



GUIDANCE FOR GENERAL EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

BLOOM-ED

Please start by viewing the background information and proposed revisions to the Australian curriculum [here](#)

Useful Information to Get Started

ACARA has asked that you do not provide any identifying information when making an email submission (although your email may identify you), but we encourage you to share a little bit about your background and why you felt compelled to make a submission. Information such as whether you are a classroom teacher, a parent a professional organisation, or a content expert is worth sharing.

Please also ensure your opening section mentions the elements of the curriculum that you feel are addressed well. We are very lucky that ACARA is welcoming comments and input from the wider community.

Please do not feel compelled to find “solutions.” Whilst you may have ideas on what could work better, it is enough that you simply highlight the areas that you are concerned about and explain why. If ACARA is open to making further changes, they will do so in consultation with numerous groups.

To make your submission to the Australian Curriculum Review Consultation click on this [link](#)

Note: You will need to scroll to the bottom of their page and select “email submissions and comments”

Key Issues To Consider

ANY LANGUAGE OR GUIDANCE RELATED TO RELATIONSHIPS, SEXUALITY AND/OR SEXUAL HEALTH SHOULD PRIORITISE THE POSITIVE PERSPECTIVE

All humans will go through puberty, and most will engage in sexual activity during their lifetime for reasons other than reproduction. Yes, like any human behaviour, there are certain risks associated with engaging in sexual activity. However, it is critical that education in Australia is reflective and supportive of reality.

Sexuality should be expressed in a positive light and schools should avoid messaging that only focuses on fear and harm prevention measures. There is also a lot more to sexual health than ‘consent.’ Shame, stigma and embarrassment all heavily influence an individual’s ability to receive education and to seek help. Schools have a critical role to play in modelling how the topic of sexual health can and should be addressed more openly.

SEXUALITY SHOULD BE VIEWED AS AN IMPORTANT ‘CAPABILITY’

While the personal and social capabilities are broad enough to address important life skills, the lack of specific language and instruction increases the risk that educators may overlook opportunities to develop the personal and social capability of students in relation to their sexual identity, sexual relationships and/or sexual health.



GUIDANCE FOR GENERAL EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

BLOOM-ED

Key Issues To Consider continued...

THERE IS A BRILLIANT STATEMENT ABOUT DIVERSE LEARNERS IN THE HPE CURRICULUM - THIS SHOULD BE APPLICABLE TO ALL EDUCATORS, NOT JUST HPE TEACHERS

The proposed HPE curriculum has a strong statement in reference to diverse learners (pp. 25-26), particularly in light of the language used to describe the importance of inclusive education that is relevant to lived experience. It is incredibly encouraging to see the statement:

“... when teaching about reproduction and sexual health, to ensure that the needs of all students are met, including students who may be same-sex attracted, gender diverse or intersex.”

The sentiment behind this is admirable and should be mentioned in all other curriculum and guidance documents created by ACARA. All learning areas should be directed to ensure their teaching is inclusive and reflective of lived experience. This is not just important for individual students who may be same-sex attracted, gender diverse or intersex, but it also acknowledges that these identities are pervasive in the broader school community.

ELABORATIONS SHOULD BE MANDATORY OR CONTENT ELABORATIONS REQUIRE MORE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE TO ENSURE CRITICAL CONCEPTS ARE TAUGHT

Across all learning areas, elaborations are provided as optional materials to guide how the compulsory sections of the curriculum (i.e. the content descriptors) could be addressed. If elaborations are merely optional, then additional elaborations, specific to relationships and sexuality should be written where appropriate. Schools can then elect not to teach these if they wish.

Within health sections of the proposed HPE curriculum, the content descriptors are vaguely written. This is going to result in huge variability with how health will be taught across the country and what topics will or will not be covered. It opens schools up to criticism that they are not teaching the same content as their peers. Greater clarity will protect educators who are already delivering relationships and sexuality education as per best-practice guidelines. As an example, you will not find important phrases such as safer sex skills, sexually transmissible infections, condoms, contraception, or pregnancy mentioned in any content descriptors or elaborations.

MORE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IS REQUIRED

Please refer to our [various help sheets](#) for further details on how topics such as relationships, communication, identities, diversity, are not guided by language that is specific enough. This means schools can address all these issues in very superficial ways if they choose to.

A GLOSSARY OF VERBS WOULD BE USEFUL

What does ACARA actually mean by terms such as “examine,” “propose,” “explore” and “analyse.” Greater detail will result in more uniform application of the curriculum. ACARA should also explain that if a student is performing “to standard” then how to they demonstrate that they are exceeding it?

AUDITING OF DELIVERY

Currently there is no requirement for teachers or schools to demonstrate how they are addressing the concept of relationships and sexuality education within their school. However, auditing processes and peer moderation does already occur in other learning areas and this content area should be subject to the same requirements. Please note that recent adoption of [mandatory relationships and sexuality education](#) throughout all schools in England does specify that key aspects of relationships and sexuality education are in scope for school inspections (p.44).



GUIDANCE FOR GENERAL EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

BLOOM-ED

Issues for Specific Learning Areas

In Health, **ISSUES SURROUNDING CONSENT ARE EXPLAINED WELL, BUT THE TOPIC OF CONSENT IS RARELY MENTIONED IN THE COMPULSORY SECTIONS (I.E. THE CONTENT DESCRIPTORS).**

Whilst it is pleasing to see the proposed HPE curriculum comprehensively addresses the issue of consent (i.e. acknowledgement of factors such as communication, negotiation, empathy, boundary setting, stereotypes, power, coercion, and violence). The content descriptors are what classroom teachers will focus on and “consent” is rarely mentioned here.

Also in Health, **SCHOOLS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADDRESS EACH HEALTH FOCUS AREA EQUALLY.** The proposed HPE curriculum has several areas of focus to be addressed from F-10. However, it does not stipulate how much time schools should spend on each focus area (p.8). Essentially, there is nothing stopping schools from covering nutrition as much as they want and avoiding sexual health as much as possible.

In Science, **HUMAN REPRODUCTION AND THE HUMAN REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM SHOULD BE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED.**

Furthermore, **THE BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES SUB-STRAND SHOULD INCLUDE SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO HUMANS.** Please refer to the Science Help Sheet for more information. At the current time, there is a real risk may students will leave secondary school without any understanding of how their own body is capable of reproduction.

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION CAN BE ADDRESSED IN MULTIPLE LEARNING AREAS. THIS SHOULD BE EMPHASISED

Relationships and sexuality education is not just the responsibility of HPE teachers. To make it clearer for schools, that relationships and sexuality can and should be addressed across multiple learning areas, a curriculum connection document should be created.

Whilst the Respect Matters curriculum connection document is admirable, it should be replicated to consider the broader context of relationships and sexuality. For example:

- In **HASS**, there is an opportunity for students to explore how gender and sexuality are understood through a lens of civics and citizenship, law, and/or history. Students may also learn how to understand and navigate moral and ethical standpoints. both from a historical perspective and a current cultural perspective. Any exploration of families should also consider the broad variety of family structures (e.g., adoptive, foster, single parent, large families, blended families, grandparent families, same-sex parents, etc.)
- In **Science**, there is an opportunity for students to learn about the human reproductive system. However, the proposed Science curriculum does not use language that is specific enough and many schools may choose to address reproduction in the context of flora and fauna only.
- In **Technologies**, there is an opportunity for students to learn about critical digital literacy skills and how to remain safe online.
- In **English**, there is an opportunity for students to examine media that showcases diverse human identities and experiences, and has been developed by diverse authors/creators.