

**Rationale**

The formal study of Auslan contributes to the overall intellectual and social enrichment of both first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners by providing:

- opportunities for engagement with the Deaf community and insight into its rich cultural heritage
- opportunities to develop intercultural capabilities, understanding and respect for others, appreciation of diversity and openness to different perspectives and experiences.

This curriculum provides direction for an integrated, inclusive and meaningful approach to language education in Auslan for both first and second language learners.

**Rationale for first language learners**

This curriculum meets the need of young deaf people to formally learn their own language, and it recognises the significance of Auslan in the linguistic landscape of Australia. It provides deaf children, and potentially hearing children of deaf parents, with access to education in and about their first language, playing an important part in the development of a strong sense of self-esteem and identity and contributing in crucial ways to overall learning and achievements. It enables learners to develop a wider recognition and understanding of their language, culture and identity, thus contributing to their psychological wellbeing as well as to their academic development.

**Rationale for second language learners**

Many deaf children today are educated in inclusive school settings, thus raising the profile of Auslan in the wider community. The presence of deaf students and interpreting practitioners in schools creates a need and offers opportunities for a wider range of peer-group communication partners, and not all interactions can or should be mediated by an interpreting practitioner. One of the key reasons for introducing Auslan in schools, therefore, is for humanistic purposes: to increase opportunities for interaction between deaf children and their hearing or hard of hearing peers, and to reduce barriers to communication. Through learning Auslan, L2 learners gain access to additional knowledge and understanding of the nature and purpose of human languages and of the use of a different language modality. In addition, from a vocational perspective, greater participation of deaf people in society in a diverse range of occupations and breadth of community spheres creates possibilities for future career options and personal fulfilment for L2 learners. In general educational terms, learning Auslan as a second language enables students to engage meaningfully with a different language and culture and to enhance understanding of their own language and culture. Such intercultural learning is essential in the increasingly diverse and changing contexts in which they live and will work.

**For all learners**

- broadens students' understanding that each language is an integrated, evolving system for the framing and communication of meaning; and encourages understanding of the role of language as an expression of cultural and personal identity and a shaper of perspectives
- contributes to the overall curriculum intent by providing distinctive real-life and intellectual opportunities for students to expand their engagement with the wider world and to reflect on the cultural and social assumptions that underpin their own world view and language use. Such awareness of different perspectives is an integral part of effective communication
- contributes to the development of critical thinking and the ability to adapt to change and equips students with learning strategies and study habits that are the foundation not only for lifelong learning but also for any subsequent language learning.

The opportunity to learn Auslan formally is becoming available in an increasing number of Australian schools, and the aim of this national curriculum is to make this learning opportunity accessible in a systematic manner to students around Australia. Language learning is life enhancing. This national curriculum offers all Australian students the opportunity to benefit from the social, cultural, intellectual and emotional development that will result from learning the unique and sophisticated visual-gestural language of the Australian Deaf community.

**Year 7 and 8 (Year 7 Entry) Achievement Standard**

By the end of Year 8, students interact with the teaching team, class visitors and each other to share information about themselves, their families, friends, routines, pastimes and experiences. They refer to family members and classmates using fingerspelling or sign names as appropriate, and use lexical adjectives and some SASS depicting signs to describe people's physical appearance and characteristics, for example POSS1 SISTER E-M-M-A, PRO3 SHORT RED HAIR. They use entity depicting signs to discuss movement and location. They recount shared and personal experiences, using simple clause structures, modifying some verbs for present referents or single absent referents for example PRO1 LIKE TV. They ask and respond to simple questions and distinguish between statements and questions using grammatical non-manual features (NMFs). They express likes, dislikes and feelings using lexical signs and affective NMFs, such as DON'T-LIKE DRAWING. They follow directions for class routines and instructions of two or more steps, using directional terms or depicting signs such as DS:turn-left DEAD END DS:turn-right. Students follow culturally appropriate protocols, such as responding to and using attention-gaining strategies such as flashing lights, waving or tapping a shoulder or table, using voice-off while signing and observing appropriate distance between signers. They identify specific points of information in signed texts, for example, colours, numbers, size or time. They present factual information about familiar topics, using modelled lexical signs and formulaic constructions. They demonstrate simple procedures using known signs, gestures, objects and list buoys. They recount and sequence events, using familiar signs and visual prompts and time markers such as 3-YEARS-AGO, IN-TWO-WEEKS or LAST NIGHT. They restrict signing to the standard signing space. They view short imaginative and expressive texts, such as poems and stories, demonstrating understanding through drawing, gesture and modelled signs. They create simple imaginative texts and retell wordless animations, using familiar signs, gestures, modelled language and visual supports, modifying NMFs and lexical signs to indicate manner. They translate high-frequency signs/words and expressions in simple texts. Students identify themselves as members of different groups and describe their relationships with deaf, hard of hearing students, family members and the larger Deaf community and also with the wider 'hearing' world. They consider how these different relationships contribute to their sense of identity. They identify places that are important to the Deaf community and describe how such places evoke a sense of belonging and pride. They recognise that one of the most unifying features of the Deaf community is the use of Auslan.

Students know that Auslan is a language in its own right, different from mime and gestures used in spoken languages, and that eye contact is necessary for effective communication. They know that meaning is communicated visually through the use of signs, fingerspelling, NMFs and non-conventional gestures. They identify and describe the handshapes, movements and locations of signs. They identify some signs that link to visual images, for example HOUSE, DRINK, and demonstrate signs that are body anchored, such as HUNGRY or SLEEP, and non-body anchored, such as HAVE or GO-TO. They identify how signers use space to track participants through a text, for example by pointing back to an established location to refer to a noun referent; and they identify ways signers refer to the same referent in a text, for example, by using DSs, points or list buoys. They know that signs can be displaced in space for a range of purposes, such as to show locations or to indicate participants in a verb. They know that signing involves telling, depicting or enacting. Students recognise variation in the use of Auslan, such as regional dialects and differences in signing space. They understand different ways that English words are borrowed into Auslan and how these become lexicalised. They recognise variation in how Auslan is used, for example by recognising regional dialects and differences in signing space and explain the nature of transmission of Auslan. They identify different ways Deaf community members communicate with each other and with members of the wider hearing community; and describe how digital forms of communication, such as social media, SMS/texting and NRS, have improved accessibility for the Deaf community and contribute to the vitality of Auslan. They recognise the importance of facial expression, eye gaze and NMFs in a visual-gestural language and culture.

**Aims**

The Australian Curriculum: Languages – Auslan aims to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to enable students to:

- communicate in Auslan
- understand language, culture and learning and their relationship, and thereby develop an intercultural capability in communication
- understand themselves as communicators
- develop a knowledge and an understanding of the diversity of Deaf experience and the nature of identity.

These aims are interrelated and provide the basis for two organising strands for learning Auslan: Communicating and Understanding.

**Key Ideas**

**Language and culture**

The interrelationship of language, culture and learning provides the foundation for the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

In the languages learning area the focus is on both language and culture, as students learn to communicate meaningfully across linguistic and cultural systems, and different contexts. This process involves reflection and analysis, as students move between the new language being learnt and their own existing language(s). It is a reciprocal and dynamic process which develops language use within intercultural dimensions of learning experiences. It is not a 'one plus one' relationship between two languages and cultures, where each language and culture stay separate and self-contained. Comparison and referencing between (at least) two languages and cultures build understanding of how languages 'work', how they relate to each other and how language and culture shape and reflect experience; that is, the experience of language using and language learning. The experience of being in two worlds at once involves noticing, questioning and developing awareness of how language and culture shape identity.

**Structure**

Learner background and time-on-task are two major variables that influence language learning and they provide the basis for the structure of the Australian Curriculum: Languages. These variables are addressed through the specification of content and the description of achievement standards according to pathways and learning sequences respectively.

**Pathways**

In the Australian Curriculum: Languages, pathways for second language learners, background language learners and first language learners have been developed as appropriate to cater for the dominant group(s) of students learning each specific language within the current Australian context. For the majority of languages, one curriculum pathway has been developed for Years F–10, catering for the dominant cohort of learners for that language in the current Australian context. For Chinese, pathways have been developed for three learner groups: first language learners, background language learners and second language learners.

The Framework for Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages includes three learner pathways:  
 •first language learner pathway  
 •revival language learner pathway  
 •second language learner pathway.

**Sequences of learning**

The design of the Australian Curriculum: Languages takes account of different entry points into language learning across Foundation – Year 10, which reflects current practice in languages.

For the second language learner pathway and the background language learner pathway, there are two learning sequences:

- Foundation–Year 10 sequence
- Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

For the first language learner pathway, there is one learning sequence:

- Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

Content and achievement standards are described initially in a three-year band for Foundation–Year 2 followed by two-year bands of learning: Years 3–4; Years 5–6, Years 7–8 and Years 9–10.

The Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages is written in the bands Foundation – Year 2, Years 3–6 and Years 7–10. In the absence of pedagogical evidence across the country for all these languages, the broader band distinctions provide maximum local flexibility in curriculum development.

**Content structure**

The content of the Australian Curriculum: Languages is organised through two interrelated strands which realise the three aims. The two strands are:

- Communicating: using language for communicative purposes in interpreting, creating and exchanging meaning
- Understanding: analysing language and culture as a resource for interpreting and creating meaning.

The strands reflect three important aspects of language learning:

- 1) communication
- 2) analysis of aspects of language and culture
- 3) reflection that involves
  - reflection on the experience of communicating
  - reflection on comparative dimensions of the languages available in students' repertoires (for example, the first language in relation to second language and self in relation to others).

**Strands and sub-strands**

A set of sub-strands has been identified within each strand, which reflects dimensions of language use and the related content to be taught and learned. The strands and sub-strands do not operate in isolation but are integrated in relation to language use for different purposes in different contexts. The relative contribution of each sub-strand differs for described languages, pathways and bands of learning. The sub-strands are further differentiated according to a set of 'threads' that support the internal organisation of content in each sub-strand. These 'threads' are designed to capture (1) range and variety in the scope of learning and (2) a means for expressing the progression of content across the learning sequences.

## Year 7 and 8 (Year 7 Entry) Level Description

### The nature of the learners

The transition to secondary schooling involves social and academic demands that coincide with a period of maturational and physical change. Learners are adjusting to a new school culture with sharper divisions between curriculum areas. Learners in this pathway have had little or no experience with Auslan, but are learning it with the expectation that it will be their primary language in the future. They have a range of experience with other signed or spoken languages, or a home gesture system, but may not be fluent in any standard language, and may have associated cognitive challenges. A multilevel and differentiated approach to teaching and task design responding to this diversity of prior experience is necessary, including using as much visual support as possible.

Auslan is learnt in parallel with English literacy. Learners in this sequence and pathway have little experience of English and are learning English literacy simultaneously to Auslan. As they have no access to spoken English, this poses particular challenges. The learning of Auslan supports and enriches deaf students' learning of English.

### Auslan learning and use

Rich language input characterises the first stages of learning. Learners engage in a range of activities designed to immerse them in language scaffolded to their level of linguistic and cognitive development. They build vocabulary for thinking and talking about school and home, routines and social worlds. They interact in structured routines and activities with their peers, family members and as many fluent signing adults as possible. They are supported to use Auslan for different language functions, such as asking and responding to questions, expressing wishes, responding to directions, and taking turns in games and simple shared learning activities. Learners may initially need time to watch Auslan without pressure to respond, until they feel comfortable with the situation and context. When they produce Auslan, they use well-known phrases to participate in familiar routines and structured conversations. Over this band, they continue to develop confidence in communicating about the here and now, and gradually begin to talk about the past or future and non-present entities or events.

### Contexts of interaction

Learners at this level are given as much opportunity as possible to interact with their peers, the teaching team and members of the Deaf community for additional enrichment and authentication of their language learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources provide extra access to Auslan and to the cultural experience of deafness. A key expectation in the L1 pathway is that students will have opportunities to interact with a variety of native or near-native signing models. The familiarity and routine dimension of the classroom context provide scaffolding and opportunities for language practice and experimentation. Language development and use are incorporated into structured collaborative and interactive learning experiences, games and activities.

### Texts and resources

Learners engage with a variety of signed texts, live and recorded. They watch the teacher signing, share ideas and join in activities, stories and conversational exchanges. They become familiar with ways of recording Auslan, either through film, photos of signs, line drawings of signs or simple symbols. An important source of texts is the Deaf community and older members of it.

### Features of Auslan use

Learners in Years 7–8 can identify the handshape movement and location of signs. Depending on their access to home-sign systems, they make use of varying levels of handling or SASS depicting signs, gradually learning the conventions of Auslan. They learn to use entity depicting signs to discuss movement and location, decreasing their signing space to the conventional area. Learners at this stage use simple clause structures, modifying some verbs for present referents, and begin to understand and ask basic questions.

### Level of support

The early stage of language learning is supported by extensive use of concrete materials and resources, gestures and body language. If the student has existing idiosyncratic gestures or home signs the teacher can access, these are used to scaffold their learning of Auslan. Learning is also supported through the provision of experiences that are challenging but achievable with appropriate scaffolding and support. This involves modelling, monitoring and moderating by the teacher; provision of multiple and varied sources of input; opportunities for revisiting, recycling and reviewing; and continuous cueing, feedback, response and encouragement. Use of recounting and retelling assists in establishing early language skills based on real-life experiences. The teacher provides implicit and explicit modelling and scaffolding in relation to meaningful language use in a range of contexts.

### The role of English

Auslan is the language of all classroom interactions, routines and activities. Because these students do not have any English, they cannot make comparisons between English and Auslan. Research work in English is not an option for these learners. The students' learning is focused primarily on developing Auslan capabilities as intensively as possible with a view to progressing to a state of communicative competence as soon as possible.

## Year 7 and 8 (Year 7 Entry) Content Descriptions

### Communicating

#### Socialising

Interact with peers and teachers to exchange information about self, family, friends and interests, describe people and objects and express some feelings and preferences.

[Key concepts: interaction, communication, introduction, description; Key processes: socialising, expressing feelings, exchanging greetings, asking/responding to questions]

Participate in guided group activities such as signing games and simple tasks using repeated language structures, non-manual features and gestures.

[Key concepts: game, learning activity, instruction, role-play, task; Key processes: participating, following instructions, classifying, exchanging, transacting, collaborating]

Develop communication and interaction skills such as asking and responding to simple questions and statements and following protocols for participation in Auslan classes and engaging with the Deaf community.

[Key concepts: protocol, greeting, signing space, visual applause; Key processes: recognising, following instructions, gaining attention]

#### Informing

Locate specific points of information from signed texts about familiar topics and use the information in new ways.

[Key concepts: information, topics, directions; Key processes: identifying, responding, following directions]

Present factual information about familiar topics using signs that have been modelled.

[Key concepts: description, procedure, recount; Key processes: describing, demonstrating, recounting, reporting]

#### Creating

Participate in the viewing of recorded or live imaginative signed texts, responding through drawing, miming, gesture or modelled signs.

[Key concepts: story, imagination, Deaf art, gesture, mime; Key processes: viewing, drawing, responding, mimicking, shadowing]

Express imaginative ideas and visual thinking through the use of mime, gestures, drawing and modelled signs.

[Key concepts: story, animation, constructed action; Key processes: re-enacting, depicting, constructing, representing]

#### Translating

Translate familiar words and phrases from Auslan to English and vice versa, noticing similarities and differences in meaning.

[Key concepts: meaning, interpretation, translation; Key processes: translating, interpreting, identifying, comparing, recognising, paraphrasing, summarising]

Create different types of bilingual texts to support their classroom learning.

[Key concepts: bilingual, meaning, translation, equivalent; Key processes: translating, labelling, developing, creating, captioning]

#### Identity

Explore the concepts of identity, social groupings, relationships, community and place and space, and deaf people's visual ways of being and negotiating these networks.

[Key concepts: identity, self, relationship, community, Deafhood, visual ways of being, place, space, reciprocity, responsibility; Key processes: identifying, discussing, exchanging]

#### Reflecting

Reflect on ways in which Auslan and associated communicative and cultural behaviours are similar to or different from other language(s) and forms of cultural expression.

[Key concepts: intercultural experience, ways of knowing and being; Key processes: comparing, analysing, discussing, reflecting]

### Understanding

#### Systems of Language

Identify and describe all elements of sign production, including handshape and its orientation, movement, location and non-manual features and understand that signs can look like what they represent.

[Key concepts: handshape, orientation, movement, location, hand dominance; Key processes: identifying, recognising, describing, understanding]

Recognise and restrict signing to the standard signing space, and understand that particular signs, depicting signs, some verbs, enacting and pronouns make use of spatial relationships.

[Key concepts: signing space, function of points, verb modification, depicting signs; Key processes: noticing, recognising, describing, comparing, distinguishing]

Recognise and use elements of clause structure, such as noun groups/phrases or verb groups/phrases and using conjunctions to shape structure.

[Key concepts: sign class, nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, clause; Key processes: recognising, observing, distinguishing, understanding]

Recognise similarities and differences in language features of different types of texts, and notice how signers build cohesion in texts.

[Key concepts: text, textual features, referent tracking; Key processes: recognising, identifying]

#### Language variation and change

Recognise that there is variation in in how Auslan is used depending on context, environment and influences of other signed languages.

[Key concepts: language variation, influence, word-borrowing, change; Key processes: exploring, identifying, classifying, describing]

#### Language awareness

Develop awareness of the sociocultural context, nature and status of Auslan and of the Deaf community in Australia and the impact of this on language change.

[Key concepts: communication, transmission, accessibility, language vitality; Key processes: identifying, describing, recognising, investigating, discussing]

#### Role of language and culture

Explore connections between language, identity and cultural practices, values and beliefs and the expression of these connections in Auslan.

[Key concepts: language, culture, identity difference, transmission; Key processes: recognising, exploring, understanding, identifying]