What is understanding?

To understand is to go beyond the information that is presented. It involves knowing at a deeper level, in order to be able to explain and build on the ideas, concepts or skills. Understanding forms the building blocks for more complex levels of thinking, including analysing, evaluating, inferring and predicting.

As learners become more proficient at making meaning, they develop mental models using explicitly communicated and implied information. Through the activation of ideas, connections can be made between known and new information to improve learners' understanding. Using questions such as why and how can help to grasp concepts and build a deeper understanding.

A process of understanding may include:

- identifying and highlighting concepts, key words or phrases

- making connections with new and known information

- recognising and explaining the key message in the information.

Understand as a cognition

Cognitive verbs are categorised using Marzano & Kendall's four elements of the cognitive system: retrieval, comprehension, analysis and knowledge utilisation (2007).

The cognitive verb understand is part of the comprehension element of cognitive process. This element involves the storage of 'the critical features of information in permanent memory' (p. 40)

Understand in the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0

The cognitive verb understand appears in various achievement standards (AS) and/or content descriptions (CD) in the Australian Curriculum. The following table shows the use of understand across the Australian Curriculum in Prep–Year 6.

Understand in the Prep–Year 6 Australian Curriculum AS and CD

	English	Health and Physical Education	P–6 HASS	Mathematics	Science	Technologies		
						Technologies	Design and Technologies	Digital Technologies
Prep	CD							
Year 1	CD							
Year 2	CD							
Year 3	CD							
Year 4	CD							
Year 5	CD							
Year 6	CD							

Understand in the Prep–Year 6 Australian Curriculum AS and CD

	Languages							The Arts					
	Chinese	French	German	Indonesian	Italian	Japanese	Spanish	The Arts	Dance	Drama	Media Arts	Music	Visual Arts
Prep													
Years 1–2	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS						
Years 3–4	AS CD	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS						
Years 5–6	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS						

Learning area/subject examples include, but are not limited to:

Year/s	Learning area/subject	AS	CD
Prep	English		**understand** that texts can take many forms such as signs, books and digital texts AC9EFLA03
Years 1–2	Languages: German	They (students) **understand** that language is connected with culture, and notice how this is reflected in their own language(s) and culture(s).	
Year 2	English		understand that in sentences nouns may be extended into noun groups using articles and adjectives, and verbs may be expressed as verb groups AC9E2LA07
Years 3–4	Languages: Chinese	They (students) demonstrate **understanding** that Chinese has rules for non-verbal communication, pronunciation and writing, and that characters are a form of writing and Pinyin reflects the sounds of spoken Chinese.	recognise and use modelled combinations of sounds, tone-syllable pronunciation and intonation patterns to form words and phrases, and **understand** that Pinyin is the romanisation of characters AC9LC4U01
Year 5	English		understand that language is selected for social contexts and that it helps to signal social roles and relationships AC9E5LA01
Years 5–6	Languages: Italian	They (students) use strategies to locate and interpret information and ideas in texts, and demonstrate **understanding** by responding in Italian or English, adjusting their response to context, purpose and audience.	
Year 6	English		understand how ideas can be expanded and sharpened through careful choice of verbs, elaborated tenses and a range of adverb groups AC9E6LA06

References

Marzano, R & Kendall, J 2007, *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.

More information

This information sheet is part of a suite of resources to support teachers in the explicit teaching and assessment of students' thinking. The suite of resources includes categories of common cognitive verbs, cognitive verb overviews and a cognitive verb toolkit with information sheets, posters and graphic organisers.

If you would like more information, please visit the QCAA website www.qcaa.qld.edu.au and search for 'cognitive verbs'. Alternatively, the suite of resources can be found here: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq/version-9/cognitive-verbs-in-version-9.0.