Shape of ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum: Education Studies T

October 2024

Table of Contents

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The Shape of ACT Senior Secondary Curriculum: *Education Studies* will guide the writing of the *Education Studies T* course in consultation with expert advice from Professor Deborah Pinot Pasternak of the University of Canberra, Dr Joanne Quick of the Australian Catholic University.

1.2 This paper has been prepared following the research and deliberations of the BSSS curriculum writing team.

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 *Education Studies T* 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 ways to support students with pathways to further education and to fulfilling lives and careers. The Education Studies course is proposed to support students in continuing studies in Education at the tertiary level, understanding the nature of Education as an academic discipline and as a pathway to a meaningful career.

There is demand for teachers in all Australian jurisdictions, educational sectors and worldwide. Commonwealth Department of Education modelling suggests that "the demand for secondary teachers to exceed the supply of new graduate teachers by around 4,100 between 2021 to 2025"[1].

Further, as with many courses there is a dropout rate from Education courses. Among the 10 significant reasons for dropping out of such courses were "Boredom/lack of interest, Expectations not met, academic support, [and] workload difficulties"[2]. These matters might be ameliorated by prospective Education students undertaking a related preparatory senior secondary course. Such a course might instil foundational skills, knowledge and understanding that would strengthen student capacity to undertake further study in this area.

Students undertaking Education Studies will therefore be able to gain insight and be more equipped to make informed decisions in terms of considering the teacher pathway and the preferred level of schooling and from a societal perspective, a pre-investment in positive and targeted post-school pathways. Further, an ability to teach and train others in any career pathway is an important skill. This course is developed considering the national Teacher Workforce Plan priority areas 2 and 4: 'Strengthening initial teacher education' and 'Elevating the profession'.[3] This is because students will be well prepared for further study and because the profile and significance attached to Education as a profession will be heightened by its presence in the secondary curriculum beside courses targeting other professions and trades.

3.2 *Education T* is a subject that develops significant skills, knowledge and understandings, as well as a range of general capabilities, to pursue a range of future occupations and life aspirations. This course will be contemporary and highly relevant to senior secondary students in the 21st Century.

---

[1] Australian Government Department of Education, Issues Paper: Teacher Workforce Shortages, (n.d.), p. 3 www.education.gov.au,
[2] Universities Australia, Higher Education Facts and Figures, Universities Australia, 2020, p. 56.
[3] National Teacher Workforce Action Group, *National Teacher Workforce Plan*, Australian Government, Department of Education, 2023.

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 *Education T* course is to be developed under the *Integrated Learning Framework* as it engages with evidence and methodologies from several disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and biology, and the concepts, methodologies and skills pertinent to the learning areas targeted for teaching. Drawing on the definitions of Alexander Refsum Jensenius, this course is interdisciplinary in that students learn how to assess and apply evidence from different disciplines to inform their thinking and draw conclusions. It is multidisciplinary in that the epistemological focus of units will shift as students connect education to different areas for teaching. The course is transdisciplinary in that the course aims to provide the opportunity for students to connect different learnings and understandings drawn from their studies to improving their capacity to learn and teach what they know. (Jensenius, A. R, 2012) The course will engage with changes in technology and society that challenge students' learning and fulfilment, and it will build skills applicable to life, learning, community and workplaces.

3.4 This is in keeping with the *Integrated Learning Framework* that states:

> *"Advances in technology, coupled with political, economic, and social shifts both nationally and globally have transformed the nature of work and learning. Students are required to demonstrate a range of capabilities. They are required to apply concepts, methods, and language of more than one discipline to explore topics, design research questions, develop skills and solve problems*
>
> *Courses written under this framework promote interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. Students will learn how to transfer capabilities such as the research process, information management, critical thinking, creativity, effective teambuilding, leadership, collaborative decision making and communicate with a diverse range of people.*
>
> *Students complete an inquiry that has a purpose, product or outcome. They develop the ability to engage with a process, question sources of information, make effective decisions, consider ethical implications, evaluate their own progress, be innovative and solve problems.*
>
> *Courses written under this framework are suited for students with diverse abilities and learning styles, including students preparing to enter the workforce, as well as for further study."*

(BSSS, Integrated Learning Framework, 2017, p. 4.)

3.5 All courses based on this framework should enable students to:

- critically analyse and evaluate ideas, methodologies, concepts, issues and knowledge
- apply ethical frameworks that underpin relevant disciplines
- plan and develop research projects
- reflect the inquiry process and on the learning process
- demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills
- build on and connect, concepts and skills from diverse disciplines
- use inquiry and research methods from diverse disciplines to identify problems and to research solutions
- use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse methodologies and insights from a variety of disciplines
- demonstrate collaboration and build mentoring relationships within the community
- apply creative and innovative solutions to real life contexts.

Courses developed under the *Integrated Learning Framework* provide details of course content through the component units of the course. While this content will differ according to the particular course, all content will be chosen to enable students to work towards the achievement of the common and agreed goals of the Framework.

3.6   Concepts, knowledge and skills from the *Integrated Learning Framework*

Concepts and knowledge

- multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary approaches
- models for research and inquiry (proposing, designing, initiating, planning, producing and reviewing)
- problem finding
- information and data management
- information and communication technologies
- personal and social capability
- ethical understanding
- collaborative and global understanding
- nature of creativity and innovation
- educational settings
- consultation with community.

Skills

- creating and producing
- communication
- critical review
- creative thinking
- modelling
- evaluation, analysis, assessing
- selecting primary and secondary sources
- decision making
- teamwork, collaboration
- project management (including time management/organisation)
- metacognition (including reflecting on the process).

3.7   All courses of study for the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate should enable students to develop essential capabilities for twenty-first century learners as proposed by the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (2019) "to prepare young people to thrive in a time of rapid social and technological change, and complex environmental, social and economic challenges" (2019, p. 3). This is in part developed in all ACT BSSS course through the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities, which comprise an integrated and interconnected set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions. (ACARA, 2016) The course will help students to develop consciously the clusters of skills and dispositions that they can transfer from role to role as they adapt to a rapidly changing world and work context. (Snow, A, 2019)

Education Studies T provides opportunities to develop capabilities in 'Personal and Social Capability', 'ICT', 'Literacy', 'Numeracy', and 'Ethical Understanding' in particular. In addition, students will develop capability in 'Intercultural Understanding' in understanding the existing social and work environment (ACARA, 2016). These have been identified by research and by teachers in the ACT as being key to successful work as a teacher.

> *Students develop personal and social capability as they learn to understand themselves and others, and manage their relationships, lives, work and learning more effectively.*

Personal and social capability involves students in a range of practices including recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for others and understanding relationships, establishing and building positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams, handling challenging situations constructively and developing leadership skills.

The full reference can be found [here](#).

In this course, students become literate as they develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. Literacy involves students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

The full reference can be found [here](#).

In this course, students become numerate as they develop the knowledge and skills to use mathematics confidently across other learning areas at school and in their lives more broadly. Numeracy encompasses the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students need to use mathematics in a wide range of situations. It involves students recognising and understanding the role of mathematics in the world and having the dispositions and capacities to use mathematical knowledge and skills purposefully.

The full reference can be found [here](#).

In this course, students develop Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capability as they learn to use ICT effectively and appropriately to access, create and communicate information and ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively in all learning areas at school and in their lives beyond school. ICT capability involves students learning to make the most of the digital technologies available to them, adapting to new ways of doing things as technologies evolve and limiting the risks to themselves and others in a digital environment. To participate in a knowledge-based economy and to be empowered within a technologically sophisticated society now and into the future, students need the knowledge, skills and confidence to make ICT work for them at school, at home, at work and in their communities.

The full reference can be found [here](#).

In this course, students develop ethical understanding as they identify and investigate the nature of ethical concepts, values and character traits, and understand how reasoning can assist ethical judgement. Ethical understanding involves students building a strong personal and socially oriented ethical outlook that helps them to manage context, conflict and uncertainty, and to develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others. It does this through fostering the development of 'personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others', and the capacity to act with ethical integrity, as outlined in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008, p. 9).

The Full reference can be found [here](#).

In this course, 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 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.

The Full reference can be found [here](#).

3.8   The importance of the senior years of schooling as a critical transition point for young people is highlighted in two extracts from the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration:
All Australian Governments and the education community need to support students in their senior years by helping them acquire the cognitive and social skills necessary for life after school and equip students to remain engaged in learning throughout life.

Australian Governments commit to working with the education community to provide a senior secondary education that equips young people with the skills, knowledge, values and capabilities to succeed in employment, personal and civic life.

https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration

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, respectful and contributing 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, a *Education Studies T* course should include:

- a student-centred pedagogical approach
- an interdisciplinary approach
- developing an understanding of education, teaching and learning
- the Integrated Learning Framework and Achievement Standards
- the needs of different schools and sectors (government and non-government)
- acquiring a range of instructional skills
- examining how to learn and the diverse factors that impact learning
- opportunities to apply learning and skills through engagement with community members
- understanding the structures in which education operates and the regulations required to protect human rights and maintain safety

5. AIMS OF THE EDUCATION STUDIES CURRICULUM

5.1   Students in Education Studies will develop an understanding of the complex processes and methodologies of teaching and learning. They will engage with philosophies and practice of education and the various contexts of schools and students that impact teaching and learning. Students interested in pursuing a pathway in teaching and education may elect to take this course that has a focus on young people's welfare and behaviour, educational philosophies and learning science. Experts such as M.E. Sharpe, similar to Le Page et al and Huynh et al. note the centrality of studies in pedagogy, learning and assessment, sociology and history of education, schools and philosophies of education, and child development to teacher training courses. Indeed, these sorts of courses are prevalent in university education courses. See [University of Sydney](), [Macquarie University](), [University of New England](), [University of Canberra](), [La Trobe University](), the [Australian Catholic University]()

5.2   In *Education Studies T,* students are provided with the opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and understandings by:

- critically analysing the nature of learning
- critically analysing various philosophies of education
- critically analysing the historical and social contexts of schools, teaching and learning
- critically analysing the teaching and learning of disciplinary literacy and numeracy skills
- evaluating the methodologies of education as an academic discipline, and also the methodologies of the disciplines they may teach, including ethical research
- applying personal and interpersonal skills and dispositions necessary to build effective relationships in educational contexts with students, families and colleagues
- applying teamwork and collaboration skills necessary for educational contexts
- applying communication and presentation skills necessary to deliver lessons effectively
- applying information technology skills and digital literacy necessary to meet the demands of the school and educational context, including child safety and academic integrity
- synthesising critical and creative thinking skills and practical capacity to solve problems in teaching and learning

6.   STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION STUDIES COURSE

Rationale
Education Studies provides students with an understanding of teaching and learning. They will gain insights both into their own learning, and into the learning of others. They will also gain insight into the professional practices of teachers, and contexts in which teachers work. These insights will support them in the transition to tertiary education programs and then to work as teachers. This interdisciplinary course will provide foundational understanding of education as an academic discipline, its methods for researching teaching and learning, and justifying and communicating findings. Educational research methods draw on both social science and science methods, depending on the particular topics of study. Further, they gain deeper understanding of the disciplines and methods targeted for teaching as they develop skills in how to convey complex and difficult material in a manner comprehensible to targeted groups of students. In doing so, they develop an understanding of the art of teaching that allows them to communicate effectively. They develop and rehearse the intrapersonal and interpersonal practices of effective teachers that allow them to build and maintain productive relationships with students, families, and colleagues. Students also gain a deeper understanding of schools and teachers and their place in society. This course will form a foundation for further studies in university, thus easing the transition for students to new educational settings beyond school, but also providing a skill and knowledge base on which they may build their further studies. This will provide insight into the potential of teaching as a fulfilling career.

Units
Perspectives in Education In this unit, students investigate a range of established and contemporary philosophies of education and evaluate their application to school settings. They explore paradigms of education, including place-based pedagogies of Indigenous cultures. Students consider the interaction between schools and wider society, and how those conditions and structures impact on learning and the nature of schools, e.g., gender disparities, Socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage, structural inequities, racism, accessibility and inclusion. Students reflect on their own learning contexts and how these experiences have shaped them as individuals and learners. *Topics for study may include ecclesiastical, industrial, economic rationalist, political, democratic, Dewy, Steiner, Foucault, Sudbury, play-based learning, nature play*
Learning and Assessment Students examine how young people learn and how that learning can be measured. They investigate perspectives on learning, including contemporary research, to understand the role of teachers in the learning process. Students consider the impact of teaching strategies, developmental stages and technology on learning. They consider models for formative and summative assessment, and the efficacy of educational measurements. They engage with research on learning from a range of academic fields, such as Biology, Psychology, and Sociology and consider how those findings are employed in schools.
Teaching and Engagement In this unit, students focus on how learning can be planned and pedagogy applied to promote engagement. Students evaluate ideas about optimising the physical learning environment, including Work Health and Safety. Students investigate the pedagogical tools teachers use to overcome the challenges faced by young people in accessing and succeeding in education. Students explore classroom management and wellbeing practices to develop students as learners and people. *Topics for study may include Glasser, Positive Behaviours for Learning, PERMA, SEL, Trauma Informed etc.*

Curriculum and Planning
Students examine the spoken and unspoken curriculums delivered in schools. They investigate the priorities of different curriculums. They evaluate different programs for curriculum development, e.g. UDL, project-based learning, teaching and learning cycle, Understanding by Design Students synthesise their disciplinary knowledge and understandings of learning to translate curriculum into sequences for student learning. Students investigate curriculum differentiation to plan for access to learning by all students. They reflect on their own experiences and the experiences of others.

Independent Study
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 a course.

7. CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Incorporating a futures orientation

To equip students to engage in their future, they should examine themselves, the processes and systems at work in their world, how to learn, and how to respond to change. This intention follows the aims enunciated in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration*:

> "The skills and knowledge that young people acquire are critical to their success and happiness. The scale and pace of change in society and the economy mean that now more than ever, the ability to learn and grow beyond the compulsory years of education and training is essential. Skills, knowledge and capabilities will need to be renewed and updated throughout life." (Commonwealth Education Council, 2019, p. 10)

In addition, the intention of this course also follows the ACT's *Future of Education* plan.

> "The Strategy is about developing capable adults who have learnt to learn, live productively in society, think, create and work in an increasingly digital future... The Strategy also recognises that learning environments are places that bring people together as a community and enable relationships to form between people and services." (Berry, 2018)

Both the future orientations of the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration* and the ACT's *Future of Education* plan find a presence in the purpose of this course in that it builds the capacity to enable students to build positive pathways into the future and learn about learning and become lifelong learners.

7.2 *Education Studies* course

Education Studies will be a useful addition to ACT senior secondary curriculum. The curriculum fosters learning, intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding, intercultural understanding, and communication skills that equip students to take an active part in their community as people, citizens and workers.

7.3 Equity and opportunity

The *Education Studies* course provide flexibility and choice for teachers and students. Teachers will design programs of learning to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills outlined in the course. The factors that influence those programs include school and community contexts, local community learning opportunities, contemporary and local issues and available learning resources.

This course is intended to provide a means to redress inequities in students' access to and attitudes towards further education. It will provide a secure foundation for moving into the education at a tertiary level, particularly for students whose self-image may not be inclusive of themselves as university students or teachers.

7.4   Connections to other learning areas

Education Studies is an inherently interdisciplinary course. The curriculum for courses will identify where there are links or opportunities to build cross curriculum learning. The connections arise naturally out of the curriculum.

7.5   Role of digital technologies

Students and teachers integrate a growing range of online information, tools and applications into teaching and learning in this course. These include a range of online resources including databases, reference works and indexes to library holdings. Students will develop skills for lifelong learning and for teaching and pedagogy through familiarity with digital resources and tools. Learning systems, platforms and AI enabled platforms are features of teaching in the contemporary world, so students in this course will investigate strengths, weaknesses and utility of Edtech, as well as having some familiarity with their use. *Education Studies* will examine education in the digital world and how to use it in teaching and learning. They will examine educational and child development questions raised by the digital environment.

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 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 T students who intend to pursue further studies in Education.

7.9   General capabilities

A wide range of General Capabilities are developed in *Education Studies*. Teachers will emphasise aspects of the General Capabilities in different ways across units and according to their program of learning.

7.10   Cross-curriculum perspectives

Each of these perspectives, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Australian's Engagement with Asia, and, sustainability, 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 unit 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:

Underpinning beliefs

1. All students are able to learn
2. Learning is a partnership between students and teachers
3. Teachers are responsible for advancing student learning.
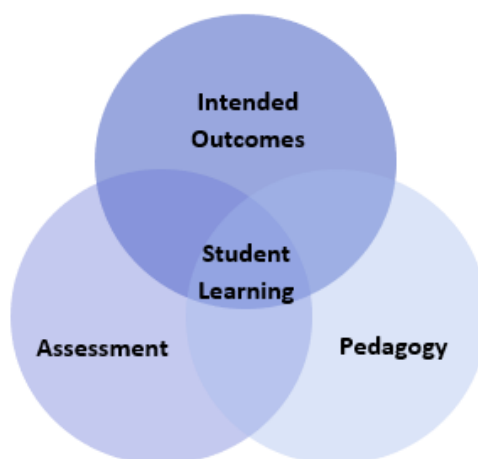
Learning Principles

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

Students undertaking *Education Studies* will therefore be able to gain insight and be more equipped to make informed decisions in terms of considering the teacher pathway and the preferred level of schooling, while also gaining a useful and rich general education experience.

10. REFERENCES

ACARA, "General Capabilities", Australia Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2016, https://acara.edu.au/curriculum/foundation-year-10/general-capabilities

ACT Future of Education Report, *https://www.education.act.gov.au/the-future-of-education/home/resources?a=1231080*

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, Commonwealth Department of Education Skills and Employment, *https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration*

11. RESEARCH

Additional readings for the preparation of this Shape paper:

Australian Government Department of Education, Issues Paper: Teacher Workforce Shortages, (n.d.), www.education.gov.au

Johnson, C. E., Boon, H. J., & Dinan Thompson, M. (2020). "Curriculum Alignment After Reforms: A Systematic Review with Considerations for Queensland Pre- and In-service Teachers", *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(11). http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.202v45n11.3

National Teacher Workforce Action Group, *National Teacher Workforce Plan*, Australian Government, Department of Education, 2023.

LePage, Pamela; Courey, Sue; Fearn J, Emilene; Benson, Vicki; Cook, Ellen; Hartmann, Liz; Nielsen, Shelley; "Curriculum Recommendations for Inclusive Teacher Education", *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, Vol. 6, No.2, 2010.

*Sharpe, M.E., "*Key Points in the Core Curriculum of Teacher Training: The Contribution of the Educational Sciences to the Professionalization of Teachers*", European Education* vol. 35, no. 4, Spring 2004, pp. 11–22. 2004

Universities Australia, Higher Education Facts and Figures, Universities Australia, 2020

Various university course information pages- University of Sydney, Macquarie University, University of New England, Canberra University , La Trobe University