



Shape of ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum:

Religion

July 2019

for public consultation

for public consultation

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Shape of ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum: Religion will guide the writing of the Religious Studies and World Religions courses.
- 1.2 This paper has been prepared following analysis of feedback from public consultation to the Humanities and Social Sciences Shape Paper; consultation with Professor Peta Goldberg RSM FACE; and the deliberations of the Religious Education Advisory Group.
- 1.3 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 Religious Studies and World Religions courses will be the basis of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in ACT senior secondary schools. It will be useful for and useable by experienced and less experienced teachers.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies is reviewing the Religion Curriculum in the five -year course development cycle of improvement and renewal.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The Religion courses are to be developed under the Humanities and Social Science 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:

Humanities and Social Sciences is the study of how people process and document the human experience and their place in it. It seeks to empower 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.

By analysing how people have tried to make moral, spiritual and intellectual sense of the world, it promotes empathy and understanding. It also requires students to deal critically and logically with what can be subjective, complex and imperfect information.

Humanities and Social Sciences courses provide a context for the contemporary world and a framework for students to critically and creatively assess possible, probable and preferred futures for themselves and the world in which they live. It empowers students to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse and complex and interdependent world.

The study of Humanities and Social Sciences promotes well-rounded, thinking, analytical young citizens equipped for the demands of the 21st Century globalised world.

Courses written under this framework focus on concepts from a discipline or draw ideas from a number of disciplines. The analytical, critical and communication skills taught in the Humanities and Social Sciences will be valuable for future study, work or profession. (page 5)

3.4 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.

3.5 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.

3.6 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.

In particular, Intercultural Understanding provides a context when developing the Religious Studies and World Religions courses.

Students develop intercultural understanding as they learn to value their own cultures, languages and beliefs, and those of others. They come to understand how personal, group and national beliefs and identities are shaped, and the variable and changing nature of culture. Intercultural understanding involves students learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect.

Intercultural understanding is an essential part of living with others in the diverse world of the twenty-first century. It assists young people to become responsible local and global citizens, equipped through their education for living and working together in an interconnected world.

Intercultural understanding combines personal, interpersonal and social knowledge and skills. It involves students learning to, value, personally reflect and view critically their own cultural perspectives and practices and those of others, through their interactions with people, texts and contexts across the curriculum.

Intercultural understanding encourages students to make connections between their own worlds and the worlds of others, to build on shared interests and commonalities, and to live with difference. It develops students' abilities to communicate and empathise with others, and to analyse intercultural

experiences critically. It offers opportunities for them to consider their beliefs and attitudes in a new light, and so gain insight into themselves and others.

Intercultural understanding stimulates students' interest in the lived experience of others. It cultivates and promotes values and dispositions such as curiosity, empathy, respect, responsibility and critical awareness, resulting in positive intercultural behaviours. Though all are significant in learning to live together, three dispositions – expressing empathy, demonstrating respect and taking responsibility – have been identified as critical to the development of Intercultural Understanding in the Australian Curriculum.

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/intercultural-understanding/>

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, religion curricula should include:

- a student-centred pedagogical approach
- an interdisciplinary approach
- the educational needs of young people with respect to religion, cultural and belief systems
- the Humanities and Social Sciences Framework and Achievement Standards
- the needs of different schools and sectors (government and non-government)
- religious diversity
- the presence of religion in the public sphere

- the right to freedom and expression of religion and belief
- global and local issues.

5. AIMS OF THE RELIGION CURRICULUM

5.1 According to contemporary research and literature, teaching about religions and beliefs should be:

- sensitive, balanced, inclusive, impartial, and based on human rights principles relating to freedom of religion or belief
- supportive of intercultural understanding
- fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship.

5.2 The study of religions and beliefs fosters personal, social, moral and ethical development, and promotes intercultural understanding by:

- providing opportunity to create spaces for intercultural dialogue to foster religious and cultural cohesion
- addressing respectfully sensitive issues arising from diversity of religions and philosophical convictions
- developing skills of critical evaluation and reflection with regard to understanding the perspectives and ways of life of different religions and philosophical convictions
- challenging prejudice and stereotypes, which are barriers to intercultural dialogue, and promoting the human dignity of all.

5.3 Students are provided with the opportunity to develop knowledge and understandings in regard to:

- the right of individuals to adhere to a particular religion or belief system, including the right not to believe in any religious or belief system
- an ability to connect issues relating to religions and beliefs to wider human rights issues (such as freedom of religion and freedom of expression)
- the promotion of peace (i.e. the capacity of religions and beliefs for solving and preventing conflicts)
- an understanding of the importance of religious or philosophical beliefs in a person's life
- the ability, based on sound knowledge, to recognize and to question existing negative stereotypes about religious communities and their members.

6. STRUCTURE OF THE RELIGION CURRICULUM

The principles underpinning the structure of this course is Big Ideas. The theory of the use of Big Ideas in the curriculum was developed by Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins. Big ideas are what we want students to understand by the end of their study.

| | World Religions | Religious Studies |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Course rationale | <p>The World Religions course teaches students about world religions and spiritual traditions, their contexts, development and core beliefs, influential figures and their contribution to world history. Students analyse a variety of different religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, to encourage empathy and understanding of diversity. World Religions is an interdisciplinary course. It addresses how religion and spirituality relates to other socio-cultural factors including language, ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender and class. Students learn how religion and spirituality play a role in a wide variety of modern issues.</p> | <p>Religious Studies is the study of identity, beliefs, community, society, human behaviour, ethics, morality and culture in the context of religion. In a complex and changing world, students explore the search for meaning and purpose of human existence. Students examine religious concepts through analysis, independent research and open critical inquiry to become active and informed citizens, and lifelong learners. Religious Studies engages students in a dynamic process of making meaning of the world. Religious Studies is an interdisciplinary course.</p> |
| Units | <p>Unit 1 Religion and Popular Culture <i>Unit Description:</i> Students explore the relationship between religions and popular culture. They examine how religions and spirituality affect and appropriate popular cultures, and how popular cultures create and/or re-enforce stereotypes. A minimum of two belief systems must be studied in depth. Possible approaches: Using the lens of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media representations of religion • contemporary expressions of religious life • new religious movements | <p>Unit 1 Expressions of Faith and Spirit <i>Unit Description:</i> Students investigate how religious and spiritual traditions and beliefs shape, form and support creative expression. Students explore forms of communication such as literature, art, oral storytelling, music, drama and dance that seek to explain or illustrate religious or philosophical ideas or experiences. The unit also examines how religious expression impacts on and interacts with, groups in society. Possible approaches: Using the lens of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sacred texts and religious literature • sacred place and space • visual and performing arts |

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| | <p>Unit 2 Influence, Community, Culture and Power</p> <p><i>Unit Description:</i> Students explore the power relationships between religions, cultures and communities. Students examine the influence of single and multiple religions on cultures and communities. A minimum of two belief systems must be studied in depth.</p> <p>Possible approaches:</p> <p>Using the lens of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theocracies and religious fundamentalism • religious foundations of government, politics and law • colonialism and decolonisation • conflict and cooperation | <p>Unit 2 A Good Life</p> <p><i>Unit Description:</i> Students examine moral and ethical principles of various religions and worldviews that contribute to a ‘good life’. Students explore different perspectives and paths to personal and shared fulfilment, and social responsibility.</p> <p>Possible approaches:</p> <p>Using the lens of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • religion and social reform • religion in action • ways of living |
| Units | <p>Unit 3 Narratives and World Views</p> <p><i>Unit Description:</i> Students examine how religious and spiritual narratives represent themes such as connection with the land, suffering in the world, why humans seem to be flawed, how they might find liberation or salvation or how they might make the world a better place.</p> <p>Possible approaches</p> <p>Using the lens of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mythology • cosmology • divine revelation and inspiration • critical theory and meta-narrative | <p>Unit 3 Exploring Meaning</p> <p><i>Unit Description:</i> Students examine over time and across cultures how humanity has sought to understand the why and how of existence. Students explore how people engage with the origin and meaning of religious, mystical, spiritual or transformative experiences.</p> <p>Possible approaches:</p> <p>Using the lens of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mystical experience • ritual, meditation and prayer • religious dimensions • indigenous spiritualities • world views |
| | <p>Unit 4 The Global Religious Landscape</p> <p><i>Unit Description:</i> Students explore factors that influence participation in religion in societies and how that has changed over time and place, for example, history, technology, demography, economics, globalisation, immigration, culture, choice and education. A minimum of two belief systems must be studied in depth.</p> <p>Possible approaches:</p> <p>Using the lens of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secularism and secularisation • religious diaspora • globalisation of religious movements | <p>Unit 4 Continuity, Change and Diversity</p> <p><i>Unit Description:</i> Students examine how religion and/or philosophy has adapted to change and diversity. They explore continuity of traditions, beliefs and values, and responses to emerging knowledge and innovation.</p> <p>Possible approaches:</p> <p>Using the lens of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scientific and technological revolutions • contemporary challenges • historical perspectives • reform movements |

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| Units | <p>Unit 5 Negotiated Study</p> <p>A negotiated 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. A negotiated study unit is decided upon by a class, group(s) or individual student in consultation with the teacher and with the Principal's approval. The program of learning for a negotiated study unit must meet all the content descriptions as appears in the unit.</p> | <p>Unit 5 Negotiated Study</p> <p>A negotiated 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. A negotiated study unit is decided upon by a class, group(s) or individual student in consultation with the teacher and with the Principal's approval. The program of learning for a negotiated study unit must meet all the content descriptions as appears in the unit.</p> |
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A *Studies of Religion* course makes provision to draw units from the *World Religions* and *Religious Studies* courses.

7. CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Incorporating a futures orientation

To equip students to engage in the world in which they live, they need to understand religious diversity and world religions.

In the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, ministers note that 'Global integration and international mobility' have heightened the need 'to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship'. The declaration observes that the growing importance of India, China and other Asia-Pacific nations sparks the need for Australians to become 'Asia literate', as well as the need for greater environmental awareness, information and communication technology (ICT) skills and the augmented importance of educational attainment.

A futures orientation focused on globalisation, the rise of the knowledge economy, the importance of sustainability, the rich diversity of the Australian people and their distinctive position within the Asia-Pacific region make an informed understanding of social, cultural and religious diversity all the more important.

Religion courses have a broad and comprehensive foundation from which the implications for Australia can be grasped. With such a foundation that the longevity and richness of Indigenous history will be appreciated; the dimensions of our migrant experience and cultural diversity will be intelligible; that our relations with the Asian region will be comprehended; and the distinctive as well as the shared and derivative character of our beliefs will be revealed.

7.2 Religion curriculum

The religion curriculum retains an important place in ACT senior secondary curriculum. The curriculum fosters higher order thinking and the skills of critical and intercultural understanding that equip students to take an active part in democratic discussion of the role of religion and spiritual beliefs in national and global issues.

7.3 Equity and opportunity

The Religious Studies and World Religions courses provide 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.

The Religious Studies and World Religions courses provide opportunities for students to develop an understanding of aspects of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They include opportunities to describe ideas developed by Indigenous peoples to explain the world around them and analyse reasons why Indigenous peoples may have different views and perspectives.

7.4 Connections to other learning areas

Religious Studies and World Religions are interdisciplinary courses. The learning acquired by students in religion contributes to learning in other areas such as sociology, history, psychology, geography, the Arts and English. The curriculum for courses will identify where there are links or opportunities to build cross curriculum learning. The connections arise naturally out of the religion curriculum.

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 items from museum collections, 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 Tertiary (T), Accredited (A) and Modified (M) levels of study.

7.9 General capabilities

Skills and understanding related to numeracy, literacy and ICT are further developed and used in both Religious Studies and World Religions, as are thinking skills and creativity. In addition, capabilities such as self-management, teamwork, intercultural understandings, ethical awareness, and social competence are represented in the courses in ways appropriate to that area.

7.10 Cross curriculum perspectives

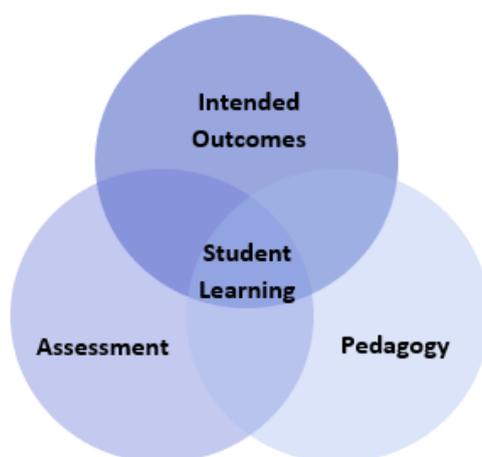
Each of these perspectives, Indigenous education, sustainability and Australia's links with Asia, are represented in the courses in ways appropriate to that area. Curriculum documents are explicit as to how the perspectives are dealt with in each course and how links can be made between learning areas.

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 Religious Studies and World Religions courses are to be developed under the Humanities and Social Sciences framework. The study of Humanities and Social Sciences promotes critical and creative thinking and intercultural understanding, equipping young citizens for the demands and challenges of the 21st Century globalised world. The Religious Studies and World Religions courses equip students to analyse how people have tried to make moral, spiritual and intellectual sense of the world.

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