Response From Catholic Education Office, Diocese Of Wollongong
7-10 English Writing Brief

This response has been prepared as a result of a Focus Group Meeting held at the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Wollongong.

The Focus Group Meeting was held:
   on: 25 June, 2001
   at: 2:00pm to 4:00pm

The meeting was attended by English teachers from Systemic and Congregational schools and Diocesan Education Officers and was facilitated by the Board of Studies Liaison Officer South Coast, Di Trist. The meeting provided an opportunity to respond to the English 7-10 Writing Brief. This submission represents a response as a Catholic community to the proposals in the Writing Brief with particular attention given to the connections to the English K-6 syllabus and the Stage 6 English syllabus. In preparation for this response attention was drawn to the Literature Review and the Middle Years Literature Review.

As an introduction to the Focus Group Meeting an overview was presented regarding the current syllabus and the general proposals in the Writing Brief. Outlined was the fact that the revision of the 7-10 syllabus is to ensure that there is a continuity of theory, knowledge and understanding, and a continuum of teaching and learning in English K-12. Important developments that must be acknowledged as part of the Review include:

- importance of outcomes-based education
- introduction of standards referenced assessment
- information now available from benchmark literacy testing
- imperative in accountability and nature of the School Certificate testing
- paradigm shifts in theory and pedagogy in English
- changes in means of communication and information gathering
The new syllabus must attend to issues outlined in the Literature Reviews including:

- relevance of literature
- recognition of new technology
- relationships between English and Literacy
- multi literacy development
- broadening visual text
- role of workplace cultures and the language of the workplace
- place of youth in the modern world
- emphasis on independent learning (less teacher based learning)
- multi media environment in trying to accommodate the range of abilities

The new 7-10 English syllabus will require teachers to review and modify their traditional role as teachers and their methods of working with students.

The Board of Studies Liaison Officer facilitated the participants through the elements of the Writing Brief and the matters for consideration.

**Rationale**

Comments centred on the need to clarify the personal values in the body of the syllabus not just in the rationale. The syllabus should provide some specific examples and ideas and how they will be addressed. It was felt that the rationale does support a contemporary view.

**Aim**

The aims adequately cover the intention of the syllabus.

**Objectives**

The objectives need to include other modes ie. kinaesthetic, multimedia and interpersonal modes.
Content organization

There is a need to ensure that there is provision for a full range of student abilities particularly low achievers. The writing brief assumes all students have achieved Stage 3 outcomes. The strands provide a useful way of organising content and the focuses are appropriate.

Relationship between English and Literacy

The relationship between English and Literacy seems too convoluted and needs to clarify more explicitly the relationship between the two. We would like to see a definition of each term included here not just in the Glossary.

Outcomes

The outcomes should be written in simpler terms so they can be more clearly understood and be more user friendly with less jargon. We would like to see indicators as well as outcomes included, not only as a checklist but with more appropriate wording. Outcomes for listening need to be specifically addressed.

We are happy that the Stage 5 outcomes definitely build on and further develop the Stage 4 outcomes. We feel that all students, including ESL students, can meet these outcomes.

Content Samples

Comments expressed that the examples are good but we would like to see more. The question was raised about the need for clarification between talking and speaking and the need for listening skills to be more specifically developed. There needs to be greater focus on, and examples of, how we can teach and assess listening skills. It was seen to be crucial for preparation of Stage 6.
Proposed Text

It was felt that thought could be given to a broad text list of suggested/optional novels, texts and films that would need to be updated regularly.

Cross Curriculum Content

It is thought that cross curriculum content is a necessary inclusion and will need to be specifically embedded to ensure that it is not seen as a token gesture.

K-12 Continuum Overview

This section was extremely well received, as it was good to see the full picture of where to start and finish.

Overview of the Scope K-10

The syllabus needs to be flexible in order to cater for the students who are operating above or below the Stages. The syllabus needs to recognise that students operate at different levels and support documents should give strategies of what teachers can do with students who are working below or beyond the main group.

Assessment

The 3 to 5 level statements were seen as a positive inclusion but we would like to see more work samples of each. The dot points are very good.

Glossary

We would like to have definitions of listening, speaking and talking included.
Overall Evaluation

We acknowledge the following strengths of the Writing Brief:

- continuum of learning
- work samples
- reflection of the spirit of the new senior syllabus
- links with K-6 syllabus.

Implementation of document

We suggest implementation for years 7 and 9 in the first year and then the following year for years 8 and 10.

Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the English 7-10 Draft Writing Brief. We hope that the comments contained in this response provide valuable feedback to the Catholic Education Commission for its response as a catholic sector and to the Board of Studies in the development of the Syllabus.

For any further information and clarification please contact:
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