



Introduction to explicitly teaching the Victorian Curriculum F–10 capabilities

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Introduction

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 includes four capability curriculums:

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Ethical Capability
- Intercultural Capability
- Personal and Social Capability.

The learning areas and capabilities in the Victorian Curriculum F–10 support each other:

- the capabilities can enrich the learning of the knowledge and skills from the learning areas, enabling students to go deeper with their understanding
- the learning areas can provide the contexts to develop and apply the knowledge and skills specified in the capabilities.

This document introduces a range of key considerations when determining what is required to explicitly teach the capabilities. It consists of three sections:

- Building deep familiarity with the capabilities curriculums
 - Aims and structure of the capabilities
 - The content underpinning the capabilities
- Explicitly introducing capabilities content and consolidating learning
 - Explicitly introducing capabilities content (introduction phase)
 - Consolidating new learning (practising phase)
- Identifying progress in student learning (assessment)

Section 1: Building deep familiarity with the capabilities curriculums

Building deep familiarity with the capabilities curriculums helps teachers ensure a rich learning experience for students that is planned in an efficient way and makes the most effective use of class time.

Aims and structure of the capabilities

The first step in building deep familiarity with the capabilities curriculums involves engaging with the aims and structure of each curriculum and its underlying content. This fosters understanding of:

- the intended curriculum
- how its content descriptions are organised (that is, the strands)
- how its content descriptions are connected to each other
- how its achievement standards and content descriptions are connected.

Outlined below are the aims of each of the capabilities and a brief description of the strands within each curriculum.

Critical and Creative Thinking

Aims

Critical and creative thinking capability aims to ensure that students develop:

- understanding of thinking processes and an ability to manage and apply these intentionally
- skills and learning dispositions that support logical, strategic, flexible and adventurous thinking
- confidence in evaluating thinking and thinking processes across a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

Strands

Questions and Possibilities

Students develop the knowledge and skills essential to becoming effective questioners and developers of ideas.

Reasoning

Students develop the knowledge and skills required to compose, analyse and evaluate arguments and reasoning.

Meta-Cognition

Students develop the knowledge and skills to understand, manage and reflect on thinking and learning processes.

Ethical Capability

Aims

The Ethical Capability curriculum aims to develop knowledge, understandings and skills to enable students to:

- analyse and evaluate ethical issues, recognising areas of contestability
- identify the bases of ethical principles and ethical reasoning
- engage with the challenges of managing ethical decision making and action for individuals and groups
- cultivate open-mindedness and reasonableness.

Strands

Understanding Concepts

Students develop the knowledge and skills to enable them to identify ethical problems, and analyse ethical concepts and principles.

Decision Making and Actions

Students develop the knowledge and skills to approach ethical problem-solving, and the challenges associated with ethical decision making.

Intercultural Capability

Aims

Intercultural capability aims to develop knowledge, understandings and skills to enable students to:

- demonstrate an awareness of and respect for cultural diversity within the community
- reflect on how intercultural experiences influence attitudes, values and beliefs
- recognise the importance of acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity for a cohesive community.

Strands

Cultural Practices

Students develop the knowledge and skills to enable them to describe, observe and analyse the characteristics of their own cultural identities and those of others, and to critically reflect on how perspectives and actions can be shaped by culture.

Cultural Diversity

Students develop the knowledge and skills to critically examine the concept of respect, the challenges and opportunities created by cultural diversity, and the way in which cultural diversity shapes and contributes to social cohesion.

Personal and Social Capability

Aims

The Personal and Social Capability curriculum aims to develop knowledge, understandings and skills to enable students to:

- recognise, understand and evaluate the expression of emotions
- demonstrate an awareness of their personal qualities and the factors that contribute to resilience
- develop empathy for and understanding of others and recognise the importance of supporting diversity for a cohesive community
- understand how relationships are developed and use interpersonal skills to establish and maintain respectful relationships
- work effectively in teams and develop strategies to manage challenging situations constructively.

Strands

Self-Awareness and Management

Students develop the knowledge and skills to regulate, manage and monitor their emotions; to realistically assess their strengths and achievements; and to work independently, with initiative and perseverance.

Social Awareness and Management

Students develop the knowledge and skills to participate in positive, safe and respectful relationships; to work collaboratively; and to resolve conflict.

The content underpinning the capabilities

The second step in becoming deeply familiar with the capabilities curriculums is to engage with the content underpinning the structure and aims of each curriculum. Each capability curriculum describes a continuum of knowledge and skills that is discrete from other curriculum areas. As such, each capability curriculum has specific content that must be explicitly taught and learned.

The achievement standards describe what students are typically able to understand and do. These are linked to content descriptions that identify what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn in order to build this understanding and skill. Unpacking the content descriptions involves identifying the key concepts and ideas (the specific knowledge and skills) that underlie each content description.

Building deep familiarity with the content underpinning the capabilities helps to ensure progress in student learning by:

- enabling the teacher to set clear and consistent expectations for assessment, making sure the focus knowledge and skills are transparent for students
- making it easier for the teacher to ensure that students are taught something they do not already know, as the key knowledge and skills that underpin and support the learning have been identified and therefore can be pre-assessed
- making it easier for teachers to identify links between the capabilities and other curriculum areas, which can facilitate deeper learning by students.

Below is an example from each capability that highlights the connection between content descriptions and achievement standards. The content descriptions and achievement standards should be read together.

Each example below also lists some of the key concepts and ideas that could be taught to unpack the content description.

Critical and Creative Thinking example

Content description (Levels 7 and 8):

Consider a range of strategies to represent ideas and explain and justify thinking processes to others ([VCCCTM040](#))

Relevant achievement standard extract (Levels 7 and 8):

Students use a range of strategies to represent ideas and explain and justify thinking processes to others.

Key concepts and ideas that could be taught:

Storyboards, 3D mock-ups and symbolic representation are three ways of representing ideas. Each of these has particular strengths and weaknesses, and typical applications.

Ethical Capability example

Content description (Levels 3 and 4):

Explore the extent to which particular acts might be regarded by different people as good or bad, right or wrong, better or worse, and explain why ([VCECU005](#))

Relevant achievement standard extract (Levels 3 and 4):

[Students] use concrete examples from a range of contexts to explain the ... significance of acts.

Key concepts and ideas that could be taught:

Reasons why different people might make different ethical judgements about an act include:

- they disagree about what is of value or most important
- they have had different experiences that affect their understanding of relative harm or benefit
- they have different knowledge about the situation itself or similar situations.

Intercultural Capability example

Content description (Levels 9 and 10):

Identify and analyse the challenges and benefits of living and working in an interconnected and culturally diverse world ([VCICCD019](#))

Relevant achievement standard extract (Levels 3 and 4):

[Students] critically analyse ... the challenges and benefits of living in an interconnected and culturally diverse world.

Key concepts and ideas that could be taught:

Some factors that influence a sense of belonging and inclusion in a community and that can therefore be used to analyse challenges and benefits of living in an interconnected world include:

- a sense of membership to the group, expressed for example through shared common symbols, and boundaries for who does and does not belong
- the extent to which a member can exercise influence
- members' needs being met
- shared emotional connection, for example, through shared experiences.

Personal and Social Capability example

Content description (Levels 5 and 6):

Identify the characteristics of an effective team and develop descriptions for particular roles including leadership, and describe both their own and their team's performance when undertaking various roles ([VCPSCSO032](#))

Relevant achievement standard extract (Levels 5 and 6):

[Students] contribute to groups and teams suggesting improvements for methods used in group projects and investigations.

Key concepts and ideas that could be taught:

Common characteristics of effective teams include:

- common goals
- agreed team protocols
- clearly defined roles undertaken by competent people
- a way of welcoming disagreements and reaching a decision
- balanced participation
- trust and willingness to cooperate between team members.

Section 2: Explicitly introducing content and consolidating learning

Explicitly introducing capabilities content (introduction phase)

Once they are deeply familiar with a particular capabilities curriculum, teachers can determine what new knowledge and skills students need to develop. This is typically done through pre-assessment (see [Section 3: Identifying progress in student learning](#), below) and whole-school planning.

The key questions in determining what new capabilities content to introduce are:

- What do students already know? What are they able to do, and how well?
- What existing knowledge and skills require further consolidation?
- What new knowledge and skills should be introduced to enable progress in student learning?

The introduction phase involves explicitly unpacking content descriptions to engage students with the specific underlying knowledge and skills (key concepts and ideas) required to work towards the achievement standards. See [Section 1: The content underpinning the capabilities](#) for examples of key concepts and ideas for each capability that could be explicitly taught to students.

Consolidating new learning (practice phase)

In the practice phase, students undertake activities to learn and become confident with newly introduced knowledge and to build their skills as they progress towards an identified achievement standard.

Examples to illustrate introduced content should be drawn from a range of contexts already familiar to students and build on the skills that the students already have. This approach ensures that students are not being introduced to two unfamiliar contexts at once.

Encountering new learning area content and new capability content at the same time could create a learning experience that is too complex for many students.

Other reasons that learning activities are effective within a range of familiar contexts is because they allow students to consolidate their learning and they allow students to begin to build capacity to deploy this learning in other contexts in the future.

Critical and Creative Thinking example

Students have previously learned that all planets in our solar system revolve around the Sun, and comets also revolve around the Sun (Levels 5 and 6, Science). This can now be used a foundational context to practise new learning about errors in reasoning (Levels 5 and 6, Critical and Creative Thinking) to show why a conclusion that ‘therefore, comets are planets’ is an error in reasoning.

Ethical Capability example

Students have previously studied a narrative involving a hero (Level 3, English). This story can now be used as a foundational context to practise new learning on role models and the dispositions that we might value as supporting ethical decision-making (Levels 3 and 4, Ethical Capability).

Intercultural Capability example

Students have previously learned what children's lives are like in neighbouring countries and the geographical characteristics (such as climate) that influence the children's lives (Levels 3 and 4, Geography). This can now be built on by connecting students online with children from a neighbouring country's school, to create and critically reflect on an intercultural experience (Levels 3 and 4, Intercultural Capability), where the focus is on similarities and differences in cultural practices.

Personal and Social Capability example

Students have previously studied marketing strategies (Levels 7 and 8, Economics and Business). This can become prior learning from which the teacher constructs a learning activity, such as analysis of advertising campaigns, which supports students to consolidate their learning on how and why emotional responses may change in different contexts (Levels 7 and 8, Personal and Social Capability).

Section 3: Identifying progress in student learning (assessment)

Assessment in the capabilities involves teachers identifying evidence of students' learning progress. Assessment could be formative or summative, and it could occur at the beginning of the introduction phase (for example, as pre-assessment) or during the practice phase. Each student is assessed against the relevant capability achievement standard towards which they are progressing.

Pre-assessment (introduction phase)

Before introducing new learning, pre-assessment could be undertaken to ascertain which achievement standard students are working towards within the capability curriculum continuum and to gauge their current proficiency and next steps.

Next steps could involve:

- continuing to work towards the achievement standard students are currently working towards
- beginning work towards another part of the achievement standard within the current level
- beginning work towards the achievement standard at a higher level.

Personal and Social Capability example

For example, students may have been working on following content in the Collaboration sub-strand in Levels 5 and 6 Personal and Social Capability:

Content description (Levels 5 and 6): Identify the characteristics of an effective team and develop descriptions for particular roles including leadership, and describe both their own and their team's performance when undertaking various roles ([VCPSCSO032](#))

Achievement standard extract (Levels 5 and 6): They contribute to groups and teams suggesting improvements for methods used in group projects and investigations.

Meeting this part of the achievement standard involves students learning knowledge of typical team roles, including leadership roles, creating descriptions of team roles using this knowledge and then applying their knowledge of team roles to make contributions to groups and teams and to suggest improvements.

Pre-assessment might show that the next step for some students is to continue to work towards the achievement standard that is their current focus (Levels 5 and 6), either to:

- continue to improve the quality of their team role descriptions
- engage with new learning aimed at developing their ability to apply knowledge of these roles.

Pre-assessment might show that some other students are ready to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to work towards Levels 7 and 8:

Achievement standard extract (Levels 7 and 8): They explain the extent to which individual roles and responsibilities enhance group cohesion and the achievement of personal and group objectives.

Note that pre-assessment may show that students are at a higher or lower level on the curriculum continuum than the level that correlates with their year level. Becoming familiar with the curriculum as a learning continuum will assist teachers in identifying differentiated teaching and learning strategies and also facilitate tracking of student progress as students move year levels.

Formative and summative assessment (introduction and practice phases)

Formative and summative assessment for the capabilities at the introduction and practice phases involves gathering evidence of student progress in meeting the capability achievement standards.

A critical aspect of effective assessment of the capabilities is for teachers to set clear expectations. This includes identifying the specific knowledge and skills that students are to develop and then explicitly introducing these to students. Setting clear expectations is easier when teachers are deeply familiar with the curriculum (see [Section 1](#)).

In the [example above](#) for pre-assessment, students were working towards being able to suggest improvements for methods used in group projects and investigations. The teacher would have been explicitly developing student knowledge of team roles, and students could use their knowledge of team roles to help them analyse group performance. In terms of assessment, the teacher could set a clear expectation that, when undertaking assessment, they would look to see how well students could apply their knowledge of team roles to suggest improvements for how the group works together.

Setting expectations this way can help to ensure coherence between teacher judgements and any peer- or self-assessment that is undertaken – in this example, the focus of teacher judgement, peer-assessment and self-assessment would be the application of knowledge of team roles.