



Australian  
CURRICULUM  
Review

# CROSS- CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

## SUSTAINABILITY

**Consultation – introductory information and  
organising ideas**

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## REVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM F–10: CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

### Sustainability

#### Introduction

The terms of reference for the Review of the Australian Curriculum F–10 (the Review) require the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to “revisit and improve where necessary, the organising frameworks for the cross-curriculum priorities with reference to current research”.<sup>1</sup>

Cross-curriculum priorities support the Australian Curriculum to be a relevant, contemporary and engaging curriculum that reflects, regional, national and global contexts. Cross-curriculum priorities are incorporated through learning area content; they are not separate learning areas or subjects. They provide opportunities to enrich the content of the learning areas, where most appropriate and authentic to do so, allowing students to engage with and better understand their world.

There are three cross-curriculum priorities in the F–10 Australian Curriculum:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia
- Sustainability.

Opportunities to apply cross-curriculum priorities to learning area content vary. Cross-curriculum priorities are embedded in content descriptions where the development of knowledge, understanding and skills relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia, and/or Sustainability are core to the delivery of the learning area content. They are also identified in content elaborations where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning.

Each cross-curriculum priority has:

- an **overview statement** that provides a description of the cross-curriculum priority and a rationale for its inclusion in the Australian Curriculum
- a number of **organising ideas** that provide a scaffold for developing the knowledge, understanding and skills of the cross-curriculum priority and promoting connections between the priority and learning area content.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2020, *Terms of reference: Review of the Australian Curriculum F–10*, p. 5.

## Review of the Sustainability cross-curriculum priority

Revisions to the Sustainability cross-curriculum priority reflect evolving understanding of the concepts that underpin sustainability and the features of effective sustainability education. In particular, the revisions position the priority with reference to the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration \(2019\)](#) and the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority revisions:

- broaden references to environmental sustainability to include all Earth's systems, not just the biosphere
- focus on the interdependence of sustainability of environmental, social and economic systems
- expand the focus on sustainable design of products, environments and services
- broaden actions for sustainability to include the mitigation of human impacts and restoration of environments, in addition to preservation
- provide clearer support to explore how individuals and communities can take action and effect positive change
- ensure that organising ideas fit naturally within learning areas and can be applied to content descriptions and elaborations.

Input was sought and received from external stakeholders including the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the Australian Association for Environmental Education and the Australian Science Teachers' Association.

Draft revisions were provided to the teacher and curriculum reference groups for Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Technologies, and to the F–12 Curriculum Reference Group.

Feedback from these groups strongly supported the key areas for revision, and the inclusion of organising ideas in content descriptions for Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, and Technologies. Links to general capabilities and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority were also noted and supported.

Teachers, in particular, acknowledged the broad contexts that the cross-curriculum priority can support and emphasised the need for clear, descriptive content elaborations to assist teachers to identify opportunities to engage with sustainability across learning areas.

**Attachment 1** presents the updated description and revised organising ideas for the Sustainability cross-curriculum priority.

**Attachment 2** presents a comparison between the current and revised organising ideas.

## Attachment 1. Sustainability cross-curriculum priority (revised version)

### Overview

Sustainability addresses the ongoing capacity of Earth to maintain all life. Sustainable patterns of living seek to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Actions to improve sustainability may be individual or collective endeavours shared across local, national and global communities. They necessitate a balanced approach to the way humans interact with each other and the environment; they should reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require individuals and communities to recognise, adapt to, and manage change.

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority develops the knowledge, skills, values and worldviews necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to a sustainable future. Designing solutions and actions for a sustainable future requires an understanding of the ways environmental, social and economic systems interact, and an ability to make balanced judgements based on present and future impacts.

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority is futures-oriented. It is designed to encourage students to reflect on how they interpret and engage with the world and support them to take informed action to create a more environmentally and socially just world.

### Sustainability framework

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority has been developed around four sets of organising ideas:

#### *Systems*

- The interdependence of Earth's systems (the geosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere) that support all life on Earth, and social and economic systems

#### *Worldviews*

- The role of worldviews (sets of attitudes, values and beliefs) in shaping individual and community ideas about how the world works and our role in the world

#### *Design*

- The role of innovation and creativity in sustainably designed solutions, including products, environments and services, that aim to reduce present and future impacts and to preserve or restore environmental, social and economic systems

#### *Futures*

- Ways of thinking and acting that seek to empower young people to design action that will lead to an equitable, sustainable and inclusive future.

## Organising ideas

### Systems

- All life forms, including human life, are connected through Earth's systems on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival. (SS1)
- Sustainable patterns of living require the responsible use of resources, maintenance of clean air, water and soils, and preservation or restoration of healthy environments. (SS2)
- Changes in social and economic systems influence the sustainability of Earth's systems. (SS3)

### Worldviews

- Worldviews that recognise the interdependence of Earth's systems, and value diversity, equity and social justice, are essential for achieving sustainability. (SW1)
- Worldviews are formed by experiences at personal, local, national and global levels, and shape individual and community actions for sustainability. (SW2)

### Design

- Sustainably designed products, environments and services aim to minimise the impact on, and preserve or restore the quality and diversity of environmental, social and economic systems. (SD1)
- Creative and innovative design is integral to the identification of new ways of sustainable living. (SD2)
- Sustainable design requires an awareness of place, past practices, research and technological developments, and balanced judgements based on projected environmental, social and economic impacts. (SD3)

### Futures

- Sustainable futures are achieved through informed individual and community action that values local, national and global equity and fairness across generations into the future. (SF1)
- Community action for sustainable futures requires individuals with shared beliefs and values to collaborate, seek information, identify solutions, influence others and reflect on and evaluate past actions as they work towards a desired change. (SF2)

## Attachment 2. Comparison of current and revised organising ideas

Table 1: Comparison of the current and revised organising ideas of the Sustainability cross-curriculum priority

Current organising ideas	Revised organising ideas
<b>Systems</b>	<b>Systems</b>
The biosphere is a dynamic system providing conditions that sustain life on Earth. (OI.1)	All life forms, including human life, are connected through Earth's systems on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival. (SS1)
All life forms, including human life, are connected through ecosystems on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival. (OI.2)	Sustainable patterns of living require the responsible use of resources, maintenance of clean air, water and soils, and preservation or restoration of healthy environments. (SS2)
Sustainable patterns of living rely on the interdependence of healthy social, economic and ecological systems. (OI.3)	Changes in social and economic systems influence the sustainability of Earth's systems. (SS3)
<b>World views</b>	<b>Worldviews</b>
World views that recognise the dependence of living things on healthy ecosystems, and value diversity and social justice, are essential for achieving sustainability. (OI.4)	Worldviews that recognise the interdependence of Earth's systems, and value diversity, equity and social justice, are essential for achieving sustainability. (SW1)
World views are formed by experiences at personal, local, national and global levels, and are linked to individual and community actions for sustainability. (OI.5)	Worldviews are formed by experiences at personal, local, national and global levels, and shape individual and community actions for sustainability. (SW2)
	<b>Design</b>
	Sustainably designed products, environments and services aim to minimise impact on, and preserve or restore the quality and diversity of environmental, social and economic systems. (SD1)
	Creative and innovative design is integral to the identification of new ways of sustainable living. (SD2)
	Sustainable design requires an awareness of place, past practices, research and technological developments, and balanced judgements based on projected environmental, social and economic impacts. (SD3)

Futures	Futures
The sustainability of ecological, social and economic systems is achieved through informed individual and community action that values local and global equity and fairness across generations into the future. (OI.6)	Sustainable futures are achieved through informed individual and community action that values local, national and global equity and fairness across generations into the future. (SF1)
Actions for a more sustainable future reflect values of care, respect and responsibility, and require us to explore and understand environments. (OI.7)	Community action for sustainable futures requires individuals with shared beliefs and values to collaborate, seek information, identify solutions, influence others and reflect on and evaluate past actions as they work towards a desired change. (SF2)
Designing action for sustainability requires an evaluation of past practices, the assessment of scientific and technological developments, and balanced judgements based on projected future economic, social and environmental impacts. (OI.8)	
Sustainable futures result from actions designed to preserve and/or restore the quality and uniqueness of environments. (OI.9)	