



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: SACE Board of South Australia  
Submitting as a: Government agency  
State: SA

### Summary

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It is fundamental that learners, regardless of age and experience, gain the skills to collaborate, think critically, think creatively, communicate and reflect to be aware of self and others. The general capabilities provide a framework for this learning. To support the uptake of these capabilities, evidencing and tracking of them from early years to post school is needed.

Allowing time for teachers to clarify or validate the standard of student work through comparing evidence and discussing the quality of student work through moderation would further support improved outcomes for young people. Consistent standards and expectations are necessary to ensure equitable progression of all students.

Our nation's long term goal for students should be for them to be lifelong learners with the capability to unpack a problem and the ability to go about solving it. One of the most important skills our young people need is the ability to apply their learning to varied contexts; the ability to 'transfer' understanding and skills in problem identification and subsequent solutions to different contexts are critical.

### Main submission

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What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

What capabilities, skills and knowledge should students learn at school to prepare them for the future?

The general capabilities represent a set of cross-curriculum capabilities, described in the Australian Curriculum, which are expected to be developed by students across all curriculum areas and throughout their schooling. These capabilities are drawn from the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), specifically Goal 2, which expresses the aspiration that "all young Australians [should] become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens." (p.8). The Melbourne Declaration continues by describing a list of skills, attitudes, motivations and dispositions that are expected to contribute to the achievement of Goal 2.

The capabilities are variously described, as 21 Century Skills or Inquiry-based learning but they are essentially descriptions of skills that our young people need to have success in the modern world. Additionally, the OECD 2030 Framework outlines a similar concept by proposing that student learning is a weaving of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

It is fundamental that learners, regardless of age, experience and socio-economic status gain the skills to collaborate, think critically, think creatively, communicate and reflect to be aware of self and others. The general capabilities provide a framework for this learning.

How should school quality and educational success be measured?

As the general capabilities are developed and taught it is evident that no one approach is the answer. Research consistently indicates that these general capabilities are best developed through subject disciplines and embedded in subject pedagogy. However, it is also clear that this is not sufficient and that we must support young learners to recognise the development of these capabilities and, more importantly, how to transfer these skills to variable contexts.

In South Australia, at the senior secondary level, moderation is used to quality assure student learning in all subjects. This process could be adapted to include tracking

and evidencing of students' growth and development of the general capabilities. This places the teacher in the best position to monitor a student's growth in one or more of these capabilities.

Support for schools, teachers, students and families in valuing the growth of every learner by evidencing and tracking their development of the general capabilities from early years through to post school is critical. This vision also enables the conceptualisation and development of a senior secondary instrument or process that validly and reliably captures student achievement, aligns with the F-10 process and complements existing tertiary admissions processes.

What can we do to improve and how can we support ongoing improvement over time?

How could schools' funding be used more effectively and efficiently to have a significant impact on learning outcomes for all students (including disadvantaged and vulnerable students and academically advanced students)?

Support for sustained teacher professional learning would allow growth in contemporary pedagogical practice for teachers and leaders of schools. Funding could be directed to gathering evidence of the 'pockets of exemplary practice' that already exists in schools. Such practice should not be viewed as a formula for teachers to follow. Rather, the models of exemplary practice would provide a stimulus that teachers could adapt for their own setting and for their particular students. Sharing of task/assessment exemplars and pedagogical approaches could provide this impetus.

Allowing time for teachers to clarify or validate the standard of student work through comparing evidence and discussing the quality of student work through moderation would further support improved outcomes for young people. Consistent standards and expectations are necessary to ensure equitable progression of all students. Additionally, funding could be directed towards evidence-based outcomes and to reporting learning progressions.

What institutional or governance arrangements could be put in place to ensure ongoing identification, sharing and implementation of evidence-based good practice to grow and sustain improved student outcomes over time?

As an assessment agency, high trust relationships between the principal of a school as the leader of learning and the agency is essential. The empowerment of school leaders, versus the authority dictating terms and ways of working, builds an environment of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes of young people in schools.

The moderation process referred to above could be established as a necessary element of standards setting and consistency across all jurisdictions. There is a

growing cultural shift of viewing system wide moderation as a method of gaining national comparability.

Within the frame of students developing their general capabilities, and the notion previously referred to regarding the transfer of knowledge from one context to another, consideration to broadening cross/inter/multi-disciplinary studies could be explored.

How can system enablers such as targets and standards, qualifications and accreditation, regulation and registration, quality assurance measures and transparency and accountability provisions be improved to help drive educational achievement and success and support effective monitoring, reporting and application of investment?

As outlined previously in this submission it is critical that capabilities be grounded in subject disciplines but that further development of these should be mandated and evidenced from early years through to post-school. This alignment enables a vision that links students' development of the general capabilities to tertiary entrance and, potentially, the development of an instrument or process that validly and reliably complements existing tertiary admissions processes.

Assessment agencies could broaden their view of other forms of learning that could be recognised as providing evidence towards successful completion at senior secondary qualifications (i.e. learning which occurs outside of the classroom). Various ways of micro-credentialing could be introduced.

Are there any new or emerging areas for action which could lead to large gains in student improvement that need further development or testing?

Our nation's long term goal for students should be for them to be lifelong learners with the capability to unpack a problem and the ability to go about solving it. One of the most important skills our young people need is the ability to apply their learning to varied contexts; the ability to 'transfer' understanding and skills in problem identification and subsequent solutions to a different context are critical.

Are there barriers to implementing these improvements?

If yes, what are they and how could these be overcome?

The allocation of appropriate resourcing is always a challenge. Any improvements to support better outcomes for students must be enabled by investing in sustained professional learning for teachers.

As outlined previously, changing the way that evidence of the development of the general capabilities from early years to post-school could contribute to tertiary entrance would promote a new way of viewing success, particularly at senior secondary.

Differences in legislation between states present a challenge. Formal mechanisms for rich, across state collaboration could be established.