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:

* selecting information relevant to what is to be understood

* identifying and highlighting concepts, key words or phrases

* making connections between new and known information

* recognising and explaining the key message in the information

* checking the key message for clarity.

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 and/or content descriptions in the Australian Curriculum. The following table shows the use of understand across the Australian Curriculum in Years 7–10.

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Understand in the Years 7–10 Australian Curriculum achievement standards (AS) and content descriptions (CD)

	English	Health and Physical Education	Humanities and Social Sciences					Mathematics	Science	Technologies			The Arts				
			Civics and Citizenship	Economics and Business	Geography	History			Technologies	Design and Technologies	Digital Technologies	Dance	Drama	Media Arts	Music	Visual Arts
Year 7	CD																
Year 8	CD																
Year 9	CD																
Year 10	CD																

Understand in the Years 7–10 Australian Curriculum achievement standards (AS) and content descriptions (CD)

	Languages P–10 sequence							Languages 7–10 sequence						
	Chinese	French	German	Indonesian	Italian	Japanese	Spanish	Chinese	French	German	Indonesian	Italian	Japanese	Spanish
Year 7	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD
Year 8	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD
Year 9	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD
Year 10	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD

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

Year/s	Learning area/subject	Achievement standard	Content description
Year 7	English		**understand** how complex and compound-complex sentences can be used to elaborate, extend and explain ideas AC9E7LA05
Years 7–8	Languages: 7–10 sequence Indonesian	They (students) respond in Indonesian or English, and demonstrate **understanding** of context, purpose and audience in texts.	develop knowledge of, and use structures and features of, the Indonesian grammatical and writing systems to **understand** and create spoken, written and multimodal texts AC9LIN8EU02
Year 9	English	.	**understand** how evaluation can be expressed directly and indirectly using devices such as allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor AC9E9LA02
Years 9–10	Languages: P–10 sequence Spanish	They (students) demonstrate **understanding** of the conventions of spoken and written texts and the connections between them.	interpret and translate non-verbal, spoken and written interactions and texts to convey meaning and intercultural **understanding** in familiar and unfamiliar contexts AC9LS10C04

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.