

Queensland response

Note: In the current *Curriculum review: an international perspective, June 2001*, the information regarding Education Queensland's New Basics trial in the Queensland sections is current.

1. In the countries of the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Archive, what is the frequency of curriculum review? Are reviews regular or ad hoc? What triggers curriculum reviews?

Currently in Queensland there are two curriculum development authorities — Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (QBSSSS) for Years 11-12 and Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) for P-10. When one authority (the Queensland Studies Authority) comes into being on 1 July 2002, a process for revision of curriculum will be retained.

The purpose of syllabuses (curriculum documents) developed by either QBSSSS or QSCC is to provide a framework for schools/educational institutions to develop curriculum including valued learnings, course structures and assessment techniques. From a syllabus document, schools develop curriculum that meets the needs of the schools community.

QBSSSS

The review is periodic, a syllabus remains current for six cohorts of students. Syllabuses are generally reviewed on a six-year cycle. For syllabuses with embedded vocational education and training components, a review occurs every four years. Broader syllabus documents for non-moderated subjects (known as study area specifications), that have embedded vocational education and training components are revised in accordance with the revision or the development of training packages by industry training bodies. It is guaranteed that at least three cohorts of students study a syllabus before changes to vocational education requirements effecting syllabuses would be implemented.

QSCC

The review is periodic. A syllabus remains current for five years. Syllabuses are to be evaluated/reviewed over a period of three years.

2. In the countries of the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Archive, what are the aims or purposes of curriculum review? Are they, for example, to modernise the system, or to reduce the burden on teachers?

QBSSSS and QSCC

The need for revision is in response to the dynamic nature of the education systems of which the syllabuses are an important component. So that syllabus documents keep pace with the needs of the students and be part of an education system that responds to these changing needs, they undergo revision on a regular basis. The valued learnings of the subjects may change over time just as the approach to assessment may alter. This may be in response to, for example, the changing use of technology in the subject.

3. In the countries of the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Archive, what is the review process for curriculum review? That is, how is curriculum review conducted, who is involved etc?

QBSSSS

The Board, upon recommendations and advice of the Curriculum Committee, initially approve a syllabus revision and at the completion of the process, approves the revised syllabus.

The Curriculum Committee is an advisory committee to the Board. The committee's role is –

- To keep the Board informed of current curriculum development
- To review syllabuses and other materials submitted by subject advisory committees
- To make recommendations to the Board additional to those made by subject advisory committees about the suitability of syllabuses and other materials.

The Curriculum Committee forwards advice to the Board when proposals for revisions are made in addition to that provided by subject advisory committees at each stage of the development of syllabuses. The advice of the Curriculum Committee is widely based, directed towards helping the Board make decisions about the relationships between subjects and the likely impact of new or revised subjects across a school curriculum.

Subject Advisory Committees (SACs) are statutory committees that usually represent a discipline area, sometimes comprising several subjects (eg The Arts), or less commonly, a single subject. The functions of the SAC are –

- to make recommendations to the Board concerning the broad framework of the syllabus or syllabuses in the subject or group of subjects for which the committee is appointed
- where such matter is referred to the SAC by the Board, to make recommendations to the Board with respect to the matter of syllabuses for those subjects developed by schools, school systems, authorities, other institutions or the Board itself which are designated, or are to be designated, Board or Board registered subjects on the senior certificate
- to make recommendations to the Board on such other matters as the Board refers to the committee.

The advice of subject advisory committees is generally subject-specific.

Each SAC comprises nominees of various stakeholders (for example, teachers, the various employing authorities, tertiary representatives and/or learned associations, industry groups, parent representatives, QSCC, QBSSSS and other necessary persons appointed by the Board). The relevant SAC reviews syllabuses every six years. The format of the proposal outlines the classification of the revision (minor or major), and identifies key points for attention, gleaned from teacher surveys. The periodic review recommends one of the following revision options –

- No change needed
- A minor revision where changes need no trialling-piloting and it can be implemented in all schools at the same time
- A major revision occurs where changes are substantial enough to require combined trialling-piloting. It requires most teachers to do more than one of the following:
 - gain knowledge of new subject matter;
 - acquire new strategies and skills to teach the subject;
 - develop an understanding of new criteria and standards for assessing student achievement;
 - assess student achievement using new techniques.

The respective SACs, from formal nominations every four years, selects subcommittee members. Subcommittees are subject specific committees that operate with guidance from professional officers of the Board. The subcommittee completes the writing of the revision.

Membership is predominantly practicing teachers drawn from the various schools with at least one tertiary representative and, where relevant, at least one industry representative.

Professional officers of the QBSSSS are involved in the syllabus development process by–

- conducting literature searches and surveys of stakeholders, managing logistical considerations; organising and facilitating meetings, compiling information from the subcommittee into drafts of the document, distributing information to members of the committee, liaising between various managers and committees;
- bringing state-wide teaching, learning and assessment perspectives to the subcommittee;
- support the writing of the assessment and related moderation procedure sections of the syllabus;
- tracking changes in Vocational Education Training (VET) Packages and working with the Board's VET Curriculum Advisory Committees to identify those aspects of the packages suited to being embedded in syllabuses.

The process of syllabus revision

Board subjects

In the second year of the cycle SACs undertake a literature review, in conjunction with an analysis of overseas and interstate curriculum documents for identified syllabuses due for revision. The subcommittees of the SACs commence regular meetings in preparation for the writing of the revised syllabus.

Early in the third year of the cycle schools, tertiary institutions, industry and business, subject professional associations and other interested bodies are surveyed for analysis and discussion by the SAC. As a result of this a decision is made by the SAC as to whether the revision will be a minor or major. The SAC then presents either a proposed plan of action for a minor revision or a proposal for major revision to the Curriculum Committee. Time-lines are then determined for the revision process depending on the nature of the revision.

Study area specifications

When changes to study area specifications can be implemented by most teachers of the subjects (strands) with some support from the Office of the Board, a revision is implemented in all schools at the same time.

A substantial draft of a revision is discussed no later than the November meeting of the SAC in year 5 of the cycle of revision. The subcommittee reworks the draft. A final draft of a revision, adjusted in accordance with the SAC's requirements, is discussed no later than the March meeting of the SAC and the April meeting of the Curriculum Committee in the 6th year of the revision cycle. A revision may have timelines for implementation altered as a result of the vocational education and training components in an individual strand changing significantly as a result of a new national training package(s).

QSCC

A curriculum evaluation advisory committee is established for each review. A manager from the Office of QSCC is appointed and the review is undertaken either internally or through an external consultant. This manager undertakes the development of a project profile for the evaluation that is approved by the Director. An evaluation team is appointed by the manager, either through existing office staff or purchasing the services of an external consultant.

The Manager in consultation with relevant people produces an evaluation design that includes a publishing plan and this is submitted to the Evaluation Advisory Committee for advice before being approved by the Director.

The collection of data and analyses of data are prepared by evaluation team members in accordance with Program Evaluation standards and Guidelines for the ethical conduct of

evaluations. The evaluation manager provides the report to the Evaluation Advisory Committee for advice before receiving publishing approval. The Director then receives the report for approval. Report findings may be published/ presented to the Council or be included as a summary in the Director's report to the Council.

4. In the countries of the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Archive, what is the level of political involvement in curriculum review? For example, is curriculum review linked to political change? Is it a democratic process, which is open to political debate?

In Queensland the development and review of curriculum is undertaken by the two statutory authorities established for this function.

While the Minister for Education may direct the Queensland Studies Authority, which is to be operational on 1 July 2002, to develop a syllabus, the direction may not be about the content of a syllabus or the approval of a syllabus.

5. In the countries of the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Archive, when curriculum is reviewed, are there links to standards setting and is there an international dimension to this?

Syllabuses developed by QSCC and QBSSSS contain statements about standards of learning and standards of assessment. In the P-10 documents, outcome statements are identified in the different Key Learning Areas for six stages and beyond. In the 11-12 documents, objectives are stated with related criteria and standards for assessment across five grades that eventually articulate into the Levels of Achievement that are awarded to students.

Standards for learning and standards for assessment in other Australian states are referred to and discussed when developing those in the Queensland syllabuses.

A scan of international literature, including curriculum documents may identify standards for learning but it is not usual for a scan to disclose standards of assessment.

6. In the countries of the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) Archive, when curriculum review takes place, what is the timeframe for it and how long is it expected to take?

QBSSSS

The process of syllabus revision, from review of the existing document through writing, publication and distribution to schools, runs from May in year 2 of the cycle to March in year 6, approximately 4 years.

Note: the syllabus revision process is a subset of the periodic revision cycle and currently takes approximately four years. The syllabus writing process is subsumed into the syllabus revision process.

QSCC

It is planned that the time taken to revise syllabuses is three years.