



General 7-10 Curriculum Position Paper

History Teachers' Association of NSW

August 2023

The History Teachers' Association of New South Wales has a proud history of advocating for high quality and dynamic History curricula in NSW and Australia. Our aim is to see History remain a strong area of interest in NSW schools, providing students with the opportunity to develop a mature and complex understanding of Australia's rich history, and that of our region and wider world. We believe that learning about the past can equip students with knowledge and skills that will be of benefit beyond the years of mandatory schooling.

To that end, and as a starting point rather than an exhaustive statement, we support a mandatory 7-10 History curriculum for NSW that:

1. Is teachable

A quality History curriculum will be afforded an appropriate amount of time across Stage 4 and 5. It will be teachable by professionals who vary in experience and worldview. It should be practical to implement faithfully in a variety of school contexts across all educational sectors in NSW and within the time allocated to it.

2. Is contemporary and enjoyable

A modern history curriculum in NSW should enable and encourage students to explore their national heritage and value the contribution of a variety of ideas, movements and people that have shaped the world and Australia. It will assist in developing students' civic awareness of Australian democracy in a global context, the rich history of Australia's region (the Asia-Pacific) and the world. The NSW History curriculum should enable students at varying stages to enjoy an interesting and engaging experience.

3. Is clear and coherent

The NSW History curriculum should be structured and communicated in a clear and comprehensible manner for specialist and non-specialist teachers. There should be a sensible amount of detail to guide teachers but not overburden them or unnecessarily constrain what or how they teach. The History curriculum should also be coherently organised to allow for a logical sequence of learning across the stages in which students do/can study History. It should avoid unnecessary overlap of content across the stages but also provide students with a strong foundation that can be drawn upon in Stage 6 History courses.

4. Appropriately acknowledges the importance of Australia's First Nations' history

First Nations histories and cultures should be given an appropriate emphasis within the NSW 7-10 History curriculum, including within the content students learn and the perspectives from which that content can be explored (see also point eight below).

5. Promotes deep knowledge and understanding of the past

Learning History should provide students with the opportunity to develop deep knowledge about the events, people, cultures and ideas of the past that they examine. This knowledge is crucial to developing a mature understanding of the past and to developing key disciplinary skills (see point 6).

6. Promotes a critical and complex understanding of the past

Disciplinary thinking should be as valued as substantive knowledge in the NSW 7-10 History curriculum. It should also offer students the opportunity to demonstrate an increasingly complex understanding of the past as contested. Students should be given the opportunity to participate in historical debates by learning to form analytical judgments about the past, based on evidence and the careful examination of a variety of perspectives and interpretations.

7. Draws on relevant research

Where appropriate, the NSW 7-10 History curriculum should draw on high quality research to shape the scope, content, outcomes, skills and concepts that underpin student learning in schools. This should be broad and include insights from up-to-date research into History and historiography, history education and broader educational research.

8. Is balanced

The content requirements of the NSW 7-10 History curriculum should allow schools and students to explore a range of topics from the past including national, regional and global history. Ignoring national history would be to the detriment of students' awareness of their heritage, but narrowing history to exploring *only* the national past would deny many students an important opportunity to begin expanding their knowledge of our globalised world.

9. Is representative

A quality 7-10 History curriculum should enable students to explore the past from a variety of perspectives that reflect modern Australia and the world. As a starting point, this would include (but not necessarily be limited to) exploring the past, where appropriate, from the perspectives of Indigenous people, women, migrants, children/youth and various political, philosophical and religious movements.

10. Is appropriately flexible

There is an important place for common content in a quality 7-10 History curriculum, but there should also be room for flexibility. Common content could include substantive knowledge of specific eras, events, cultures and themes from the past. Common content should also include aspects of disciplinary knowledge such as historical thinking concepts and skills. Where it is appropriate, schools and teachers should also be given curriculum choices that allow them to develop logical and meaningful learning sequences that draw on teacher expertise and student interest.