

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.

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.

Year 7 and 8 (Year 7 Entry) Achievement Standard

By the end of Year 8, students use Auslan to share information, experiences, interests, thoughts and feelings about their personal and immediate worlds. They use modelled constructions, ask for repetition or clarification, such as please slow sign, and use strategies such as fingerspelling to replace unknown signs to support continued interaction. They use lexical signs, gestures and affective non-manual features (NMFs) to indicate understanding, interest or lack of interest, for example, AGREE YES or PRO1 AGREE or PRO1 KNOW WHAT MEAN, BUT.... They ask and respond to familiar questions and directions and distinguish between statements and questions using grammatical NMFs. Students use familiar language to collaboratively plan and conduct shared events or activities, such as presentations, demonstrations or transactions, for example, PRO2 TYPE PRO1 WRITE. They describe people, animals and objects using lexical adjectives and familiar SASS depicting signs and appropriate classifier handshapes, for example, POSS1 MATH TEACHER TALL DS:long-wavy-hair or SCHOOL UNIFORM HAVE DS:long-thin-tie. They compare routines, interests and leisure activities, using signs for timing and frequency, simple depicting verbs for showing location, and appropriate sequencing. They use culturally appropriate protocols when communicating, such as maintaining eye contact, responding to and gaining attention by waving or tapping a shoulder or table, flashing lights, back-channelling and voice-off. Students locate specific information in a range of signed texts, such as weather reports, public announcements and presentations by visitors, using visual and contextual clues to help make meaning. They summarise and retell key points of information in correct sequence using list buoys. They plan, rehearse and deliver short presentations, taking into account context, purpose and audience and using familiar signs and visual supports, such as photos and props, and cohesive and sequencing devices. Students view and respond to short imaginative and expressive texts, such as short stories, poems and Deaf performances, for example by identifying and discussing ideas, characters and events. They create their own simple imaginative texts and retell wordless animations using familiar signs, gestures, modelled clause structures, high-frequency signs, modifying NMFs and lexical signs to indicate manner. They translate and interpret short texts using Signbank, and give examples of how languages do not always translate directly. They create bilingual texts and resources for the classroom, for example, glossaries and captions for their own and each other's short stories. They explain the importance of facial expression, eye gaze and other NMFs in a visual-gestural language and culture, and reflect on their own cultural identity and ways of communicating in light of their experience of learning Auslan.

Students know that Auslan is a legitimate language, 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, NMFs and gestures and can be expressed through whole signs or fingerspelling. They identify and describe the handshapes, movements and locations of signs. They distinguish between entity, handling or SASS depicting signs by looking at what the handshape and movement represent in each type and know that spatial relationships are typically expressed with entity DSs. They know that signs can be displaced in space for a range of purposes, such as to show locations or show the participants in a verb. They know that signing involves telling, depicting or enacting. They identify iconic signs and discuss how these match their referent, such as HOUSE, TREE, DRINK. They know that the function of constructed action is to represent the words, thoughts or actions of themselves or others. They use metalanguage to talk about Auslan, for example using terms such as depicting signs, indicating verbs, non-manual features, handshapes, pointing signs and clauses. 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 explore the influence on Auslan of other signed languages, such as BSL, ISL and ASL, as well as English over different periods of time and in different domains of language use, and consider reasons for these influences. They identify different ways that Deaf community members communicate with each other and with members of the wider hearing community, describing how different forms of digital communication such as social media, SMS/texting and NRS have improved accessibility for the Deaf community and contribute to the vitality of the language. Students recognise that Auslan has been transmitted across generations and describe ways it has been documented and recorded. They reflect on ways that culture is differently interpreted by others, for example by identifying how stereotypes about deaf and hearing people influence perceptions; and they understand that the most unifying factor of the Deaf community is the use of Auslan.

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

Learners are beginning their study of Auslan and typically have had little prior exposure to the language or to the Deaf community. Many will have learnt an additional language in primary school, and some have proficiency in different home languages, and consequently bring existing language learning strategies and intercultural awareness to the new experience of learning Auslan.

Skills in analysing, comparing and reflecting on language and culture in both English and Auslan are mutually supportive. 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. They may need encouragement to take risks in learning a new language at this stage of social development; and to consider how the experience impacts on the sense of 'norms' associated with their first language and culture.

Auslan learning and use

Learners are encouraged to watch and sign Auslan in a range of interactions with the teacher and with each other. They use the language for interactions and transactions, for practising language forms, for developing cultural knowledge and for intercultural exchange. Rich and varied language input characterises this first level of learning, supported by the use of gestures, vocal and facial expression and concrete materials. Learners respond with a mix of Auslan and conventional and unconventional gestures and fingerspelling, as they use all available resources to make meaning and to express themselves.

Learners in this band engage in a range of activities in Auslan and share ideas about the language. They use well-known phrases in Auslan to participate in classroom routines, presentations and structured conversations with their teacher and their peers.

They build vocabulary for thinking and talking about school and personal topics. Language used in routine activities is re-used and reinforced from lesson to lesson in different situations, making connections between what has been learnt and what is to be learnt. Learners follow instructions, watch stories and participate in creating short texts on topics relevant to their interests and enjoyment, such as family, friends, favourite activities or food. They recount experiences, interact with visitors, follow directions, negotiate roles in a group and retell important information.

As they adjust language use to suit different purposes, contexts and situations, learners notice how culture shapes language. They work collaboratively and independently. They focus on the different systems that structure language use, such as sign modification, clause and text structure, and vocabulary, and reflect on their experience as Auslan learners and users. They gradually build a vocabulary and grammatical base that allows them to compose and present different kinds of simple texts.

Contexts of interaction

The Auslan classroom and interactions with deaf peers or adults in their school or local environment are the primary contexts for language and culture experiences. Learners also have some access to the wider Deaf community and to various resources through virtual and digital technology. 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 work with a range of published texts designed for language learning, such as videos or websites, as well as teacher-generated materials. Authentic texts from different sources provide opportunities for discussion and analysis of the relationship between communication and culture. Learners become familiar with ways of recording Auslan, through either film, photos of signs, line drawings of signs or simple symbols.

Features of Auslan use

Learners in Years 7 and 8 are able to produce all handshapes, movements and locations of single signs. They can independently produce simple positive and negative statements with some time marking, and use plain verbs, indicating verbs modified for present referents and simple and familiar depicting verbs.

They describe familiar objects, animals or people using lexical adjectives and some SASS depicting signs. They depict the movement of people, animals and means of transport, using an appropriate classifier handshape in a depicting sign. They explore the expression of emotions through NMFs, and begin to use NMFs for grammatical purposes in modelled language. They use simple constructed action and handling depicting signs to show the characteristics and actions of an animal or a person. They learn that verbs can be modified spatially to express relationships with participants, and that space is used meaningfully in Auslan.

As learners 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.

Level of support

Learning at this level is supported by rich and varied language input and by the provision of experiences that are challenging but achievable. Support includes scaffolding, modelling and monitoring; frequent revision; and explicit instruction, description, and comparison of Auslan and English. Teachers model language use and examples of texts, and provide feedback and review student work to support the interactive process of learning. Learning experiences incorporate implicit and explicit form-focused language learning activities and examples of texts and tasks. Learners are given support and opportunities to practise using dictionaries, especially Signbank, and to access word charts, vocabulary lists and examples when translating and creating texts. Support is also provided through visual and tactile materials, such as pictures, objects and charts, and through the use of conventional gestures. Learners rely on modelled language and scaffolded tasks to create their own texts, for example, choosing signs to complete sentences or using pictures to sequence a story that has been told to them.

The role of English

Learners are encouraged to use Auslan whenever possible, with the teacher providing rich and supported language input. Auslan is used for classroom routines and language learning tasks and may be used as the language of instruction for learning content of other learning areas. The language of response varies according to task demands, with Auslan used primarily for communicating in structured and supported tasks.

English is used as a medium of instruction and for explanation and discussion, or in areas from the Understanding strand. This allows learners to talk about differences and similarities they notice between Auslan and their first language(s) and culture(s), to ask questions about language and culture, to consider how they feel when they see or use Auslan and how they view different languages and the people who speak them. This introduction to the meta dimension of intercultural learning develops the ability to consider different perspectives and ways of being. English may also be used to research cultural issues where the source text is not available in Auslan.

Year 7 and 8 (Year 7 Entry) Content Descriptions

Communicating		Understanding
<p>Socialising Interact with peers and teachers to exchange information about self, family, friends and interests and to express feelings and preferences. [Key concepts: self, family, friends, interests, preferences, feelings; Key processes: interacting, describing, comparing, stating, explaining]</p> <p>Collaborate with peers to plan and conduct shared events or activities such as presentations, demonstrations or transactions. [Key concepts: participation, collaboration, negotiation; Key processes: participating, organising, reviewing, transacting]</p> <p>Communicate appropriately and clearly with the teaching team and peers using appropriate Auslan protocols for classroom interaction. [Key concepts: protocol, attention, instruction; Key processes: responding, gaining attention, back-channelling, agreeing/disagreeing]</p>	<p>Creating Engage with different types of creative texts, identifying and discussing ideas, characters, events and personal responses. [Key concepts: imagination, play, character, performance, visual text, representation; Key processes: viewing, responding, participating, comparing, shadowing, mimicking]</p> <p>Express imaginative ideas and visual thinking through the use of familiar modelled signs, mime, gestures, drawing and visual supports, with a focus on emotions, appearance and actions. [Key concepts: game, animation, creativity, emotion; Key processes: depicting, collaborating, creating, re-enacting, reinterpreting]</p> <p>Translating Translate and interpret short texts from Auslan to English and vice versa, noticing which concepts translate easily and which do not. [Key concepts: equivalence, meaning, interpretation, translation; Key processes: translating, interpreting, identifying, comparing, paraphrasing, summarising]</p> <p>Create bilingual texts and learning resources to use in the classroom. [Key concepts: translation, meaning, transcription, bilingualism; Key processes: translating, captioning, recording, creating]</p>	<p>Systems of Language Identify and describe all elements of sign production, including handshape and its orientation, movement, location and non-manual features, and look at the link between signs and their referents in terms of iconicity. [Key concepts: handshape, orientation, movement, location, hand dominance, iconicity; Key processes: identifying, noticing, recognising, comparing, understanding]</p> <p>Recognise and restrict signing to the standard signing space, and understand that pronouns, depicting signs and verbs can be located meaningfully in that space to show participants in a process. [Key concepts: signing space, pointing, verb modification to show who, depicting signs; Key processes: noticing, identifying, recognising, describing, comparing, distinguishing]</p> <p>Recognise and use elements of clause structure, such as noun groups/phrases or verb groups/phrases and using conjunctions to join clauses. [Key concepts: sign class, noun and verb groups, conjunctions, clauses, sign order; Key processes: recognising, observing, distinguishing, understanding]</p> <p>Recognise similarities and differences in language features of different types of texts and in Auslan and English texts of a similar type, and notice how texts build cohesion. [Key concepts: text, textual features, referent tracking; Key processes: recognising, identifying, analysing]</p>
<p>Informing Identify gist and some points of factual information from a range of signed texts about familiar topics and use the information in new ways. [Key concepts: information, data, summary, procedure; Key processes: gathering information, summarising, sequencing, identifying]</p> <p>Present and explain factual information about a range of topics of interest. [Key concepts: routine, report, explanation, procedure; Key processes: describing, reporting, signing, instructing]</p>	<p>Identity Demonstrate understanding of the nature of identity in relation to themselves, the Deaf community and the wider hearing community. [Key concepts: identity, community, similarity, difference; Key processes: comparing, identifying, viewing, exploring, discussing, surveying, analysing]</p> <p>Reflecting Reflect on ways in which Auslan and associated communicative and cultural behaviours are similar to or different from their own language(s) and forms of cultural expression. [Key concepts: language, culture, similarity, difference, communication; Key processes: describing, discussing, examining, reflecting, noticing]</p>	<p>Language variation and change Explore different dimensions of variation in the structure, development and use of Auslan, including how it has been influenced by English and other signed languages. [Key concepts: language variation, influence, word-borrowing, change; Key processes: exploring, identifying, classifying, describing]</p> <p>Language awareness Develop awareness of the sociocultural context, nature and status of Auslan and of the Deaf community in multilingual Australia. [Key concepts: communication, accessibility, transmission; Key processes: identifying, investigating, discussing, understanding]</p> <p>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, appreciating, exploring, understanding, identifying]</p>