Professional learning activity: Planning for teaching approaches when implementing contemporary issues

**Activity suggested duration:** 30 minutes

**Activity description:** For this activity, consider the Civics and Citizenship curriculum content descriptions appropriate to the year levels your participants work with. Levels 7 and 8 is given as an example, with ideas for other levels below**.**

**Learning leader preparation:**

* Print or digitally share the curriculum resource included below.
* Read 2.1 and 2.3.

**Participant preparation:**

* Read 2.1 and 2.3.

Activity steps

1. As a whole group, participants discuss the content descriptions available in the resource below and brainstorm suitable issues for the levels that they teach. Note that the content descriptions are intended to be taught holistically, so issues can span a number of these descriptions. (5 minutes)
2. In pairs, participants discuss which of the six different teaching approaches outlined in 2.3 could be used with the issues they have identified. Pairs select one of the issues they identified in step 1 to focus on for the next step. (5 minutes)
3. In pairs, using the issue selected in step 2, participants can discuss and record the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches and select one that suits the content descriptions, and the issue or issues chosen for the teaching and learning program. (10 minutes)
4. Pairs report back to the full group on key ideas of their discussion about curriculum, issue(s) and teacher approaches. (10 minutes)

Extension: Additional discussion questions and prompts

* Which of the teaching approaches described in 2.3 might be helpful in facilitating discussion of these issues?
* Which approaches might be challenging? Why?
* Choose one of the issues relevant to the year level participants teach and brainstorm a list of some common statements, arguments, opinions, questions or slogans that relate to the issue. Which of the teaching approaches described in 2.3 would be an appropriate response to students repeating these ideas in class?
* Some participants might be experts in this area. Participants are encouraged to share situations where they’ve taught contemporary issues, what teaching strategies worked in those situations and what helped to mitigate challenges.
* What issues are relevant for these content descriptions today?

Resource: Identifying opportunities to use contemporary issues within the curriculum

Levels 7 and 8

**Curriculum links:**

* Government and Democracy
* Discuss the freedoms that enable active participation in Australia’s democracy within the bounds of law, including freedom of speech, association, assembly, religion, and movement ([VCCCG019](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCG019)).
* Explain how citizens can participate in Australia’s democracy, including the use of the electoral system, contact with their elected representatives, use of lobby groups, interest groups and direct action. ([VCCCG020](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCG020))
* Citizenship, Diversity and Identity
* Identify how values can promote cohesion within Australian society, including the values of freedom, respect, inclusion, civility, responsibility, compassion, equality and a ‘fair go’ ([VCCCC025](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCC025))

Note: These content descriptions do not explicitly mention contemporary issues, but there are many relevant issues that could engage students with this topic.

**Suitable issues:**

* Should the voting age be lowered to 16?
* Should voting be compulsory?
* Why is young people’s involvement in the School Strike 4 Climate movement controversial?
* Does freedom of speech protect anti-vaccination or COVID-19 misinformation?

Note that students and staff may have strong opinions about these issues.

Levels 3 and 4

**Curriculum links:**

* Government and Democracy
* Identify how and why decisions are made democratically in communities ([VCCCG002](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCG002))
* Citizenship, Diversity and Identity
* Investigate why and how people participate within communities and cultural and social groups ([VCCCC006)](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCC006)

**Suitable issues:**

* How do people learning English as an additional language participate in society? Are there enough supports?
* What are some barriers to participation in sport and social clubs?
* How are children supported to participate in society? Are they active citizens?

Levels 5 and 6

**Curriculum links:**

* Government and Democracy
* Describe the roles and responsibilities of the three levels of government, including shared roles and responsibilities within Australia's federal system. ([VCCCG009](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCG009))
* Laws and Citizens
* Explain how and why laws are enforced and describe the roles and responsibilities of key personnel in law enforcement, and in the legal system ([VCCCL013](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCL013))
* Identify who can be an Australian citizen and describe the rights, responsibilities and shared values of Australian citizenship and explore ways citizens can participate in society ([VCCCC014](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCC014))

**Suitable issues:**

* What are the best uses of outdoor space in the local area?
* Should young people be involved in the School Strike 4 Climate movement?
* How does freedom of speech relate to anti-vaccination or COVID-19 misinformation?

Levels 9 and 10

**Curriculum links:**

* Government and Democracy
* Discuss the role of political parties and independent representatives in Australia’s system of government, including the formation of governments, and explain the process through which government policy is shaped and developed ([VCCCG028](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCG028))
* Laws and Citizens
* Explain how Australia’s international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ([VCCCL032](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCL032))
* Citizenship, Diversity and Identity
* Analyse contemporary examples and issues relating to Australian democracy and global connections, including key aspects of citizenship in a pluralist society ([VCCCC035](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCC035))
* Discuss challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society ([VCCCC036](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCCCC036))

**Suitable issues:**

* How does the 2022 election effect the ‘two-party system’?
* How does Australia’s commitment to international climate agreements shape government policy? Are these policies effective (for example, COP26)?
* What are Australia’s international legal obligations regarding refugees? How do these obligations shape government policy?
* How has Australia implemented the recommendations of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? What are the implications for First Nations Australians?