

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Languages literature review

Senior syllabus redevelopment

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# Executive summary

## Syllabuses within the Languages and the Humanities and Social Sciences Learning Areas

<b>Authority syllabuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2009</li><li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages 2011</li></ul>
<b>Authority-registered syllabuses</b>	n/a
<b>VET qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CUV10211 Certificate I in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts</li><li>• CUV20211 Certificate II in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts</li><li>• CUV30211 Certificate III in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts</li><li>• SIT10112 Certificate I in Tourism (Australian Indigenous Culture)</li></ul>

## Overview of methodology and findings

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are an important part of the shared history of Australia and consequently should be an important part of the curriculum in Australian schools. This literature review provides a snapshot of the current curriculum pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages that is in place across Australia.

The methodology used was primarily a desktop review, accessing web-based curriculum documents from a range of Australian and international education system websites. Documents reviewed include curriculum materials and syllabus programs, teaching overviews, learning units, assessment frameworks, system guidelines and other content relating to the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages. Additional material was drawn from school-based websites to explore how syllabus programs have been adapted and implemented at the school-community level. The desktop study material was supplemented by the author's personal insights and experience working with syllabus documents relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

Findings from the literature review identify significant commonality across Australian and international contexts at all stages of development and implementation of syllabus documents. Some of the key findings or common critical factors are outlined below.

## Community engagement

The theme of community engagement shapes the curriculum documents and associated processes and this engagement is meaningful and authentic as well as based on mutual respect and common understanding of community expectations for curriculum.

Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols and ethics was identified by all jurisdictions, not merely as a critical starting point, but as the foundation of quality teaching and learning programs. Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols and ethics was part of the curriculum documents, particularly within the rationale and guidelines sections that ground the curriculum. Given the diversity of the Indigenous groups studied in this literature review, this component was contextualised to suit the site or regions for which the curriculum was developed. In the examples from First Nations in Canada and the United States, this contextualisation component of the curriculum was further refined to specific language groups or nations.

Teaching of Indigenous languages is seen as the prerogative of the respective custodians and the school is merely providing a space for knowledge transmission as well as supporting community aspirations for language maintenance or language revival. The shape of Indigenous languages curriculum documents need to be guided by the local language community and to complement the community processes and associated language activities.

A similar concept is also advocated for Indigenous studies with the teaching of cultural matters being the domain of cultural custodians including elders, traditional owners and other recognised community members. Teachers and schools provide the space for teaching and learning.

Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also underpins curriculum planning and implementation; several curriculum documents advocate a 'sign-off' or 'settlement' phase to affirm community support. Establishing Advisory Reference Groups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is also a common building block for syllabus implementation.

## **Traditional Indigenous knowledges**

Most, if not all, curriculum documents identify the need to incorporate traditional Indigenous knowledges and worldviews into the curriculum that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their lives, cultures and histories.

Several jurisdictions, notably First Nations in Canada (Alberta and Ontario), clearly define and articulate what is encompassed in these worldviews and how this knowledge is integral to teaching and learning.

Students explore Indigenous knowledge and oral histories alongside historical accounts to gain an understanding of the views and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In Indigenous studies, oral histories are seen as valid primary sources for student research. First Nation groups in Canada (e.g. Alberta) provide input into the curriculum content.

Most curriculum documents highlighted in the literature review strongly encouraged understanding of Indigenous knowledge and oral histories should be gained first-hand through interactions with Indigenous communities and their knowledge keepers. It was suggested in

several syllabus documents that traditional learning approaches such as ‘talking circles’ and ‘storytelling/narratives’ should be used in curriculum programs.

## **Culturally responsive pedagogy**

A key theme throughout the literature review was the concept of culturally responsive teaching practices that respect the cultures, histories and worldview of Indigenous people. In the examples of First Nations in Canada, the concept was expanded to include the cohort of students from the local Aboriginal community. This pedagogical approach places an obligation on the teacher to understand the learner, the community and the socio-cultural and historical dimensions of these contexts.

Within the Australian jurisdictions, this finding aligned with the current initiative of culturally competent teaching and the requirement that teachers and other school personnel undertake regular, ongoing professional development relating to the teaching of, or about, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## **Inquiry-based learning**

In line with student exploration of Indigenous knowledge systems, most syllabus documents advocated an inquiry-learning model. New Zealand extends this approach through endorsement by the local Māori community. This model allows for student-directed research with guidance from teachers and community members. It also caters for teaching and learning to reflect themes and topics relevant to the local community.

Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language syllabuses, students may become resources for wider community language revival through their inquiry-based learning. In this context, if the traditional language has suffered significant loss and the student may take on the role of a ‘language engineer’ to help rebuild a community language. This aspect is part of the language revival pathway of the Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1.

## **Language curriculum frameworks**

Within Australian settings, the loss of traditional languages has been extensive with less than 50 of the original 750+ languages and dialects still spoken daily. Language syllabus materials need to be cognisant of this, hence the development of curriculum frameworks with multiple pathways to suit the language community. For ‘strong’ or thriving languages, the focus is on maintaining or teaching a language ‘off-country’ to native or fluent speakers; however, the majority of Australian languages sit under the language revival pathway for learners. Rather than specified content, this pathway needs to be flexible enough to cater for the range of languages and their ecology.

International language curriculum has a tendency to be language-specific or region-specific. For example, the New Zealand Māori Language Curriculum is developed for a single language (te reo

Māori) with consideration for schools to include regional variations. The Santa Fe Indian School has language-specific curriculum for teaching four Native American languages within the school. However, the contexts surrounding community governance and educational systems in these international settings are quite different to Australian contexts.

## Student reflective assessment

Given the personal journey of undertaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, students maintain a personal account of their learning journey over the duration of the course. Generally, this account takes the form of journaling through a reflective log or similar, which outlines the students' views, thoughts, perceptions on course content, community interactions and other experiences arising during the course.

## Curriculum content

Due to the diversity within and across Indigenous groups, the content overviews within the relevant syllabus documents are based on the historical or linguistic profiles of the local community. Local case studies feature predominantly across the syllabus materials as well as including provision for students to undertake in-depth studies on emerging issues, trends or historical events in the local community.

The content of linguistic material for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is determined by the language profile of the local community, i.e. number of speakers, language documentation, recordings and linguistic studies.

This approach is highlighted across the Australian and international jurisdictions in varying degrees. The QCAA syllabus documents and VET offerings encompass these elements and indicate currency in approaches to the development and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Curriculum documents are concise and clearly articulate the requirements of courses for both teachers and students. The accompanying support documents, i.e. *A guide to implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Syllabus* and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Handbook* are quality resources that address any concerns that schools and teachers may have about curriculum development and implementation.

Given the findings of the literature review, the QCAA syllabus and VET qualifications are quite sound in their currency and alignment with current trends for the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and studies courses across Australian jurisdictions. There is also a synergy with international jurisdictions, with the main contrasting features being attributable to context-specific matters and community governance. For example, many of the international jurisdictions develop syllabuses for a defined group or region; this is not practicable or viable in the Australian context. QCAA curriculum frameworks provide an organising structure for school-

communities to contextualise syllabus documents to suit their particular socio-cultural and historical settings. This contextualisation is occurring in many Queensland school sites.

The community governance issue is difficult to resolve due to the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. While state-based advisory groups exist, their role is primarily to provide advice or serve as a reference point for matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in general. The Santa Fe Indian School is administered by 19 Pueblo Governors, who oversee all educational responsibilities, including curriculum. Within the Australian educational context, the closest community governance structure would be the Torres Strait Regional Education Council (TSIREC) and Tagai State College, which has a shared administration and curriculum across 18 islands. Independent Aboriginal Community Schools also have the community governance to manage local curriculum decisions.

The literature review also highlighted the resource intensiveness of language and studies programs. In particular, there is an absence of trained and/or qualified language teachers to support the implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in Queensland schools. While this issue is beyond the role and responsibility of the QCAA, it is a barrier that needs to be addressed. The QCAA, through its board or relevant Indigenous advisory bodies, may be in a position to advocate for the development and delivery of appropriate training for community and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in pre-service or post-service teaching courses.

## Conclusion

The findings of the literature review highlight that the QCAA syllabuses within the subject group are quality documents that may require subtle refinement or alignment to ensure consistency with the recent developments in the Australian Curriculum. Redevelopments of QCAA syllabuses will add value to these documents by extending to existing content around teaching, learning and assessment. Educational excellence from international jurisdictions in the areas of Indigenous languages and studies needs to be recognised and shared across Queensland schools via the QCAA. This best practice can also inform any redevelopments of QCAA syllabuses and explore the potential for incorporating such practices into Queensland curriculum contexts.

The success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and studies syllabuses is critically dependant on the school's engagement of community. QCAA provides excellent resources to facilitate this process; however, the ultimate responsibility lies with the school and their commitment to teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and languages. There are success stories from across Queensland that should be celebrated and shared with other schools to 'sow the seed' and increase the take-up of the QCAA syllabuses.



## Summary of recommendations

While the literature review findings indicate that there is a synergy between the QCAA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabuses and current directions across Australian states and territories, it is important to ensure ongoing alignment with the direction of the Australian Curriculum.

Specifically, the recent release of the draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1 provides a timely reminder for QCAA to look closer at the pathways to the QCAA senior syllabus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages. The draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1 has undergone considerable revision since the (then) QSA coordinated a *Queensland Response to the Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages draft Framework* (July 2013). While QCAA has been actively involved in providing feedback and advice to the ongoing development of the draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1, there may be a need to undertake another scan of the document to ensure key issues have been adequately addressed.

Similarly, the revision of the Australian Curriculum: History v7.5 into the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences v8.1 requires a scan to analyse pathways and other linkages to the QCAA senior syllabus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

The VET qualifications within the subject group may require minor revision to include additional units such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. For example, the draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1 explores the application of languages to the arts as well as cultural tourism. These units would generate further interest from schools and students.

In summary, there is only minor 'tweaking' required of the QCAA syllabuses with a further area of consideration being to promote and raise awareness of the QCAA syllabuses to increase the number of schools implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander studies and language programs.

# 1 Significant emerging trends

## 1.1 Assessment

Key points on significant emerging educational trends on assessment include the development of assessment frameworks that have a cultural overlay that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, lifestyles, histories and worldviews.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus

QCAA has incorporated Uncle Ernie Grant's Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework into the senior syllabus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies; the next phase would be to extend this framework into the assessment domain.

Qualitative assessment has also emerged as not only a trend but also a means of measuring the personal growth of students over the duration of the course. Social learning and inquiry learning lend themselves more readily to qualitative forms of assessment. Consequently, most jurisdictions have integrated reflective journals as part of the assessment process. An interesting development from this approach has been the use of teacher–student conferencing to explore students' learning and understanding.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus

Assessment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages also references qualitative practices; however, the diversity of languages and their ecology creates further implications. There is a need for schools to define the purpose and nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language programs, and how and what is to be assessed. Given the endangered status of most Australian languages, the focus of programs may be revival and language fluency may not be one of the priorities for measuring the skills, knowledge and understanding of students.

## 1.2 Pedagogical approaches

Social learning and social inquiry are identified as the main pedagogical approaches across jurisdictions. Students are encouraged to research, explore and interrogate data. Critical thinking and reflective thinking are integral to the learning experiences of students as they consider the different worldviews of historical and life events.

Oral history is given the same level of importance as historical evidence and as a 'living memory' should be treated with respect and empathy. This is a small part of culturally responsive teaching, whereby teachers demonstrate respect for socio-cultural protocols, traditional knowledges and worldview through their teaching practices. Culturally responsive pedagogy creates global

citizens because the teaching and learning creates the space to develop citizenship skills and knowledge and to use these skills and knowledge to ensure the world is a better place.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

Pedagogical approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are undergoing rapid changes and development. International jurisdictions, particularly First Nations in the United States and Canada, have defined the benchmarks for quality teaching and learning practices. Australian practitioners have looked closely at the language teaching of te reo Māori and First Nations to identify what works well and how it can be adapted to suit Australian contexts. Total Physical Response and Accelerated Second Language Acquisition are currently being trialled in Australian school–community settings. Successful strategies such as Language Nests and Master-Apprentice models are also in place. These initiatives have been identified and recognised through national research, e.g. NELS 2 (2014) and *Our Land, Our Languages* (2014), resulting in active support by the Australian Government to implement pilot sites for the Indigenous Languages Support initiative.

## **1.3 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses**

There is a need to revisit the existing QCAA syllabuses to ensure alignment with the recently developed draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1 as well as the reconfigured Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences v8.1.

This literature review has identified sound linkages and pathways from these documents to the QCAA syllabuses. However, it may be timely to undertake a comparative scan of QCAA syllabuses for consistency of content, key themes and assessment practices as there have been considerable revisions for the Australian Curriculum documents.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

In particular, the draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1 is significantly altered since the 2013 QSA Response. One specific area to analyse is the use of linguistic terminology throughout the QCAA syllabus to ensure there is a shared understanding across schools and the QCAA. The language revival pathway will be adopted by most Queensland schools for their language program and it will need to be examined to enhance its application to Queensland language communities.

In terms of the VET offerings within the subject group, a scan of the material is also recommended with a view to adding core or elective units relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Languages are an important part of community arts and culture centres as

well as cultural tourism; most students undertaking these VET offerings will be looking at future work or employment in such industries. Languages in the arts and tourism industry are suggested topics within the draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus**

The Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences v8.1 has also undergone revision; however, the pathway through to the QCAA senior syllabus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is still sound. The inquiry method is a key approach in the F–10 documents that will prepare students for the senior syllabus. Again, a cursory scan may be required to identify progression from themes and topics of Years 8–10, which maintains a timeline approach to key themes in Australian history culminating in contemporary Indigenous affairs. The social sciences aspect has added in several key Indigenous topics such as Indigenous Land Use and Traditional Indigenous Knowledge Systems. These topics are also included within the QCAA syllabus; however, commonality of concepts and terminology is required.

## **1.4 Recommendations**

### **Recommendation: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

That the QCAA scan the current senior syllabus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages to ensure consistency and alignment with the draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Alignment of the learner pathways from the Australian Curriculum, i.e. L1, L2, LR to the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus is required approaches, i.e. Approach 1 Maintaining language and Approach 2 Revitalising language.
- Consistency of terminology in both curriculum documents is necessary to ensure a common understanding of linguistic terms and their application to school community settings. For example, within the Australian Curriculum documents, language revitalisation is seen as a sub-group or category within language revival. However, in the QCAA documents, language revitalisation is presented as an overarching group with a lack of clarity on the relationship between language revitalisation, language renewal and language reclamation
- Consistency of terminology and concepts used in both documents is necessary for content descriptions, elaborations, key concepts and key processes. For example, 'Indigenous knowledge', 'Indigenous inquiry', 'community inquiry' and other terms are used in the QCAA document without a clear definition or understanding of how they connect to 'social inquiry' models presented in Australian Curriculum documents.

- The core learnings within the QCAA Languages syllabus are sound and should be maintained and the four interrelated areas of study (Grounding Australian languages, Making connections, Understanding language and Using language) provide useful course organisers. The standards matrix serves as a guide for teachers in assessing student achievement and the selection of suggested techniques is also quite sound. The pedagogical approach of social-inquiry learning is a common feature of both documents and should be maintained. The recommended course of action in these key areas is to ensure there is a cultural framework or overlay that strengthens the respect of community knowledge and worldviews. This framework may require strengthening of the intercultural understanding elements to ensure they are integral to the course and embedded within pedagogy, learning and assessment.
- Culturally responsive pedagogy is linked to the community models of knowing presented within the QCAA Languages syllabus; however, there is a need to strengthen the model by considering current research into culturally responsive pedagogy. Research through the Australian Council of Educational Research, James Cook University and the Australian Association of Maths Teachers have explored the application of this model in Australian contexts. A stronger model and accompanying framework will provide teachers with guidance and direction for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. This material would be best located in the accompanying Teacher's Handbook and referenced within the appropriate sections for learning and assessment.

### **Recommendation: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

That the QCAA scan the current VET offerings within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subject group to ensure consistency and alignment with the Draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Exploring the pathway from the Australian Curriculum document to the VET offerings should ensure consistency for the student cohort seeking employment in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts or tourism sector.

### **Recommendation: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

That the QCAA undertake an analysis of the current VET offerings within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Subject group to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language units to strengthen progression from the draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Explore opportunities to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language topics and content within VET offerings to expand the potential pathways from the VET qualifications in arts and tourism.
- Consider units or topics that include Indigenous languages and the arts, Indigenous languages and tourism, and community Indigenous languages. The inclusion of these topics would also strengthen the establishment of community-driven enterprise and employment in regional and remote communities.

### **Recommendation: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus**

That the QCAA undertake a scan of the current senior syllabus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to ensure consistency and alignment with the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences v8.1.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Ensuring the progression from the latest version of the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences v8.1 to the senior syllabus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is clear. Specifically, some content areas relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories have been removed while other Social Science areas have been strengthened, e.g. connection to place, Indigenous land use.
- Checking consistency of terminology and concepts used in both documents is necessary, particularly for content descriptions, elaborations, key concepts and key processes. For example, the concept of traditional Indigenous knowledge appears in both documents and it is

important for continuity and understanding that there is a high degree of commonality in definitions.

- Retain Uncle Ernie Grant's Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework and strengthen references to current research into culturally responsive pedagogy.

The organisational framework referenced within the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus is based on this framework, which highlights the interconnectedness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures and histories. It is also a curriculum organiser and grounds the local area study. The local area study should be retained as core learning for the syllabus.

## 2 Overview, comparison and connections

### 2.1 QCAA syllabuses and VET qualifications

The QCAA syllabuses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages both have a holistic nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus also provides the organising structure for course content. The QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies framework is based on the work of Dyrbal Elder Uncle Ernie Grant and clearly identifies the interconnectedness of Indigenous histories, cultures and people. It also shapes course content areas and topics for study, as well as providing a foundation to undertake a local area study. Course content within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus is dependent on the language profile of the local community. Languages are studied in relation to interconnected themes, which serve as curriculum organisers.

Both syllabuses are premised on community protocols and active community engagement in the development and delivery of teaching and learning. Each syllabus also advocates social learning as a means for students to explore the lifestyles and cultures of Indigenous Australians. Local area studies is a focus in both syllabuses with an opportunity to undertake comparative studies

Assessment is a blend of quantitative and qualitative assessment practices; each syllabus uses learning journals or similar logs for student reflection. QCAA certification standards apply in student assessment for both syllabuses. There is some flexibility in the media students choose to demonstrate their learning achievement: multimodal, performance or art. Assessment may differ within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus based on the vitality of the target language, because students may be active participants in a community language revival process. As such, students' roles may be different to the typical 'student as learner' model and align closer to the 'student as action researcher' or even 'student as project support officer'.

The VET qualifications in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts (Certificates I, II, III) represent a progression of courses with increased workloads at each level. There are significant shared core units of work with differentiation across the elective units.

While the QCAA syllabus subjects are directed towards the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) framework and a range of pathways, the VET qualifications have clear linkages to employment pathways. The units of work within the VET offerings target particular skill sets or competencies that are required for employment in the respective industries: arts and cultural tourism.

There are no significant overlaps between the QCAA syllabus and Authority-registered syllabuses. Each syllabus encourages teachers and schools to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives; however, there are no instances of significant overlaps. For example,



the Tourism Subject Area syllabus identifies opportunities to explore Indigenous tourism, but this is not a mandatory requirement. Indigenous tourism is referenced in both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabuses; however is not a unit or discrete topic. Marine and Aquatic Practices has elective units that focus on Indigenous marine use and management, which is a topic that arises in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus; however, this should not be viewed as a significant overlap. A similar situation arises in the Arts subjects groups, where optional topics reference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander themes.

Similarly, there is minimal overlap between the QCAA syllabuses and VET qualifications. The difference in pathways creates a difference in units of work and topics with little opportunity for similarity beneath the surface. For example, the VET qualifications have units pertaining to culture and identity that may highlight language as a critical factor; however, it is explored from the personal experience of the student undertaking the course.

## 2.2 Recommendations

### **Recommendation: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

That QCAA explore the potential for a VET qualification relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages with a view to establishing employment pathways into Indigenous language centres or similar organisations that are working in the documentation, revival or maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Exploring opportunities for developing an appropriate VET qualification in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. In Queensland, there is an absence of training in the area of Indigenous languages, with interested community members or students having to travel to the Batchelor Institute in the Northern Territory. There is a gap for this type of course, particularly with recognition from relevant industry and potential employers, for example language centres, and cultural centres.

### **Recommendation**

That QCAA explores the potential to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural framework for assessment to apply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabuses.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Use Uncle Ernie Grant's Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework as a starting point to extend into an assessment model. Currently, the framework serves as a curriculum and learning organiser. An assessment model would help to identify and articulate the types and

range of intercultural understandings students are expected to achieve during the course the study. This type of assessment framework may require a balance of formal and informal assessment as well as quantitative and qualitative assessment. Student self-assessment and community-based assessment could be components of a cultural framework for assessment.

- Retain the qualitative assessment strategies of student self-assessment and reflective journaling. The suggested formal and informal assessment strategies also provide a sound reference guide for teachers. There is opportunity to expand assessment strategies to include community-based approaches. For example, the New Zealand community validation of student research has merit and could be adapted to Australian contexts.

## 2.3 Comparable syllabuses from selected Australian and international jurisdictions

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus

In relation to QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, New South Wales has the most similar offering with a stand-alone Aboriginal Studies syllabus. Other Australian jurisdictions have developed cross-curriculum approaches with a strong focus on reconciliation and citizenship. Within Australian contexts, the studies syllabuses are within the Humanities or Social Sciences subject groups.

International jurisdictions also tend to align Aboriginal Studies within the Humanities subject groups, with the exception of the First Nations of Canada, which identifies a discrete subject grouped as Native Studies.

Generally, teaching and learning within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabuses has an inquiry approach across all jurisdictions and is consistent across Australian and international jurisdictions. Given the nature of the studies content, this approach allows students to explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories as an academic researcher as well as a young person on a journey of discovery. Accompanying this approach is a reflective component whereby students have the opportunity to reflect on feelings and responses to events, experiences and interactions during the course. Critical thinking is embedded in the studies syllabuses across jurisdictions with a view to developing young people into global citizens who are actively involved in the world around them. Many of the syllabuses clearly state reconciliation and citizenship as anticipated outcomes.

Content within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabuses across all jurisdictions tends to have a focus on contemporary studies. This focus allows for ease of research and availability of resource materials, resource people and other primary sources. Contact history is often presented as introductory units to ground the students in understanding a 'starting point' for contemporary issues and current affairs.

Assessment in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabuses tends to be ongoing and standardised with some degree of flexibility in the type of assessment and tools used. A reflective learning journal provides the basis for qualitative assessment while quantitative assessment is centred on students presenting research findings and demonstrating their understanding. Additional informal assessment may be based on cultural frameworks and on students observing cultural protocols and engaging in respectful interactions with Indigenous people.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

Within Australian contexts, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabuses are situated within the Languages subject groups. International jurisdictions generally align Indigenous languages within the languages subject groups as well; however, there are some exceptions where Indigenous languages syllabuses are situated within Native Studies subject groups, or within the Practical Arts program as is the case of the Santa Fe Indian school.

Within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabuses, content is determined by the language vitality of the local community. Across all jurisdictions, there was consistency in the local, traditional language being taught in schools. 'Off country' teaching was available but required observance of cultural protocols and permissions from traditional custodians. The main differentiation between Australian and international jurisdictions was the availability of resources, including local language speakers. The te reo Māori language program is very strong and well resourced, as are some of the First Nations language programs in the United States and Canada. However, the Australian context of forced removals and government policies exacerbated language loss to the extent that most language programs in Australian jurisdictions are focused on reviving a traditional language before it is lost forever.

The international jurisdictions tend to develop syllabuses for a specific language or group of related languages. Within the Australian context, curriculum frameworks are designed to cater for a range of languages in various states of vitality. Across Australian jurisdictions, the frameworks encompass different pathways for program delivery: language maintenance (where languages are still spoken in community); 'off country' language programs (where student cohorts speak traditional language but attend schools away from community); and language revival (where there has been significant language loss with minimal speakers/resources).

Teaching and learning is quite varied across jurisdictions in light of resourcing and experience of teachers. International jurisdictions generally have fluent, qualified language teachers and/or fluent, community language teachers; linguistic support is generally available. In Australian settings, there are a minimal number of qualified fluent language teachers. Postgraduate teacher training is only a recent innovation — the Master of Indigenous Languages Education was only implemented by the University of Sydney in 2006. There is a rich history of linguistic training and many school and community language programs have developed in response to local linguistics

research. School language programs within Australian jurisdictions tend to be informal programs with classroom teachers supporting local community language workers.

Content in Australian jurisdictions focuses on key themes throughout F–10, for example people, conversations, and plants and animals. Progression through the schooling program is dependent on available resources. Within Senior Studies, the focus of the syllabus is on understanding and using the language, as well as playing a role in the revival of language in the local community. Fluency is important, but is not the overall aim of most language programs in Australian jurisdictions, which centre on bringing the language back to life and being in use within the local community. The exceptions in Australian jurisdictions are in the limited number of language maintenance programs where the language is still strong in the local community and the aim shifts more towards fluency and extending the language repertoire.

Information technology is used across Australian and international jurisdictions, particularly with the advent of computer software designed for language revival. Focus in this area is on students learning to collate and analyse language data as well as develop language resources.

## 2.4 Recommendations

### Recommendation

That QCAA explores the potential for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework for teaching and learning and assessment practice within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Languages syllabuses.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Exploring opportunities for extending Uncle Ernie Grant’s Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework to incorporate assessment practice. It currently serves as an organiser for learning.
- Consider contextualising the framework to individual school and communities given the diversity of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This contextualisation could be similar to First Nations in the United States jurisdictions where syllabus content and implementation is responsive to a particular Nation or group.

### Recommendation

That QCAA advocate for increased training for community language teachers as well as tertiary courses for language teaching (pre-service/post-service).

Specific areas to consider include:

- While this area is primarily outside the responsibility of QCAA, an advocacy role could help address the unmet need for trained community language teachers. Further exploration in this area could identify pathways into tertiary studies from the subject group. Potential

opportunities include strengthening linkages from the senior syllabuses to Arts, Education, Linguistics and Tourism syllabuses. These discussions would need to involve relevant tertiary institutions.

## 2.5 Connections with the Australian Curriculum

Syllabus type	Syllabus	Path	AC subject
<b>Authority syllabuses</b>	• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2009	Yes	No
	• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages 2011	Yes	No
<b>Authority-registered syllabuses</b>	n/a		

### QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus

There is no comparable Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum; however, there are linkages and pathways from several F–10 curriculum programs. The Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum programs in the subjects of English, Earth and Environmental Science, Geography, Ancient History and Modern History have minimal links to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus. Optional units or suggested topics reference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.

There was a strong synergy between the Australian Curriculum: History F–10 v 7.5 and the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus, particularly in terms of contemporary Indigenous studies. The most recent version, Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences v8.1, maintains a natural pathway into the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus. The inclusion of social science themes such as Indigenous land use, connection to place and traditional Indigenous knowledge systems support the holistic worldview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The inquiry method is articulated through both syllabus documents and it is envisaged that by entry into the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander syllabus, students will have a firm grounding of the processes and application of the inquiry method.

Additional pathways can be identified within the Australian Curriculum: English v8.1, which introduces students to the concept of Indigenous narratives, particularly oral histories. This pathway allows the development of understandings that oral history provides another perspective on historical events.

The newly released Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1 also has a pathway although the focus is on languages; it provides students with a rich understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.

There is exploration of the historical contexts of language and language loss, which has direct links into the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus.

Minimal but significant pathways are found in the Australian Curriculum: Science v8.1, which explores traditional Indigenous knowledge systems.

The remaining Australian Curriculum learning areas of Economics and Business, Health and Physical Education, Technologies and The Arts explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in varying degrees. While these learning areas are relevant for a deeper understanding of Indigenous people, the pathways into the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus are minimal.

The Australian Curriculum's cross-curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures and Histories are clearly represented within the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus. There is provision to address some elements of the 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia' cross-curriculum priority area and the 'Sustainability' cross-curriculum priority area; however, these elements do not feature strongly within the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus.

In summary, there is a natural pathway from the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences v8.1 to the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus. The Australian Curriculum: While the other Australian Curriculum learning areas explore Indigenous perspectives, their linkages are not as significant to content covered in the QCAA syllabus.

### **QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

No Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum is comparable to the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus; however, there are linkages and pathways from several F–10 curriculum programs. The Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum programs in the subjects of English, Earth and Environmental Science, Geography, Ancient History and Modern History have minimal links to the QCAA syllabus. Optional units or suggested topics reference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.

The newly released Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1 has a direct pathway to the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus. There is significant alignment in the design and organisation of both curriculum frameworks and the suggested delivery modes. The Australian Curriculum document has undergone considerable community consultation and reworking since the initial advice provided by the (then) QSA in July 2013.

The Australian Curriculum: History F–10 v 7.5 and the revised version of the Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences v8.1 have sound progression into the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus. These learning areas provide a

foundation for understanding the nature and diversity of Australian languages as well as providing the historical context for language loss.

A significant pathway can also be identified within the Australian Curriculum: English v8.1, which introduces students to the concept of language diversity and exploring local Indigenous languages, including placenames and creation stories.

The remaining Australian Curriculum learning areas of Economics and Business, Health and Physical Education, Science, Technologies and The Arts explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to varying degrees. Language is a part of these perspectives. While these learning areas are relevant for a deeper understanding of Indigenous people, the pathways into the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus are minimal.

The Australian Curriculum cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures and Histories is clearly represented within the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus and there is ample provision to ensure elements are covered over the course of study. The remaining cross-curriculum priorities are not as well covered; there may be some opportunities to address some elements based on the school-community setting. For example, Sustainability may be explored through topics of caring for country and connection to place. The remaining priority of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia is not strongly represented in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus.

In summary, there are examples of links between the Australian Curriculum F–10 learning areas and the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus. However, the most direct and significant pathway is from the Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1.

## **2.6 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses**

There are no comparable senior secondary Australian Curriculum courses. The Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum programs in the subjects of English, Earth and Environmental Science, Geography, Ancient History and Modern History have minimal or indirect links. Optional units or suggested topics reference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories; however, there are not significant similarities to create any issues. Future development of the Australian Curriculum in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies or languages may warrant further investigation.

## 2.7 Recommendations

That the QCAA scan the current senior syllabus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages to ensure consistency and alignment with the draft Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Aligning the Learner Pathways from the Australian Curriculum, i.e. L1, L2, LR to the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus approaches, i.e. Approach 1 Maintaining Language and Approach 2 Revitalising Language.
- Consistency of terminology used in both curriculum documents to ensure there is a common understanding of linguistic terms and their application to school-community settings. For example, within the Australian Curriculum documents, language revitalisation is seen as a sub-group or category within language revival. However, in the QCAA documents, language revitalisation is presented as the overarching group within a lack of clarity on the relationship between language revitalisation, language renewal and language reclamation.
- Consistency of terminology and concepts used in both documents in terms of Content Descriptions, Elaborations, Key Concepts and Key Processes. For example, 'Indigenous knowledge', 'Indigenous inquiry', 'Community inquiry'. Other terms are used in the QCAA document without a clear definition or understanding of how they connect to 'social inquiry' models presented in Australian Curriculum documents.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Ensuring the progression to QCAA studies syllabus document from the latest version of the Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages v8.1 is clear; specifically, some content areas relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories have been removed while other Social Science areas have been strengthened, e.g. connection to place, Indigenous land use.
- Consistency of terminology and concepts used in both documents, particularly in terms of Content Descriptions, and Elaborations. For example, the concept of traditional Indigenous knowledge appears in both documents and it is important for continuity and understanding that there is a high degree of commonality in definitions.
- The organisational framework referenced within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is based on the Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework developed by Uncle Ernie Grant. This model highlights the interconnectedness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures and histories. It also serves as a curriculum organiser and grounds the local area study. The local area study should be retained as core learning for the syllabus. The framework developed by Uncle Ernie Grant should be retained and strengthened with reference to current research into culturally responsive pedagogy.



## 3 Learning expectations

### 3.1 Scope of learning across Australian and international jurisdictions

#### QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus

The New South Wales, South Australian and Western Australian jurisdictions offer comparable syllabuses to the QCAA senior syllabus in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The scope of learning is based on contemporary studies and the notion of a shared history as students explore topics applied to their local or regional communities. Themes are broad, focusing on concepts including land, culture, identity, social justice. Most jurisdictions also include a local area case study as a significant assessment piece. Western Australia and New South Wales have a set course of units that students complete over the course of study; South Australia offers a course based on elective units of work.

Outcomes are presented in broad statements describing anticipated student outcomes in terms of skills, understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, histories and lifestyles. Values and attitudes are also identified as broad outcomes. These statements are based on students demonstrating respect and understanding as critical thinkers and global citizens who take an active interest in social justice issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. All jurisdictions incorporate observance of protocols as a key measure of growth in values and attitudes as well as the use of a personal journal or log.

International jurisdictions also focus on contemporary issues within their studies syllabuses with the student learning centred on their local or regional Indigenous communities. Content is organised and presented as themed units that students progress through over their course.

Learning is described as broad outcome statements; the emphasis is on students' demonstration of skills, knowledge and understanding over the course duration. New Zealand has a bicultural approach that explores the traditions, values and histories of both Pakeha and Māori people. Community engagement is fundamental to the syllabus with community-based learning a mandated learning experience — community validation of research is part of the students' inquiry learning model. Student reflection and self-assessment is integral to the course of study with regular student–teacher meetings to discuss not only student progress, but also to explore the students' personal development in response to the course. Canada (Alberta) also incorporates self-assessment, but also extends student understanding using quizzes, which account for 25% of the course. There is an expectation that students develop grounding in the local First Nations Metis people. Canada (Ontario) uses a cultural framework to measure student achievement. There is merit in exploring this approach for the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus. Any redevelopment for the QCAA syllabus documents should include

investigation of the use of self-assessment, including the weighting of such assessment in the overall student achievement. The current QCAA syllabus documents do not quantify weighting for assessment; however, 25% could be a useful guide for any subsequent review. This self-assessment could be part of an overall cultural assessment framework that measures students' intercultural understandings and their demonstration of socio-cultural protocols and research ethics.

In summary, the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus compares favourably across Australian and international jurisdictions. There are elements from international contexts that could be explored further to test their application to Queensland school contexts, notably assessment practices.

### **QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus**

The New South Wales, Victorian and Western Australian jurisdictions offer comparable syllabuses to the QCAA senior syllabus in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages. The scope of learning is based on a curriculum framework that meets the diversity of languages across their respective states. New South Wales offers two core units plus elective units; they also have the capacity to develop local community-based modules. Victoria's course has been developed in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Corporations for Languages (VACL) and has a primary focus on language revival and reclamation as the students work through core units of work. Similarly, Western Australia is also based on a set of core units extending their knowledge and use of language over the course.

Outcomes are a combination of broad statements relating to understanding language and its custodians to more specific descriptions on the use of language in a range of settings. The contribution of student research to community language revival also features in these syllabuses.

International jurisdictions are focused on a specific language or group of related languages and the scope of syllabuses is quite significant and shaped by the strength of local and regional languages. New Zealand te reo Māori language syllabus is quite intensive in its scope and outlines set standards, including proficiency required at each level of progression. Outcomes are very specific and contextual, for example, student proficiency in everyday vocabulary through to proficiency and use of language in ritual/ceremony settings. A similar expectation is required in the Santa Fe Indian School program that offers four First Nation languages that students undertake according to their group affiliation. A high level of proficiency and use across school-community settings is required.

In summary, the QCAA studies syllabus compares favourably across Australian jurisdictions in that it is a curriculum framework aimed at catering for a diverse range of language communities. The international jurisdictions operate in quite different contexts and it must be acknowledged that these examples are very well documented and resourced language programs. The international

jurisdictions can be used as best practice scenarios that Queensland school communities could explore for effective ideas and strategies for their programs.

## 3.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation

That QCAA explore the potential for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Framework for teaching and learning and assessment practice within the Studies and syllabuses.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Exploring any opportunity for extending Uncle Ernie Grant’s framework to incorporate assessment practice. Currently, the framework serves as an organiser for teaching and learning and identifies key themes. Any subsequent syllabus redevelopment would need to explore applying the framework as an assessment tool. A cultural assessment framework would allow students to demonstrate cultural understandings and learnings. Any review or subsequent redevelopment of the QCAA syllabus documents would need to explore this concept further.
- Given the diversity of Queensland’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, this framework may need to be contextualised to individual school communities. This contextualisation could be similar to First Nations in the United States jurisdictions where syllabus content and implementation is responsive to a particular Nation or group.
- External assessment within these syllabuses would need to be flexible and generic enough to reflect the local contexts of teaching and learning. Local area studies feature within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus and may provide the basis for external assessment — for example, the external assessment task may require students to elaborate on a broad issue or theme and how it applies or affects their local Indigenous community. In light of the language diversity of Queensland, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus does not readily present itself for external assessment. There may be an option of an extended written assessment task on the nature and ecology of language in their community. However, while an extended written assessment task may be possible, there may be implications for how markers without an insight into the student’s local community assess student’s work. The task and assessment criteria would need to be generic if it is to be used across all Queensland settings. Within the Western Australian context, the sample externally set task is general and allows for comparative study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with Indigenous groups from international contexts. This approach could be readily adapted within the Queensland context.

# 4 Future focus: 21st century skills

Through its own initial research, QCAA has determined a set of 21st century skills that reflect current educational trends.

21st century skills	Elements
<b>Critical thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analytical thinking</li> <li>• problem solving</li> <li>• decision making</li> <li>• reasoning</li> <li>• reflecting and evaluating</li> <li>• intellectual flexibility</li> </ul>
<b>Creative thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• innovation</li> <li>• initiative and enterprise</li> <li>• curiosity and imagination</li> <li>• creativity</li> <li>• generating and applying new ideas</li> <li>• identifying alternatives</li> <li>• seeing or making new links</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective oral and written communication</li> <li>• using language symbols and texts</li> <li>• communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration and teamwork</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relating to others (interacting with others)</li> <li>• recognise and utilise diverse perspectives</li> <li>• participating and contributing</li> <li>• community connections</li> </ul>
<b>Personal and social skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adaptability/flexibility</li> <li>• management (self, career, time, planning and organising)</li> <li>• character (resilience, mindfulness, open- and fair-mindedness, self-awareness)</li> <li>• leadership</li> <li>• citizenship</li> <li>• cultural awareness</li> <li>• ethical (and moral) understanding</li> </ul>
<b>ICT skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• operations and concepts</li> <li>• accessing and analysing information</li> <li>• being productive users of technology</li> <li>• digital citizenship (being safe, positive and responsible online)</li> </ul>

## 4.1 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses

Many of the identified skill sets have application to the QCAA studies and languages syllabuses.

### QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies syllabus

The inquiry-learning method is embedded as part of the studies syllabus and includes the skills of critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration and teamwork as well as personal and social skills. Their inclusion would serve to strengthen the concept of inquiry learning and set parameters for teachers and students for exploration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures and histories.

Ideally, a section on 21st century skills and their application to the particular QCAA syllabus could be added to the existing documentation as part of any syllabus redevelopment. In terms of the studies syllabus, this would require an overview of inquiry learning and how these 21st century skills add value and extend the current definition and approach. There would also be a need for an accompanying section on assessment, including exemplars or checklists, for teachers to identify not only for assessment purposes but also to assist planning to ensure a broader coverage of the skill sets.

### QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus could also be strengthened through the inclusion of the 21st century skills. In particular, the social learning skills of communication, collaboration and teamwork as well as personal and social skills are very applicable to the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus, by its very nature, lends itself to social learning.

Another innovation would be the inclusion of ICT skills, particularly the use of technology to record, document and archive traditional languages. Additionally, the use of ICT skills along with creative thinking could lead to the development of quality language resources for use in the school community. Measuring student achievement in the use of technology may have implications for assessment practices.

Communication is currently within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabus and the elements align closely with the syllabus. The main implication in this area is the vitality of the language and the level of communication possible in the target language. This element may require further elaboration to take into account the extent of language material. For example, some Queensland Aboriginal languages have less than 250 recorded words — this context could require blending Standard Australian English for elaborate or sophisticated levels of communication.

As per the above section, there would be a need for inclusion of a 21st century skills section in teacher support material to outline its application to the syllabus.

In summary, 21st century skills are applicable and relevant to the QCAA studies and languages syllabuses. They can add value to existing programs, but requires additional supporting information for teachers.

## 4.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation

That any redevelopment of QCAA syllabuses references 21st century skills, with additional support material for teacher use.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Extending the Teacher's Handbook for the relevant syllabus documents to include sections on 21st century skills and their application to teaching, learning and assessment.

### Recommendation

That QCAA further explore 21st century skills to identify implications for assessment practices within the QCAA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages syllabuses.

Specific areas to consider include:

- Extending the Teacher's Handbook for the relevant syllabus documents to include sections on 21st century skills and their impact and implications for assessment. Exemplars of assessment tools and checklists would be part of these sections.

## Bibliography

No bibliography was provided.