

Senate Committee: Education and Employment

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2016 - 2017

Outcome: Agency: ACARA

Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ16-000862

Senator Collins, Jacinta provided in writing page

ACARA - Measurement of Complex Skills - measure skills

Question

Could the Department please provide an update on any discussions on how to measure skills broader than literacy and numeracy tests, such as creativity, communication, collaboration, problem solving and other transversal skills?
Have any suggestions been put forward as to credible methodology to measure these skills?
What are ACARA's findings on assessing these skills?

Answer

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has provided the following response.

In the Australian Curriculum, general capabilities refer to a set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that can be developed and applied across the curriculum. They offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning and are addressed through the content of the learning areas. Seven general capabilities are included in the Australian Curriculum, namely: Literacy, Numeracy, Information Communication Technology, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding.

ACARA is planning to investigate how some of the general capabilities contained in the Australian Curriculum could be addressed through the National Assessment Program (NAP) sample assessments where these link to specific curriculum learning areas (Science, Civics and Citizenship, History and Digital Technologies). This work will probably focus on the ICT, critical and creative thinking and personal and social capabilities.

The investigation will be limited to current NAP sample assessments - to identify if it is possible to embed some of the general capabilities in those assessments, with no new additional assessments planned. The expectation will be that any general capabilities assessed through existing programs will be embedded in content taught as part of the curriculum. That is, general capabilities would be addressed in the NAP sample assessments through the content of a particular learning area/subject.

In undertaking the investigation ACARA will consider that international work that has been undertaken in this area, for example, through PISA 2015 and the Assessment and Teaching of 21st century skills project. In general terms, credible methodologies already exist to measure transversal skills. ACARA has and will continue to give consideration to these in work to assess general capabilities within the Australian Curriculum.

ACARA has also recently been involved in an international partnership focusing on the development of collaborative online assessment tasks. Such tasks measure students' capacity to work in pairs and teams, to process information, think critically and solve problems. Current work includes the psychometric analysis of students' responses to inform the development of more assessment tasks.

The work is still being scoped and the ACARA Board is yet to consider specific proposals. Further, the Education Council would need to endorse any changes to the basis for NAP sample assessment in relation to additional general capabilities.