



GENERAL CAPABILITIES

INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

**Consultation – introductory information and
learning continua**

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REVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM F–10: GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Intercultural Understanding

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 learning continua for the general capabilities with reference to current research”.¹

General capabilities equip young Australians with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century. General capabilities are developed through learning area content; they are not separate learning areas, subjects or isolated skills.

The F–10 Australian Curriculum includes seven general capabilities:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Digital Literacy (formerly Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capability)
- Personal and Social capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Intercultural Understanding.

General capabilities are addressed through the content of the learning areas; discipline-based content knowledge is important for the development of general capabilities. The teaching of learning area content will be strengthened by the application of relevant general capabilities, as will the development of the general capabilities through appropriate learning area contexts.

Opportunities to develop general capabilities in learning area content vary. Some general capabilities are essential to, and best developed within specific learning areas; others support learning in any learning area. General capabilities are identified in content descriptions where they are developed or applied through learning area content. They are also identified in content elaborations where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning.

¹ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2020, *Terms of reference: Review of the Australian Curriculum F–10*, p. 4.

Organisation of the general capabilities

Each general capability has an introduction that provides a description of the capability and a rationale for its inclusion in the Australian Curriculum.

Each general capability is presented as either a learning continuum or a learning progression and is structured around elements and sub-elements.

A learning continuum has been developed for five of the seven general capabilities, and describes the knowledge, skills and behaviours that students can reasonably be expected to develop from Foundation to Year 10. The continua map common paths for the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours in each of the elements and sub-elements across six levels for Critical and Creative Thinking, Digital Literacy, Personal and Social capability, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding.

For the Literacy and Numeracy capabilities, more detailed learning progressions have been developed to describe the learning pathway(s) along which students typically progress regardless of age or year level. The National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions describe the skills, understandings and capabilities students typically acquire as their proficiency increases in a particular aspect of the curriculum over time, and help teachers ascertain the stage of learning reached, identify any gaps in skills and knowledge, and plan for the next step to progress learning.

Review of the Intercultural Understanding capability

The Review of the Intercultural Understanding capability followed a similar process to that of the other general capabilities:

- a) Research related to intercultural understanding was sourced and reviewed.
- b) An analysis of the learning continuum was undertaken for horizontal and vertical alignment.
- c) The continuum was compared with a range of learning area content descriptions for the purpose of ensuring alignment of concepts and expectations.
- d) The continuum was compared to the continua of the other general capabilities to identify commonalities and align language and 'at level' descriptions across continua.
- e) An external expert panel was convened to critique and provide input into drafting improvements to the continuum.
- f) Evidence gathered in the research, analysis and comparison phases was used to refine and propose revisions of the continuum for consultation and feedback through ACARA's reference groups, advisory groups and expert panels.

The Review of the Intercultural Understanding learning continuum found:

- sub-elements that change focus or intent from level one to level six
- misalignment of sequences or descriptions of skills across levels
- sub-elements that describe multiple skills

- sub-elements that do not provide clear links to content or context
- some sub-elements with uneven expectations for understandings and skills as they move from novice to expert.

The Review identified the following opportunities to improve the Intercultural Understanding learning continuum:

- revisit and improve where necessary the element and sub-element descriptions and developmental sequence
- improve the relationship of the intercultural understanding continuum to learning area content
- increase opportunities for reflection, engagement and agency in intercultural contexts.

As a result of the Review, the following key changes were made to the Intercultural Understanding learning continuum:

- a) The element descriptions were changed and refocused for consistency with current research, and to make explicit a cycle of self-awareness and agency, for example, what to notice, how to engage, and how to use reflection to inform future action:
 - ‘Recognising culture and developing respect’ was refocused as ‘Reflecting on culture and cultural diversity’.
 - ‘Interacting and empathising with others’ was refocused as ‘Engaging with cultural and linguistic diversity’.
 - ‘Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility’ was refocused as ‘Navigating intercultural contexts’.
- b) The sub-element descriptions were changed to refocus their intent with current research, to improve the sequence across levels one to six, and to more clearly describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours identified within the sub-elements.
- c) Names of the elements and sub-elements in the continuum were revised to simplify language across the continuum and to use titles that more appropriately reflect the skill described within the element or sub-element.

A comparison of the structure of the current to revised learning continuum follows in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of the current and revised elements and sub-elements of the Intercultural Understanding learning continuum

Current elements	Current sub-elements	Revised elements	Revised sub-elements
Recognising culture and developing respect	Investigate culture and cultural identity	Reflecting on culture and cultural diversity	Reflect on the relationship between cultures and identities
	Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices		Examine cultural perspectives and worldviews
	Develop respect for cultural diversity		Explore the influence of cultures on interactions
Interacting and empathising with others	Communicate across cultures	Engaging with cultural and linguistic diversity	Communicate responsively
	Consider and develop multiple perspectives		Develop multiple perspectives
	Empathise with others		Develop empathy
Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility	Reflect on intercultural experiences	Navigating intercultural contexts	Consider responses to intercultural experiences
	Challenge stereotypes and prejudices		Respond to biases, stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination
	Mediate cultural difference		Adapt in intercultural exchanges

Attachment 1 presents the updated description and learning continuum for the Intercultural Understanding capability.

Attachment 2 presents the current learning continuum as a comparison.

Attachment 1. Intercultural Understanding – revised consultation version

Description

Intercultural understanding as a general capability is about understanding what happens and what to do when cultures intersect.

It involves developing the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions to reflect on culture and cultural diversity, engage with cultural and linguistic diversity, and navigate intercultural contexts.

Structure

The Intercultural Understanding learning continuum is organised into three elements:

- Reflecting on culture and cultural diversity
- Engaging with cultural and linguistic diversity
- Navigating intercultural contexts.



Figure 1: Organising elements for Intercultural Understanding

Each element comprises a set of sub-elements to describe the key skills and knowledge reflected in the element, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Elements and sub-elements of the Intercultural Understanding learning continuum

Element	Sub-elements
Reflecting on culture and cultural diversity	Reflect on the relationship between cultures and identities
	Examine cultural perspectives and worldviews
	Explore the influence of cultures on interactions
Engaging with cultural and linguistic diversity	Communicate responsively
	Develop multiple perspectives
	Develop empathy
Navigating intercultural contexts	Consider responses to intercultural experiences
	Respond to biases, stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination
	Adapt in intercultural exchanges

Reflecting on culture and cultural diversity

This element is organised into three sub-elements:

- Reflect on the relationship between cultures and identities – students discuss their own cultural identities and draw connections with those of others. They transition from familiar to less familiar contexts and explore cultural continuity and change. They examine how people experience intercultural contexts differently.
- Examine cultural perspectives and worldviews – students analyse how these are shaped, preserved or transmitted over time and place.
- Explore the influence of cultures on interactions – students reflect on how their cultural identities relate to others and how others' cultural identities relate to them.

Engaging with cultural and linguistic diversity

This element is organised into three sub-elements:

- Communicate responsively – students learn to tailor their communication in a range of contexts, demonstrating sensitivity and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity. They use their understanding of this diversity to keep communication open, flexible and focused on constructive processes and outcomes.
- Develop multiple perspectives – students build self-awareness of their own perspectives towards issues and sharpen their skills in perspective-taking. They consider representation, acknowledge that multiple perspectives exist for any given

issue, and learn that perspectives influence how people interpret and interact with the world around them.

- Develop empathy – students reflect on their thoughts and feelings when taking on a range of perspectives. They learn to mediate perspectives to pursue inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Navigating intercultural contexts

This element is organised into three sub-elements:

- Consider responses to intercultural experiences – students understand their own and others' responses to intercultural experiences, and reflect on how these responses are shaped and influence individuals and their relationships. They learn to propose alternative responses to improve communication outcomes.
- Respond to biases, stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination – students examine their origin, respectfully challenging prejudicial and discriminatory behaviour and propose action to promote the wellbeing of people while valuing their cultural identities.
- Adapt in intercultural exchanges – students apply their learning in a range of interactions, using their understanding of culture and cultural diversity, and skills in perspective-taking and empathy.

Intercultural Understanding learning continuum – revised consultation version

	Sub-element	Level 1 (Foundation)	Level 2 (Years 1–2)	Level 3 (Years 3–4)	Level 4 (Years 5–6)	Level 5 (Years 7–8)	Level 6 (Years 9–10)
REFLECTING ON CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY	Reflect on the relationship between cultures and identities	Identify examples of cultural practices important to self, family and friends, noticing the thoughts and feelings experienced	Discuss examples of cultural practices drawing family and friends together, considering how respect is conveyed	Describe variability in beliefs and cultural practices in the community, sharing how belonging grows	Examine how a nation's beliefs and cultural practices convey meaning and influence peoples' sense of identity and belonging	Explain examples of continuity and change for beliefs and cultural practices within, between and across cultural and linguistic groups	Analyse a range of beliefs and cultural practices for connections between cultures and identities, including their own
	Examine cultural perspectives and worldviews	Identify how family and friends express opinions about what they value	Describe how people express agreement or disagreement about what they value within familiar intercultural contexts	Compare the influence of beliefs and cultural practices on what cultural groups value within familiar intercultural contexts	Examine the factors that influence cultural perspectives presented within global intercultural contexts	Analyse the assumptions that underpin diverse cultural perspectives and worldviews in a range of intercultural contexts	Evaluate how common and conflicting values within, between and across cultural and linguistic groups affect the presentation of cultural perspectives and worldviews
	Explore the influence of cultures on interactions	Identify experiences of where they belong to multiple groups	Describe how their cultural identities influence interactions with others	Compare the influence of culture on their interactions with cultural and linguistic diversity at the community level	Examine the influence of culture on familiar interactions within cultural and linguistic diversity, identifying opportunities and challenges for relationship building	Explain the influence of culture on unfamiliar interactions with cultural and linguistic diversity, analysing opportunities to show respect for cultural traditions over time and place	Analyse the influence of culture on interactions within, between and across cultural and linguistic groups, considering and developing opportunities for exchange and collaboration
ENGAGING WITH CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY	Communicate responsively	Notice the use of different languages to communicate	Use verbal and non-verbal communication, recognising that these may have different meanings for familiar cultural and linguistic groups	Initiate verbal and non-verbal communication, comparing how members of familiar cultural and linguistic groups respond	Select strategies for open, flexible and focused communication in unfamiliar settings, considering their effect on building understanding	Question how cultural perspectives and worldviews affect communication within, between and across cultural and linguistic groups	Apply communication strategies in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts, developing understanding of the interrelatedness of language and culture
	Develop multiple perspectives	Listen to and share opinions on familiar topics, noticing the thoughts and feelings expressed	Consider points of view on familiar topics, identifying the motivations and intentions expressed	Use perspective-taking to discuss familiar topics, considering how points of view influence people's thinking and behaviour	Use perspective taking to discuss unfamiliar topics, examining factors that influence cultural perspectives	Consider multiple perspectives held on unfamiliar topics, assessing the assumptions informing each cultural perspective	Analyse unfamiliar topics, mediating different cultural perspectives to develop responses to these topics
	Develop empathy	Notice their own feelings and those of others in familiar intercultural contexts	Discuss familiar intercultural experiences, conveying awareness of how they contribute to outcomes	Discuss how people experience familiar intercultural contexts differently, linking responses to outcomes	Integrate diverse experiences of intercultural contexts, using relationship building to affect outcomes in these contexts	Explain diverse experiences of intercultural contexts, assessing how perspective-taking, mutual understanding and respect affect outcomes in these contexts	Analyse diverse experiences of intercultural contexts, reflecting on how these contexts influence their own and others' feelings, motivations and actions

	Sub-element	Level 1 (Foundation)	Level 2 (Years 1–2)	Level 3 (Years 3–4)	Level 4 (Years 5–6)	Level 5 (Years 7–8)	Level 6 (Years 9–10)
NAVIGATING INTERCULTURAL CONTEXTS	Consider responses to intercultural experiences	Notice how memorable intercultural experiences affect relationships	Describe how intercultural experiences affect how they make sense of the world around them	Examine the influence of intercultural experiences on what they learn about themselves and others	Explain how intercultural experiences affect what they learn about relationship building and interactions	Analyse how cultural representations in a range of intercultural contexts, influence perceptions of culturally appropriate behaviour	Apply learning to improve communication outcomes in unfamiliar intercultural contexts, considering and developing alternative responses
	Respond to biases, stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination	Identify examples of acceptance and inclusion within friendship groups	Discuss examples of stereotypical statements applied to groups they belong to, reflecting on their feelings and responses	Compare the effects of stereotyping on people in familiar intercultural exchanges, identifying actions to change perceptions	Describe how biases and stereotypes affect familiar intercultural exchanges, examining actions that demonstrate valuing of cultural identities	Analyse the origins of biases, stereotypes and prejudices affecting a range of interactions, assessing representation, and proposing alternative scenarios	Apply learning to promote the wellbeing of people within unfamiliar intercultural exchanges, proposing actions to challenge biases, stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination
	Adapt in intercultural exchanges	Notice the diversity of responses to intercultural exchanges, identifying how people listen and show respect	Consider different responses to intercultural exchanges, practising ways to develop empathy	Use perspective taking to develop understanding, examining how familiar intercultural exchanges influence thinking and behaviour	Modify interactions in unfamiliar intercultural exchanges, demonstrating understanding of culture and cultural diversity	Modify and justify responses to unfamiliar intercultural exchanges, to negotiate shared outcomes	Apply learning on the challenges and benefits of interacting in a culturally diverse society, adapting thinking and behaviour to achieve constructive outcomes

Attachment 2

Intercultural Understanding learning continuum – current version

Sub-element	Level 1 Typically, by the end of F	Level 2 Typically, by the end of Year 2	Level 3 Typically, by the end of Year 4	Level 4 Typically, by the end of Year 6	Level 5 Typically, by the end of Year 8	Level 6 Typically, by the end of Year 10
Recognising culture and developing respect element						
Investigate culture and cultural identity	share ideas about self and belonging with peers	identify and describe the various groups to which they belong and the ways people act and communicate within them	identify and describe variability within and across cultural groups	identify and describe the roles that culture and language play in shaping group and national identities	explain ways that cultural groups and identities change over time and in different contexts	analyse how membership of local, regional, national and international groups shapes identities including their own
Explore and compare cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices	identify, explore and compare culturally diverse activities and objects	describe and compare the way they live with people in other places or times	describe and compare a range of cultural stories, events and artefacts	describe and compare the knowledge, beliefs and practices of various cultural groups in relation to a specific time, event or custom	analyse the dynamic nature of cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices in a range of personal, social and historical contexts	critically analyse the complex and dynamic nature of knowledge, beliefs and practices in a wide range of contexts over time
Develop respect for cultural diversity	discuss ideas about cultural diversity in local contexts	describe ways that diversity presents opportunities for new experiences and understandings	identify and discuss the significance of a range of cultural events, artefacts or stories recognised in the school, community or nation	discuss opportunities that cultural diversity offers within Australia and the Asia-Pacific region	understand the importance of maintaining and celebrating cultural traditions for the development of personal, group and national identities	understand the importance of mutual respect in promoting cultural exchange and collaboration in an interconnected world
Interacting and empathising with others element						
Communicate across cultures	recognise that people use different languages to communicate	describe how the use of words and body language in interactions may have different meanings for various cultural groups	recognise there are similarities and differences in the ways people communicate, both within and across cultural groups	identify factors that contribute to understanding in intercultural communication and discuss some strategies to avoid misunderstanding	explore ways that culture shapes the use of language in a wide range of contexts	analyse the complex relationship between language, thought and context to understand and enhance communication
Consider and develop multiple perspectives	express their opinions and listen to the opinions of others in given situations	express their own perspectives on familiar topics and texts, and identify the perspectives of others	identify and describe shared perspectives within and across various cultural groups	explain perspectives that differ to expand their understanding of an issue	assess diverse perspectives and the assumptions on which they are based	present a balanced view on issues where conflicting views cannot easily be resolved
Empathise with others	imagine and describe their own feelings if they were put in someone else's place	imagine and describe the feelings of others in familiar situations	imagine and describe the feelings of others in a range of contexts	imagine and describe the situations of others in local, national and global contexts	imagine and describe the feelings and motivations of people in challenging situations	recognise the effect that empathising with others has on their own feelings, motivations and actions
Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility element						
Reflect on intercultural experiences	identify and describe memorable intercultural experiences	identify and describe what they have learnt about others from intercultural encounters and culturally diverse texts	identify and describe what they have learnt about themselves and others from real, virtual and vicarious intercultural experiences	explain what and how they have learnt from a wide range of intercultural interactions and experiences	reflect critically on the representation of various cultural groups in texts and the media and how they respond	reflect critically on the effect of intercultural experiences on their own attitudes and beliefs and those of others

Challenge stereotypes and prejudices	identify examples of the acceptance and inclusion of others in given situations	discuss the effects of acceptance and inclusion in familiar situations	explain the dangers of making generalisations about individuals and groups	explain the impact of stereotypes and prejudices on individuals and groups within Australia	identify and challenge stereotypes and prejudices in the representation of group, national and regional identities	critique the use of stereotypes and prejudices in texts and issues concerning specific cultural groups at national, regional and global levels
Mediate cultural difference	identify similarities and differences between themselves and their peers	recognise that cultural differences may affect understanding between people	identify ways of reaching understanding between culturally diverse groups	discuss ways of reconciling differing cultural values and perspectives in addressing common concerns	identify and address challenging issues in ways that respect cultural diversity and the right of all to be heard	recognise the challenges and benefits of living and working in a culturally diverse society and the role that cultural mediation plays in learning to live together