



BSSS Teacher News

Spring 2026

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Acknowledgements

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Narrabundah College

Sunset at the National Carillion, photograph

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The BSSS acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We acknowledge the traditional Custodians of the land on which our department is located and where we live, learn and work.

We pay our respects to Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

Mathematics as a requirement of the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate

The ACT Senior Secondary Certificate (ACT SSC) is the qualification students can attain at the end of Year 12. Students completing the ACT SSC may also include vocational qualifications and a Tertiary Entrance Statement with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

To be awarded an ACT SSC, students must complete set patterns of coursework over Years 11 and 12. Currently, English is a requirement of the qualification, with students completing at least two semesters of English during their senior secondary years. English became a requirement following the 2014 review of the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate.

The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) is now undertaking a review of Mathematics as a requirement for the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate. A Mathematics Advisory Committee has been established to lead the review and provide independent and expert advice.

To support the review, a discussion paper titled *'Review of Mathematics as a Requirement of the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate'* has been produced. The paper outlines background information, context and data to inform discussion, and presents a proposed recommendation:

"That all students complete a course under the Mathematics Framework as a requirement for the award of an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate."

The proposed recommendation is intended to support discussion about whether Mathematics should become a requirement for the award of the ACT SSC, like the existing English requirement. A decision regarding the recommendation has not been made. The Mathematics Advisory Committee needs to consider feedback from the current consultation before making their final recommendations to the BSSS.

Approximately 90-95% of ACT students already enrol in a mathematics course each year. There are a range of courses under the BSSS Mathematics Framework, written to cater for students with diverse aspirations, abilities and future pathways. The BSSS Mathematics courses support students undertaking vocational, employment and university pathways, while also promoting the mathematical skills needed for everyday life and workforce participation. Of note is a relatively new course designed to support students who are still developing their numeracy skills, Bridging Numeracy.

A course is defined as at least two units of study (a Minor course). One standard unit of study represents a minimum of 55 hours of structured learning activities, generally over one semester. Nearly all students complete 5 or 6 units each semester, depending on their school requirements.

The BSSS is now seeking community feedback and invites schools, students, parents and carers, businesses, and the broader community to have their say on the discussion paper available on the BSSS website. Public consultation is open until Friday 21 August 2026.

Feedback received through the consultation process will be reviewed by the Mathematics Advisory Committee before formal recommendations are made to the BSSS.

Review of Mathematics as a requirement of the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate



ACT System Overview

- The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) utilises school-based curriculum and assessment.
- System moderation is conducted each semester to ensure comparability of grades across schools.
- To attain an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC), students must complete a minimum of 17 units from at least three different course areas.
- Students are required to undertake a course in English as a requirement of the SSC.

The consultation paper introduces the idea of Mathematics as an additional requirement of the SSC.

Should students complete a course under the Mathematics Framework as a requirement for the award of an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate?

Rationale for a course in Mathematics as a requirement of the ACT SSC

- Provides essential mathematical skills for everyday life, including financial decision-making, risk assessment and interpreting data.
- Supports 21st century capabilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, logical reasoning and data literacy.
- Keeps pathways open for higher education, vocational education and emerging careers.
- Reduces inequality by ensuring all students access powerful knowledge, not just those who choose mathematics.
- Addresses gender inequality and disadvantage.

Jurisdiction Comparison

The ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia that does not have a minimum requirement for numeracy or mathematics for its senior secondary qualification.

BSSS Mathematics Courses

Courses under the BSSS Mathematics Framework are

- *Specialist Mathematics*
- *Specialist Methods*
- *Mathematical Methods*
- *Mathematical Applications*
- *Essential Mathematics*
- *Bridging Numeracy*

These courses are written to cater to the full range of student abilities and future pathways. Students can engage with mathematics at a level appropriate to their aptitude and future goals, ensuring flexibility is maintained.

Alignment with National Goals

- Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019)
- Australian Qualifications Framework
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
- The Future of Education: An ACT education strategy for the next ten years (2018)

Data and Evidence

- Approximately 90–95% of ACT students enrol in a mathematics course each year.
- PISA data from 2022 shows that 43% of ACT students performed below the National Proficient Standard in mathematical literacy and reasoning.
- Between 27% and 35% of Australian students lack proficiency in key areas such as problem-solving, digital literacy and financial literacy.
- Mathematics study is strongly linked to higher employment rates and increased lifetime earnings.

How to contribute

- Complete the consultation survey: <https://forms.office.com/r/qPHRPBF85Z> or
- Attend a public forum. See www.bsss.act.edu.au

Feedback will inform the final recommendation to the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

Curriculum updates

Semester 2 has been a busy period for curriculum development and implementation; workshop days for Education Studies, Health, Outdoor and Physical Education (HOPE), and Pacific Studies all brought teachers together to share ideas and experiences as these courses are implemented.



Education Studies

Having completed the first semester of Education Studies, the teachers of the course came together to reflect on their experiences. The workshop provided an opportunity to share successes, explore challenges, and discuss ideas with colleagues from different schools. Teachers reviewed samples of student work, examined approaches to assessment and worked collaboratively to develop assessment tasks and Programs of Learning for Semester Two. Professor Joanne Quick from the Australian Catholic University also joined the workshop, offering her perspectives on the course and its early implementation. The discussions throughout the session reinforced the value of professional collaboration and the shared commitment to successfully implementing the course.

Territory educators refine implementation of HOPE framework

Teachers gathered on Thursday, 25 June to participate in a high-level workshop and networking symposium dedicated to the ongoing implementation of the Health, Outdoor, Physical Education and Exercise Science (HOPE) framework.

The session served as a critical checkpoint for educators driving the delivery of seven newly redeveloped courses, most of which launched at the start of the 2026 academic year.

The workshop brought together specialised educators representing the full spectrum of the HOPE framework's seven courses:

- Public Health
- Physical Education
- Exercise Science
- Athlete Development
- Sport, Fitness and Recreation
- Outdoor and Environmental Education
- Outdoor Recreation

The primary intention of the session was to foster cross-sectoral collaboration, evaluate the initial rollout of the 2026 curriculum, and ensure territory-wide alignment in senior secondary assessment standards.

A central focus of the symposium was the explicit integration of global citizenship principles into daily teaching. Educators analysed how to apply references to integrity, ethics, and sustainability directly into teaching and assessment from the Framework Goals and Achievement Standards. The objective is to ensure ACT graduates leave secondary education not just with technical skills, but with a robust ethical compass tailored to the modern health, sport, and environmental sectors.

To highlight rigorous assessment expectations across colleges, attendees deconstructed the framework's core assessment task types. Teachers collaborated on building consistent benchmarks across three distinct domains:

- Research - Standardising investigation methodologies and academic integrity.
- Application and Analysis - Translating theoretical concepts into practical performance.
- Evaluate and Improve - Refining how students critically appraise and optimise outcomes.

The workshop provided a transparent forum for teachers to share firsthand insights into the strengths and challenges of the 2026 rollout. Discussions focused heavily on balancing student workload with the increased depth of the new courses. By analysing both educator and student perspectives, participants identified systemic strengths to celebrate, and logistical hurdles to troubleshoot collaboratively.

The final segment of the session addressed administrative requirements, focusing on the retention of student assessment evidence. Educators shared ideas and discussed best-practice models to streamline the retention of evidence.

The insights gained from this workshop will directly shape the delivery of the HOPE courses heading into the latter half of the academic year, reinforcing the ACT's commitment to progressive physical and environmental education.

Pacific Studies Professional Learning Workshop Inspires Teachers

Teachers recently participated in a rich and engaging Pacific Studies professional learning day, designed to deepen their understanding of Pacific perspectives, pedagogies, and assessment approaches in preparation for teaching the new course in 2027. The day featured presentations from Professor Katerina Teaiwa and Jay Caldwell from The Australian National University (ANU), and Bronwyn Williams and Mijica Lus from the Australian Pasifika Educators Network (APEN).

The first session, facilitated by Bronwyn and Mijica, focused on building teachers' cultural capability and confidence in engaging with Pacific knowledge systems. Participants were introduced to Pacific epistemologies, ontologies, and ways of knowing, being, and doing, including *talanoa*, *va*, *fa'afaletui*, and *kakala*. The session emphasised the importance of engaging with these approaches in meaningful ways, rather than treating them as labels or additions to existing practice.

A strong focus was placed on culturally responsive teaching and what this looks like in practice. Presenters explored how topics such as colonialism, climate change, and sovereignty can be approached thoughtfully and respectfully. The discussion centred on creating learning experiences that are both culturally informed and safe for students and communities. Participants also discussed the importance of building authentic relationships with Pacific communities, cultural knowledge holders, and the Pacific Cultural Reference Group, recognising that effective teaching requires knowing who to ask and where to seek guidance.



Learning about and celebrating Pacific pedagogies

Facilitated as a *talanoa*, the session itself modelled Pacific pedagogy in action. Rather than following a traditional lecture style presentation, the learning experience was relational and collaborative, demonstrating the kinds of approaches teachers are encouraged to use in their own classrooms.

In the second session, Katerina and Jay explored the rationale for studying the Pacific, highlighting the importance of viewing Pacific Studies as a dynamic and continually evolving field. Participants were introduced to Teresia Teaiwa's concept of the classroom as a "metaphoric canoe", an exploratory vehicle for examining the Pacific (T Teaiwa, 2005).

Within this model, both the content and the process of learning are significant, emphasising cooperation, shared responsibility, and collective navigation of knowledge.

Teachers were also introduced to the Island Model of Culture, which explores culture at surface, shallow, and deep levels (K Teaiwa, 2026, adapted from UIS-UNESCO). Discussion highlighted the idea that deep culture is often experienced as feeling and lived reality rather than something that can be explicitly taught. This prompted teachers to think critically about how cultural knowledge is approached, represented, and respected in classroom contexts.

Another important concept introduced was reflective critical practice, illustrated through the Hawaiian principle of *Ki'i kupuna makawalu*, an image of an ancestor with eight eyes, capable of seeing from multiple perspectives. This metaphor reinforced the value of considering diverse viewpoints when engaging with the many cultures, histories, and experiences that make up the Pacific region.

The presentation also showcased assessment ideas that align with Pacific ways of knowing, being and doing.

Examples included having students design a uniform or costume that incorporates cultural symbols from a specific Pacific country or culture accompanied by a rationale; transforming the lyrics, geographical imagery, and dance movements of a class hula into a tattoo design; and completing reflective reports that encourage students to engage deeply with their learning. These examples demonstrated how assessment can move beyond traditional formats to provide students with meaningful opportunities to connect knowledge, creativity, and cultural understanding.

Participants gained a deeper understanding of the purpose and scope of Pacific Studies, along with practical ideas for assessment and curriculum delivery that can be applied in their own school contexts.

Thank you to all the teachers who attended, and to our presenters from ANU and A the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (APEN) for generously giving their time to support and work alongside our teachers to support the implementation of this new course.

Navigating Assessment in the Age of Generative AI

Perspectives on Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the context of senior secondary education.

Recent BSSS pre-moderation data indicates an increasing shift towards assessments conducted in class under supervised conditions. While this approach may strengthen confidence in assessment evidence authenticity, it also reflects the challenges schools face in designing valid assessments within a changing educational environment. This shift may be a portent of a narrowing of assessment types, which in turn may impact equity.

To appreciate the implications of such a shift, it is important to revisit the principles on which the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) school-based assessment system was founded. The establishment of the ACT senior secondary system in 1976 marked a significant departure from the New South Wales (NSW) education system.

This historic change was a direct response to concerns from educators and the community regarding rigid curriculum structures and high-stakes examinations that were perceived as limiting the potential of both teachers and students (Kass, 2025).

The blueprint for a different approach to assessment was developed in 1972 through the Campbell Report (Secondary Education for Canberra: Report of the Working Committee on College Proposals for the Australian Capital Territory), which recommended a substantial restructuring of the final years of schooling (Kass, 2025). At its core was a progressive commitment, formalised in 1976, to replace external high-stakes examinations with a system of school-based, continuous assessment (O'Connor et al., 2024).

The ACT senior secondary system was established with the express purpose of enhancing educational equity by supporting student choice and flexibility through school-based curriculum and assessment (O'Connor et al., 2024). That foundational commitment remains highly relevant today. In many ways, the adoption of school-based assessment was itself an act of educational innovation. This continuous assessment model supports teacher agency, offers the flexibility to design assessments tailored to diverse learners, and fosters strong partnerships between teachers and students through ongoing feedback.

The emergence of generative AI may be seen to exacerbate some of the existing assessment challenges in senior secondary education. However, the ACT has a long tradition of educational innovation dating back to 1976 as a student-centred, equitable education system capable of meeting contemporary challenges.

Highly supervised, in-class, and text-based assessments should be considered in the context of equity and student agency. Narrowing the scope of how knowledge is evaluated through limited task types may impact diverse learners while challenging students and their opportunity to be active partners in their own learning journey (Fenwick, 2011).

Educational equity is not achieved by treating every student identically. Rather, it requires assessment approaches that provide meaningful opportunities for all students to demonstrate learning (Frønes et al., 2020). Genuine curriculum justice cannot be achieved through replication of a standardised assessment type to all students (Riddle et al., 2023; Mills et al., 2022).

Instead, it requires careful consideration of how assessment practices affect students with diverse backgrounds, strengths, experiences and ways of demonstrating knowledge (Levy-Feldman, 2025).

When assessment becomes heavily concentrated in a narrow range of formats, some students may be disadvantaged, not because they lack understanding, but because the mode of assessment does not fully allow them to demonstrate their learning (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2013).

Assessment is never entirely neutral. Instead, it reflects broader assumptions about what counts as valued knowledge and how learning ought to be demonstrated (Wyatt-Smith and Klenowski, 2013). When applying Fraser's (2009) foundational triad of redistributive, recognitive, and representational justice, Dooley et al. (2025) argues that educational assessment must be viewed through those three interconnected dimensions. Under this framework, redistributive justice promotes equitable access to opportunities and high-status knowledge. Recognitive justice validates the diverse identities, cultures, and experiences of learners. Finally, representational justice ensures students have meaningful opportunities to demonstrate their learning and actively participate in how success is recognised.

The introduction of generative AI presents a profound shift in senior secondary education, demanding that we rethink how we evaluate student learning (Lodge et al., 2023). The challenge ahead is not a binary choice between rigor and innovation, or between authenticity and inclusion.



Early days of the system: The School Without Walls

The ACT senior secondary education community can leverage established systemic strengths to ensure that strategies designed to strengthen assessment authenticity do not inadvertently reduce the flexibility, access, and equity that define the system.

When the ACT senior secondary system was established 50 years ago it consciously broke away from rigid external examinations in favour of school-based assessment and consensus moderation. This structural design shifted agency directly to teachers, trusting their professional judgement to evaluate student learning over time. In a rapidly evolving technological environment, this innovative spirit remains our greatest asset.

As Prime Minister Albanese noted in his recent national address on *AI in Australia's Interest* (2026), while technological change cannot be stopped, society retains the agency to shape how emerging technologies reflect our core human values.

Rather than responding to disruption by retreating from innovation, the ACT senior secondary curriculum allows proactive adaption. Supported by system Moderation Day and low-definition BSSS accredited courses, teachers have the flexibility to re-evaluate what evidence of learning matters most. The goal is to focus on assessing uniquely human capabilities, such as critical judgement, ethical reasoning, creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem solving, which school-based assessment is ideally positioned to capture.

The ACT senior secondary continuous assessment model allows for a programmatic approach, evaluating the full suite of assessments across a course rather than task singularity. To ensure trustworthiness and inclusion, schools may design assessment suites where no single task accounts for all desirable or undesirable uses of AI. Lodge et al (2023) argues that using multiple, varied assessment types across a unit provides a rich portrayal of student thinking that is visible throughout the entire learning cycle, rather than assessing only a final product. Teachers can gather rich evidence through drafting, conferencing, research notes, reflections, and iterative feedback loops.

Furthermore, rather than attempting to secure every single task against the use of AI, this model involves identifying key assessment moments at a program level and securing those specific checkpoints (Lodge et al., 2023). These secured moments verify what students are capable of without AI, particularly regarding critical course milestones, while still inviting students to act as partners in their learning by using generative AI ethically and transparently where appropriate.

A powerful lens to ensure that this programmatic approach enables students to demonstrate rich thinking, while guaranteeing that the assessment suite is inclusive and equitable, is to draw upon

Fraser's (2009) foundational triad of redistributive, recognitive, and representational justice of justice. Schools can consider how the suite of assessment tasks promotes opportunities to engage with high-status knowledge, reflect diverse cultures and identities, and allow students to negotiate their own assessment pathways.

The ACT senior secondary system provides a vehicle for collaboration through system Moderation Day so that this work does not need to be taken in isolation. Moderation Day is an active ecology of communication, interpretation, and joint meaning-making (Priestley and Drew, 2019). Focused professional dialogue around actual student work samples can deepen teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and improve judgment consistency across the territory. Moderation Day can be utilised



Phillip College under construction

to explicitly address the opportunities and risks of generative AI. This means using the day to exchange innovative ideas on assessment designs that address the needs of diverse learners, while also providing critical feedback to peers.

The future of senior secondary assessment in the ACT rests in thoughtful, evidence-informed educational design that preserves authenticity, supports equity, and mirrors the realities of learning in a technology-rich world. Using established networks of collaborative social moderation and professional trust, the ACT education community will continue to deliver a high-quality and high-equality senior secondary system that prepares all learners for further education, work and participation and engagement in our democratic society.

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AI Update: Hype Cycles and Wearables

To begin with in this update, we have some recommended reading for you; an interesting summation of some of the research into AI's projected impact on cognition and learning. Strongly recommended - get those TQI professional hours in!

Lodge, Jason M.; Loble, Leslie (2026). Artificial intelligence, cognitive offloading and implications for education. University of Technology Sydney. Report. <https://doi.org/10.71741/4pyxmbnjq.31302475.v2>

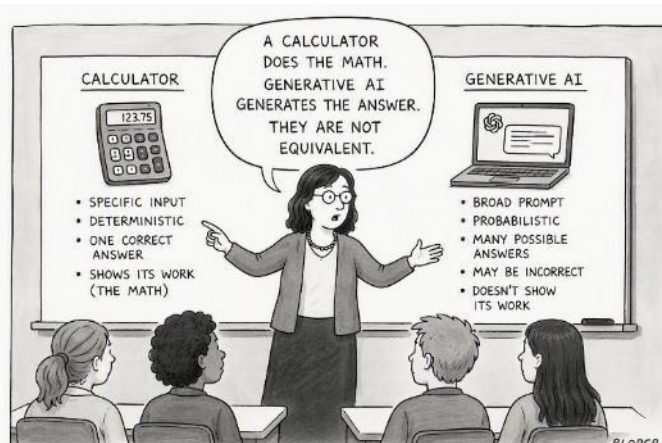
AI is well into its hype cycle, not helped by social media screaming that if students aren't taught to use ChatGPT/Claude/Gemini/NotebookLM/the latest new hot thing, then they will be woefully prepared for the future. This sounds kind of nice, but the idea that teaching students to use specific products will prepare students for the future does not reflect the fact that cognitive biases and hype factors can affect our ability to predict what technologies will be useful and used by consumers and workplaces.

While there are some industry-standard products that it is necessary to teach for later workplace use (e.g., Adobe's suite of publishing and layout products), caution is advisable whenever predicting our technological future. This may apply to either particular providers (e.g., Claude vs. Deep Seek) or particular interfaces (e.g., "prompt engineering").

[AITSL \(2023\) explains the problem:](#)

A cyclical pattern in edtech research has been observed over several decades (e.g. Higgins, 2012; Figure 3), with research publications about new edtech typically representing the following phases:

1. *As a new technology is developed, a flurry of theoretical or opinion-based articles will promote its adoption in education, typically extolling significant benefits for students and teachers.*
2. *Initial findings from early adopters in schools are often very positive and based on anecdotal feedback from students and teachers.*
3. *As the technology is applied more widely, more extensive research studies that attempt to quantify the impacts often show limited improvements in student learning, if any. Conflicting results are more likely to be published at this stage, although a bias towards publishing positive outcomes has previously been noted (this bias is common to many research fields).*



AI generated cartoon about calculators vs. AI -- note that it has actually signed the cartoon, and note that in contrast to previous models, the writing is clear and sensible.

4. *The latest innovations draw the interest of researchers and early adopters with their apparent potential to offer better outcomes (as per phase 1). Consequently, research efforts and publications shift focus to the latest technologies. The pace of change can leave the majority of teachers and schools with little time to adopt, or adapt to, any given edtech before the next 'latest' development arrives.*

It appears that we may currently be in the early third stage of this cycle. Articles such as Bastani et al's [Generative AI without Guardrails can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics](#) (2024) are beginning to show that early predictions of super-charged learning were perhaps optimistic. Analysis such as Lodge and Loble (2026), identifies that early articles about AI and learning may have been confusing the performance paradox¹, and to some extent, the Matthew Effect in AI², with genuine gains.

Indeed, the journal *Humanities and Social Sciences* [retracted a 2025 article](#) by Wang and Fan, which had made findings that "ChatGPT has a large positive impact on improving learning performance" (Wang and Fan, 2025) and was reasonably widely-cited (~290 citations in less than a year prior to retraction) before other academics began querying the findings. The retraction was based on discrepancies in the meta-analysis, which undermined the study's validity (Humanities and Social Sciences, 2026). This impact is discussed in more philosophical terms in [Corbin et al \(2025\)](#), which canvasses systemic issues beyond teaching and learning – we linked you that one a while back.

Reach of the technology

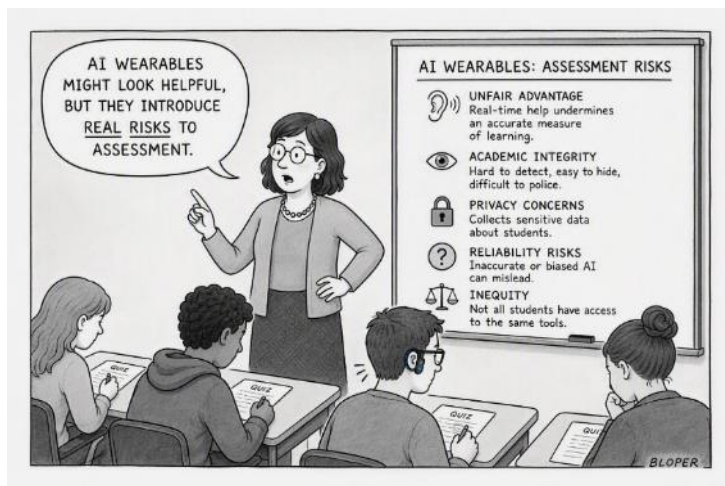
That said, hype cycles are one thing, and student use is another. Two common analogies that are used by people talking about AI and education are the calculator, and contract cheating through purchasing papers. While both of these analogies work, they fail to capture the reach of generative AI.

Lodge (2024) deconstructs the calculator analogy as follows:

The emergence of generative AI is often compared to when calculators became available to students. However, calculators require some understanding of mathematics to use. Generative AI tools only require basic language skills and can 'chat' with users in natural language. These tools can also explain to users how to use them, calculators do not.

¹ An effect where students demonstrate superficial performance gains associated with AI use, but do not attain the underlying learning or skills.

² An effect where existing advantages are amplified by AI – e.g., knowledge, biases, language, culture, skills



Another AI generated cartoon -- note that the prompt was only "can you now do one in the same style about AI wearables and assessment risks?" -- the AI made up all the rest. AI is rapidly advancing from where it was only a few years ago.

The human-machine relationship with generative AI is more interactive than transactional, and this difference is important for those in the higher education community to come to terms with. Generative AI is not like a calculator at all.

It is important not to underestimate the scope and reach of AI.

Examples of technologies in use in ACT schools that the office has been alerted to include:

- Dummy "calculators" that have the appearance of a scientific calculator but instead are used to access LLMs
- Browser extensions used to automatically enter pre-written text into a digital document slowly, and with revisions and errors. The intent is to falsify the version history of a document so that this measure cannot be used to assure the authenticity of a student's work.
- AI Humanisers, which claim to make AI-generated text read as if it were written by a human, thereby making it less likely to be "flagged" as AI by either human readers or AI detectors.

These technologies are over and above existing technologies that fall into a grey area, such as “smart” glasses and predictive text (now a feature in many major document platforms). For the AST, a ban on wearables is currently in place and we do not anticipate this changing in the near future. However, the use of these technologies will not be entirely prevented by banning AI use. This should hardly be surprising; these technologies exist to be used surreptitiously. Watch this space – we are actively looking into it.

If you are particularly interested in wearables, we recommend this article, which raises the issue of what may happen further down the road regarding wearables:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02602938.2026.2661367#abstract>

How do we deal with the hype as teachers?

Drawing distinctions between beneficial and detrimental uses of AI in many industries is a key research focus across the globe. It is as yet unknown if there is a genuine fairness issue between students and teachers being permitted to use AI, but it certainly appears that, regarding learning, there are valid reasons why a student may not be permitted to use AI when their teacher is.

This is not to say that teachers are not exposed to risk from AI use, and that teacher AI use may pose other risks. For example, there is emergent research about the impact of AI on lesson planning, with AI lesson plans appearing to focus on activities and events in the classroom, as opposed to a cohesive design and domain literacy underpinned with pedagogical knowledge and research (Pearson and Jensen, 2026). [Pearson and Jensen observe \(p.37\) that:](#)

The ability of general-purpose AI to immediately produce complete products is easy to mistake for expertise in what it is being asked to do. These AI can create lesson plans for a topic in seconds. But because general-purpose AI do not exclusively draw from the evidence base of how students learn best, these lessons can overemphasise student activities and underemphasise the knowledge and related skills that should drive instruction. This can undermine effective teaching.

Additionally, the presence of neuroeducational myths such as “learning styles” in the literature and practice of the past points to a critical risk of generative AI in the education realm for teachers using AI to plan – generative AI relies on its training data, and LLMs are general-purpose tools – as Kirschner (2025) states – “It has no built-in instructional goals, no learning theory, and no pedagogical intent.” Pearson and Jensen (2026) remind us that:

General-purpose AI like ChatGPT is typically trained on vast amounts of publicly available content, so their outputs reflect dominant narratives in the public domain. In education, those narratives are not always grounded in the evidence from cognitive sciences on how students learn best.

A degree of caution and a willingness to query received wisdom is recommended throughout the journey. It may be that applying teacher knowledge with an awareness of AI’s characteristics can lead to better understanding, and better outcomes; starting where one is an expert, so that critique of AI outputs is easy and natural, before moving to unfamiliar ground.

Questions from Teachers

As always, if you have a question that you would like to see in this section, please email bsssenquiries@act.gov.au or ask someone from the Office when you see us at a coordinators' meeting or at Moderation Day.

Why are there now two assessment adjustment types in ACS for an insubstantial attempt?

Feedback from the Deputy Principals' meetings and other coordinator meetings told us that people would really value a way to differentiate an attempt at a task that was insubstantial because it wasn't serious, and an attempt that was insubstantial because it did not meet the minimum standard of the task.

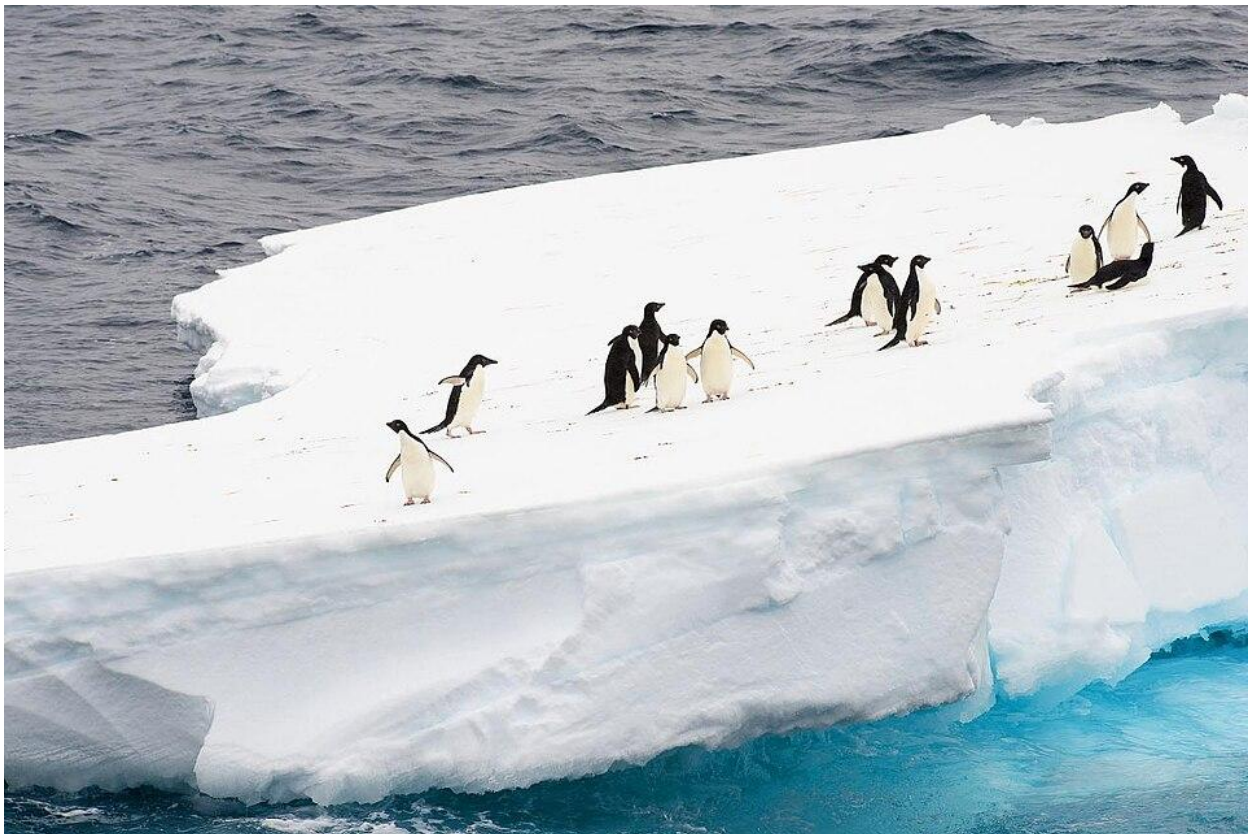
You will see these as options in ACS from early August. Either option will function as a normal insubstantial attempt; the item will not be "counted" toward the 70% of completed assessment for the unit.

What's going on with 2fA ACS?

Your school may have mentioned to you that we are working on improving the security of ACS by bringing it into line with ACT Government requirements for multi-factor authentication. This will be put into place across the summer holidays.

Who can reset my ACS password?

Your certification coordinator can reset your ACS password. Please don't contact the office to reset your password – we can't do it, because we can't identify you over the phone and we can't send the password by email as it is not a secure form of delivery. Your certification coordinator can re-set your password and give you the new password without needing to email it!



Antarctica 2013: Journey to the Crystal Desert - Christopher Michel. CC-2.0

Bringing Cultural Institutions into the Classroom



Mountains of the Antarctic Peninsula, in front of Peterman Island Luis Bartolomé Marcos CC-4.0

Canberra's cultural institutions, both national and local, are a great place to start when planning a program of learning that appeals to the interests of the students and allows for learning opportunities. This issue, we begin a new series of articles exploring some of the special exhibitions at our cultural institutions, and how teachers in different disciplines might bring them into the classroom.

Our first exhibition is Antarctica, on at the National Museum of Australia. We picked this exhibition because it is new and free and has a lot of possibilities for a range of subjects; you may be able to share the paperwork and planning with a colleague – even one who isn't in your faculty -- to get an excursion up and running.

The National Museum of Australia has a strong education programme and often runs welcome events for teachers when a new exhibition is launched. You can find their education webpage here:

<https://www.nma.gov.au/learn>

Ways to incorporate the exhibition into a range of subjects

These ideas are presented in the hope that they will spark a further idea or program of learning for you and your teaching. If you are interested in exploring the exhibition further, check out the Museum's website for bookings and more information.



Hodges, William, 1744-1797 :The ice islands, seen the 9th of January., 1773 (Public Domain)

The Arts

The Australian Antarctic program has a [huge arts component to it](#), with creators from a range of artistic disciplines being funded to visit Antarctica.

You could take students to the museum to view the exhibition, focussing on the elements of artistic expression both in the items exhibited, and in the curation of the exhibition itself.

Possible lenses through which you could respond to the exhibition:

Art which responds to place

The Antarctica exhibition could be used as part of a study of how art responds to place; this is an area of study that can encompass everything from Australia's first peoples to the Romantics and contemporary depictions of place.

Scientific art, observation and illustration

A two-pronged activity could see students researching and reporting on scientific art and then creating their own scientific art and illustration to document research. This could be linked to an institution, a species or place, or a personality (e.g., John James Audubon, Sydney Parkinson, Elizabeth Gould).

You can find more examples of scientific artwork through Australia's other institutions. For example, Museums Victoria has a large collection:

<https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/search?collectingarea=Scientific+Art+%26+Observation>

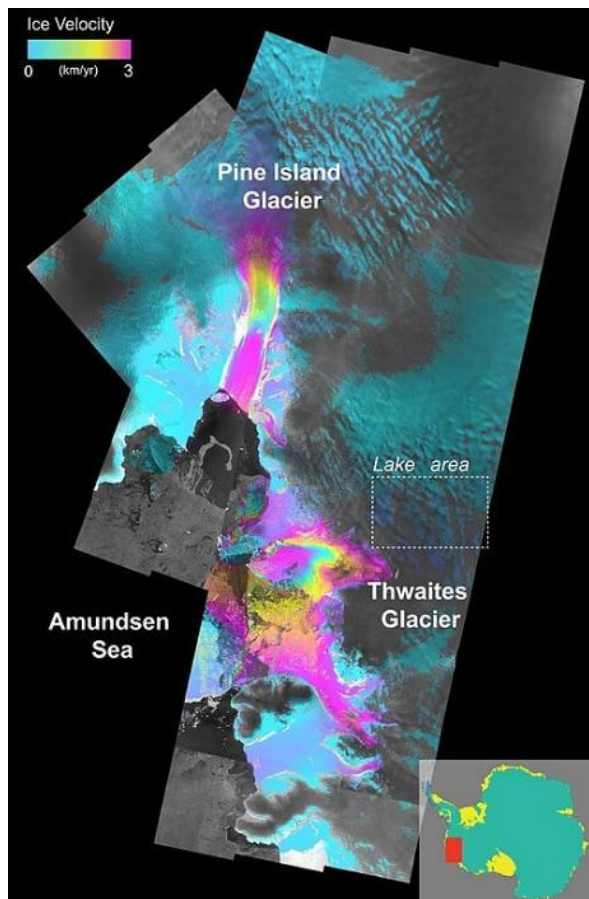
Curatorship

The team that curated the Antarctic exhibition had to winnow a collection of thousands of objects down to just a few hundred. Students could examine what was/was not included and argue for the inclusion of an object within a curated exhibition – for example, selecting an Antarctic artwork, or selecting artworks for a hypothetical exhibition relating to the area of study.

Museum Theatre

Canberra has a unique relationship with Museum Theatre, a theatrical form that uses actors to bring to life the exhibitions in institutions such as museums, galleries and libraries. The annual *Come Alive* festival celebrates our cultural institutions and the work of student actors.

Students could use the exhibition as a starting point for play building or museum theatre, illuminating an item and its history.



1European Space Agency: the speed of ice flow in West Antarctica. Contains modified Copernicus Sentinel data (2016)/CPOM University of Leeds–A. Hogg/University of Edinburgh–N. Gourmelen, CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO

The Sciences

Antarctica would be a strong area of study for a unit in any science course, but the Interdisciplinary Science course would offer a particular opportunity to explore. A range of ideas for a range of scientific disciplines is presented below:

Adaptations and selection pressures

Select one Antarctic species featured in the exhibition and collect evidence about body size, insulation, feeding strategies, reproductive strategies, and other adaptations.

Follow up questions in class – explain the selection pressures that exist in Antarctica and predict how individuals without these adaptations would be disadvantaged? OR evaluate whether behavioural adaptations are more important than structural adaptations for survival in in Antarctic environments OR compare adaptations of an Antarctic species with those of an organism from another extreme environment e.g. desert.

Climate Change

View the ice core displays in the exhibition and consider how Antarctic ice cores provide evidence for past climate conditions.

In class, students can research why ice cores are collected, what information is trapped within ice, how climate records are reconstructed and the timescale represented in Antarctic ice cores. Teachers could then provide students with Antarctic ice-core datasets. Students could analyse atmospheric CO₂ concentrations, methane concentrations, and temperature proxies

Follow up question in class - Evaluate the strength and limitations of ice-core evidence for anthropogenic climate change.

Homeostasis

Consider how the human body maintains homeostasis in Antarctica. Students should identify physiological challenges such as extreme cold, dehydration, isolation, altered sleep cycles and high UV exposure.

Students then explain the physiological responses that help maintain homeostasis in Antarctica and evaluate the limitations of human physiology in extreme environments and how technology helps overcome these limitations.

Ecological relationships

Students examine information about Antarctic wildlife and ecosystems and investigate why krill is considered a keystone species.

In class, provide students with a scenario e.g. krill population declines by 60%. Have students predict and justify the impacts on penguin/seal/whale populations and overall ecosystem stability.

Students then use evidence to determine which trophic level is most vulnerable to climate-driven environmental change.

STEM type activity - design a research station

Students use evidence collected from the exhibition to design an Antarctic research station. Students must justify their decisions including food production, health management, waste disposal, fuel source, water treatment, material selection, insulation, energy efficiency, and transport solutions.



Union Glacier Camp In Antarctica Christopher Michel CC-3.0

They could prepare a scientific proposal for the Australian Antarctic Division including annotated design diagrams, risk assessment, Environmental Impact Statement, scientific justification of design decisions, sustainability evaluation etc.

Humanities

The museum created a student experience that is relevant to many of the Humanities subjects, particularly Global Studies, Geography, and Politics: <https://www.nma.gov.au/antarctica/school-programs/excursions-senior-secondary-governing-ice>

Education Studies

The Museum has created a range of lesson plans and activities that complement the exhibition. You could use these as a jumping-off point for exploring experiential learning; for exploring age-appropriate choices in pedagogy and planning; or as a source for students to deconstruct in exploring how content and pedagogy interface in museum situations.

Technologies

Design Courses

Antarctica provides a challenge for designers in a range of industries, and there are examples in the exhibition of textile design in particular; functional garments that allow scientists to live and work comfortably in freezing temperatures.

As an unusual setting for designed environments, engineering studies and technologies, students could analyse the artefacts presented in the exhibition and design for these environments themselves.

Industrial technologies

Antarctica provides significant opportunities for people trained in industrial technologies to live and work as a member of a team. A case study of how people from the industry being taught (e.g., automotive technology) are employed in Antarctica could expand students' horizons as to their future work opportunities.

Hospitality

Cheffing is an Antarctic profession, and an unusual location to plan for. Students could learn about the conditions in Antarctica through the exhibition, and when planning service or a menu, plan one for the unique conditions and needs of the crew in Antarctica. A case study of how people from the industry are employed in Antarctica could expand students' horizons as to their future work opportunities.