for deep learning. Not enough valuing of student's background and connectedness.

Many respondents identified the capacity of any curriculum to provide for individualised instruction as being a defining element of in-depth teaching and learning. The structure and organization of the draft Australian curriculum and the prescriptive nature of its content were viewed as being impediments to individualized instruction:

the national curriculum implies homogeneous cohorts of students and devalues the roles of peer interaction. It doesn't account for online learning.

A significant related issue here was the perception that the draft curriculum does not adequately conceptualise the needs of students, and the necessity for individualized learning is therefore lost as a curriculum principle:

This curriculum seems to serve teachers' delivery of content rather than the intellectual growth, development, enjoyment and skills of students.

One group response took up this theme in a developed manner:

Such a prescriptive syllabus also implies that assessment of this content will be simplistic and narrow. The content does not account for the richness and diversity of the learning experience for both students and staff. Individual differences (e.g. GAT, ESL etc) and learning styles and differing school contexts are less able to be accounted for. This document also devalues the role of teacher judgement and professionalism, as teachers are unable to negotiate individual learning programs according to particular circumstances.

Teachers are clearly indicating here that the draft curriculum has not realised the ambitions of the Shape paper:

the draft doesn't exemplify statements in the Shape paper about diversity.

An organizing structure, such as outcomes, was seen as necessary to rectify these identified weaknesses in the draft curriculum:

The curriculum, with its prescribed content rather than outcomes, is not flexible enough to readily allow an individualized focus. The sense of development that is supposed to be there is not clear from year to year; certainly, the sense of development is not captured in the Language strand. Without the verbs to contextualise learning, what are teachers expected to do, and how will this become deeper or more complex for students from year to year? The national curriculum is too prescriptive and narrow. It lacks the breadth and flexibility necessary to tailor teaching to the learning needs of individual students: it is both limiting and inhibiting.

A number of responses defined 'in-depth teaching and learning' as being necessarily implicated in a recursive understanding of teaching and learning in English. These responses did not see a recursive structure in the draft Australian Curriculum:

Students seem to be absent from this document. Is it mechanics as an ends rather than a means? The NSW syllabus is more recursive in its approach and this reflects the way in which students learn. The national curriculum seems not to return to skills and concepts, exploring them in new ways and at a deeper level. Does the national curriculum lead to an attitude of learning that can be summed up as 'you've learnt it once, move on!'?

47. Takes into account available evidence about the nature of the learner

Members were very clear about the fact that the draft curriculum does not seem to take into account available evidence about the nature of the learner. Indeed there is almost no acknowledgement of a learner at all. The document is focussed on content and constructs the learner as passive "Students will be taught..."

This is teacher focussed curriculum that puts national political goals first

Prescribes a teacher-centred learning and teaching approach. Does not allow for student negotiation and even teachers are very prescribed to with regard to curriculum content. Has potential to be a launching pad for the delivery of basic skills related to language function across the nation.

Students treated as 'products' of a business.

They commented that the draft curriculum fails to offer opportunities for students to attain higher order thinking skills and creativity and completely ignores the importance of metacognition in supporting students' understanding of their own processes of reading and writing. One comment that is typical of members' responses to the document is:

The student is not centre of curriculum, as reflection & judgement are underplayed (certainly not as evident as in NSW); there is no sense of the student as a life long learner

The aims of the Shape Paper are not adequately addressed in the draft NC. In fact, the aims stated in the shaping paper are completely different to the aims of the draft NC, neither are they represented in the rationale or within the content of draft NC. For example: the aim "develop English for lifelong enjoyment and learning" - these terms are not mentioned anywhere within the document and the document does not reflect the spirit of this statement.

Members see a lack of a philosophical basis for the nature of the subject and the nature of the learner.

The assumption is that Garth Boomer was never born. Appears to ignore research findings from the last 30 years and reflects educational trends of the early 20th Century.

No history of the document is provided. It appears atheoretical. No academic analysis of the underpinning research and assumptions is provided. It appears rushed and fragmented, runs against Quality Teaching model. Providing supporting theory would be beneficial.

They believe that the draft
need[s] to put literature (understood as texts and textuality) at core, and articulate to a broader research base.

They also commented that

The assumptions made about grammatical knowledge and improved communications are highly questionable: the document creates a sense, in leading with Language, that there is a necessary and inevitable relationship, which simply has no reputable basis in research.

NSW teachers are used to teaching language for meaningful purposes, in an integrated way, & in context. Research by Crystal and many others suggests that this is the only way to effectively teach Language, grammar in particular.

The preponderance of Language content implies transmission teaching strategies, which are hardly engaging for students. It does not coherently depict a vision of learning and the learner in English, in keeping with decades of research and current practice. It does not pay due heed to the ways students are implicated in language and textual-cultural practices outside of school.

Many also commented that quality teaching and productive pedagogies are not addressed and saw the document as the

deprofessionalising of teachers & erosion of valuing judgement (due to prescriptive nature, partic. language)

This document is not based on an inherent philosophy of teaching English.

48. Takes into account the needs of all students

The responses to the ETA were overwhelming in their consensus that the draft English National Curriculum does not adequately cater for the needs of all students. Members uniformly criticised the radical shift from a curriculum where the student as learner is central, to one that is a prescriptive, regimented content-based curriculum which implies a teacher-centred pedagogy and student as passive learner. The prescriptive nature of the draft, particularly the predominance of prescribed lower order literacy and language content descriptions, makes it difficult for teachers to be flexible in delivering the content in a way that both engages their students and meets their diverse needs. Despite some recognition of the needs of students and their diverse backgrounds in the General Capabilities section, this is almost entirely absent from the course content descriptions.

The draft does not acknowledge the diversity of student needs: it does not identify or provide for such groups as ESL students, Life Skills students, Gifted and Talented students and students with other special needs. The lack of understanding of the recursive nature of English teaching and student learning will disadvantage students who need reinforcement and remediation of their skills.

There is mention in the draft of the valuing of different cultural perspectives, specifically mentioning the heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Impact of English as a Language in Asia and Asian texts. But as one member said:

Insisting on Asian and ATSI texts in every year is not the same thing as catering for diversity. There is no indication in the curriculum about how it could be differentiated to cater for the wide range of learning styles, abilities and cultural background

Members also commented that

side-lining of the visual element is disempowering for many students

[the] overwhelming focus on the written word and the teacher is the disseminator of information. Creativity, exploration and discussion are made peripheral to the core business of punctuation, spelling and grammar. Boys, especially, [will find this alienating].

Independent learning and negotiated curriculum provides opportunity for tailoring the teaching and learning activities to students' needs, backgrounds and interests. It also caters for different student learning styles. The lack of emphasis on metacognition and the prescriptive nature of the draft limit the opportunity for independent learning.

There is little in the draft curriculum that respondents felt would excite teachers or students. In particular, students entering school from backgrounds which do not highly value educational achievement may well be alienated by the dry, prescriptive nature of the draft curriculum, a curriculum which does not seem to connect to their background and culture and the world of the 21st century in which they live. The inclusion of ICT in the curriculum is superficial and restricts the use of it to engage students and does not acknowledge their immersion in ICT outside of the classroom.

The draft lacks specific mention of the love of literature or of pleasure and joy being derived from reading and composing, and as such does not seem to seek to engender this in students.

Is there room in this document to excite and enthuse students about English? Is there a passion for literature?

The NSW English Syllabus 7-10 encourages wide reading and composing of texts for pleasure but there is no sense of enjoyment stated or implied in the Draft Australian English Curriculum.

The affective domain is largely absent from the NC.

The word 'appreciate' seems too clinical and ambiguous to fulfil this aim.

49. Enables teachers to cater for developmental diversity

This has been addressed in other areas particularly questions:4, 46 and 48

50. The draft curriculum is not overcrowded

Members consider that the draft *Australian Curriculum: English* is indeed overcrowded despite the fact that it has less content than the NSW syllabus. The proliferation of dot points under the three separate headings Language, Literature and Literacy, results in a focus on minutiae at the expense of higher order understandings. There is no overarching purpose for inclusion of the content details against which teachers can make professional judgements. There is no prioritising of items into higher and lower order so that they can make decisions about what is most important for their students. The dis-integration of English into three

separate strands and dispersed dot points militates against an understanding of English as a discipline.

Members also recognise that the draft curriculum is in danger of becoming practically unmanageable. This would be the case if it is read as presented - a series of discrete elements to be taught. An effective and usable English syllabus constructs a sequence of learning activities and recursively develops a relatively small set of skills and processes in ever-increasing depth, complexity and sophistication. Simply stating that "it should be noted that many aspects of the English curriculum are recursive" in the Organisation section of the document (p4) evades the primary responsibility of curriculum development ie ensuring a workable course of study. The draft curriculum on the other hand, sets out the content to be covered in each year without specifying the ways in which students can build on prior learning and practise, revise and refine skills. The draft curriculum does not indicate what content, skills and processes should be followed through. There is concern, therefore, that incorporating the necessary revision, practice and refinement of prior learning will subsequently be undertaken on a largely ad hoc, as opposed to strategic, basis because of the structural deficiencies of the draft curriculum.

Despite all the detail in the document, the draft curriculum does not address significant areas of the NSW syllabus, all of which are important for the development of post-school skills and reflect "a futures orientation" (Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English p.4): critical thinking and problem-solving; independent, student-centred learning; using ICT as an everyday tool for the production of a range of texts, including multi-media texts; the ethical use of ICT; collaborative learning; negotiating tasks and working towards outcomes; learning how to learn; reflecting on one's own learning.

These absences led members to fear the "dumbing down" of the subject through a narrowing of the nature of the discipline. Given the concrete specificity of many the content descriptors, there is also concern that they could easily be treated perfunctorily.

You could pre-test & then move on. However, surely the fact that this is so easy is because the task is so quantitative... Tasks which centre of the higher end of Blooms are generally open ended.

Loses process of English: learn about, learn to. There is a danger of teaching the content, and losing focus on the skills associated with the process of learning. Supports teaching to the test.

Concern is that teachers will teach to tests, external exams rather than catering to students' needs.

51. Provides coherence and continuity across the stages of schooling

The arbitrary and forced nature of content allocation, highlighted elsewhere in this response, as well as the weak relationship between achievement standards and the curriculum mean that members were unable or unwilling to endorse this description of the draft curriculum.

52. Reflects a world class curriculum

No. The membership was quite clear that the National Curriculum English does not reflect a world class curriculum nor does it adequately prepare students for living and working in the 21st century as it does not embody notions of change, flexibility, problem solving.

This curriculum is apologetic, a backward-looking rehash of what was done (and hated by students) in the 60s and 70s.

The nature of the prescriptions in this document

focus on lower order cognitive skills and neglect the development of metacognition and higher order thinking skills. This document is dominated by literacy skills and there is an apparent loss on the focus on literature.

If 'world class' is to be read as winning the PISA race, there are also problems, because PISA tests critical literacy and the NC promotes lower-order skills. Students need to be actively brought into critical engagement with texts.

The role of the learner is not sufficiently respected

higher order thinking is inadequately dealt with, metacognition is not sufficiently addressed and assumes students are passive and therefore not collaborative learners, does not address the problematic and complex nature of knowledge.

and it

[a]ppears to be modelling the UK system of which aspects ...appear not to be working. This does not develop the higher order thinking and conceptualisation skills required for future tertiary education.

A key problem they identify is that the curriculum's three strands seem to defy integration. If, as the rationale states, these three are "interrelated areas", the possibilities and processes for teaching them in an integrated way should be fairly evident to assist programming. As it is, members note that

There's no way of reading the document across the 3 strands, therefore there is no clear way of integration.

It is interesting that the graphic at the beginning of the Organisation section of the curriculum puts "making meaning" at the centre of the subject but this is not developed in the curriculum document itself. The beauty of the "making meaning" core is that it fuses knowing and doing. This would solve many problems with the curriculum that have been identified by members, particularly those involved with the learner and the processes of learning. Instead there are repeated statements about Language, Literature and Literacy being "the core" of English.

The document's itemized content points are reductive of the holistic, non-quantifiable or immeasurable aspects of the experience of reading and responding - it effectively reduces the process to meeting dot points. One would expect that for a world class curriculum

the whole should be greater than the sum of its parts. The NC does not adequately recognise this, and instead makes the dot point parts greater than the whole.

Members wanted to see a coherent statement of what students are to learn year by year and one that reflects the theoretical understandings of the discipline of English and those that inform the teaching and learning experiences outlined in the curriculum. There was a view that

outcomes are better than the content descriptors in conveying the range of concepts and content to be covered, and the depth and complexity required, mainly because the achievement outcomes refer to students as participants in the educational process.

This statement reflects another main issue – that the curriculum is so content focussed that it does not allow for the flexibility needed to address the diversity of students. In fact the student is constructed as a passive receptor of content, with little control or understanding of his or her own learning and learning processes. This attitude to education is out of step with current understandings of learning theory. As members commented

The overriding sense is the document is about transmission of content and that knowledge is fixed and finite.

Limits creative pedagogical practices which are vital in maintaining student engagement and ensuring student and teacher enjoyment in the study of English. The prescriptive content lends itself to textbook teaching.

It appears very prescriptive. I am also concerned that it appears to have a behaviourist underpinning, which emphasises separate skill acquisition rather than a more holistic approach to the subject.

The prescriptive nature of the content does not appear to allow tailoring of curriculum to different students - all are working to understand and master the same things at the same time. There is not a sense that students' will make progress across different periods of time.

Such a prescriptive syllabus also implies that assessment of this content will be simplistic and narrow. The content does not account for the richness and diversity of the learning experience for both students and staff. Individual differences (e.g. GAT, ESL etc) and learning styles, and differing school contexts are less able to be accounted for.

The needs of students in all their diversity are not allowed for, as a result of the content prescriptions. These put content dot points ahead of students as the starting place for planning and programming. Knowledge is reified ahead of the growth and development of the people, in all their diversity, sitting in front of the teacher.

In terms of a curriculum for the 21st century, the draft Australian Curriculum: English falls short of expectations in its inscription of ICT. Technology is seen as an addendum rather than integral to processes of responding to and creating texts.

ICT needs to be more explicit in terms of development of ideas, ethics and research skills. Downplays critical thinking of the students in terms of sites visited etc., does not embody notions of 21st notions of change, flexibility, problem solving,

ICT use is low-level - word-processing; lack of emphasis on creating multi-media texts - web pages, movies (again, boys may be disengaged); lack of skills needed for effective adult workplace participation

ICT is laughable - where is creating in multi-modal forms. ICT is little more than basic recording of information. Engagement with multimodal texts and different narrative technologies provide intellectual opportunities we must value

This document also devalues the role of teacher judgement and professionalism, as teachers are unable to negotiate individual learning programs according to particular circumstances. The deleterious consequences of the limited nature of the bibliography for the Shape Paper, including some serious 'gaps' in its synthesis of the research base, are evident in the way that draft curriculum does not pay due regard for the history of the subject, while also failing to adequately prepare students for the future.

53. Please provide any further comments you have on the draft Australian Curriculum (eg strengths, priority areas for improvement).

Members expressed disappointment that

The document does not represent the Shape Paper, which includes focus on Quality Teaching, individual student achievement, flexibility and choice for teachers, equity and opportunities for students. These are not addressed within the individual Content Descriptors contained in the NC. Please note, a KEY CONCERN is that this curriculum seems to be designed to ensure that English will become a service subject for other KLAs, in terms of literacy.

The draft National Curriculum: English

does not reflect the vision of [the Shape Paper], and instead narrows the teaching and learning of English to a set of utilitarian skills, particularly in the language strand.

A final note of optimism:

Hopefully it is a first draft and that consultation will see a significant shift in the shape of the document. It is well intended and may... [yet] be useful for current teachers of English.

APPENDIX 1

The (lack of) relationship between the achievement standards, the modes and content in the example of Year 10

Content coding: Language, Literature, Literacy

Language Mode	Achievement*	Content
Listening & Speaking	1.1 interact appropriately with audiences in a range of formal and informal contexts	
	1.2 make effective use of agreed protocols to engage in discussions to build on others' ideas, solve problems, justify opinions and develop arguments	12. Use protocols in formal presentations and discussions to enhance meaning
Reading	1.3 engage in informed discussions of texts with others in varied contexts	1. Reflect on and discuss with informed appreciation and discernment, an increasing personal repertoire of preferred authors and literary texts
Writing	1.4 develop complex ideas and explore social issues of global and local concern	1. A brief history of how aspects of spoken and written English have evolved 2. Explore and discuss concepts of cultural and literary tradition in response to literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts 7. Create texts that create relationships between ideas using appropriate grammar and punctuation that develop abstract concepts, generalise about and question human experience, and persuade others to action
	1.5 explore and analyse a range of attitudes, values and perspectives	

Language Mode	Achievement	Content
Listening & Speaking	2.1 understand strategies speakers use to respond to and influence audience expectations	2. Selection and patterning of language can involve or distance the audience by creating a sense of affinity, empathy, inclusion, exclusion or threat
	2.2 clearly communicate complex ideas and arguments in sustained, coherent and well-structured presentations to different audiences, in familiar and public situations.	
	2.3 make effective use of a variety of features of spoken language, including tone, pace, pitch, pause and volume to enhance meaning.	
Reading	2.4 Reflect on issues and ideas from texts and explore these in their own compositions	
Writing	2.5 students create a wide range of sustained written and multimodal texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes	5. Vocabulary for use in more academic contexts
		9. Create sustained literary texts selecting and adapting appropriate language structures and features to meet the purpose, context and intended audience
		6. Use vocabulary selectively that is most appropriate to engage and inform the audience
		9. Represent people, places, events, things and concepts by selectively making choices about the inclusion, exclusion or emphasis of

		certain aspects of subject matter and language
	2.6 construct logical arguments	
	2.7 selectively choose details and subject matter to support a point of view, imaginative idea or to persuade others to action	3. Different perspectives can be introduced by citing the words and views of others
	2.8 logically sequence and organise content to manage the flow of information and ideas in longer texts	9. How to manage the flow of information in longer texts
	2.9 write sustained texts, using a variety of sentence structures for effect and using active or passive voice as appropriate	6. A rich repertoire of grammatical resources allows for the expansion of higher order thinking 7. Subtlety of meaning is enhanced through the careful choice of verbs
	2.10 use appropriate punctuation when writing complex sentences and complex texts for formal purposes, including conventions of referencing	8. How to manage the expression of complex ideas in sentences 11. Conventions of quoting others and referencing sources when writing complex texts for formal purposes
	2.11 plan, draft edit, proofread and revise for accuracy, clarity and consistency of style.	10. Use increased familiarity with text types, structures, styles and editing techniques to plan, rehearse, draft, edit and proofread for accuracy, clarity and consistency of style

Language Mode	Achievement	Content
Listening & Speaking	3.1 students listen attentively to spoken texts dealing with challenging ideas and issues, identifying values, attitudes and assumptions conveyed in these texts	12. Listen to spoken texts dealing with challenging ideas and issues and identify values, attitudes and assumptions conveyed
	3.2 selectively use strategies to comprehend and interpret oral presentations in different contexts	
Reading	3.3 students read, view, navigate and respond to a wide range of informative, persuasive and imaginative texts and recognise the multiple purposes for which texts are created	
	3.4 explore and evaluate the personal, social, cultural and political issues presented in these texts.	8. Create logical arguments that explore and analyse the attitudes and values revealed in literary texts
	3.5 offer reasoned explanations of how the language choices in different texts influence the responses of audiences in different ways	3. Appreciate how a range of language devices, including rhetorical questions, oxymorons, metonymy and satire, are used to express ideas and to engage an audience 4. Analyse and explain, using appropriate metalanguage, how the language of literary texts influences audience response in different ways and in different contexts 6. Analyse how texts evoke audience empathy or antipathy with the characters, situations and viewpoints and also how audiences are positioned to respond 1. Analyse and evaluate how the selection of subject matter and language has been influenced by purposes and likely audiences
	3.6 students make valid inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas and information in a wide range of texts.	4. Opinions and attitudes are often expressed indirectly and need to be interpreted in the context of the surrounding text 2. Use all elements in a text to locate and discriminate between synonymous pieces of information 3. Make inferences including inferring an intended relationship or category 5. Analyse embedded perspectives in a text to identify the author's beliefs, assumptions and motives

	3.7 compare and contrast typical features and key ideas in particular texts, and synthesise information from various sources to reach considered conclusions	5. Compare the language features and structures of literary texts which were created in different contexts or modes 7. Examine why certain literary texts are valued by certain audiences and develop ideas about how to appraise the aesthetic features, personal significance and value of literary texts 4. Compare and contrast information within and between texts, identifying and evaluating supporting evidence and drawing conclusions 8. Select subject matter from multiple sources and perspectives to create original texts using appropriate grammar and punctuation
Writing		

Language Mode	Achievement	Content
Listening & Speaking	4.1 understand and use well-designed and nuanced structures and features of language in responding to and presenting spoken and multimodal texts	10. Construction of multimodal and digital texts involves knowledge of visual grammar
Reading	4.2 undertake independent research using well-developed research skills and resources, including libraries, websites, search engines and databases.	11. Undertake independent research using libraries, media sources and online resources
Writing	4.3 literary and persuasive texts as starting points for writing, transforming and adapting texts for different contexts and audiences	

APPENDIX 2

Conceptualising English (Yrs 7-10) based on a new synthesis of historically understood and internationally acknowledged reasons for studying English (cf. Ellis, Fox and Street, 2007).

Year 7 Curriculum

Content coding: [Language](#), [Literature](#), [Literacy](#)

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
1. Developing the self, values and social relationships	Listening & Speaking	1.1 listen attentively to spoken and multimodal texts in order to identify key information and ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen carefully, ask relevant questions and present an accurate summary of what has been heard Discuss aspects of texts, such as their aesthetic and social value, using relevant and appropriate metalanguage
		1.2 ask relevant questions and present accurate summaries of what has been heard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use strategies such as planning and rehearsing when preparing to make a spoken presentation
	Reading	1.3 read, view, navigate and respond to imaginative, informative and persuasive texts drawn from a range of contexts, and that cover topics of personal, social and cultural significance.	
	Writing	1.4 create well-structured and sequenced written and multimodal texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use personal knowledge, life experience and literary texts as a starting point for creating imaginative texts in a range of literary forms
		1.5 create imaginative texts and present points of view that sustain meaning, reasoning and structure	

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
2. Developing productive and artful communication	Listening & Speaking	2.1 They create coherent spoken texts for specific purposes and audiences, and for informal and formal contexts.	
		2.2 They examine verbal and non-verbal communication in digital texts and consider how these elements convey meaning and influence audience response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various grammatical, visual, and non-verbal linguistic resources can be used to introduce an opposing argument or point of view
		2.3 They use appropriate protocols when participating in discussions, challenging opposing views, clarifying information and collaborating with others in developing group presentations.	
	Reading	2.4 They compare structural and language features of texts and explain how authors influence readers and viewers by making strategic language choices including vocabulary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciate how authors use a range of devices including puns, idiomatic expressions, innuendo and parody to express ideas and develop humour in literary texts Associate particular structures and language patterns with particular literary text types Strength of feelings, opinions and judgments can be adjusted through choice of vocabulary (including adjectives and adverbs) and images
	Writing	2.5 select relevant content to support points of view and interpretations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create written, spoken and multimodal texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes that contain vocabulary to show feelings and opinions, a variety of clause structures

			supported by appropriate punctuation to sustain meaning, reasoning and structure
		2.6 guide readers through their texts using introductions, topic sentences in paragraphs, modality, verb groups and clauses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of modality changes the degree of possibility or obligation ▪ Verb groups and clauses represent a variety of processes: action, saying, sensing (thinking, feeling, perceiving), relating and existing ▪ Different kinds of connections between ideas and information can be made by using conjunctions to combine clauses ▪ Texts move through particular stages to achieve their purpose ▪ Features of texts that guide readers such as text openers, paragraph openers and sentence openers
		2.7 choose vocabulary precisely to express and develop ideas and create interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build vocabulary of increasing precision and technicality, including metalinguistic vocabulary, and checking for understanding by using online and print dictionaries and thesauruses and digital databases ▪ How vocabulary choices enable greater precision, technicality and interest ▪ Understanding spelling rules including origins, word endings, Greek and Latin roots, base words, suffixes, prefixes, spelling patterns and generalisations
		2.8 use a range of sentence level and clause level punctuation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose of punctuation including using speech marks for direct speech, brackets to enclose extra information and commas to mark clauses
		2.9 plan, draft, edit and proofread for appropriateness and accuracy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan, draft, edit and proofread for accuracy using organising strategies such as focus questions and research notes ▪ Consolidate a handwriting style that is automatic and legible under conditions when sustained writing is required and use word processing software and select functions for communicating and creating

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
3. Promoting engagement and developing insightful response	Listening & Speaking	3.1 interact with others with increasing confidence to report information, discuss ideas and issues and interpret differing perspectives.	
		3.2 explain how language can function to create imaginative worlds, describe personal experiences and explain social issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People and things (both concrete and abstract) can be represented with precision through the use of noun phrases of increasing length and complexity
	Reading	3.3 identify the main ideas of texts, make inferences about characters, settings, events and issues, drawing on textual evidence to support their judgments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrieve information explicitly stated in texts by locating and connecting relevant information across sentences, across paragraphs and between the text and images Identify likely purposes and audiences of written, spoken and multimodal texts Make inferences including inferring meanings and messages using evidence from interrelated parts of the text Evaluate how well the purpose of the text is met and the accuracy of content, citing information from the text to support point of view
		3.4 They identify combinations of written, visual and auditory elements in digital texts, and explain how these elements contribute to meaning and influence their personal responses.	
		interpret and integrate information and ideas in texts, including various viewpoints about human experience and diverse cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise the richness of other cultures, making connections and looking for commonality between the cultural contexts in their world and the cultural contexts represented in literary texts Interpret and analyse texts critically for different perspectives including identifying how aspects of subject matter and particular language choices contribute to the representation of characters, places and events Impact of English as a language in Asia
		3.6 draw conclusions about main ideas, concepts and arguments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw conclusions about main ideas, concepts and arguments
	Writing	3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select and organise subject matter and express a point of view drawing on personal knowledge, experiences, thoughts and feelings and the subject matter of texts they have listened to, read and viewed Select aspects of subject matter and particular language to represent people, places events and things in ways that appeal to certain groups or audiences Resources for creating cohesive texts including identifying reference items, the use of substitution and ellipsis, relationships between vocabulary items, and the role of text connectives

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
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4. Developing, applying and transforming learning for new communicative contexts and problems	Listening & Speaking	4.1 They plan, revise and rehearse oral presentations for accuracy and clarity.	
	Reading	4.2 They collect evidence from a range of sources including books, websites, search engines and databases to inform research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect evidence from a variety of sources including libraries, websites, databases and search engines
	Writing	4.1 use design and editing software and equipment to create particular effects in texts for a range of purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiment with particular literary elements and devices drawn from literary texts they have listened to, read, and viewed when creating fiction and non-literary texts Build a repertoire of ICT resources including use of design and editing software and equipment for creating specific texts for a range of purposes and intended effects
		4.2 experiment with the use of points of ellipsis for effect and use basic referencing conventions when presenting research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose of punctuation including using speech marks for direct speech, brackets to enclose extra information and commas to mark clauses

Year 8 Curriculum

Content coding: Language, Literature, Literacy

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
1. Developing the self, values and social relationships	Listening & Speaking	1.1 Students use language effectively to express and develop ideas, to create identities and to position themselves and others as speakers and listeners and to engage audiences.	1. Languages are constantly evolving due to social, cultural and geographic factors, movements of people and technological innovation
		1.2 Students interact with others confidently to report information, discuss ideas and opinions, debate issues and evaluate differing perspectives.	2. Language can function to create identities and to position oneself and others
		1.3 Students use appropriate strategies and protocols for participating in discussions and negotiations, and for collaborating with others in group presentations.	3. Language can move from bare assertions to statements that take account of other perspectives and possibilities
	Reading	1.4 Students read, view, navigate and respond to imaginative, informative and persuasive texts covering topics and issues of personal, social and cultural significance and that include differing viewpoints about human experience.	3. Recognise, explain and value differing viewpoints about the world's cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts
		1.5 Students explore and explain different viewpoints about human experience, drawing on textual evidence to support their opinions	3. Draw conclusions about the author's intent and identify the evidence used to draw the conclusion
	Writing	1.6 Students explore challenging ideas, report events, reflect on human relationships, express opinions, and respond to others' views.	8. Create texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes that raise social issues, report events, reflect on human relationships and advance opinions 9. Create representations (of people, places, events and things that are shaped by context, purpose and intended audience) to explore challenging ideas and ethical dilemmas

		1.7 Students take account of other perspectives and possibilities, using personal knowledge and experience as the basis for further research that informs the development of written and multimodal texts.	
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Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
2. Developing productive and artful communication	Listening & Speaking	2.1 Students create a range of spoken texts for specific purposes and audiences, and for formal and informal contexts.	
		2.2 Students create coherent imaginative, informative and persuasive texts	13. Use humour, anecdotes and emotive language to engage audiences in a spoken presentation
		2.3 Students explain language and structural choices made that convey meaning and content effectively	
		2.4 Students plan, revise and rehearse oral presentations for accuracy and impact.	
	Reading	2.5 Students compare and contrast structural and language features including vocabulary of literary texts explaining how they influence readers and viewers.	5. Texts are enhanced by creative vocabulary choices. 10. How texts are structured to achieve their purposes. 13. Purpose of devices used by authors including symbolism, analogy and allusion. 1. Appreciate how writers use a range of devices to add layers of meaning in literary texts including symbolism, analogy and allusion. 4. Understand and explain how and why a particular literary text has the power to influence the audience 4. Interpret and analyse texts critically for different perspectives including identifying and explaining how audiences are positioned by particular representations of an event or issue. 6. Build vocabulary of increasing precision and technicality, including metalinguistic vocabulary, and check for understanding by using language reference resources
	Writing	2.6 Students create coherent written and multimodal texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes	
		2.7 They select language structures and features to create coherent texts, showing connections between ideas and information.	4. Attitude towards a topic can be expressed through the use of adverbials. 8. The verb group can indicate different perspectives on time, including present, future and past time. 9. Details surrounding an activity can be specified by the use of adverbials
		2.8 Students use a variety of clause combinations, supported through the use of correct punctuation to create clear and coherent texts.	6. Sentences can consist of a number of independent and dependent clauses combined in a variety of ways. 7. Some clauses are finite and some are nonfinite 12. Purposes of punctuation to communicate ideas in complex sentences such as commas, semicolons, dashes and brackets. 11. Create texts using complex punctuation for emphasis and to add to

			the meaning of the text
		2.9 Students consistently use a range of spelling conventions to enhance meaning and clarity.	
		2.10 They plan, draft, edit and proofread for accuracy, selecting text structures and features that best suit the context.	11. Sentences, clauses and word groups need to be carefully crafted for clarity and coherence 10. Plan, draft, edit and proofread with particular attention to selecting text structures and features that best suit the context

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
3. Promoting engagement and developing insightful response	Listening & Speaking	3.1 Students listen attentively to a range of spoken texts, identify relevant information, ideas and issues, and evaluate the effectiveness of language choices used to influence listeners	14. Listen carefully to spoken texts identifying techniques used to influence the audience and explain their effects
	Reading	3.2 Students identify the main ideas of texts with challenging but accessible subject matter and the evidence that supports those ideas.	1. Locate, select and retrieve information explicitly stated but separated by competing information 5. Evaluate texts by critically reflecting on the author's point of view, validity of content and credibility of sources, including evidence to support point of view
		3.3 Students make inferences to clarify ideas.	2. Make inferences including to clarify and define concepts or ideas
	Writing		

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
4. Developing, applying and transforming learning for new communicative contexts and problems	Listening & Speaking	4. 1 Students interpret verbal and non-verbal communication in multimodal and digital texts and consider how these elements combine to convey meaning and influence audience response.	
	Reading	4.2 Students interpret literal and non-literal language in digital texts, and how combinations of written, visual, auditory and symbolic elements are used to make meaning, achieve particular purposes and establish certain relationships with audiences.	2. Use knowledge of language patterns and structures of particular literary text types to discuss, compare and contrast features of different multimodal literary text types
		4.3 Students locate and use relevant research from a range of sources.	7. Locate and use relevant research resources including contemporary media and online resources
	Writing	4.4 Students create literary texts that select digital elements designed to develop intended meanings and effects for specific audiences and contexts.	5. Create a range of multimodal literary texts that make connections with or draw upon aspects of other literary texts for particular purposes and effects. 12. Select from a range of ICT software to assist in processing and presentation

Year 9 Curriculum

Content coding: Language, Literature, Literacy

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
1. Developing the self, values and social	Listening & Speaking	1.1 Students listen attentively to a wide range of oral presentations, and are able to identify how events, situations and people are represented from different perspectives.	4. Interpret and analyse texts critically for different perspectives including comparing representations of an issue, event, situation or character in different texts

relationships			
		1.2 Students use a variety of strategies to participate in conversations and discussions, to ask questions to clarify meaning, and to express their own ideas and viewpoints	2. Expanding social roles and relationships require a greater repertoire of interpersonal resources
		1.3 Students collaborate with others to solve problems, and to create and produce dramatic and multimodal presentations.	
			1. Texts are created and interpreted within the context of other texts and are influenced by cultural perspectives
	Reading	1.4 Students read, view, navigate and respond to texts with challenging themes and issues relating to personal and wider social and cultural experiences.	1. Explore and reflect on personal understanding about the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting literary texts
	Writing		9. Make appropriate selections of subject matter from various sources, synthesising and organising these in a logical sequence, to speculate about their place in the world and the future

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
2. Developing productive and artful communication	Listening & Speaking	2.1 Students produce coherent and sequenced spoken texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes.	
		2.2 They use spoken, non-verbal language, auditory, visual and multimodal resources in presentations to influence audiences, to enhance meaning, and to achieve particular effects.	14. Use spoken, non-verbal, auditory, visual, technical and multimodal resources in a presentation and evaluate audience response
		2.3 They plan, rehearse and revise oral presentations for effect and clarity.	
	Reading		
	Writing	2.4 Students create a range of coherent written texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes.	6. Use of a variety of clause types can enhance written expression 7. Information can be condensed by collapsing a clause into a noun phrase (nominalisation) 8. More subtle ideas can be expressed through verb groups of extended length and complexity 9. Certain abstract nouns can be used to compact preceding or subsequent stretches of text 8. Create texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes that make sense of human relationships
		2.5 They select relevant subject matter to logically advance and justify arguments to persuade others.	8. Create texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes that advance and justify arguments to persuade others, make judgments and justify interpretations of texts
		2.6 They create representations of people, places, events and	10. Create representations of people, places, events, things and

		concepts, selectively and imaginatively making choices to position and appeal to audiences.	concepts, selectively making choices to position and appeal to different audiences and to explore cultural assumptions about groups
		2.7 Students synthesise and organise ideas, linking information in logically sequenced texts	
		2.8 . Students experiment with different text structures and language patterns to compose literary texts for particular purposes and effects.	10. Parallel structures contribute to coherence and rhythm of texts. 6. Experiment with different literary text structures, modes, media, and language patterns to create imaginative and playful literary texts for particular purposes and effects
		2.9 Students understand how vocabulary choices contribute to the abstraction, technical precision and discipline-specific nature of texts.	5. Vocabulary choices that contribute to the abstraction, technical precision and discipline specific nature of texts 6. Build vocabulary of increasing abstraction, subtlety and nuance, including metalinguistic vocabulary, and checking for understanding by using dictionaries and thesauruses
		2.10 Students use correct punctuation to support meaning in complex sentences with embedded clauses and phrases.	11. Purposes of punctuation to support meaning in complex sentences with embedded clauses and phrases 16. Use grammatical features and punctuation to control the expression of complex ideas
		2.11 Students make appropriate vocabulary choices to contribute to the clarity, precision, and persuasiveness of texts.	
		2.12 Students plan, draft, edit and proofread for clarity and coherence.	12. Plan, draft, edit and proofread for clarity and coherence

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
3. Promoting engagement and developing insightful response	Listening & Speaking	3.1 Students listen attentively to a wide range of oral presentations, and are able to identify main ideas and issues.	
		3.2 Students identify stated and implied meaning in spoken texts.	11. Listen to a range of spoken texts, identifying and explaining stated and implied meaning
		3.3 Students interpret and evaluate the use of language, visual and non-verbal communication in establishing relationships with different audiences.	1. Identify and explain choices made in texts to achieve particular purposes and to appeal to a wide range of audiences
	Reading	3.4 Students read, view, navigate and respond to imaginative, informative and persuasive texts drawn from a variety of contexts	
		3.5 Students make reasoned inferences explaining how choices made by authors influence readers.	3. Identify and explain how the language of literary texts influences personal response using appropriate metalanguage
		3.6 Students interpret and integrate ideas and information in texts and draw conclusions about characters, events and key ideas.	4. Evaluative vocabulary can be used to express judgments of characters' behaviour and motivations and to assess the quality of artistic works 2. Retrieve information by searching for synonymous pieces of information across a whole text 15. Make inferences including inferring relationships between ambiguous information

		3.7 Students analyse and discuss texts, evaluating the quality of evidence used to support main opinions.	5. Evaluate texts by comparing ideas and information between texts to evaluate the quality of content and the author's craft, and providing alternative pieces of information, evidence or arguments from outside the texts to support a point of view
		3.8 Students compare and contrast their own responses to literary texts and different interpretations presented by others.	3. Language can be multi-layered, resulting in varying interpretations 4. Evaluate others' interpretations of and responses to literary texts based on textual evidence
		3.9 Students are able to identify and explain how the structures and features of texts are designed to appeal to audiences.	2. Appreciate how a range of language devices, including connotations, contrasting sounds, rhythm and metre in verse, are used to enhance meaning and intended effects
			3. Drawing conclusions about major ideas by identifying use of references to other texts and how these contribute to meaning
	Writing		

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
4. Developing, applying and transforming learning for new communicative contexts and problems	Listening & Speaking	4. 1 Students collaborate with others to create and produce multimodal presentations.	
		4.2 Students use multimodal resources in presentations to influence audiences, to enhance meaning, and to achieve particular effects.	
	Reading	4.3 Students analyse how written, visual and auditory elements are integrated in digital texts, and the impact on readers of the different elements.	
		4.4 Students evaluate online research tools for objectivity, reliability and completeness.	7. Evaluate online research tools such as websites and databases for objectivity, reliability and completeness
			13. Use ICT and digital sources such as databases and search engines for researching information and refining ideas
	Writing	4.5 Students create a range of coherent multimodal texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes.	5. Create a range of multimodal literary texts that develop sustained, logical arguments using evidence drawn from literary texts for a range of purposes and contexts
		4.6 Students create digital texts that strategically integrate written, spoken and visual modes.	

Year 10 Curriculum

Content coding: Language, Literature, Literacy

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
1. Developing the self, values and social relationships	Listening & Speaking	1.1 interact appropriately with audiences in a range of formal and informal contexts	
		1.2 make effective use of agreed protocols to engage in discussions to build on others' ideas, solve problems, justify opinions and develop arguments	12. Use protocols in formal presentations and discussions to enhance meaning
	Reading	1.3 engage in informed discussions of texts with others in varied contexts	1. Reflect on and discuss with informed appreciation and discernment, an increasing personal repertoire of preferred authors and literary texts
	Writing	1.4 develop complex ideas and explore social issues of global and local concern	1. A brief history of how aspects of spoken and written English have evolved 2. Explore and discuss concepts of cultural and literary tradition in response to literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts 7. Create texts that create relationships between ideas using appropriate grammar and punctuation that develop abstract concepts, generalise about and question human experience, and persuade others to action
		1.5 explore and analyse a range of attitudes, values and perspectives	

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
2. Developing productive and artful communication	Listening & Speaking	2.1 understand strategies speakers use to respond to and influence audience expectations	2. Selection and patterning of language can involve or distance the audience by creating a sense of affinity, empathy, inclusion, exclusion or threat
		2.2 clearly communicate complex ideas and arguments in sustained, coherent and well-structured presentations to different audiences, in familiar and public situations.	
		2.3 make effective use of a variety of features of spoken language, including tone, pace, pitch, pause and volume to enhance meaning.	
	Reading	2.4 Reflect on issues and ideas from texts and explore these in their own compositions	
	Writing	2.5 students create a wide range of sustained written and multimodal texts for imaginative, informative and persuasive purposes	5. Vocabulary for use in more academic contexts 9. Create sustained literary texts selecting and adapting appropriate language structures and features to meet the purpose, context and intended audience 6. Use vocabulary selectively that is most appropriate to engage and inform the audience 9. Represent people, places, events, things and concepts by selectively making choices about the inclusion, exclusion or emphasis of certain aspects of subject matter and language
			2.6 construct logical arguments

		2.7 selectively choose details and subject matter to support a point of view, imaginative idea or to persuade others to action	3. Different perspectives can be introduced by citing the words and views of others
		2.8 logically sequence and organise content to manage the flow of information and ideas in longer texts	9. How to manage the flow of information in longer texts
		2.9 write sustained texts, using a variety of sentence structures for effect and using active or passive voice as appropriate	6. A rich repertoire of grammatical resources allows for the expansion of higher order thinking 7. Subtlety of meaning is enhanced through the careful choice of verbs
		2.10 use appropriate punctuation when writing complex sentences and complex texts for formal purposes, including conventions of referencing	8. How to manage the expression of complex ideas in sentences 11. Conventions of quoting others and referencing sources when writing complex texts for formal purposes
		2.11 plan, draft edit, proofread and revise for accuracy, clarity and consistency of style.	10. Use increased familiarity with text types, structures, styles and editing techniques to plan, rehearse, draft, edit and proofread for accuracy, clarity and consistency of style

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
3. Promoting engagement and developing insightful response	Listening & Speaking	3.1 students listen attentively to spoken texts dealing with challenging ideas and issues, identifying values, attitudes and assumptions conveyed in these texts	12. Listen to spoken texts dealing with challenging ideas and issues and identify values, attitudes and assumptions conveyed
		3.2 selectively use strategies to comprehend and interpret oral presentations in different contexts	
	Reading	3.3 students read, view, navigate and respond to a wide range of informative, persuasive and imaginative texts and recognise the multiple purposes for which texts are created	
		3.4 explore and evaluate the personal, social, cultural and political issues presented in these texts.	8. Create logical arguments that explore and analyse the attitudes and values revealed in literary texts
		3.5 offer reasoned explanations of how the language choices in different texts influence the responses of audiences in different ways	3. Appreciate how a range of language devices, including rhetorical questions, oxymorons, metonymy and satire, are used to express ideas and to engage an audience 4. Analyse and explain, using appropriate metalanguage, how the language of literary texts influences audience response in different ways and in different contexts 6. Analyse how texts evoke audience empathy or antipathy with the characters, situations and viewpoints and also how audiences are positioned to respond 1. Analyse and evaluate how the selection of subject matter and language has been influenced by purposes and likely audiences
		3.6 students make valid inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas and information in a wide range of texts.	4. Opinions and attitudes are often expressed indirectly and need to be interpreted in the context of the surrounding text 2. Use all elements in a text to locate and discriminate between synonymous pieces of information 3. Make inferences including inferring an intended relationship or

			category 5. Analyse embedded perspectives in a text to identify the author's beliefs, assumptions and motives
		3.7 compare and contrast typical features and key ideas in particular texts, and synthesise information from various sources to reach considered conclusions	5. Compare the language features and structures of literary texts which were created in different contexts or modes 7. Examine why certain literary texts are valued by certain audiences and develop ideas about how to appraise the aesthetic features, personal significance and value of literary texts 4. Compare and contrast information within and between texts, identifying and evaluating supporting evidence and drawing conclusions 8. Select subject matter from multiple sources and perspectives to create original texts using appropriate grammar and punctuation
	Writing		

Objective	Language Mode	Achievement	Content
4. Developing, applying and transforming learning for new communicative contexts and problems	Listening & Speaking	4.1 understand and use well-designed and nuanced structures and features of language in responding to and presenting spoken and multimodal texts	10. Construction of multimodal and digital texts involves knowledge of visual grammar
	Reading	4.2 undertake independent research using well-developed research skills and resources, including libraries, websites, search engines and databases.	11. Undertake independent research using libraries, media sources and online resources
	Writing	4.3 literary and persuasive texts as starting points for writing, transforming and adapting texts for different contexts and audiences	

APPENDIX 3

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY APPLIED TO NATIONAL CURRICULUM STRANDS (Content Descriptions) & NSW OUTCOMES IN YEAR 9

(Year 9 was chosen as the mid-point of secondary schooling, avoiding national issues around the year in which secondary schooling begins. It is also the year that is the focus for PISA, and so is integral to debates around educational standards in Australia.)

Table 1: Frequency of verbs (or other words & word combinations) that align with Bloom's taxonomy.

This illustrates certain patterns with regards to what students are expected to know and do. It is important to recognise that, historically speaking, content in English has been understood as what students are expected to know *and* to be able to do (see the following note).

Note: The Language content descriptions contain no verbs, breaking with the historical nexus in English studies between theory and practice (*and related ideas*: process and product *or* responding and composing *or* learning to do and learning about) (see Pope, 2002) and adding extra emphasis to lower order skills in the national curriculum (see Tables 2 and 3).

Cognitive Level	NC Literature	NC Literacy	Totals	NSW Outcomes	Totals
Knowledge	Identify	Identify -2 Retrieve Select	5 (=17%)	Selects -2 Describes -2	4 (=15%)
Comprehension	Explain	Explain – 2 Interpret Build Infer	6 (=20%)	Responds Understanding Interpretation -2 Explains	5 (=19%)
Application	Explore	Speculate Listen Plan Draft Proofread Use	7 (=23%)	Uses – 4 Transfers	5 (=19%)
Analysis		Analyse	1 (3%)	Critical analysis Thinks critically	2 (=7%)
Synthesis	Create Experiment	Create -2 Synthesise	5 (=17%)	Composes Experiments Investigates relationships Adapts	4 (=15%)
Evaluation	Reflect on Appreciate Evaluate	Conclude Evaluate -2	6 (=20%)	Critically assesses Questions Challenges Evaluates Reflects on Assesses	6 (=23%)

Table 2: Frequency of verbs and verb groups aligning with Bloom's taxonomy as they appear in the content elaborations for the Language strand in Year 9.

Note: It has been necessary to analyse the content elaborations for Language in this manner as the content descriptions for Language do not actually convey the sense that students use language, let alone that they will come to understand themselves and the world *through* language. Instead teachers are presented with a mixed list of 12 items that sometimes describes particular features of language; at other times makes assertions about the nature of language and texts; and also suggests particular phenomena influencing the ways language takes on meaning. The CDs for Language read as a primer

for teachers, rather than programmable content. This is a significant point, especially given that the elaborations exist only for illustrative purposes, guiding the practice of inexperienced teachers – they do not constitute the curriculum. In the Language strand, the line between CDs and CEs blurs.

Cognitive Level	NC Language Content Elaborations	Totals
Knowledge	Identify – 4 Recognise – 4 Observing how – 3 Knowing - 6	17 (=63%)
Comprehension	Understanding - 2	2 (7%)
Application	Employing Using -3	4 (15%)
Analysis		
Synthesis	Creating patterns	1 (4%)
Evaluation	Reflecting on Appreciating Assessing	3 (11%)

Table 3: Relative tendencies towards lower and higher order skills in the National Curriculum (incorporating Tables 1 and 2 to better account for the Language strand) and the NSW Curriculum

Cognitive level	National Curriculum – Yr 9	NSW Curriculum – Yr 9
Knowledge Comprehension	53%	34%
Application Analysis	21%	26%
Synthesis Evaluation	26%	38%

Conclusions

1. The national curriculum, primarily through its Language strand, marks a radical break with historic understandings and conceptualisations of English curriculum.
2. The conceptual vacuum at the heart of the national curriculum, and its consequent incoherence, is highlighted by the obvious differences in the writing of the three strands. The Language strand is imbued with a very different set of understandings (e.g. of English, of students and teachers, of effective teaching and learning, and of the cognitive levels at which an English curriculum should tend to operate) from that evident in the other two strands. This raises serious concerns about how teachers will be able to understand the three strands in a coherent manner, seeing them as inter-related and interdependent, as they set about the task of programming the curriculum.

3. The break the national curriculum makes with past understandings and methods of organising the English curriculum has had a deleterious consequence to the extent that the national curriculum tends to operate at a lower cognitive level than the NSW curriculum, primarily because of the content of the language strand. The national curriculum is certainly less evenly balanced in its cognitive emphases.
4. Language is clearly understood within the national curriculum to be something students primarily just 'know about'. Such an emphasis on knowledge and understanding runs counter to past emphasis on studying language in a broadening range of contexts and for real purposes, and would seem to implicitly favour and promote unproductive transmission pedagogies. Certainly, the idea that it is in and through language (i.e. its use) that we come to better understand language, ourselves, social relationships, power structures, and the world around us is absent from the Language strand. So too is the idea that language, as "institution and practice" (Green, 2008, p.38), is open to critical reflection, analysis and reform. An English curriculum that does not foster and promote critical language awareness and understandings is but a pale shadow of past curriculums.
5. To the extent that a "better" curriculum is one that is cognitively challenging, it is not possible to conclude that the national curriculum is "better" than existing state curriculums – the NSW curriculum being a case in point.

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