



## **Shape of ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum**

### **Beginning Classical Languages A/T/M**

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## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The *Shape of ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum: Beginning Classical Languages* will guide the writing of the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) *Beginning Classical Languages A/T/M* course.
- 1.2 This paper has been prepared following consultation with Professor Caillan Davenport FAHA, FHEA, FRHistS, FSA of the ANU and the deliberations of the *Beginning Classical Languages* course writers.
- 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](http://www.bsss.act.edu.au/curriculum/bsss_course_development_consultation)

## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The *Beginning Classical Languages 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 existing Beginning Classical Languages course in the ten-year course development cycle of improvement and renewal. The requirements of the new Languages Framework approved by the Board in 2026 will also feature in this redevelopment.
- 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.

The BSSS *Beginning Classical Languages A/T/M* course is to be developed under the *Languages Framework*, reflecting the nature of the discipline. The *Languages Framework* is located here:

The rationale for this framework describes Languages as:

In learning a language, students learn how to interact with others across languages and cultures to share meaning and learn about themselves, others and the world. It is a complex undertaking that engages students interpersonally, interculturally, creatively and intellectually. Students interpret, respond to and create and exchange language for a wide variety of purposes in a range of contexts. They reflect upon ideas, concepts, decisions, and choices and their impact. In learning about self and others in a diverse world they become multilingual communicators and meaning makers who engage socially and interculturally with others.

Language learning is a continual, cumulative and contextual process that inspires curiosity. Students aim to engage in meaningful communications using a repertoire of cultural and conceptual insights, vocabulary and grammar, and develop intercultural capability. They become flexible and creative users of complex systems of meaning and interaction. Students select from personal repertoires with attention to audience, purpose, context and textual features and enjoy the complex and creative act of self-expression and mediating meaning across languages and cultures. They use language respectfully, appropriately and creatively to pursue their goals.

Language learning is also a reflective process of self-discovery, personal transformation and identity formation. Students take time to reorganise thoughts, perceptions and ways of thinking to accommodate new world views inherent to the language. In opening their minds to diverse ways of thinking, being and living, students reflect on their understanding of themselves, their world and their own repertoire of languages and cultures. They re-examine closely held beliefs and preconceptions about being in the world and develop an evolving and reflexive sense of self in relation to others.

Students develop the learning skills, attitudes and dispositions to acquire a language and expand their meaning making repertoires and as such becoming more sensitive to language and texts and more adept at learning and using additional languages. They develop the dispositions of empathy, compassion, and perseverance, resilience and confidence in the face of uncertainty.

With experience in interacting and communicating across languages and cultures, students will develop the capability to navigate a complex, dynamic, and diverse world and pursue further studies. They will develop skills such as appropriate risk-taking and situational adaptability which are critical to living in a rapidly changing world. These transferable skills will be highly sought after in a variety of occupations, community settings and integral to living a full, ethical and rich life as global and local citizens.

**3.3** All courses based on the Languages Framework should enable students to:

- Become confident communicators who can use the target language effectively in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes, developing interpersonal skills
- Build intercultural capability by exploring the connections between experiencing language and culture, reflecting on self and others in the world, and the ways of the world, to foster respect, empathy, and local and global awareness
- Apply increasingly complex linguistic concepts to both the target language and own language(s), developing accuracy, creativity, reflexivity<sup>1</sup>, and adaptability in interpreting, creating and exchanging meaning
- Use the target and own language(s) to gain and [mediate](#) knowledge, debate ideas, and share meanings, to enable engagement with others, collaboration, and problem-solving across cultures
- Build the confidence to learn independently, experiment with the language, and reflect on experiences to develop the creativity, open-mindedness, reflective and reflexive practices, and resilience needed to be lifelong learners

**3.4** Concepts from the *Languages Framework* (page 3) build on ACARA's F-10 Languages curriculum. Content in Languages is organised under 2 strands:

- Communicating meaning in [Language]
- Understanding language and culture

The 2 strands are interrelated and inform and support each other. The structure in Languages is presented in one or 2 sequences that offer alternative entry points into language learning, from Foundation to Year 10 and/or Year 7 to Year 10.

#### **Engaging with the ancient [Country/City] world through texts**

This involves students learning to use language for communicative purposes in interpreting, creating and exchanging meaning. There are 2 sub-strands:

- Accessing and responding to [Classical language] texts
- Translating

#### **Understanding language and culture**

This involves students learning to analyse and understand language and culture as resources for interpreting and shaping meaning in intercultural exchange. There are 2 sub-strands:

- Understanding systems of language
- Understanding the interrelationship of language and culture

**In the ACT, and to align with Modern languages, we adopt and adapt the assessment criteria to be:**

- Communicating Meaning in Language
- Understanding Language and Culture
- Reflection on Learning and Self in the World

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<sup>1</sup> See Languages Framework - Appendix D.

**3.5** 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. While developing all capabilities, in particular, the *Beginning Classical Languages A/T/M* course will engage with the capabilities of Intercultural Understanding, Creative and Critical Thinking, Personal and Social capability and Digital Literacy.

### **Intercultural Understanding**

The Intercultural Understanding capability is core to Languages. In learning a language, students develop an appreciation of languages, cultures and beliefs including their own. Students learn about the strong interrelationships between languages and cultures and how these shape identity. They develop and apply intercultural understanding to value and respect diverse ways of communicating, thinking and behaving. They recognise how these are reflected in social and cultural practices, and language use. Students develop connections with communities and cultures, become aware of similarities and differences, and cultivate mutual respect. The Intercultural Understanding capability assists students to navigate and reflect on language use, perspectives and behaviours.

More information on the General Capabilities may be found [here](#):

### **Critical and Creative Thinking**

Languages develop students' ability to think logically, critically and creatively. It provides opportunities for students to inquire, generate, analyse and reflect on a range of information, ideas and perspectives in spoken and written texts. Students learn how to analyse texts and interpret how the language of texts conveys meaning. They reflect on the thinking and processes used to mediate meaning between languages. They apply their knowledge of language as a system to new contexts and learn to revise and modify texts when considering context, purpose and audience.

More information on the General Capabilities may be found [here](#):

### **Personal and Social capability**

Languages enhance students' personal and social capability. Through the *Communicating meaning in Language* strand, students develop a range of interpersonal skills essential to effective communication, such as active listening, decision-making, negotiation and collaboration. Content in the *Communicating Meaning in Language, Understanding language and culture, and Reflecting on Learning and the Self* strands encourages students to develop an appreciation of language, diverse cultures and perspectives, and recognise how these influence self and behaviours.

More information on the General Capabilities may be found [here](#):

### **Digital Literacy**

Languages develop students' digital literacy capability as they use a range of digital tools to access and create information, ideas and perspectives in multimodal texts. Students develop understanding of how they can use digital tools to access diverse language-speaking communities and authentic texts. They evaluate and analyse information in digital formats and develop understanding of their intended context, purpose and audience.

More information on the General Capabilities may be found [here](#):

## 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' well-being, 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 *Beginning Classical Languages* course should include:

- application of a student-centred pedagogical approach
- alignment to the Languages Framework and Achievement Standards
- applying communication, evaluation and reflection skills in *Beginning Classical Languages*
- developing an understanding of the classical world being studied, and the experiences, thoughts and perspectives of classical authors
- opportunities to enjoy studies of language, the classical world studied and its texts
- recognising the connections between the classical worlds and the contemporary world
- developing an appreciation of language as a system and the rules and variations that govern a language
- appreciate the interaction between language and culture
- develop skills in mediating meaning and culture across and within languages
- develop the translation skills common to studies in classical languages
- develop research, interpersonal, communication, digital and critical literacy skills

## 5. AIMS OF THE BEGINNING CLASSICAL LANGUAGES CURRICULUM

The *Beginning Classical Languages* course provides opportunities for students to develop their ability to mediate meaning effectively across languages and classical cultures. They will develop critical literacy skills and a deep appreciation of nuance and distinction in language through the process of translation. Classical studies also result in a deep historical understanding of the cultures and people of the classical world and period studied. They will have the opportunity to be introduced to linguistic and social science analyses and build an understanding of the function and form of thought, behaviour, and social practices revealed in and through language.

Learning a classical language allows students to experience the joy and fascination of entering the ancient world through the words, perspectives and experiences of the ancient authors. As Nicola Gardini suggests there is much to be gained by exploring what the ancients had to say about personhood, life and living, the significance of which continues to reward students with meaningful insights and advice into their own lives.<sup>2</sup> Coulter George also notes the interest and pleasure in decoding the systems and practices of classical languages and the meanings to be found, and of finding insights into the connections linguistically and culturally between then and now.<sup>3</sup> The systemic complexity of Classical languages provides considerable cognitive training, and research suggests such studies “can also support the development of literacy skills and critical skills.”<sup>4</sup>

Other transferable skills include aiding the development of vocabulary and morphological awareness to support further development of L1 literacy and language skills, due to the heritage of classical languages in many modern languages, be it Latin and Greek to English, Spanish, Italian and Modern Greek, or Sanskrit to Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, classical languages provide an opportunity for students of diasporic communities to explore and celebrate a significant aspect of their personal identity. Reflecting on and exploring the heritage of Ancient Rome, Classical Greece and the empires of the Indian subcontinent in the contemporary cultures and languages of those contemporary countries can be a significant source of interest, pride and self-identification for young people in the ACT.

Learning an additional language broadens students’ horizons, fostering personal, social, cultural, and employment opportunities in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. It promotes intercultural understanding by enabling students to explore cultural diversity and similarities between their own language and others, while reflecting critically on the relationship between language, culture, and identity. Further, they will join a long line of scholars of classical texts that extends around the world and engage in rich debates about form and meaning stretching back millennia.

Pathways for studies in classical languages are common with the opportunity to continue studies in classics at university in Canberra and beyond. By integrating language learning, mediating and translating meaning, critical and creative thinking, and intercultural awareness, the program prepares students for further academic study and careers in education, translation, diplomacy, international business, cultural consultancy, and museums and galleries. Ultimately, acquiring an additional language equips students with essential 21st-century skills, enriching their intellectual, personal, and social development and enabling successful participation in a global society.

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<sup>2</sup> Nicola Gardini, *Long Live Latin: The Pleasures of a Useless Language*, Picador, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Coulter H George, *How Dead Languages Work*, Oxford University Press, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Bethany White, [How learning Latin could change your life | Humanities Division](#) Oxford University Press, Accessed 28 Nov 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Evelien Bracke and Ceri Bradshaw, “The impact of learning Latin on school pupils: a review of existing data”, *Language Learning Journal* 48(2):1-11, November 2017. Nivedita Narendran, “The interaction of phonological awareness and Sanskrit sutra learning techniques in language acquisition”, *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 2024, 13(02), 2646–2652, <https://ijsra.net/sites/default/files/IJSRA-2024-2056.pdf>

## 6. STRUCTURE OF THE BEGINNING CLASSICAL LANGUAGES CURRICULUM

### RATIONALE

Learning classical languages allows students to enter the thoughts, lives and perspectives of the peoples of the classical world and reflect on both the continuity of the human conditions and the particularities of culture and place. Such studies broaden their cognitive and cultural experience and further the generation of a positive internal life. The study habits and transferable work skills students develop are applicable to a wide range of pathways and endeavours.

Learning languages opens new perspectives for students, not only in relation to ancient cultures and their languages, but also in terms of their own language and cultural practices. Studies in a classical language extend the learner's understanding of themselves and their understanding of the world, values, and identity. Classical Studies provide opportunities for students to develop an awareness of the wider world, including the diversity of languages and cultures that have continued to be an integral feature of societies since the classical period. They enter the cognitive domain of the ancient world and thus expand their own ways of knowing and thinking. Students develop intracultural and intercultural capability by developing an understanding of, and respect for, diversity and difference, and openness to different perspectives and experiences.

Students go through the challenging experience of learning to reorganise their thinking to accommodate the structure of another language. In doing so they develop habits of persistence, attention to detail and careful, reflective reading. Students of classical language develop cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills as they grapple with translation and mediation of meaning.

Through their reading, analysis and translation of texts, students of classical languages further develop their literacy, through close attention to detail, logic, and critical reasoning. Students develop an understanding of the nature of language, including linguistic and stylistic features, of culture, and of textual analysis. They develop skills in rhetoric and expression. Through such analysis, learning languages strengthens intellectual and analytical capability and enhances creative and critical thinking.

The valuable intellectual, linguistic, creative, and intercultural skills derived from undertaking complex textual, linguistic and cultural analysis are applicable to many fields of endeavour. They develop a fundamental grounding in grammar and linguistics applicable to many areas of further study. Further, learning classical languages also opens pathways to conducting primary research in fields such as Literature, Ancient History, Medieval History, Theology, and Archaeology. The communication, interpersonal and problem-solving skills developed are welcome in any workplace.

## UNITS

The units have been drafted for discussion as follows:

<b>The Individual</b>
Students learn about classical notions and expressions of individuality through the analysis and translation of classical texts in the chosen language. Inspired by classical writings and experiences, explore ways of being in the classical world and reflect on their own selfhood, culture and life. Students reflect on their language learning practices and their developing intercultural understanding skills.
<b>Society and Community</b>
Students learn about classical communities through the analysis and translation of classical texts in the chosen language. They consider how writers expressed their perception of and engagement with their community using grammar and vocabulary. Inspired by classical writings and experiences, they reflect on their own relationship to community and the nature of their community life. They reflect on the efficacy of their language learning habits and practices and their developing intercultural understanding skills.
<b>The Classical World</b>
Students learn about the challenges, problems, and debates of the classical world. They consider how classical writers expressed their experience of their world. Inspired by classical writings and experiences, they reflect on their own understandings and experience of the world around them. They reflect on the efficacy of their language learning habits and practices and their developing intercultural understanding skills.
<b>Diverse Perspectives</b>
Students learn how classical writers communicated, sustained, and challenged thinking, behaviour, and systems. They explore the use of rhetorical and stylistic devices in classical texts. Inspired by classical writings and experiences, students reflect on their own views and beliefs and how they express them. They reflect on the efficacy of their language learning habits and practices and their developing intercultural understanding skills.
<b>Independent Study</b>
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. Independent study units are only available to individual students in Year 12. Pre-requisites for an Independent study unit are that students have completed at least THREE standard 1.0 units from this course.

## 7. CONSIDERATIONS

### 7.1 Incorporating a futures orientation

Teachers use the course document to guide the redevelopment of Programs of Learning, integrating the latest research and discoveries in *Beginning Classical Languages*. The emphasis on problem solving, intellectual flexibility and critically evaluating research and ideas in *Beginning Classical Languages* empowers students to become lifelong learners and successfully participate in global society.

The course meets objectives outlined in *The ACT Future of Education Strategy* to allow students agency in being “active participants in their learning” by developing students “interests, knowledge and skills”. *Beginning Classical Languages* provides opportunities for teachers and students to develop their interests in this area and through Programs of Learning. Further, students will develop inquiries into areas of particular interest and develop a “high standard of literacy and numeracy” in critically analysing, representing, and communicating their findings (ACT Government, Future of Education Strategy Website, 2018).

The course also meets objectives outlined in the *Alice Springs Mparntwe Declaration* has as a goal “All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.” (2019, p. 5). With a strong foundation in *Beginning Classical Languages*, students are prepared to make informed decisions, solve problems, value and celebrate cultural and linguistic differences, and engage in the global community. The curriculum encourages curiosity, ethical thinking, and critical analysis, enabling students to adapt to the demands of a dynamic and evolving field.

### 7.2 Beginning Classical Languages curriculum

The *Beginning Classical Languages* curriculum plays a vital role in the ACT senior secondary curriculum, fostering higher-order thinking, personal and social capability, and communication skills. The ability to communicate in an additional language is an important 21st century skill. Students develop knowledge, understanding and skills that enable successful participation in a global society. Communication in an additional language expands students’ horizons and opportunities as local, national and global citizens. Classical Studies allows students access to a rich tradition of literary and historical inquiry.

### 7.3 Equity and opportunity

The *Beginning Classical Languages* course provides flexibility and choice for teachers and students to pursue their language of interest. 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 *Beginning Classical Languages* course builds on knowledge, skills and understanding from students’ previous studies of Australian Curriculum courses. Students learn about fundamental principles and ideas about language learning area from P -10. Languages provides opportunities to integrate and connect content to other learning areas; in particular, English, Humanities and Social Science (HASS) and The Arts. Languages, HASS and English support students’ literacy development. Both learning areas share the focus for students to interact with others and create spoken, written and multimodal texts with an awareness of context, purpose and audience. Languages, HASS and English help students to understand the relationship between spoken and written language, and recognise how cultural context shapes meaning. They develop students’ understanding of, and ability to use, grammatical and language features. Languages and HASS subjects share learning contexts that progressively shape the students’ world. In both learning areas, students’ learning involves perspectives of their personal worlds, such as personal and family histories and events, their local communities, and national and global contexts. In the process of understanding an expanding world view, both learning areas help students to learn to reflect on the relationship between cultures and identities. Languages and The Arts share a focus on the communication of stories, ideas, perspectives and cultures. Both learning areas help students to explore relationships among people, cultures and identities, and recognise how these are exemplified in and through linguistic and artistic practices and behaviours.

## **7.5 Role of digital technologies**

Students integrate an extensive range of online information and texts in the target language. They learn how to use alternate keyboards and typing in the target language. Students learn to find and use reliable online information sources in the target language and about target language cultures and places. Students learn the strengths and weaknesses of translation technologies such as AI and other online tools and how to use them to enhance rather than undermine their own learning.

## **7.6 Clarity of curriculum**

The curriculum is substantial and flexible. It is sufficiently rich and descriptive to guide teachers with limited experience but avoids 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, who is well-educated in their discipline and in pedagogy, while allowing all teachers to enhance it with their interests and expertise. The course documents will contain a linguistic sequence to guide the pacing and extent of expected language specific grammar and social function in each unit.

## **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 course is designed to meet the needs of diverse learners, offering options at (T), (A), and (M) levels. This structure provides pathways for students pursuing a range of post-school goals, including tertiary education, vocational training, and a lifelong engagement with language.

## **7.9 General capabilities**

*Beginning Classical Languages A/T/M* develops critical and creative thinking when students explore problems, translate and mediate texts, and evaluate and refine their ideas. Language learning requires students to understand and create links between existing knowledge and new knowledge. Student's personal and social capability is strengthened through the study of languages. They develop an awareness of the role of languages and cultures in human interaction and identity, and develop personal ways of responding to linguistic and cultural diversity by reflecting on their experiences.

Students also reflect on their own attitudes, beliefs, and values, and those of others. In doing so, they develop awareness and understanding of the ways in which their own language(s) and culture(s) shape their actions, personal behaviour, thoughts, attitudes, perspectives, and identity. Students develop intercultural understanding as they engage with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences. Students develop their own understanding of different ways of knowing, being, and doing, and of how cultural concepts and practices affect the ways in which people see the world. They have opportunities to see their own view of the world in the context of the linguistic and cultural environment in which they live.

## **7.10 Cross Curriculum Perspectives**

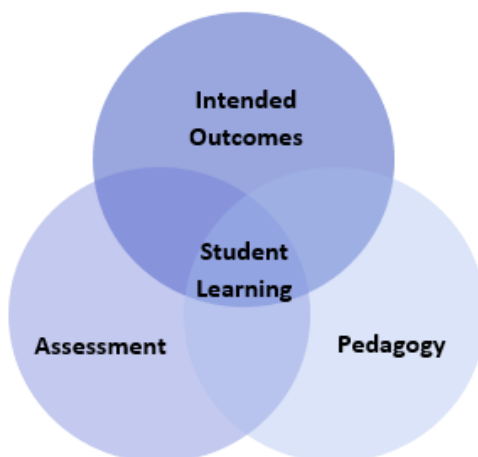
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and Sustainability perspectives are represented in the course in ways that are appropriate.

## 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 study of *Beginning Classical Languages* provides an entry point for appreciation and enjoyment of the texts, thinking and experiences of the classical world. It promotes critical and creative thinking, linguistic analysis skills, communication skills, intercultural capabilities and personal and social capability. Such intensive language studies equips students to engage with the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world and its peoples and reflect on their experience in various aspects of social life, including their own participation and ways of being in the world.

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