The Humanities and Social Sciences encompass aspects of social, civics and citizenship education, originally subsumed under the term SOSE or HSIE (in New South Wales) but now, in the 2010 national curriculum, organised in a different manner. In the latest iteration of the Australian Curriculum the term Humanities and Social Sciences encompasses studies of History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business. SOSE and HSIE are not acknowledged in the national curriculum, but in the period of transition that we are working through at the moment they are expected to linger in many school systems.

Research into Humanities and Social Sciences indicates that this area of study is a negotiation of the relative weight given to the encouragement of either social commitment or social comprehension, achieved through the aims of citizenship or scholarship (Johnston 1989).

Classroom approaches to the Humanities and Social Sciences have inquiry approaches as the centre point of the area of study and there is an emphasis on problem solving. It is often referred to as the citizenship area of the curriculum. There is also an emphasis on developing national and global identity through the content areas, particularly through historical and geographical studies.

This chapter:

• establishes the area of study in the Australian Curriculum in its historical context
• describes the individual contributions of History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business and the cross-curriculum capabilities and perspectives in the Australian Curriculum and how they relate to active and informed citizenship.
What is this area in the Australian Curriculum?

The new national Australian Curriculum has established a number of separate areas that under previous state curriculum documents were categorised as SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment) or HSIE (in New South Wales, standing for Human Society and Its Environment). The SOSE label originated from the national mapping activity of 1991 that mapped what was being taught in areas of study in Environmental Education and Studies of Society across Australia. Across the world this area of study has been referred to as social studies, studies of society or citizenship education. Typically it includes the study of disciplines such as history, geography, sociology and economics; cross-disciplinary areas such as Aboriginal studies, environmental studies, religious studies, peace studies, Asian studies; and some integrated studies such as civics and citizenship education, social studies and Australian studies.

There is thus no SOSE area in the new curriculum, but as it has always been an integrated study it still exists as long as teachers continue to teach in that manner. The Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which was established in 2008, has developed curriculum documents in Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business education, and incorporates the ‘capabilities’ to develop intercultural understanding, ethical behaviour, and personal and social competence. Along with ‘perspectives’ of Indigenous history and culture, sustainable patterns of living and engagement with Asia—all areas which have had a strong SOSE focus in previous national and state curriculum documents—these separate areas essentially make up the Humanities and Social Sciences area of the curriculum.

Internationally, this area of the curriculum is variously referred to as Studies of Society and Environment, Human Society and Its Environment, social science, social studies, new social studies, teaching about society, the study of society, citizenship education and civics, and now in the Australian Curriculum it will be called Humanities and Social Sciences. Some see these areas of study as a collection of similar or related subjects such as history, geography, civics and economics, while others see them as elements of an integrated field of study. Primary and secondary areas of schooling often use different terminology. Definitions, however, have tended to focus on the intentions of the study rather than the discipline area from which it arose, at least in the primary school.

There has always been difficulty in definitively establishing the purposes and parameters of the social studies area and despite studies by researchers such as Engle (1960), Barr, Barth and Shermis (1977) and Shaver (1982, 1987) in the United States, and Johnston (1989), Reynolds (1999) and Kennedy (2001b) in Australia, it continues to elicit scrutiny. Divisions between the cultural traditions approach (passing on of important traditions from our past), including civics education; and the critical evaluation and decision-making approach (working to transform our society), which could be seen as an active citizenship approach, are still apparent in Australia. Johnston argued that the evolution of what he calls the social studies area of study was the recurrent negotiation of the relative weight given to the encouragement of either social commitment or social comprehension, achieved through the aims of citizenship or scholarship (Johnston 1989). There are, however, some fundamental knowledges, processes and values that underpin this area and have some long-standing validity.

The knowledge and understandings of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Humanities and Social Sciences involves studying our own society, and visions for future societies encourage educators to continually reconsider and adapt knowledge and understandings that students should gain in this learning area. In many cases, however, these new learnings are simply added to the
existing learnings, leading curriculum developers to engage in endless debates as to which knowledge is of more worth. This is why we have curriculum debates as to whether we need to teach about particular Asian countries or particular Western schools of thought.

An alternative approach is where the curriculum is developed around key concepts or understandings, and there is some discretion given to teachers and students to use a variety of suitable pieces of knowledge or facts to explore these concepts. If, for example, syllabus writers established that social justice as a global issue be investigated then one example of that could be the refugee issue in Australia, along with many other examples. This approach assumes that there are a variety of facts that are of equal value in exploring an issue and there is no need to mandate any particular set of them. Of course, the danger with the latter approach is that some students may cover similar content in subsequent years, even if they address a different concept or ‘big idea’.

This then establishes the two ends of a continuum when establishing what knowledge and understandings are essential for the Humanities and Social Sciences area of the curriculum. At the one end there are facts and groups of facts required to be learnt and at the other there are broad conceptions to be explored with potentially no particular facts more important than any other.

The processes of Humanities and Social Sciences

Humanities and Social Sciences learners are guided by futures thinking in that the area of study is crucial to better understand and influence society of the future by understanding society of the present and past. Humanities and Social Sciences learners need to be self-directed. They need to be flexible and creative. They need to be collaborative. They need to have complex thinking skills and be reflective of their learning. They also need to have some vision of their role in the world and so be able to apply their skills to something meaningful for them and others (ACDE 2001; Bentley 1998; Hicks 1996; Kennedy 2001b; Spender 2001; Townsend 2001).

The inquiry process, a process strongly identified with Humanities and Social Sciences, promotes all of these desired skills. There are explanations of the inquiry process in most social studies/social science textbooks (Buchanan 2013; Hoepper and Gilbert 2013; Marsh and Hart 2011; Taylor et al. 2012) with the essential tenets being that there is a sequence of activities to guide students through a meaningful social investigation. Although there are a number of different ways of classifying this sequence, it basically revolves around a progression of framing and focusing questions; locating, organising and analysing evidence; evaluating, synthesising and reporting conclusions; possibly taking action of some sort; and reconsidering consequences and outcomes of each of the above phases (Gordon 2000; Hamston and Murdoch 1996; Naylor 2000). As Naylor (2000) pointed out, the inquiry process depends upon a view that students are to be strongly involved in the learning process and they actively construct meaning, negotiate all aspects of learning, frame questions to be answered, learn in a social context and can be involved in taking some kind of action.
The Humanities and Social Sciences area requires skills of participation. Students have to be connected to their community if this area is to assist them in future learning (Arthur and Bailey 2000; Cumming and Carbines 1997). Holden and Clough (1998) pointed out that children are interested and concerned about issues such as environmental destruction, crime and violence and they would like to work towards effective changes to their society. There are also significant benefits for society in developing such competent citizens. Holden and Clough argued that active participation is dependent on the value that teachers place on this type of participation. It requires more than an ‘in class’ romp through a textbook. Competencies in participation must be developed if it is to be effective. Hart argued that children should work alongside adults in school and community projects and there is a hierarchy of participation skills that can be developed (Hart 1992).

The development of critical social understanding, and an ability to put into action the findings of student investigation, are also critical (Gilbert 2001; Hoepper 1999). Issues-based education has a long history in the social studies (Evans and Saxe 1996), but critical theorists argue for a critical perspective on all knowledge, arguing that economic interests have shaped the interests of many aspects of society, including education, and that active citizens need to question and redress this (Hursh and Ross 2000). Forms of action for school students can be congruent with societal views of appropriate societal action and need not be extremist.

The values of Humanities and Social Sciences

Values underpin all of what we do in Humanities and Social Sciences. They influence what we teach, how we teach and they are an object of discussion in our teaching. At the hub of schooling are the values that influence our intellectual, physical, social, moral and aesthetic development. Aspin (2002, p. 13) argued that individual judgments and activities are ‘determined at the level of the culture of a community’. Community values give human beings their most fundamental conception of the meaning of life. Ghaye and Lillyman (2000) refer to action as ‘values in use’ encapsulating the holistic influence of values on our interactions with others. In other words, all our actions are influenced by our values.

Values are the estimation of worth, priority or significance of some object, feeling or idea (adapted from Hill 1994). Halstead and Taylor (2000, cited in DEST 2003a, p. 2) define them as ‘the principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable’. Values are regarded as stable guides to our behaviour and decisions and are seen to be quite enduring, formed under the influence of parents and community, knowledge, experience and peers. Values are embedded and embodied in everything we think and every action we take (Aspin 2002). Attitudes and behaviour are indicative of particular values, but are not necessarily good indicators of the fundamental values inherent when performing a particular action because people are not necessarily consistent in linking all their actions to their own underlying values and it is not always clear just what values prompt certain behaviours (Cox and Alexander 2005).

Activity

The Golden Rule: ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ (Matthew 7: 12).

This rule is enacted in many societies and cultures. Find out how it is expressed in a culture other than your own. Why would this be such an all-pervading rule? Establish some specific class rules based on this Golden Rule. Do you need other class rules or is this sufficient for a cohesive classroom?
Additionally, the literature in the area identifies a dichotomy between moral decisions and decisions that are based on societal conventions. There are instances when moral decisions are not necessarily conventional decisions, with a morally bad action being one that, even if there were no rule against it, would still be considered wrong. That is, moral laws are those that are unalterable, non-contingent, are generally acceptable and serious, whereas societal decisions are dependent on the society (Keefer 2006). However, the complexity that this dichotomy suggests can be even more convoluted with many of our moral judgments dependent on community and relationship contexts. For example, Tan and Chew query whether the five guiding values of the Singaporean Civics and Moral Education (CME) curriculum, of which one key value is that of nation before community and society before self, could be said to be morally contentious in some instances, creating inner tensions within the citizen as to which moral code should be adopted and when (Tan and Chew 2004).

Reflecting on values

Can you think of a societal rule that may be a contradiction to a moral law?

However, it is assumed that establishing socially acceptable values is a starting point for a functioning society and that there can be some values that are crucial for both the individual and the state. For example, valuing honesty is a better start to establishing a cohesive community than valuing dishonesty, and so the question arises: How can we teach what our society and our community consider to be appropriate values?

As Gilbert and Hoepper (2001) pointed out, schools cannot avoid values, and pupils and parents believe schools have a responsibility to promote values even if they are unsure exactly what they should be. Values are not easily observed by researchers and the community at large, and formal education appears to emphasise cognitive processes, with outcomes-based assessment emphasising behavioural objectives achieved by using these cognitive processes. In most states in Australia values are not assessed and they are not explicit in the Australian Curriculum. The plurality of our society leads to difficulties in deciding upon appropriate values and teaching strategies. In recent times there has been an acknowledgment of the deficit of explicit values teaching in schools, or perhaps an acknowledgment of the values that are apparent although not recognised in our classrooms, and some discussion of what values might be important in schooling. A mixture of approaches have been suggested, approaches that vary between incorporating explicit teaching of values (what is called character education in the United States) and focusing on moral reasoning including moral dilemmas, moral clarification and moral judgment (DEST 2003a). In the Australian Curriculum values emerge most prominently through the capabilities strands, particularly Ethical behaviour, Personal and social competence, and Intercultural understanding.

Preferred ways of teaching values

There is much discussion as to the most appropriate way to teach values. It is a very complex area of the curriculum and the research is not conclusive, but there are a few useful indicators of what works and what does not work that have been built up over decades of trial and error (McKenzie 2004). Leming (1997), in reviewing character education in the United States, argued that three different approaches were pursued in the twentieth century. In the 1920s and 1930s, inculcation of set virtues was the technique used. Research on programs in use in that period by Hartshorne and May (1930) indicated
that character and values in action were actually contextually specific, and urging good character
education did not necessarily lead to good character. The recommendation at the time was to lecture
less and establish a positive school climate and service-oriented activities to teach values.

In the 1960s and 1970s, values clarification (Raths, Harmin and Simon 1978) was very popular. This
technique encouraged teachers to facilitate the valuing process, withhold their own perspectives and
to respect whatever values the students finally arrived at. The research on this technique found no
significant improvement in the values of students and there was much criticism of its ethical relativism
(that is, all values being considered equally valid). Additionally, there were issues surrounding
public intrusion into individuals’ privacy. In the same period, there were education programs using
Kohlberg’s developmental theory of morality as their basis. Kohlberg (1981) argued that people moved
through six stages of moral development (from pre-conventional to post-conventional, principled
morality), influenced by their cognitive development, and the way to improve moral learning was to
involve the student in reasoning and dilemmas at one stage above the moral reasoning level at which
they currently operated. There was research evidence for improvement in moral reasoning, but not
necessarily in moral behaviour, and Kohlberg later experimented with the idea of ‘just communities’ in
schools, usually small, non-mainstream school communities.

Contemporary approaches have used the results of previous experiments to develop more
comprehensive and sophisticated approaches. Lickona (1997) argued that moral education must
address three components, these being moral knowledge, moral feelings and moral behaviour. In
his character education model, developed at the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs, he does this through
classroom strategies, creating a positive moral culture in the school and involving schools, parents and
communities as partners in this program.

It seems safe to say that it is important to use multiple approaches to values education.
Recommendations from Keefer (2006) and Tan and Chew (2004) are that the pedagogy of values
education is multifaceted but must include discussion, debate and moral dilemma because of the
importance of the context of values. Six key qualities are vital—a whole school approach; safe and
supportive learning environments; support for teachers; school planning; partnerships with the school
community; and quality teaching (DEST 2005b). Furthermore DEST (2005c) argued that there were
some underlying assumptions about values education and these were that:

- all students acquire values through an intricate interconnected range of influences including
  the school experience
- real education is about the whole and integrated person—the learner as a learner of knowledge,
skills, understandings, attributes, dispositions, and the development of an autonomous, well-
defined self
- there are some core values that can be identified and broadly agreed on as the values that
  underpin the sort of democratic and civil Australian society we aspire to be
- all schools are centres of values learning
- all facets of school life—from curriculum to canteen, from teachers to testing, from behaviour
  management to school management, from funding priorities to promotion policies, from
  Council meeting to cleaner’s greeting—are values laden and promote particular values
- all teachers are teachers of values
- values education should not be a matter of chance—values education ought to be explicitly
  planned for, implemented and monitored
- certain key characteristics of what makes for effective school-based values education can be
  identified and can be used to make a difference. (p. 11)
These assumptions provide the guidance for the following teaching strategies for values education.

**Reflecting on values**

Consider some of the schools you have visited. Do you sense a different values system operating in different schools or are they more or less the same? How do you explain the similarities and differences?

**Explicit education—character development**

This involves teaching moral values directly and is associated with naming core values and studying them specifically. The instructional process can include a variety of strategies, including direct instruction, but can also include problem solving, cooperative learning, experience-based projects, integrated thematic learning and discussion. Null and Milson (2003) argued that not only societal values but also intellectual virtues can be taught explicitly through argument and discussion.

Lovat and Schofield (1998) explored the worth of a direct values education program in establishing the values expounded in the New South Wales *Values we Teach* document. The program focused on the use of a range of moral issues and dilemmas in a classroom setting using a variety of teaching strategies. Students who participated reported high enjoyment and belief in the worth of the program. They found that the intervention did produce changes in attitudes with best results associated with activities that linked values with the school-related environment and the real-life experience of the child.

The DEST publication, *Values for Australian Schooling Professional Learning Resources—Primary* (2005c), pointed out that the building of close relationships between students and teachers provides opportunities for nurturing, bonding and exposure to positive role modelling of important values. A close student–teacher relationship supports the development of a consistent and common language of values that in turn facilitates dialogue between students, teachers and parents. Additionally, explicit teaching of values involves activities such as:

- devoting classroom time to the teaching of values
- having a part of the curriculum that deals specifically with values, beliefs, worldviews, spiritual systems and philosophy
- organising a visual display of values in classrooms
- making frequent reference to the poster display as situational opportunities arise for links to curriculum content and classroom management
- discussing role models to illustrate how people that we admire live these values
- creating similes and metaphors for the values
- reflecting on how well an individual, the class and the school are doing with the stated values.  

(p. 48)

Leming and Yendol-Hoppey (2004) reviewed studies of what children and teachers say about character education as it is practised in a number of US schools. They made recommendations for further adaptation of such programs. These included the view that character education should strengthen the students’ own values and not try to correct or change them; that such programs should be easily able to be incorporated into existing curriculum structures; that they should be developed in conjunction with students’ families; that they should be long term (K–12); and that to change behaviour, moral motivation must be addressed—as well as moral reasoning and moral knowledge.
Lemin, Potts and Welsford’s (1994) six-point strategy for considering values is a useful guide:
1. identifying, clarifying and researching others’ values
2. comparing, contrasting and exploring the nature of values
3. exploring and understanding feelings and others’ perspectives
4. exploring intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicting values
5. considering alternatives and implications
6. making a plan of action.

All these strategies can be used in conjunction with a real-life and important current issue such as those that appear in everyday History, Geography and Humanities and Social Sciences classrooms.

Implicit education—a caring school environment

Null and Milson (2003) argued that implicit teaching of values is based on the Aristotelian view of the way to teach moral virtues as opposed to intellectual virtues (e.g. you learn honesty by being honest and being surrounded by people who are likewise honest). It involves modelling, exemplification and mentoring. Lovat (2005) argued that values education refocused the attention of teachers on the fundamentals of effective teaching—the teacher, the quality of the teacher’s knowledge, content and pedagogy, and the teacher’s capacity to form committed and caring relationships with students. The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (DEST 2005a) pointed out that good practice in supporting values should include the use of whole school planning, improving partnerships with the school community, providing a safe and supportive learning environment, supporting individual students, and the use of quality teaching strategies (p. 7). The school ethos, incorporating the school’s underlying aims and philosophy that in turn influences the social interaction in the school, the attitudes and expectations of the teachers, the learning climate, the physical environment, the relationship between the school and its community and the way that conflicts are resolved, provides a strong influence on the values of its students. The notion of a caring school (Noddings 1997) implies relationships and connectedness between teachers and students, which helps develop values while allowing fair and frank discussion about values-laden issues. Having the teacher model fairness, friendliness, respect, freedom from prejudice and personal integrity influences students to be like them (Halstead and Taylor 2000).

However, as Davis (2003) argued, we cannot count on the behaviour taught leading to behaviour that is learnt and we cannot count on what we teach being able to be applied by students to new and novel situations without assistance by teachers. The teaching of values is not as easy as applying a well-worn recipe.

Peaceful Pedagogy (2010) is an approach where the entire school curriculum is built around the United Nations (UN) Rights of the Child (1989). McLeod and Reynolds (2010) argued that the Rights of the Child can be established as the key focus of the curriculum, with many different approaches to teaching them, and skills and values engendered that will lead to a more peaceful pedagogy in our schools. Approaches such as service learning in the local school community, teaching literacy through fictional texts, and using online school sites and examples of global school communities to teach key themes of human rights while continuing to teach state-mandated syllabus outcomes, can assist the development of intercultural understanding and ethical behaviour among other key capabilities and perspectives. The values emphasised in the program are the peace values of the UN at www.un.org/cyberschoolbus, these being ecological awareness, tolerance, intercultural understanding, non-violence, social responsibility, global agency and respect for life and human dignity. This type of planning provides a ‘big ideas’ approach to curriculum that transcends lists of topics and provides a more
authentic context for learning. It thus is values laden and has vision and meaning—key ingredients for History, Geography and Humanities and Social Sciences teachers.

**Cognitive approaches emphasising moral reasoning, moral judgments and values clarification through dilemmas**

These approaches teach skills that enable students to consider issues, develop some strategies that will enhance their abilities to deal with such issues, and enable them to consider multiple perspectives (and thus values) that are attached to such perspectives. These approaches assist students to be active citizens in a fast-changing, multifaceted world. Students must be taught to deal with issues that generate competing views and elicit strong emotions because these are the issues that create a strong democracy. That is what a democracy does—it provides a forum for people to work through strongly opposing viewpoints and values so as to enable a community to peacefully coexist. Moral reasoning, moral judgments and values clarification processes are taught well, using controversial issues (values-laden issues that enable visionary thinking) as stimuli.

**Reflecting on the Humanities and Social Sciences learning area**

What are the Humanities? What are the Social Sciences? What areas of study do you feel are missing from this learning area that the title would indicate should be included (if any)? What concepts do you think should be included in primary Humanities and Social Sciences? Are there any facts that you think all school students should know in this area?

**Background to a national curriculum**

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* [Melbourne Declaration] (Ministerial Council on Education, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] 2008) established two key goals for Australian schooling, one of which specifically asserted that active and informed citizenship is a key endeavour for such schooling. Although many areas of the curriculum can assist this goal, the Humanities and Social Sciences area has it as its foremost objective and so it is active and informed citizenship that binds the area. Some background to Australian developments in this area are explained below.

Although Australia has a federal system of government and school education has always been a state responsibility, there has been a long history of interaction between state governments, and between state governments and the Commonwealth government, with regard to school education. In fact, when R. Freeman Butts of Columbia University visited Australia in 1954, he wrote of an education system that was excessively centralised, with fixed syllabuses, a hierarchy of subjects biased towards the academic and a lack of public involvement. Uniformity existed under the various state jurisdictions. He attested:

> Uniform policy seems to apply to buildings, facilities, to educational expenditure, to subjects in the curriculum, to teaching methods, to standards of achievement for students, to classification, appointment, promotion and salary schedules for teachers, and the preparation of teachers. (Butts 1955, p. 12)

Since that time there has been a swing against such strong uniformity, and instead an increased devolvement of control to schools to allow schools to address specific needs of their individual
communities. However, and ironically at the same time, after the launch of Sputnik in 1957 education increasingly became a strategic national investment in the Cold War era, and was seen as a requirement and an important economic factor for nation building. Increasingly, it was seen as not good enough to leave education to the states or to state-mediated, school-based curriculum developers, but that education required national prioritisation. By the 1970s a Commonwealth-inspired core curriculum, a basic framework, was on the agenda and the Commonwealth Curriculum Development Centre was instituted in 1976 by the federal Fraser government. In 1980 the Director of the Centre (Malcolm Skilbeck) led the development of a national Core Curriculum with nine areas of knowledge and experience:

- communication
- scientific and technological ways of knowing and their social applications
- mathematical skills and reasoning and their applications
- moral reasoning and action
- social cultural and civic studies
- environmental studies
- arts and crafts
- health education
- work leisure and lifestyle.

This reconceptualisation of traditional school areas did not make much impact on state curricula and the Curriculum Development Centre was later dissolved because there was not enough money to establish a national curriculum, and because the goals of a national curriculum were elusive (Tripp and Watt 1984). Nevertheless the idea lived on, if only in a residual form with Federal government instrumentalities such as the Curriculum Corporation offering support to all states with regard to resources.

Although individual schools have increasingly been given their own budgets, since the 1980s curriculum has been once again seen as needing to be uniform between the states, and so moves to develop a national curriculum or at least national goals have increased. Throughout the Hawke–Keating Labor governments (1983–96), schooling in Australia was subject to the Federal government’s quest for greater control. The establishment of the supra-Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) in 1987 highlighted the emphasis placed on education as a means to generate greater national productivity and international economic competitiveness. Education ministers in the Hawke government, Susan Ryan and then John Dawkins, also promoted the notion of a national curriculum (Piper 1997). The 1989 Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia (Hobart Declaration) led to a considerable degree of state and Commonwealth cooperation in curriculum areas. In the late 1980s and early 1990s a national mapping exercise was undertaken and National Statements of Learning and Profiles in eight areas (English, Science, Mathematics, Languages Other than English, Technology, Studies of Society and Environment, The Arts, Health (Physical Education and Personal Development)) were developed by the Australian Education Council (AEC 1989). These learning areas were adopted differently by each of the states, but this collaboration was deemed to be quite successful and, in varying degrees, the states used these as guidelines in subsequent curriculum reforms that occurred all over the country in spite of years of debate and paranoia (Marsh 1994). In 1991 the curriculum area we now call Humanities and Social Sciences was called Studies of Society and Environment Education and then called Studies of Society and Environment, and was mapped across all states of Australia with six strands of study emerging as representative of this area, five being content strands and one being a process strand. The strands were time, continuity and change; place and space; culture; natural and social systems; resources; and investigation, communication and participation.