



Questions arising from a summary of the ETA response to the Australian Curriculum English K-10 March 2010

The NSW ETA response to the Draft Australian Curriculum presented in 2010 is available at:

<http://www.englishteacher.com.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=dN8vEyiBaDQ%3d&tabid=1125>

That response highlighted the following key issues of concern to the membership:

- poor conceptualisation of the subject and lack of integration of the three strands Language, Literature, Literacy
- a mass of detailed minutiae as content, which is constraining in itself, but which also contains no discernible sequenced developmental path or indications of the recursive nature of teaching and learning
- a focus on lower order skills, including ICT skills
- decontextualisation of language processes
- the skewing of the course away from 'English' to a course in functional literacy
- shift of focus from the student to prescriptive content with student perceived as passive learner
- failure to cater for the full range of students and acknowledge what students bring to the class
- a shift away from professional discourse of teachers
- The loss of pleasure as a core element of the subject

In the response to ACARA, NSW ETA proposed the use of 'learn to' and 'learn about' headings to allow for integration of content and skills in a more appropriate manner. Currently, the knowledge and skills subsumed under these headings strongly reflect each other, creating an integrated curriculum. This level of correlation is not maintained in the new syllabus, evident in the gaps within each outcome.

The membership of the NSW English Teachers Association was clear that the Draft Australian Curriculum did not represent a 21stC view of the subject nor was it a world-class curriculum.

It is important to remember that the audience for this present consultation on the Draft Syllabus is the NSW Board of Studies. In integrating the Australian Curriculum into a Syllabus for NSW, the NSW Board of Studies through its officers and English Curriculum Committee have attempted to address many of the issues listed above in their own concern to provide for NSW students the best curriculum possible.

The question that remains for ETA members to address is whether the Draft NSW Syllabus does, indeed, provide the best English curriculum possible for NSW students. In asking this question, members might return to the key issues above and ask certain questions, such as the ones below, of the Draft NSW Syllabus which raise equivalent issues in the new context.

Response to Draft Australian Curriculum	Questions of the Draft NSW Syllabus 2011
poor conceptualisation of the subject and lack of integration of the three strands Language, Literature, Literacy	Does the subject as conceptualised in the Draft Syllabus represent more closely 21stC conceptualisations of English?
	Do the elements of the Australian Curriculum (in the grey shaded areas) integrate well with the rest of the Syllabus?
	If not, is it possible for the elements of the Australian Curriculum to integrate well with the rest of the Syllabus?
	If not, how could the wording of the Australian Curriculum be built on so as to integrate with the rest of the Syllabus?
a mass of detailed minutiae as content, which is constraining in itself, but which also contains no discernible sequenced developmental path or indications of the recursive nature of teaching and learning	Does the Draft Syllabus show a clearer path of development in the subject – clearer taxonomies of skills, more logical sequencing, development from Stage 4 to Stage 5?
a focus on lower order skills, including ICT skills	Has the focus shifted sufficiently to higher order skills?
	Is ICT conceptualised in terms of higher order use?
decontextualisation of language processes	Is there sufficient direction/guidance for the integration of language processes for the purposes of composing? (Outcome 4 might be a good case study here).
the skewing of the course away from 'English' to a course in functional literacy	Has this been sufficiently rectified? Where could it be improved?
shift of focus from the student to prescriptive content with student perceived as passive learner	Has this been sufficiently rectified? Where could it be improved?
failure to cater for the full range of students and acknowledge what students bring to the class	Can you identify groups of students in your school whose needs interests and abilities are not addressed?
A shift away from professional discourse of teachers	Is the language of the document sufficiently familiar to NSW teachers and does it reflect their professional discourse? Where could it be improved?
The loss of pleasure as a core element of the subject	Will you enjoy teaching this syllabus and will your students enjoy learning?

At the conclusion of the ETA's response to ACARA and the Draft Australian Curriculum, we presented an alternative conceptualisation of the subject presented against which we mapped the Australian Curriculum (Appendix 2, pp. 31-42). This conceptualisation was based on a new synthesis of historically understood and internationally acknowledged reasons for studying English (Ellis, Fox and Street, 2007) and we think it would be worth respondents re-considering this and mapping

the Draft Syllabus Content Points onto it.

Historical understandings of English	Draft NSW Syllabus 2011
1. Developing the self, values and social relationships	
2. Developing productive and artful communication	
3. Promoting engagement and developing insightful response	
4. Developing, applying and transforming learning for new communicative contexts and problems	

Ellis, V., Fox, C. and Street, B. (Eds.). (2007). *Rethinking English in schools: A new and constructive stage*. London, Continuum