Response from Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Wollongong
Draft K-10 Curriculum Framework Version 2

This submission is a response to the Draft K-6 Curriculum Framework Version 2. The response was gathered largely as a result of opinions expressed and discussion held at the Focus Group Meeting. The Focus Group Meeting was convened at the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Wollongong.

The Focus Group Meeting was held:
  on: 21 June, 2001
  at: 2:00pm to 4:00pm

The meeting was well attended by primary and secondary teachers from both systemic and congregational schools and Diocesan education officers. The Board of Studies Liaison Officer, South Coast and the Senior Education Officer Curriculum K-12 facilitated the meeting. As a Catholic community it was an opportunity to make further comments to the Board of Studies and the Catholic Education Commission on the proposed Curriculum Framework. Schools and teachers have been invited to add any additional responses directly to the Board of Studies in writing and/or online.

We would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge to the Board of Studies that many of the suggestions that were made in our Diocesan response to Version 1 of the Draft K-10 Curriculum Framework have been reflected in Version 2. We feel confident that the Principles, Broad Learning Outcomes etc. will provide a good basis for future syllabus development in years Kindergarten to Year 10. We acknowledge also that the overall difference between Version 1 and Version 2 are the options presented in the minimum requirements and indicative hours. Our discussion and comments in this regard form the basis of this response.
Purpose Statement

As a statement of all K-10 curriculum and syllabus requirements we feel that the purpose statement has addressed values in that they are written more specifically than in Version 1. Overall there is consensus that human rights issues have been sufficiently covered.

Broad Learning Outcomes

All syllabus and curriculum requirements are accountable to the Broad Learning Outcomes. Comments from the Focus Group centred on the issue of the achievement of essential outcomes by ‘all students‘ and the implications for students with ‘special needs’.

Principles

It was expressed that the Principles will provide a good guide for syllabus development and will also guide implementation of syllabuses in schools. Comments centred on how the core will be represented in the syllabus. Will the core be common to ‘all’ syllabuses or does it imply a core for each subject? Further to this will the core be derived from subject material or will it be derived from what is being tested?

Translating Purpose, Broad Learning Outcomes and Principles into Curriculum

Comments and discussion included the following:

- Whether the core will sit discretely in every syllabus and the implications of cross curriculum content or subject based content as the core.
- There is consensus that there is a very crowded curriculum in terms of content in syllabuses especially at secondary school level.
- Preferences were expressed for a mapping to take place across Key Learning Areas for 7-10 as was done in the new Stage 6 syllabuses to ensure that content is not duplicated.
• Primary syllabuses are centred on students developing skills to access knowledge. The intent is on the content enhancing the outcomes with no real mandatory content. We would therefore like to see K-6 outcomes included in all 7-10 syllabuses.

• The achievement of key competencies takes a more important focus in primary syllabuses where secondary syllabuses currently are more content based and ‘knowledge’ seems more important. There is a desire to move to a more generic way of dealing with outcomes in secondary syllabuses.

• Questions were raised about the KLA model that is currently being used and its adequacy under the new framework. The notion of mandatory hours is still very much KLA based.

• Concerns were raised about how to ensure all the content is covered if we have an integrated approach particularly if we continue to be driven by external examinations.

Minimum requirements K-6:

Comments and discussion included the following:

• Creative Arts should include a study of all four subjects, Visual Arts, Music, Dance and Drama.

• HSIE should include a study related to Australia every year. This currently seems ambiguous in the minimum requirements.

• There are problems regarding the study of languages in primary schools due to insufficient teaching personnel.

• There was general agreement that it should be a requirement that the Board of Studies syllabuses are followed.
Minimum requirements 7-10

Comments and discussion included the following:

- There was general confusion as to why the Board of Studies and the Education Act requirements are not the same, general consensus was that the requirements of the Education Act and the Board of Studies should be the same.
- There was also general agreement that there should be parity of subjects. It was seen that while English, Maths, Science and HSIE get the hours that other subjects are not seen to be as important.
- PDHPE is under increasing pressure to deal with societal issues and have insufficient hours allocated to adequately attend to the areas.

School Certificate requirements

Comments and discussion included the following:

- Creative Arts should include a 100 hour study of Creative Arts subjects not just Visual Arts and Music to allow for more flexibility and the inclusion of Drama and Dance which currently have no mandatory place in the curriculum (similar to the Stage 4 Design and Technology course).
- There is a general request not to increase the mandatory requirements. Mandatory Stage 5 Australian History and Geography have had a significant impact on elective choice. HSIE could be offered in Stage 4 not just History and Geography (using a model similar to that suggested above). This would allow for better use of resources and greater choice in offerings within the Key Learning Areas themselves.
- There were many comments regarding the study of languages. The offering of languages in some primary schools and not others makes it more difficult for an appropriate study in secondary schools with some students working below and beyond the level of language studied in secondary schools.
- Strong suggestions were made in favour of the 100 hour study of languages over the whole of Stage 4 rather than the restriction of being studied in a 12 month period.
Indicative hours

Comments and discussion included the following:

- It was felt preferable to have indicative hours as a guide rather than an absolute. This would then provide a framework from which to base a timetable structure in schools but would also allow schools to exercise flexible and creative solutions to achieving syllabus outcomes.
- Further to this, indicative hours should be seen as a guide as to how long a syllabus should take to achieve the outcomes within the Stage and not as a restriction on students’ attendance in a discipline.

Reporting

Comments and discussion included the following:

- Discussion centred around the support needed by teachers to ensure they have an understanding of the standards.
- It was strongly felt that syllabuses (primary and secondary) need indicators and work samples for all subjects to allow teachers to be effective in working to standards.
- It was seen that there was no real need to grade mandatory subjects from years 7 and 8 on the School Certificate.
- There was a strong request for Course Performance Descriptors in Stage 4 as these would support the implementation of standards-referenced assessment and provide a vehicle to report Stage 4 achievement to the parent community.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Draft K-10 Curriculum Framework Version 2. We hope that the comments contained in this response provide good feedback to the Board of Studies in the development of the Framework.

For any further information and clarification please contact:
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