



Shape of ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum

Early Childhood Studies A/T/M

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The *Shape of ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum: Social and Community Work and Early Childhood Studies* will guide the writing of the revised *Social and Community Work and Early Childhood Studies* courses.
- 1.2 The *BSSS Social and Community Work 2016-2020 Course* will be redeveloped as two courses, so there will be two shape papers. This shape paper is the *Shape of the ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum: Early Childhood Studies*. Both are currently available for consultation.
- 1.3 This shape paper has been prepared following consultation with Associate Professor Dr Kym Simoncini of the University of Canberra Faculty of Education, and Sarah Grieves Head Teacher of Children's Education and Care at CIT, Clare Smith CIT Teacher of Early Childhood Education and Care, Michele Foley, and Gina Nugent, Learning and Teaching Policy and Service Design, ACT Education Directorate and the deliberations of the *Early Childhood Studies* writing team.
- 1.4 The paper should be read in conjunction with The Shape of the ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum located at:
http://www.bsss.act.edu.au/curriculum/bsss_course_development_consultation

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The *Early Childhood Studies A/T/M* course will be the basis of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in ACT senior secondary schools.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies is reviewing the *Social and Community Work* course in the five-year course development cycle of improvement and renewal.
- 3.2 The current *Social and Community Work* course has three main pathways suggested by the units, the community sector, early childhood, and volunteering. These are discreet areas that enable students to develop significant skills, knowledge, understandings, and a range of general capabilities for day to day living, future work and studies. As such, these possible pathways will be developed as two separate courses *Social and Community Work and Early Childhood Studies*. In its updated forms, these courses will be contemporary and highly relevant to senior secondary students.
- 3.3 From 2016 to 2020 students have been enrolled in units from the volunteering, child focused and community services pathways of the current course. This indicates that students are interested in the three pathways provided by the present *Social and Community Work* course.
- 3.4 Most jurisdictions in Australia have discrete child focused and community sector focused courses, some of which are related to vocational packages, e.g. South Australia's *Child Studies and Community Studies*; NSW *Family and Community Studies and Exploring Early Childhood*. Some are purely through VET training packages and others are not. Having a *Social and Community Work* course and an *Early Childhood Studies* course will be consistent with other jurisdictions. It is not proposed that *Early Childhood Studies* will have an embedded VET Training Package.
- 3.5 *Social and Community Work and Early Childhood Studies* will not duplicate content. These courses will touch on similar theories to Sociology and Psychology, but will apply them to interdisciplinary and applied purposes, and particular contexts.
- 3.6 Students may undertake both courses, *Social and Community Work and Early Childhood Studies*.
- 3.7 All courses under development are required to meet Board design specifications and to align with Board requirements for senior secondary curriculum. These specifications align with

ACARA course design specifications and provide teachers with flexibility to plan, teach and assess according to the needs and interests of their students.

- 3.8** The *Social and Community Work* and *Early Childhood Studies* courses will be developed under the *Humanities and Social Sciences Framework*. Students will engage in the analysis and applications of concepts from Humanities and Social Science subjects, such as Sociology, Geography, Philosophy, Politics, and History. The Framework located at: http://www.bsss.act.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/437300/Humanities_and_Social_Sciences_Framework.pdf

The rationale for this framework describes Humanities and Social Sciences courses:

Humanities and Social Sciences is the study of how people process and document the human experience and their place in it. It empowers students to better understand humankind, society and culture and communicate ideas for the future. Humanities and Social Sciences examines what it means to be human and to ask questions about society and its institutions.

- 3.9** All courses based on this framework should enable students to:

- compare and contrast theories, concepts, and principles
- critically analyse concepts, principles, ideas, and change
- synthesise different interpretations, representations, and perspectives
- evaluate significance of information, processes, and concepts
- apply critical and creative thinking skills
- reflect on own thinking and learning
- communicate creatively and critically in a range of modes for a variety of purposes. organise resources and material to create quality products and services.

Courses developed under this Framework provide details of course content through the component units of the course. While this content will differ according to the particular course, all content will be chosen to enable students to work towards the achievement of the common and agreed goals of the Framework.

- 3.10** Concepts from the Humanities and Social Sciences Framework (page 6) build on ACARA's F-10 Humanities and Social Sciences curriculum:

- identity
- society
- change
- culture
- environment
- relationships
- empathy
- responsibility
- values.

- 3.11** All courses of study for the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate should enable students to develop essential capabilities for twenty-first century learners. The *Australian Curriculum General Capabilities* comprise an integrated and interconnected set of knowledge, skills, behaviours, and dispositions that students develop and use in their learning across the curriculum.

3.12 The importance of the senior years of schooling as a critical transition point for young people is highlighted in two extracts from the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*:

All Australian Governments and the education community need to support students in their senior years by helping them acquire the cognitive and social skills necessary for life after school and equip students to remain engaged in learning throughout life.

Australian Governments commit to working with the education community to provide a senior secondary education that equips young people with the skills, knowledge, values, and capabilities to succeed in employment, personal and civic life.

<https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>

4. THE CONTEXT OF THE ACT

4.1 Courses of study for the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate:

- provide a variety of pathways, to meet different learning needs and encourage students to complete their secondary education
- enable students to develop the essential capabilities for twenty-first century learners
- empower students as active participants in their own learning
- engage students in contemporary issues relevant to their lives
- foster students' intellectual, social, and ethical development
- nurture students' wellbeing, and physical and spiritual development
- enable effective and respectful participation in a diverse society.

4.2 Each course of study:

- comprises an integrated and interconnected set of knowledge, skills, behaviours, and dispositions that students develop and use in their learning across the curriculum
- is based on a model of learning that integrates intended student outcomes, pedagogy, and assessment
- outlines teaching strategies which are grounded in learning principles and encompass quality teaching
- promotes intellectual quality, establish a rich learning environment, and generates relevant connections between learning and life experiences
- provides formal assessment and certification of students' achievements.

4.3 In consideration of the ACT context, and in response to contemporary research and literature, the *Early Childhood Studies* course should include:

- a student-centred pedagogical approach
- the educational needs of young people with respect to an understanding of evidence and theories about early childhood
- working and communicating with others
- the Humanities and Social Sciences Framework Achievement Standards
- the needs of different schools and sectors (government and non-government)
- awareness of local, national, and global issues
- ethical, environmental and sustainability factors.

5. AIMS OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES CURRICULUM

Early Childhood Studies explores the development, needs, rights and education of children. Students develop knowledge and understanding of children through analysing key concepts and theories. They also consider the importance and interrelationships of child health, children's behaviour, well-being of children and learning frameworks. Students investigate contemporary issues that impact children in a range of communities and contexts. This course will prepare students for further study and work in education and care, as well as parenting. The knowledge, skills and understandings gained in this course have the potential to benefit children and all society. (Manning et al, 2017, p.62)

The *Early Childhood Studies* course enables students to:

- develop knowledge of the different theories about early childhood and draw on a range of perspectives in their interactions with children, such as theories from Psychology, Sociology, Biology, History, Anthropology, Literature
- understand child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from immediate settings of family and school to broad cultural values, laws, and customs
- understand the different domains of development, including social and emotional, physical, and cognitive
- investigate contemporary research in early childhood, such as executive function, neuroscience, trauma informed teaching, nature play, indigenous perspectives
- assist children to play, learn and develop in nurturing and stimulating environments during a period of rapid growth and development
- to understand significant regulatory documents and frameworks, including the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *National Quality Framework*, and the *Early Years Learning Framework*
- understand the nature of caring for and educating children in family and early childhood education settings
- develop a foundation of learning for further study
- develop academic research, analysis and writing skills and make evidence-based decisions and judgments
- develop communication, collaboration, and organisation skills
- reflect on learning about and ethical engagement with Early Childhood Studies.

6. STRUCTURE OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES CURRICULUM

These units are drawn from the existing Early Childhood focused units of the existing Social and Community Work course. They have been reworked in relation to current research in this area as well as in consultation with Dr Kym Simoncini of the University of Canberra, Sarah Grieves and Clare Smith of CIT and Michele Foley and Gina Nugent of the Education Directorate. These units will provide students with a knowledge base, skills, and understandings with which to pursue further studies in this area, or to apply to their own parenting.

RATIONALE

Early Childhood Studies explores the development, needs, rights and education of children. Students develop knowledge and understanding of children through analysing key concepts and theories. They also consider the importance and interrelationships of child health, children's behaviour, well-being of children and learning frameworks. Students investigate contemporary issues that impact children in a range of communities and contexts. This course will prepare students for further study and work in education and care, as well as parenting. The knowledge, skills and understandings gained in this course have the potential to benefit children and all society

UNITS

The units have been drafted for discussion as follows:

Play and Learning

Students examine how children play and learn. They investigate perspectives on play, such as contemporary research, cross-cultural, and historical, to understand its role in childhood. They examine the role of play in child development and a child's right to play.

Children's Health

Students examine the factors that affect the health of children at different stages of childhood. They understand that childhood is a unique and intense period for growth and development and apply that understanding to consider the emotional and physical wellbeing of children.

Childhood

Students examine the domains of child development and theories of development. Students examine research on neurological development in children, such as executive function, trauma, and risk taking. They examine the significance of relationships in child development.

Perspectives on Children

Students examine a range of cultural, historical, political, and philosophical perspectives on childhood, including the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and *the Image of the Child*. They analyse the applications and consequences of those perspectives on children's experiences and how they have changed over time and place.

Independent Study

An Independent study unit has an important place in senior secondary courses. It is a valuable pedagogical approach that empowers students to make decisions about their own learning. An Independent study unit must be proposed by an individual student for their own study and negotiated with their teacher. An Independent study unit requires the principal's written approval. The program of learning for an Independent study unit must meet all the content descriptions as appears in the course. Pre-requisites for an Independent study unit are that students have completed at least **THREE** standard 1.0 units from a course.

7. CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Incorporating a futures orientation

The Future of Education and Skills Education 2030 stresses the importance of being future focused in the development of curriculum for schools. gain knowledge and skills for further learning and work in a socio-economically vital and rapidly growing economic sector. (OECD, 2018, p. 6) The *Early Childhood Studies* course has a futures orientation in addressing the growing need for young people to be innovative, responsible, and aware:

To prepare for 2030, people should be able to think creatively, develop new products and services, new jobs, new processes and methods, new ways of thinking and living, new enterprises, new sectors, new business models and new social models. Increasingly, innovation springs not from individuals thinking and working alone, but through cooperation and collaboration with others to draw on existing knowledge to create new knowledge. The constructs that underpin the competency include adaptability, creativity, curiosity, and open-mindedness.

[http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/E2030_Position_Paper_\(05.04.2018\).pdf](http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/E2030_Position_Paper_(05.04.2018).pdf)

The course does more than prepare students for the world of work. It enables students to develop the essential capabilities for twenty-first century learners:

Education has a vital role to play in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future. Learning to form clear and purposeful goals, work with others with different perspectives, find untapped opportunities and identify multiple solutions to big problems will be essential in the coming years. Education needs to aim to do more than prepare young people for the world of work; it needs to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible, and engaged citizens.

[http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/E2030_Position_Paper_\(05.04.2018\).pdf](http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/contact/E2030_Position_Paper_(05.04.2018).pdf)

7.2 Early Childhood Studies curriculum

The *Early Childhood Studies* course has an important place in ACT senior secondary curriculum. The curriculum promotes social analysis and ethical awareness, and in creating students that are active participants in their own community. Students are challenged to think about and respond to contemporary social issues relevant to their lives. Their personal and social development is fostered through working independently and collaboratively, and in the development of communication skills and intercultural awareness.

7.3 Equity and opportunity

The *Early Childhood Studies* course is inclusive of students' needs and interests. It provides flexibility and choice for teachers and students. The factors that influence this choice include school and community contexts, local community learning opportunities, contemporary and local issues, and available learning resources.

7.4 Connections to other learning areas

The *Early Childhood Studies* course builds on knowledge skills and understanding from students' previous studies of Australian Curriculum courses. The course builds on the Technologies learning area developed in the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences F – 10, in its focus on understanding individuals and societies.

The courses analyses and applies ideas from Psychology, Sociology, Biology and History, in particular, to practical settings aimed at education children and bringing about social change and support. The particular practical focuses of these courses in the fields of education and community organizations provides a clear distinction from other courses.

Students learn about individuals and societies in Humanities and Social Sciences subjects from P to 10. These courses build on that knowledge base about social dynamics and the individual's relationship with society.

7.5 Role of digital technologies

Students and teachers integrate a growing range of online information, tools, and applications. These include digitised online materials such as historical documents, books, newspapers, images and organisational websites, policy documents and curriculum documents, as well as other online resources including databases, reference works and indexes to library holdings.

7.6 Clarity of curriculum

The curriculum is substantial and flexible. It is sufficiently rich and descriptive to guide teachers with limited experience but avoid excessive prescription that would hamper experienced teachers from exercising their skills. The curriculum document is expressed clearly in terms that are accessible to a new teacher, while allowing all teachers to enhance it with their interests and expertise.

7.7 Breadth and depth of study

Content descriptions specify the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to learn and that teachers are expected to teach. Teachers are required to develop a program of learning that allows students to demonstrate all the content descriptions.

A program of learning is what a college provides to implement the course for a subject meeting students' needs and interests. It is at the discretion of the teacher to emphasis some content descriptions over others. The teacher may teach additional (not listed) content if it meets the specific unit goals providing that it does not duplicate content in other units.

7.8 The nature of the learner

The courses address the needs of diverse learners and cater for A, T and M levels of study.

7.9 General capabilities

Skills and understanding related to numeracy, literacy and ICT are further developed and used in *Early Childhood Studies*, as are problem solving and creativity. Critical and creative thinking are developed when students explore problems, develop innovative ideas, generate solutions, and evaluate and refine their ideas. They develop personal and social capability while working collaboratively and independently and build on self-management skills. They develop intercultural understanding as they engage with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences.

7.10 Cross curriculum perspectives

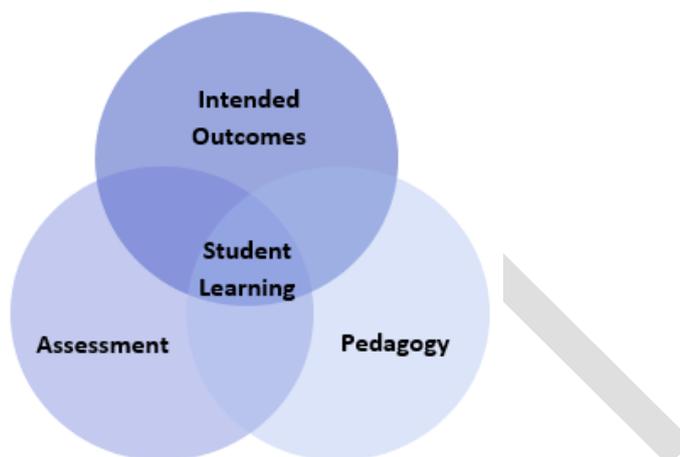
Each of the perspectives, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and Sustainability are represented in ways that are appropriate to in the course.

8. PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

The underpinning beliefs and learning principles for the development of ACT Board of Senior Secondary School curriculum as are follows:

8.1 Underpinning beliefs

- All students are able to learn
- Learning is a partnership between students and teachers
- Teachers are responsible for advancing student learning.



8.2 Learning Principles

1. Learning builds on existing knowledge, understandings, and skills.
(Prior knowledge)
2. When learning is organised around major concepts, principles, and significant real-world issues, within and across disciplines, it helps students make connections and build knowledge structures.
(Deep knowledge and connectedness)
3. Learning is facilitated when students actively monitor their own learning and consciously develop ways of organising and applying knowledge within and across contexts.
(Metacognition)
4. Learners' sense of self and motivation to learn affects learning.
(Self-concept)
5. Learning needs to take place in a context of high expectations.
(High expectations)
6. Learners learn in different ways and at different rates.
(Individual differences)
7. Different cultural environments, including the use of language, shape learners' understandings and the way they learn.
(Socio-cultural effects)
8. Learning is a social and collaborative function as well as an individual one.
(Collaborative learning)
9. Learning is strengthened when learning outcomes and criteria for judging learning are made explicit and when students receive frequent feedback on their progress.
(Explicit expectations and feedback).

9. CONCLUSION

The *Early Childhood Studies* course is to be developed under the *Humanities and Social Sciences Framework*. Students examine the development, needs, rights and education of children. They also investigate the importance and interrelationships of child health, children's behaviour, well-being of children and learning frameworks. Students critically analyse contemporary issues that impact children in a range of communities and contexts. The knowledge, skills and understandings gained in this course have the potential to benefit children and all society. Students work both independently and collaboratively and develop interpersonal and intrapersonal skills suitable for life, employment, and further study.

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