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.

Foundation to Year 2 Achievement Standard

By the end of Year 2, students interact with the teaching team, class visitors and each other to share information about themselves, their families, friends, routines, pastimes and experiences. They use fingerspelling or sign names as appropriate and lexical adjectives or size and shape specifiers (SASS) depicting signs (DS) to describe the appearance and characteristics of family members, friends or teachers, for example, POSS1 BROTHER OLD++ TALL SKINNY or POSS3 SISTER FRECKLES. Students recount shared and personal experiences and favourite activities, using plain or indicating verbs that are modified, such as PRO1 GO-TO-right, PLAY-continuous, RETURN-left, or LAST-WEEK PRO1-plural VISIT NANNA. They sequence events correctly using time markers such as YESTERDAY, LAST-YEAR, TWO-DAYS-AGO. They use everyday social exchanges such as greeting, thanking and apologising, and express feelings through the use of NMFs and lexical signs. They compare likes, dislikes and preferences, for example, PRO1 LIKE APPLE DON'T-LIKE ORANGE. They use appropriate NMFs to ask and respond to a range of wh- questions and yes/no questions. They indicate agreement/disagreement or understanding/lack of understanding by using other NMFs. They follow directions for class routines, for example, PLEASE DS:line-up-facing-front, and give and follow instructions of two or more steps, using directional terms or DSs such as DS:turn-left T-JUNCTION 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 recall and retell specific points of information from texts such as class messages, directions, introductions and 'visual vernacular' descriptions, and they recognise familiar fingerspelled words. They follow procedural texts involving several steps and retell them using list buoys. They view short Auslan stories and respond by identifying and comparing favourite elements, characters and events. They use features of constructed action (CA) such as shifting eye gaze, or head or body–head orientation when creating imagined texts, and use NMFs to modify manner or intensify adjectives, such as REMEMBER PRO1 JUMP-really-far-and-high. They identify themselves as members of different groups and describe their relationships with deaf, hard of hearing and hearing children, family members, and the community. They identify similarities and differences between how people interact and share stories in Auslan and in spoken languages.

Students know that Auslan is a language in its own right, different from mime and gestures used in spoken languages. They know that eye contact is necessary for effective communication and that meaning is communicated visually through the use of signs, fingerspelling, NMFs and non-conventional gestures. They recognise and describe the main elements of Auslan signs: handshape, movement and location; and identify and categorise signs according to these. They recognise that some signs link to visual images, for example DRINK, ELEPHANT. Students know that some words, such as proper nouns, are borrowed from English by fingerspelling and mouthing, and that locations or orientations of signs can be modified meaningfully, for example to show who is involved in an event. They recognise that signers can tell with lexical signs or show with DSs and CA, and that clauses include a verb and sometimes nouns. 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.

Foundation to Year 2 Level Description

The nature of the learners
Most hearing children, or deaf children from signing families, enter the early years of schooling with established communication in one or more languages. Cognitive and social development at this stage is exploratory and egocentric; thus learning typically focuses on students' immediate world of family, home, school and friends. Children at this age are learning how to socialise with new people, share with others, and participate in structured routines and activities at school. Auslan is learnt in parallel with English literacy and, for some children, spoken English. Some learners arrive at school with little experience of English and will learn it as a second language, while others may use spoken English with their hearing family members. The learning of Auslan supports and enriches deaf children's learning of English and vice versa.

Auslan learning and use
Rich language input characterises the first stages of learning. Most children are familiar with the forms of signs and their fluency and accuracy is further developed through activities such as play, games and viewing texts. The curriculum builds on children's interests and sense of enjoyment and curiosity, with an emphasis on active, experiential learning and confidence building. Creative play provides opportunities for using the language for purposeful interaction in less familiar contexts.

Children build vocabulary for thinking and talking about school topics, routines and processes, and expand their knowledge and understanding by interacting with other deaf children and adults in new contexts and by participating in more structured routines and activities. They use Auslan for different language functions, such as asking and responding to questions, expressing wishes, responding to and giving directions, greeting, thanking, apologising, agreeing and disagreeing, and taking turns in games and simple shared learning activities.

Contexts of interaction
Across Foundation to Year 2, learning occurs largely through interaction with peers and the teaching team, with some access to members of the Deaf community for additional enrichment and authentication of students' language learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources provide additional 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.

Texts and resources
Children engage with a variety of signed texts, live and recorded. They watch the teacher signing, share ideas and join in activities and stories and various forms of play and conversational exchanges. Text types include descriptions of appearances, relationships between people, and stories and recounts, as well as texts that talk about self, such as comparing likes and dislikes with others. Students become familiar with ways of recording Auslan, either through film, photos of signs, line drawings of signs, or simple symbols. An important source of natural signed texts are members of the deaf community. The early stage of language learning is also supported by extensive use of concrete materials and resources. Play and imaginative activities, games, and familiar routines provide essential scaffolding and context for language development.

Features of Auslan use
Children in Foundation to Year 2 learn to produce all handshapes, movements and locations of single signs. They make use of handling and size and shape specifiers (SASS) depicting signs with increasing accuracy, and use entity depicting signs to talk about simple movement and locations. Children in this band level produce a range of clause structures with the correct sign order and non-manual features (NMFs), such as questions, negatives and topic-comment structures, as well as using a range of non-manual adverbs. They learn to modify indicating verbs to show participants involved in events and can sometimes maintain those locations across multiple clauses. They are learning to integrate multiple viewpoints, such as that of narrator and of one or two characters, through constructed action and marking manner in longer signed texts.

As children learn to adjust their language to suit different purposes and situations, they begin to understand how culture shapes language use. They compare how they feel when they use different languages and how they view different languages and people who use them. This introduction to the meta dimension of intercultural learning develops the ability to 'decentre', to consider different perspectives and ways of being, and to become aware of themselves as communicators and cultural participants. Metalinguistically, children learn to describe features of signs, such as handshapes, to identify whether they are iconic; to recognise the importance of space in Auslan; and to categorise signs as nouns, verbs and adjectives.

Level of support
Learning is 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, experiencing and retelling assists in establishing early language skills based on real-life experiences.

The role of English
Auslan is the language of all classroom interactions, routines and activities. It is the principal medium of instruction in L1 pathway classrooms. English may play a complementary role, such as when comparing signs and words and looking at fingerspelling. English is necessarily discussed in the translating strand.

Foundation to Year 2 Content Descriptions

Communicating	Creating	Understanding

Communicating

Socialising

Communicate with teacher, peers and familiar adults in guided and free interactions that develop social and communicative skills.
[Key concepts: self, family, interaction, experience, preference; Key processes: interacting, greeting, asking/answering questions, recounting, describing, comparing]

Participate in group learning activities that involve taking turns, playing action games, making choices or swapping and classifying items.
[Key concepts: play, action-learning, problem-solving; Key processes: participating, playing, collaborating]

Participate in classroom routines and activities such as following directions, attracting attention, responding to questions and turn-taking.
[Key concepts: direction, response, support, protocol; Key processes: participating, responding, interacting, turn-taking]

Informing

Identify specific points of information in simple Auslan texts and use the information to complete guided tasks.
[Key concepts: information, family, games, hobbies; Key processes: collecting information, identifying, retelling, categorising, recording]

Present information about self, family, people, places and things using signed descriptions and visual prompts.
[Key concepts: self, family, routines, home, community; Key processes: providing information, describing, presenting, demonstrating, labelling, reporting]

Creating

Creating

Participate in a range of imaginative experiences and respond through drawing, telling with familiar signs and written words or enacting with constructed action.
[Key concepts: imagination, story, character, emotion; Key processes: viewing, retelling, expressing, responding, interpreting]

Express imaginative experience through creative games, role-play and mime, using familiar signs, modelled language and constructed action.
[Key concepts: imagination, emotion, expression; Key processes: creating, enacting, expressing, experimenting, imagining]

Translating

Translate familiar words and phrases from Auslan into English and vice versa, using visual cues, signs and English words, noticing how signs and words differ.
[Key concepts: similarity, difference, meaning; Key processes: noticing, recognising, identifying, translating, explaining]

Create simple print or digital texts such as labels, posters, wall charts or cards that use both Auslan images and English words.
[Key concepts: code, translation; Key processes: labelling, creating, captioning]

Reflecting

Explore ideas of identity, social groupings, relationship, space and place, and how these relate to the Deaf community.
[Key concepts: identity, self, relationship, community, place, space, connection; Key processes: identifying, exploring, describing, talking about]

Notice similarities and differences between Auslan and spoken languages in relation to ways of interacting, sharing stories and playing games.
[Key concepts: language, culture, similarity, difference, respect; Key processes: noticing, comparing, responding]

Understanding

Systems of Language

Recognise the main formational elements of handshape, movement and location in Auslan signs, and understand that a sign is the same as a spoken or written word even though it can be iconic.
[Key concepts: handshape, movement, location, iconicity; Key processes: noticing, recognising, understanding]

Recognise that signing happens in a finite space that can be used meaningfully within individual signs, learning in particular how depicting signs, some verbs, pronouns and enacting make use of spatial relationships.
[Key concepts: signing space, numeral incorporation, verb modification to show who; Key processes: explaining, describing, noticing, identifying]

Recognise that groups of words combine to make clauses and include nouns and pronouns (people, places, things), adjectives (qualities) and verbs (happenings, states); and distinguish between statements and questions based on non-manual features.
[Key concepts: sign class, clauses, telling versus showing; Key processes: recognising, observing, distinguishing]

Understand that texts are made up of units of meaning, such as words, gestures or sentences/clauses and that different types of texts have particular features that help serve their purpose.
[Key concepts: text, referent; Key processes: recognising, identifying, discussing]

Language variation and change

Understand that all languages including signed languages vary and borrow words and signs from each other.
[Key concepts: dialect, language borrowing, variation; Key processes: noticing, recognising]

Language Awareness

Recognise that Auslan is a legitimate language, one of many languages used in Australia and around the world.
[Key concept: language diversity; Key processes: identifying, recognising, comparing]

Role of language and culture

Understand that people use language in ways that reflect their culture, such as where and how they live, who they live with and what is important to them.
[Key concepts: language, culture, community, observable phenomena; Key processes: noticing, recognising, questioning, making connections]