

NSW Education Standards Authority
Key issues update
TERM 2, 2021

NSW Curriculum Reform status update

Release of K-2 English and Mathematics draft content and outcomes

NESA has now completed the first phase of public consultation on the K-2 English and Mathematics draft syllabus outcomes and content. The opening of the 'Have your say' period was announced by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning on 24 March and concluded on 30 April. Over 700 responses were received over the six week consultation period.

Community and stakeholder feedback overall has been very positive overall. Most survey respondents agree that the draft outcomes and content make clear the foundational concepts necessary for students in the early years.

In addition, the K-2 English and mathematics project team has shared information and sought feedback through targeted consultations with interested stakeholders.

Since late last year NESA has been working with Teacher Engagement Networks (TENs), comprised of over 200 teachers from across NSW to support engagement with curriculum reform.

F-10 Australian Curriculum Review

In late 2020, the NESA Board agreed that NESA would coordinate a NSW submission to the consultation with input from each of the NSW school sectors.

On 29 April the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) released draft F-10 Australian Curriculum Materials for public consultation.

NESA's curriculum inspectors are now analysing each of the F-10 syllabus documents, and over the coming weeks will work closely with their sector counterparts to draft a coordinated NSW submission to the consultation, providing feedback to ACARA on key issues across each learning area and cross-curriculum priority. The submission will incorporate any relevant insights NESA has gained through consultation on the K-2 English and Mathematics draft syllabus content and outcomes.

This work is on track for submission by the end of the public consultation period on 8 July.

2020 Higher School Certificate Report

At the beginning of each year, NESA reports on the previous year's Higher School Certificate (HSC) program. The report provides a detailed record of the development, conduct, administration and marking of the HSC examinations and the reporting of results. Statistics on disability provisions, appeals, course entries and performance are included, as well as information on media events and showcases and feedback on the examinations.

The Report shows that, despite the impacts of the pandemic during the 2020 school year, NESA delivered the HSC program successfully and HSC credentials were awarded to students without any disruptions to HSC examinations due to COVID-19.

Overall, student attainment levels in the 2020 HSC was similar to previous years, despite the impact of the pandemic on schooling during the year. The overall pattern is continuity, not discontinuity.

2020 was also the first year that students were required to demonstrate a minimum standard of

literacy and numeracy to receive the HSC. A very small proportion of the HSC cohort did not achieve the Standard before leaving school in 2020 but may continue to attempt HSC Minimum Standard tests in the years after leaving school. NESA is now working closely with Training NSW to provide these students with access to the appropriate support to meet the Standard.

Professional development policy changes

In November 2020, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning announced significant changes to professional development (PD) policy.

NESA's endorsement of more than 750 providers and 42,000 courses for teachers has been cancelled.

NESA is now limiting accreditation of courses to four priority areas that provide effective professional learning. The priority areas are:

- delivery and assessment of NSW Curriculum/Early Years Learning Framework (as applicable)
- student/child mental health
- students/children with disability
- Aboriginal education and supporting Aboriginal students/children.

Work on implementing the changes for PD providers is ongoing. NESA staff have met with a range of stakeholders in recent weeks to continue conversations about the new principles and criteria for priority area PD.

A process for interim accreditation of courses in the 'curriculum and assessment' and 'students/children with disability' priority areas was established in December 2020.

This process has enabled the interim accreditation of over 1000 eligible courses so that teachers have access to a continued supply of Accredited PD while work to implement the new requirements continues. Courses with Interim accreditation can be delivered up to 31 July 2021.

Work on refining the interim principles for effective professional learning and developing the criteria for the four priority areas is well underway.

NESA's Teacher Education and Accreditation Directorate has been consulting key stakeholders throughout the development process.

Feedback collected through a survey of PD providers in February 2021 is also being used to inform the development of application and assessment processes as well as resources and support materials for providers on the new requirements.

More information on application requirements, including the assessment of the principles of effective professional learning and criteria for the priority areas will be available before the end of June 2021.

Consultation on the criteria for the Aboriginal education and the students with disability priority areas will occur with the NESA Board's Aboriginal Education Forum and Disability Education Forum respectively.

COVID-19 pandemic response update

In 2020, the NESA Board established the COVID-19 Response Committee to ensure educational continuity in the context of COVID-19. During 2020 the Committee approved a number of modifications to HSC curriculum and assessment requirements, and HSC exam and marking operations. Most of these temporary changes will revert to 'pre-COVID' settings in 2021.

In March 2021, the Committee met again to assess the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and determine any modifications that will extend for 2021. It made two decisions that will apply for this year's HSC:

1) In 2020, the Committee gave principals and sectors the authority to change the number of weightings of assessment tasks for Years 11 and 12. This approval has been extended to 2021.

2) In 2020, the Committee also approved the introduction of a new illness/misadventure category – the learning from home category - to support students who were unable to access any teaching during the six-week 2020 school closure period. This category will remain available in 2021 – particularly for international students studying the HSC who have been subject to mandatory stay-at-home orders.

NAPLAN Update

NAPLAN Online transition

Through late 2020 and early 2021, NESAs have been working to support schools that were originally due to transition to NAPLAN Online in 2020 to undertake their transition in 2021, as well as those due to transition to NAPLAN Online for the first time in 2021.

NESA has provided schools with support materials, established communication and contact channels, and worked with schools on platform training and school readiness testing.

NAPLAN 2021

The NAPLAN Online test period ran from Monday 10 to Friday 14 May 2021. Around 72% of all NSW schools participated in NAPLAN Online this year, with all remaining NSW schools due to transition to NAPLAN Online by 2022, in line with Education Council's decision.

Pen and paper tests also occurred during the same period, with a very small number of schools completing pen and paper tests only in the following week.