

## Summary Document

### VADEA Response to the Australian Curriculum: The Arts Review

VADEA NSW has written the following response to the recent public consultation documents, released in April 2021, for the Review of the Australian Curriculum. The aim of the review is to improve the “*structural coherence and clarity of direction for teachers through the content descriptions and achievements standards*” (p.1). ACARA state: “*The proposed revisions make clear the essential arts knowledge, understanding and skills students need to be confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners and active, informed members of the community. These revisions also ensure our curriculum remains world class*” (p.1). VADEA challenges the claim that the existing Australian Curriculum: The Arts (AC:TA) is world class and asserts that the changes made in the consultation curriculum do little to improve its quality and provision for rich Visual Arts content and learning opportunities. NSW will ‘adapt and adopt’ the AC:TA in Visual Arts K-12 syllabi by 2024. In order to ensure we maintain the high quality and robustness of our current syllabus, it is important that we advocate for a stronger AC:TA - Visual Arts than is currently represented in the consultation curriculum

VADEA NSW identify a series of key issues in the proposed curriculum and summarise them as:  
Incoherent and disorganised curriculum structure, evidenced in:

- Strands/Content Descriptions
  - Process, linear conception of artmaking through the Strands which do not align skills with conceptual knowledge
  - Conflation and misrepresentation of practice in Making and Responding
  - Narrow view of representation in artmaking and forms of contemporary practice
  - Lack of provision for critical interpretation and historical study in which students learn to represent points of view through studying and writing about art
  - Narrow theoretical orientation, student centred curriculum - emphasis on process, student self-expression and intention
- Viewpoints
  - Underutilised, which favour subjectivity and exclude well-defined ideas of the cultural and symbolic value of art
- Core Concepts
  - Learning as Artist and as Audience
    - Omission of the object of study - artwork, and world represented
    - Learning as, at the exclusion of learning about
  - Learning as Making and Responding
    - ACARAs problematic definition of core concepts
- Achievement Standards
  - Alignment issues with Content Descriptions

**VADEA encourages you to complete the consultation survey. You may choose to use the following to help guide your response. We must present a strong NSW response. Your opinion matters.**

Complete the survey here: <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/consultation/the-arts/>  
Survey closes Thursday 8th July

#### Section 2- General Feedback

##### Introductory elements

##### Rationale

- The rationale does not adequately account for the role of the audience and world represented. It should include the terms ‘investigate and interpret’ in the last paragraph, as opposed to ‘recognise and appreciate’. It should use the term ‘artwork’ instead of ‘arts works’.

<p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The aims identify significant areas of visual arts content, however they are not aligned with the content of the curriculum as represented in the Content Descriptions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Organisational Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The strands do not provide a coherent organisational structure of the curriculum</li> <li>The strands do not make clear what is important knowledge, understanding and skills in Visual Arts. They present a process-based, student-centred account of Visual Arts content, which does not accurately reflect the core concepts of visual arts education. The strands conflate making and responding and focus on processes, as opposed to discipline-specific subject content.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The curriculum states that the general capabilities more relevant and applicable to The Arts are Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social capability and Intercultural Understanding. Whilst the curriculum acknowledges Literacy is fundamental to all learning, it also claims that Literacy is not core to the curriculum of Visual Arts. VADEA asserts that literacy, through written interpretive accounts, is a fundamental element of the discipline and should therefore play a more explicit role.</li> <li>The curriculum does not support the development of general capabilities. Without an adequate description of knowledge, skills and values in making and interpretation, students will be precluded from demonstrating competence in literacy skills, the integration of numeracy, developing critical and creative thinking or skills in ethical decision making. The absence of discipline-specific content means students won't have the opportunity to demonstrate competence in art as well as in 21st century skills.</li> <li>The key connections identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures as the most relevant Cross-curriculum priority to The Arts, and alongside the subject of History, has explicitly linked Content Descriptions to this. The key connections also identifies key opportunities to connect with other learning areas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The key consideration section provides information for planning teaching and learning in Visual Arts including references to: Visual arts practice; Visual conventions; Visual arts processes; Visual arts forms; Materials; Curating and exhibiting.</li> <li>Key considerations for the Arts refers to connecting learning in The Arts with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures. This section of the curriculum appropriately identifies the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocols (ICIP) and UNESCO (2017) as references in this section to support teachers.</li> <li>Viewpoints are included as part of Key Considerations for The Arts. VADEA is supportive of their inclusion and revision, however these must be more explicit in the curriculum and feature in the mandatory Content Descriptions and Achievement Standards to ensure they are used as an explicit inquiry tool by teachers to facilitate and develop students' making and interpretation of art.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Curriculum elements</b></p>
<p><b>Year/band level descriptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The band descriptions provide an overview of the learning that students should experience at each level, however there needs to be greater clarity between making and responding/interpreting, clearer reference to students learning <i>about</i> artists, artworks, audience, world (subject matter) and clearer reference to the range of forms students should be engaging with, particularly as students start to specialise in Years 7-10. The continued use of the term 'arts works', as opposed to 'artworks' is concerning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Achievement standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The achievement standards inadequately describe the expected quality of learning students should typically demonstrate in each band. The standards do not acknowledge the inherent cognitive shift across F-10 in making and responding/interpretation is underrepresented.</li> <li>The achievement standards do not reflect a clear developmental progression, with issues particularly in Years 7-8 &amp; 9-10. The standards do not appropriately reflect a progression of learning in relation to students' critical and historical interpretations of art, and do not support students developing naïve to increasingly sophisticated theories of art and understandings of practice.</li> <li>The learning described in the achievement standards does not appropriately align with the essential content students should be taught according to the Content Descriptions. There are structural alignment issues across the Arts and an issue with Visual Arts specific terminology including the use of 'arts works' as opposed to 'artworks' and 'people' instead of 'artist'.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Content descriptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content descriptions (CDs) fail to specify the essential knowledge, understanding and skills that should be learned in Visual Arts. Foundation should have subject specific CDs - generic Arts CDs are inadequate and do not foster a continuum of learning.</li> </ul>

- The CDs do not make it clear to teachers what should be taught. In particular, the core concepts of making and responding are conflated throughout the descriptions, making it unclear for teachers when students should be engaging in the practice of making and the practice of critical and historical interpretation.
- The amount of content presented in the descriptions can't be covered in each band, as virtually no content has been included. VADEA asserts that without the object of study - artwork and the world represented (subject matter) and the positioning of students as artists and audiences, at the exclusion of learning about artists and audiences, the CDs fail to represent content which can be actually taught in Visual Arts.
- VADEA suggests that the following should be removed or revised to make the content more manageable in Visual Arts:
  - The artwork (the object of study) and world represented (subject matter) must be explicit within the CDs
  - Clarify and differentiate making and responding in the CDs
  - Rename 'exploring and connecting' strand 'exploring and interpreting'
  - Include explicit reference to Interpretation in the CDs, especially in 'exploring and connecting' and 'developing skills, practice and ideas' and 'sharing and communicating' CDs/Strands
  - Explicitly reference Viewpoints in the CDs to support students representation and conceptual practice in making and responding
  - Use discipline specific terminology e.g. artworks
  - Ensure progression of learning from F-10 for each CD is in alignment (particular issues with Yr 5-10 'exploring and connecting')
  - Explicit reference to ICIP should not be included as a CDs in Yr 7-8. The use of Protocols should only be referenced to this section in Content Elaborations and Key Considerations.

#### **Content elaborations**

- The content elaborations (CE) provide some illustration and suggestions on how to plan and teach the content, however there is a disconnect between what is represented in the CD and the CE. VADEA asserts that there needs to be greater alignment and clarity between these, particularly as the CE are suggestions, not mandatory. The CEs should refer to Key Considerations, including Viewpoints and forms more explicitly.
- The CEs provide somewhat of a range of contexts that support teachers to integrate the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, however they need to be more specific in relation to the general capabilities of literacy (reference to writing and interpretation should be included at each level).

#### **Additional optional comment/observations**

#### **What has improved?**

Viewpoints are more clearly organised and arranged than AC:TA V.1

#### **What needs further improvement?**

- Clarify and clearly articulate the role of Core Concepts in the design of the curriculum
- Remove making and responding from Core Concepts and reinstate them as organising practices in CDs. Similar to V.1, identify making and responding in the CDs by using the relevant codes.
- The artwork (the object of study) and world represented (subject matter) must be explicit within the Core Concepts and CDs
- Rename 'exploring and connecting' Strand 'exploring and interpreting'
- Include explicit reference to interpretation in the CDs, especially in 'exploring and connecting' and 'developing skills, practice and ideas' and 'sharing and communicating' CDs and CEs
- Explicitly reference Viewpoints in the CDs and CEs to support students representation and conceptual practice in making and responding
- Use discipline specific terminology throughout e.g. artworks, not arts works
- Ensure progression of learning from F-10 for each CD and Achievement Standards is in alignment (particular issues with Yr 5-10 'exploring and connecting')
- Remove explicit reference to ICIP in the Yr 7-8 CD. The use of Protocols should only be referenced to this section in CEs and Key Considerations.
- Include subject specific CDs in Foundation in alignment with Technology

### **Section 3 - Band specific feedback (OPTIONAL)**

**If you would like to give specific feedback on a band level, you might like to refer to some of the following:**

#### **Areas for improvement - Content Descriptions**

##### **Foundation**

Make all CDs for Foundation subject specific (inconsistent with Technologies as Digital Technology and Design and Technology are represented as distinct disciplines).

AC9AVAF01 - replace 'communicate ideas' to 'represent their world'

**Years 1-2**

AC9AVA2E01 - replace 'people' with 'artists', replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'

AC9AVA2S01- replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'

AC9AVA2C01 - replace 'communicate ideas and/or reference experiences' to 'represent their world'

**Years 3-4**

AC9AVA4E01- Remove 'as they see it', not necessary

AC9AVA4P01 -Remove 'when developing confidence' as the CD does not make sense nor is this appropriate within the structure of the CDs; add 'to explore ideas' at the end of the CD; replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'

AC9AVA4C01 - Change 'to create visual arts works that communicate ideas' to 'to create visual artworks represent ideas about the world'

AC9AVA4S01- replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'; replace 'communicate artists intention' with 'communicate ideas'

**Years 5-6**

AC9AVA6E01- There is a significant issue with the progression of learning, as this is more conceptually demanding for students compared to the same CD in Years 7-8. To bring it into alignment with 7-8 and 91-0, this should read 'investigate and explain the ways that visual artists represent a diverse range of viewpoints for different purposes'

AC9AVA6P01- Replace 'to represent an idea' to 'to represent viewpoints'

AC9AVA6C01- replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'

AC9AVA6S01- replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'; replace the word 'reinforce' with 'express'

**Years 7-8**

AC9AVA6E01- This CD is incongruent with 5-6 and reverts to a structural focus that is not in alignment with 5-6 or 9-10. VADEA recommends removing 'visual arts processes, visual conventions, materials and techniques'. It should read: 'investigate and analyse the ways that visual artists, across times and contexts communicate concepts and represent viewpoints in their visual arts practice'

AC9AVA8E02- ICIP protocols and copyright laws as Visual Arts content in Years 7-8 should be moved to Content Elaborations, with a hyperlink. It should continue to build upon content from Year 5-6 and act as a precursor to content in Year 9-10

AC9AVA8P01- Relate Key Connections of Materials, Styles and Forms to the Content Description, rather than the generic materials and techniques

AC9AVA8P01, AC9AVA8P02 - These CDs are very similar, there is an opportunity to include a CD for making and responding/interpreting as the other form of skill and practice here, which would be stage appropriate; replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'

AC9AVA8P02, AC9AVA8S01- replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'

AC9AVA8C02- Add 'intended concepts and viewpoints'

AC9AVA8S01-'Intended concepts' is problematic, as it assumes curators and audiences always know what the artist intended, when in fact the student as curator/audience is interpreting the artwork and inferring meaning, rephrase as 'curate exhibits of visual artworks to engage an intended audience and represent concepts and viewpoints'

**Years 9-10**

AC9AVA10E01- needs to account for the cognitive shift from 7-8 more adequately and could be enriched with the inclusion of 'interpret'; Replace 'Perspectives' with 'Viewpoints'; Remove the term 'professional' (AC9AVA10E01)

AC9AVA10E02- is not in alignment with Years 1-6 which explicitly identify First Nation Australians and 7-8 which identifies ICIP protocols and copyright as content; relates to poststructural accounts of visual arts and this would allow for critical evaluation, poststructural accounts of visual arts should be included in Viewpoints

AC9AVA10P01- Remove reference to 'personal style' and 'own'; Include 'to represent concepts and viewpoints'

AC9AVA10P02- This CD does not appropriately align with 7-8 CD and does not represent a progression of learning or content, this point is better suited against the Sharing and communicating Strand; replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'; Relate Key Connections of Materials, Styles and Forms to the Content Description, rather than the generic materials and techniques; Remove 'developing personal style'

AC9AVA10C01- Add 'interpret', this could be rephrased as, 'Evaluate and critically interpret artists' practice to further develop and refine artistic practice'

AC9AVA10C02- replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'; Replace 'personal views' with 'Viewpoints' - 'represent Viewpoints and communicate intention'

AC9AVA10S01- replace 'arts works' with 'artworks'; The integration of learning as audience is absent in this CD; Replace 'for a specific purpose' which is vague and more appropriate for 7-8, with 'to represent a variety of intentions, concepts and viewpoints' (AC9AVA10S01); Replace 'investigate' with 'interpret'

Written on behalf of VADEA NSW Members,

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