Perspectives on Proposed Changes

Feedback on *Position Paper* proposals

The leading issues arising from analysis of the questionnaires, submissions, interviews and discussion groups were indicative of the high-stakes nature of post-compulsory education, the commitment of Western Australians to equity and comprehensive education for *all* students, and the complex implications of changing a well-developed system. Major concerns expressed in the feedback and the associated Curriculum Council responses are cited and described below.

A single curriculum structure

A high level of support exists for the Council's proposal for post-compulsory curriculum, assessment and certification that is inclusive and accommodates the diverse range of learning needs, interests and post-school aspirations of all students.

While there is support in principle for this to be achieved through the one curriculum structure, there is a concern that such a structure will not be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of all students:

> *To achieve a single K-12 system that is essential in establishing and maintaining a seamless education, the structure of courses of study should be comprised of identified key outcomes from within the eight learning areas using a common scale of achievement. Can it be done?*
>
> *Can the full spectrum of interests and abilities be catered for in only fifty courses?*

The Council has responded to this issue by developing features of the system that accommodate the desired principle of inclusivity while more clearly showing how it would be achieved (see Sections 4 and 5).

The focus on outcomes

Support was strong for the post-compulsory education system to be designed around a focus on outcomes. Around 80 percent of respondents to the *Position Paper* supported the view that courses of study should be designed around a manageable number of

outcomes, from within and beyond the *Curriculum Framework,* to encompass the interests and post-school aspirations of all post-compulsory students.

Support was particularly evident in the consultation conducted independently by each of the systems and sectors. There were, however, some concerns expressed about implementation:

> *While there is support for a seamless focus around Curriculum Framework, learning area and Overarching Outcomes, it will be important to ensure a consistency of approach in each course.*

The Council's position is that each course of study and its range of units will need to be consistent with the principles of the *Curriculum Framework,* build on students' achievement of the *Framework's* learning outcomes and embed the *Framework's* Overarching Outcomes, where appropriate (see Chapter 5).

Curriculum design

Elements of the initial curriculum design proposal such as two-year courses, extensions and very flexible entry to, and withdrawal from courses caused concern. While the intention of providing flexibility and greater movement within the system was well supported, there was a view that the proposals were beyond the capacity of many schools, particularly in terms of duty of care arrangements, staffing, resources, the reporting of achievement in years 11 and 12 and timetabling. Additionally, it was thought that the proposal would not have sufficient flexibility to cater for students with special needs:

> *Haphazard entry and withdrawal from courses could become unmanageable….timetabling becomes impossible..*
>
> *Course design must involve realistic and meaningful consultation with teachers, tertiary institutions, industry, parents and the community and have an adequate timeline…*
>
> *When developing courses of study, provision should be made for including VET representation and the traineeship approach.*
>
> *Schools should not be expected to develop courses of study…*
>
> *Extensions should be reconsidered given time constraints…there are implications for duty of care…*
>
> *It is not reasonable to expect students to commit to a two-year course.*

The Curriculum Council has responded to these issues by modifying substantially the intended curriculum design and by acknowledging that in an adaptive system, the design will change in response to further emerging forces.

This has meant abandoning the notions of two-year courses and extensions. The new proposal includes the capacity to offer a course in semesterised units, thus maintaining the intention of providing greater flexibility for all students and in particular, for those needing more individualised learning programs and support. This preserves the current year-long (two unit) course structure for timetabling, if desired (see Chapter 5).

Building on the strengths of Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VET)

Serious concerns were expressed that the proposed structure was not sufficiently flexible to incorporate the growth and development of the VET area.

In the view of many, at the heart of VET lies the imperative for improving the transition of all young people from school to further study and work. This requires a broadening of the educational agenda to accommodate community partnerships, key competencies, enterprise education and integrated career information and guidance services.

Strong views were expressed regarding the need to retain and strengthen some of the existing VET structures (for example, the cluster and stand-alone models) and the need to reinforce connections with, and have greater representation of, work studies and career education:

> *VET courses must retain the capacity to adjust to local interests…*

> *The proposed arrangements do not seem to understand the nature, requirements and costs of VET courses – nor the needs and resources of industry. VET students are unlikely to be willing to spend time in learning areas that are not of their choosing.*

> *Career education, traineeships and enterprise are not adequately addressed in the model…*

> *It will not be possible to link VET courses to other courses of study without unduly limiting the range of VET courses.*

> *Existing VET programs should be incorporated into proposed courses of study and appropriate resources provided to enable partnerships for schools to achieve RTO status.*

> *VET could get lost or demeaned if the National Training Modules are embedded in courses.*

The Council has responded to the many concerns expressed about VET by providing more flexible arrangements, with VET integrated into courses, VET offered as a course of study in itself or being recognised when undertaken outside school in a stand-alone mode.

It is the Council's view that VET will be the means by which more students will be encouraged to stay on into years 11 and 12. The overall aim is to offer VET in a range of ways such that it is attractive to students of all levels of achievement (see Chapter 5).

English language competence for the Western Australian Certificate of Education

While there was full support for improving English language competence *per se,* the specific proposals as to how this might be done drew strong responses. The feedback centred on the continuing tension between the nature and scope of an English course of study, the various perspectives on the role that an English course of study and other courses of study should play in the development and demonstration of minimum requirements for WACE purposes, and the different meanings ascribed to the term 'English language competence' by stakeholders.

There was support for the concept that an outcome in every course of study should involve the development of English language competence in the context of that course. There were, however, differing views about whether such outcomes in total would be sufficient, or whether study in an English course (or units) should be compulsory. Feedback indicated strong support for the inclusion of both functional and critical literacy in a student's learning program.

Strong views were expressed for and against having a compulsory English course of study. On the one hand, English was considered by many as having a special role in enhancing the transmission of Australian language, culture and identity. On the other hand, there were views that current ventures into critical literacy go well beyond what should be compulsory.

A further criticism of existing English subjects was the lack of comparability of the grades. For many stakeholders, the current arrangements of requiring a grade of 'C' or better in any of English, English Literature, Senior English, English as a Second Language or Vocational English fall short of expectations of what is considered by many to be what students should know, understand, value and be able to do in order to be considered functionally competent:

> *It is unrealistic to expect courses of study other than English to teach and assess each of the five areas of English language competence…*
>
> *There is a need to clarify what is meant by English language competence…*
>
> *We strongly support literacy being demonstrated by means other than studying English (especially in language- rich subjects like history or drama).*
>
> *Two English courses are necessary and the study of one should be compulsory.*

In response to feedback, the Council believes that there must be a new English competence standard determined for WACE purposes. The development of the standard will occur as part of the adaptive process of implementing the proposed reforms.

The Council is of the view that, notwithstanding the potential for students to develop English language competence through other means, students should be required to demonstrate achievement of the standard by undertaking English at the post-compulsory level (see Chapter 5 and 10).

Comparability of standards on scales of achievement

The Council found general support for making standards in all courses of study explicit by describing and illustrating levels of student performance at increasing levels of difficulty along a scale of achievement. There were significant concerns expressed, however, about the feasibility and desirability of developing scales of achievement where the standard described at each level was comparable in terms of difficulty across courses.

Feasibility

There was a belief that comparability of standards on the scales of achievement across courses of study would be difficult or impossible to achieve and would need to be tested before there was confidence about implementation in years 11 and 12. There was also a realisation by those opposed to scaling that it would need to continue if satisfactorily precise comparability of difficulty could not be achieved.

Feedback indicated a strong desire for the relationship between the proposed K-12 Council-endorsed progress maps and the proposed scales of achievement for course of study outcomes to be clear and unambiguous. Teachers with significant experience in using the *Student Outcomes Statements* that form part of the Department of Education's *Outcomes and Standards Framework* were particularly emphatic that the standards on the scales of achievement be a continuation from those for the compulsory years:

> *Comparison of cognitive and physical skills is a comparison on different processes and is unsuitable.*
>
> *The relationship between these levels and those in the Curriculum Framework should be clarified.*
>
> *How will scales of achievement link to the Student Outcomes Statements? What about continuity?*
>
> *There should be a natural progression from lower to upper school…use the progress maps…*

How will VET and Units of Competency be comparable across courses of study?

Must be able to report to parents/industry/further education on one scale.

How plausible is it? Will require effective moderation…

Statistical moderation is extremely important…run with both for a while at least…

Let's extend comparability across different schools within each subject before doing it across different subjects…

A lot more specificity and clarity is needed…

How can outcomes be comparable across all areas of study?

In recognition of these concerns, further testing and evaluation will take place to validate empirically the comparability of the standards described by the level on the scales of achievement for outcomes within and across courses of study. School-managed assessment will be monitored to provide evidence of, and develop confidence in, teachers' judgements against explicit standards. Statistical processes will be used following external assessment to make adjustments to the descriptors of the standards, as appropriate. A form of statistical moderation will be retained until such time as there is confidence that using explicit standards enables comparability of achievement across courses.

Desirability

Even stronger concerns were expressed about the desirability of attempting to develop standards that were comparable in terms of difficulty for outcomes across courses. It was feared that reporting student achievement solely on the basis of such strict Statewide comparisons might discourage and lessen the motivation of lower-achieving students. At present, students can gain an 'A' grade in what are considered to be less-demanding subjects, and there is no requirement that every 'A' grade in every subject is of the same difficulty. It was feared that in the proposed system, these students could become discouraged because it could appear that they were making little progress. The effect of this on students' self esteem was raised as a particular concern.

For some courses, further apprehension was expressed about meeting the needs of students across the whole ability range:

Less academically able students will not qualify for a course of study or will only ever achieve Level 1 or 2, resulting in decreased self esteem and motivation.

Will lower-ability students never receive a higher grade?

Will high VET and CAF achievers, education support and students at educational risk be disadvantaged?

Will watering down occur?

…may comprise outcomes for students at the top and bottom end of the scale…

The system does not adequately consider the self esteem of a great number of students who will not be capable of achieving higher than Level 2 or 3…which they can in the current system.

In the old scheme, some students could get an 'A' in a subject matched to their ability …

To ensure that achievement at all levels is acknowledged and, in particular, that the progress made by lower-achieving students is recognised and continues to be motivating, the Council will provide for school-managed assessment schemes that are clearly indicative of achievement and progress within specific course of study units. This means grades (or their equivalent) will be awarded for each course unit irrespective of the difficulty of the unit (see Sections 6, 7 and 8).

An adaptive implementation process

The feedback received confirmed the proposed adaptive and progressive approach to the implementation of changes. The need for continuing research, trialing, evaluation, modification and consultation associated with courses of study, assessment processes, moderation and tertiary entrance selection processes is acknowledged. Planning for implementation has been tailored accordingly:

The feasibility of these ideas and the support we have given them is contingent upon adequate resources (time, money, energy and professionalism) being available for the implementation…

…need to pilot and a longer timeframe…

Go slow, be methodical, consult with teachers, be realistic. Gradual change is needed…

Where are the money, time and resources coming from? There is a lot of work here that needs to be adequately resourced…staff need PD….further research and trialing should be a priority.

The proposed changes should be phased in rather than commenced all at once – each phase should be trialed and evaluated. This will provide time for professional development, adjustments to the ideas, and time for the students and community to come to understand the new arrangement and its language.

The initial timeline for implementation has been extended and special arrangements will be made with the training and university sectors to guarantee that students are not disadvantaged in terms of entrance eligibility requirements for post-school courses and work opportunities, if they come from schools participating in trials of the new system.

The Council concurs with the feedback suggesting that professional development, continued involvement of key stakeholders and appropriate resourcing are critical to the successful implementation of proposed changes (see Chapter 11).

SUMMARY: Perspectives on proposed changes

In general, feedback on the proposed changes indicated that there was support for the development of a system of post-compulsory curriculum, assessment and certification that is inclusive and accommodates the range of learning needs, interests and post-school aspirations of all students. Key issues addressed as a result of feedback include:

- extension of the timeline for implementation to enable an adaptive approach to change;
- clearer explanation of how a single curriculum structure could cater for the needs and aspirations of all students;
- development of courses of study that are consistent with the principles of the *Curriculum Framework*, build on students' achievement of the *Framework's* learning outcomes and embed the Overarching Outcomes where appropriate;
- modification of the curriculum design to offer courses in semesterised units and acknowledgement that in an adaptive system curriculum design will change in response to emerging forces;
- providing more flexible arrangements for VET by building on its strengths as part of the current system;
- development of a standard for English language competence and requirement that students demonstrate achievement of the standard by undertaking English at the post-compulsory level;
- further testing and evaluation to empirically validate comparability of standards described in the scales of achievement and the retention of a form of statistical moderation until such time as there is confidence that using explicit standards enables the comparability of achievement across courses; and
- provision for school-managed assessment schemes that are clearly indicative of achievement and progress within specific course of study units.

A System for all Students

The collaboration and consultation with sectors and systems that has been undertaken over the past three years has provided a valuable starting point from which to set the directions for post-compulsory education in Western Australia.

With this in mind, the Council has modified its proposals outlined in the *Position Paper* and has committed to an adaptive implementation process characterised by trialing, testing and evaluation before each stage of implementation. There will be a longer timeframe to ensure that schools, teachers, students and the wider community are fully prepared and able to provide input to new strategies and to enable further modification in the light of what the investigation and feedback suggest.

Policy directions have been designed around the key ideas set out in the sections that follow. These ideas are presented together with explanations of how the proposed directions were modified in response to feedback and include specific details relating to curriculum, standards, assessment, moderation, certification, post-school destinations and implementation of the proposed changes.

The new post-compulsory system

The new post-compulsory system aims to provide greater flexibility to meet young people's individual needs and interests and to assist them more effectively in the transition from school to further education, training, employment and participation in society in general. See Figure 2 for an overview of the system requirements.

For the first time, the system will provide for the total age cohort. *All* students, regardless of their achievement at the end of year 10 and/or their post-school intentions will be able to progress toward higher levels of achievement and qualifications within the one structure. The wide range of options available to students will be articulated clearly and provide access to university, training and employment pathways.

The new approach will enable the various post-school destinations to make explicit the standards of achievement required for entry eligibility. It will provide the flexibility for students to arrange their learning programs to ensure that options for further studies, training, work and/or community living remain open to them when they leave school.

Furthermore, to ensure that students experience a seamless transition in their learning from compulsory to post-compulsory education, the new system will closely articulate with student progress in the compulsory years.

Curriculum

Some fifty new broad courses of study will be available to students. These courses, to be developed by the Council, will accommodate each of the existing TEE and Wholly School Assessed subjects as well as the most common VET Units of Competency delivered to school students and include new areas of study similar to those available to students in other states. The course of study list in Appendix 3 is a provisional list, with a working title for each course.
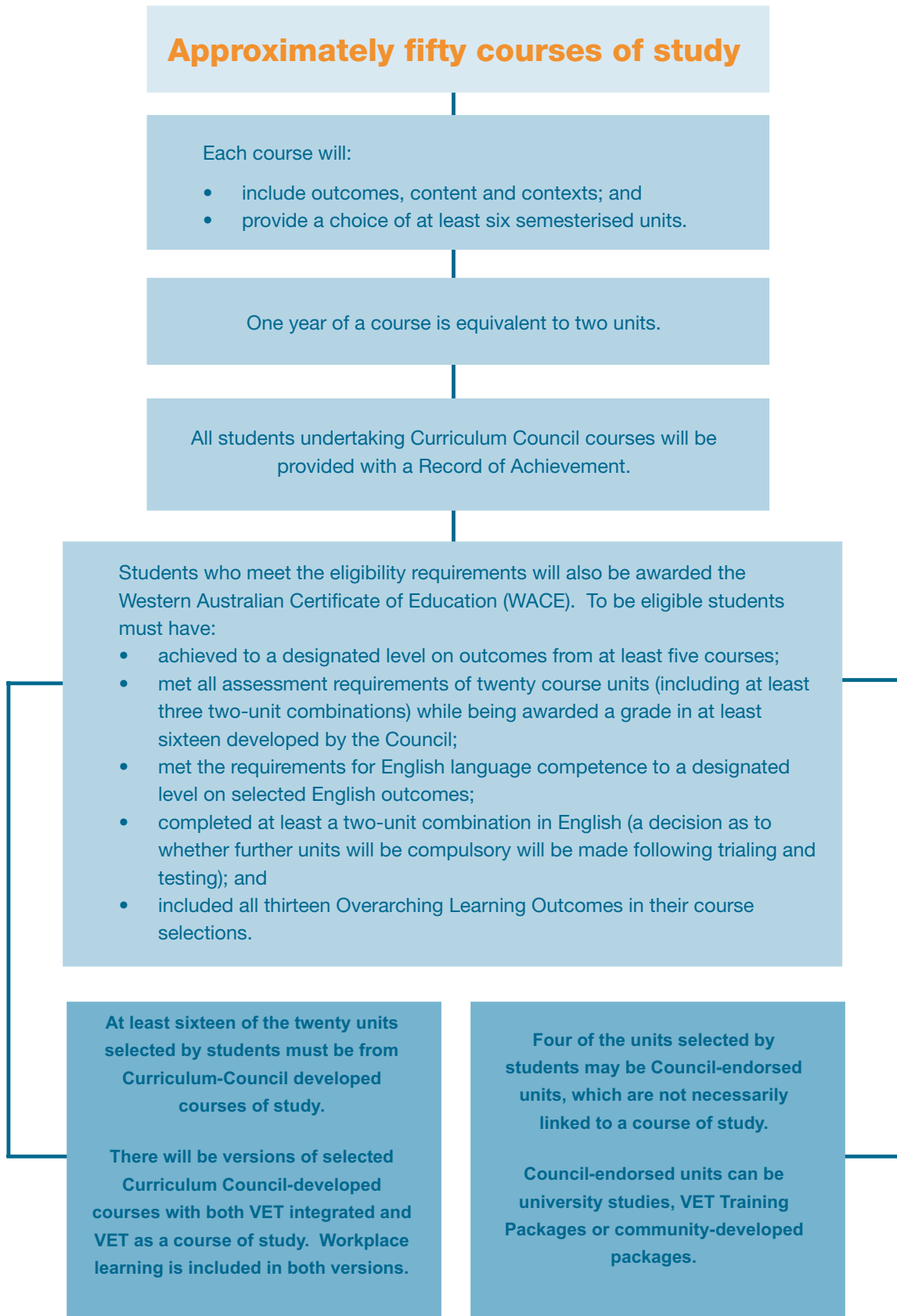
The range of courses is intended to meet the diverse needs of all students and enable them to learn in a range of settings, including the classroom, workplace and community. The courses will also enable students to participate more fully as adult citizens on leaving school, by providing further opportunities for them to achieve the *Curriculum Framework* Overarching Learning Outcomes and, where applicable to the particular course, learning area outcomes.

Each course will have a manageable number of learning outcomes, with essential content and optional contexts for learning that can be structured into at least six semesterised units. Each course outcome will have a scale of achievement with level statements that identify explicit standards at five levels. Students will be able to make progress in achieving course outcomes through each of the semester units. Schools will structure and deliver the courses according to their students' needs and interests, however they will need to report student achievement as required for certification. See Figure 3 (p. 52) for an illustration.

Catering for all students

Students enrolled in a course for one year will study two semester-long units. This is consistent with the approach in other States and with local feedback, which indicated a preference for shorter learning programs that would meet specific educational needs and interests, particularly for those who were not certain about future directions and who wished to access a wider range of programs.

Figure 2: Overview of systems requirements

Approximately fifty courses of study

Each course will:

- include outcomes, content and contexts; and
- provide a choice of at least six semesterised units.

One year of a course is equivalent to two units.

All students undertaking Curriculum Council courses will be provided with a Record of Achievement.

Students who meet the eligibility requirements will also be awarded the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). To be eligible students must have:

- achieved to a designated level on outcomes from at least five courses;
- met all assessment requirements of twenty course units (including at least three two-unit combinations) while being awarded a grade in at least sixteen developed by the Council;
- met the requirements for English language competence to a designated level on selected English outcomes;
- completed at least a two-unit combination in English (a decision as to whether further units will be compulsory will be made following trialing and testing); and
- included all thirteen Overarching Learning Outcomes in their course selections.

At least sixteen of the twenty units selected by students must be from Curriculum-Council developed courses of study.

There will be versions of selected Curriculum Council-developed courses with both VET integrated and VET as a course of study. Workplace learning is included in both versions.

Four of the units selected by students may be Council-endorsed units, which are not necessarily linked to a course of study.

Council-endorsed units can be university studies, VET Training Packages or community-developed packages.

Within each course there will be at least three sets of two-unit combinations. Each two-unit combination will be designed with starting points appropriate for students achieving at specific levels on the scale of achievement: for example, one two-unit combination might target students not yet achieving the lower levels on the scale, while other combinations might target those at the mid-range or higher levels. A range of 'life skills' units designed with students with disabilities and learning difficulties in mind will be developed in selected courses. This arrangement will provide support to schools, as they can offer course units at levels of difficulty that best suit their student populations.

Students will have greater flexibility in their choices. They will be able to select a two-unit combination from a course in their first year of post-compulsory study followed by another two-unit combination from the same course in their second year. Alternatively, a student will be able to select a two-unit combination from a course in their first year of post-compulsory study and then change to a different course of study in their second year.

It will also be possible for students to study individual units for a course; however, this option was not generally favoured in the feedback, as it was seen as potentially unmanageable for some schools.

There will be opportunities for students to undertake an element of independent study within selected units in a course.

To maximise flexibility for individual students, there will be opportunities, where appropriate, to study two different contexts in the same course: for example, students might enrol in a Materials Technology course in both metal and wood contexts. The feedback indicated that there were a limited number of instances where this approach was considered necessary and trialing and testing will inform decisions in relation to this issue.

Vocational Education and Training in Schools

The Curriculum Council wants to build on the successes of vocational and educational training in schools by expanding the range of options available to students. VET Units of Competency will be available through integration into a more general course or as a complementary course with VET competencies only, or as stand-alone VET that is unrelated to a course of study, as long as the Units of Competency are from the most recently approved Training Package. The standards and assessment processes for all three versions will be developed in accordance with the national training standards for competency-based assessment and quality assurance systems. Structured workplace learning will be an essential part of this structure. The proposed course arrangements will have the flexibility to accommodate students involved in programs such as school-based traineeships, Fast Track programs and education support, and values of particular relevance to the work place will be emphasised.

See Chapter 5 for details relating to curriculum.

Explicit standards, assessment and moderation

Standards will be made explicit by describing and illustrating five levels of student performance at increasing levels of difficulty on scales of achievement for each course outcome. These standards will be consistent with the proposed progress maps for the *Curriculum Framework* outcomes and competency standards of the National Training Framework. VET qualifications may be aligned in terms of their difficulty, as appropriate and empirically justified, to levels on the scale of achievement.

Assessment will reflect the principles of the *Curriculum Framework*, with strong links between school-managed and external assessment.

Progression in the achievement of each outcome will be measured as levels on the associated scale for the course outcome. Students will also be awarded a grade for each of the course units such as 'A', 'B' or 'C', or some other agreed terminology such as that used for Common Assessment Framework (CAF) subjects or, 'merit', 'credit' or 'excellence' as used in the New Zealand system.

The Council will ensure that students, parents, potential employers and post-school destinations are provided with clear information on the learning standards achieved by students, irrespective of the context in which they are achieved.

See Sections 6, 7, and 8 for details relating to standards, assessment and moderation.

Certification and post-school destinations

Certification will be more accommodating than at present or as proposed in the *Position Paper*. There will be enhanced provision within the statutory obligations of the Curriculum Council for schools to access additional programs (unit equivalents) from TAFE, universities, private providers, offshore and/or online. Certification will require any such units to be endorsed by the Council, however, the units will not necessarily be linked to courses of study outcomes, though the Council would prefer them to be outcomes based.

To receive a Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE), students will have to achieve the outcomes to some extent from at least five courses of study. At the same time, they will be required to meet all assessment requirements of twenty course units (including at least three two-unit combinations), of which sixteen must have been developed by the Curriculum Council. The remaining four may be unit equivalents developed by schools in partnership with other providers, as indicated above.

All students will be required to demonstrate English language competence. They will also need to complete a minimum of one two-unit combination in an English course of study. A decision as to whether further units will be compulsory will be made following trialing and testing. To ensure breadth of study, a student's overall program will need to include units which encompass all of the *Curriculum Framework's* Overarching Learning Outcomes, as these address the key competencies, literacy and numeracy and information technology skills and reflect contemporary thinking about what students need to learn in order to lead successful and rewarding lives.

See Sections 9 and 10 more detail relating to certification and post-school destinations.

Implementing the changes

The Council is convinced that it would not be in the interests of students, teachers or schools to replace the entire existing system with the new system at a particular date, as happened when the current system was introduced. Rather, the Council favours an adaptive process in which new features are gradually phased in through trialing and testing processes in parallel with the existing system.

The trialing and testing process and gradual phasing in of major changes has worked very effectively in New South Wales, ensuring a smooth transition from the old system to the new with minimal disruption to students, teachers and schools.

The Council considers that this adaptive approach should be followed in Western Australia.

Trialing, testing, evaluation and consultation

To accommodate the adaptive approach, the proposed timeline outlined in the *Position Paper* has been extended to include the necessary trialing and consultation.
The trialing process will be divided into three stages.

The first stage will commence with ten courses, which will be developed and trialed in about six schools for a three-year period. The trial schools selected will be representative of the range of schools providing post-compulsory education.

Course of study statements will be developed that identify the outcomes, scales of achievement, content and possible contexts for each course. Existing subjects will then be aligned to the scales of achievement in an appropriate course and could function, in the first instance if necessary, as the units, until such time as agreement is reached about the need to introduce new units that reflect emerging directions in disciplines, education, industry or society.

Students in their first year of post-compulsory education will trial an appropriate two-unit combination for two years, with evaluations and modifications being made in consultation with the schools for the second year of trialing.

This process will be repeated for the subsequent cognate units for those in their second year of post-compulsory education, and will commence in the second year of the trial. By the end of the third year of the trial, all three two-unit combinations should be ready for introduction into all schools.

Assessment strategies, comparability of the application of standards by teachers, reporting and certification of achievement and post-school transition selection processes will be tested, negotiated and evaluated during the trials.

Special arrangements will be made with the training sector and universities to guarantee that students from trial schools are not disadvantaged in terms of their entrance eligibility requirements for post-school courses and work opportunities.

At the same time as the first stage of the trialing process, work will begin, at a slower rate, on developing twenty new courses for each of the second and third stages.

Feedback from the first stage of development will inform the second stage, and, subsequently, the third stage of trialing. Trialing will take place in the same schools, but other schools will be able to apply to join the trial schools.

Classroom teachers will be involved in the design and development of courses and throughout the trialing, testing and evaluation processes, together with experts from universities, TAFE colleges and the wider community, as is presently the case with syllabus committees. There will be continuous consultation throughout the process.

It is envisaged that the first stage of trialing will be ready to commence in 2003/4, with all courses being converted to the outcomes-focused assessment structure by 2009. See pages 100 and 101 for further details.

Accreditation of courses will be subject to review every five years.

SUMMARY: Trialing, testing, evaluation and consultation

The rate at which the adaptive system evolves will be responsive to student and school needs, developed through wide consultation that includes trialing, testing and evaluation, and will be endorsed through collaborative Curriculum Council committee processes. The target date for trialing to commence is 2003/4, with all courses being converted to the new assessment structure by 2009.

Course of study list

Central to the new system are approximately fifty new courses of study to be developed from the existing Tertiary Entrance Examination subjects, Wholly School Assessed subjects and VET courses. The list in Appendix 3 is a provisional list, with working titles.

The courses will receive official status following consultation and accreditation through the accepted Post-compulsory Education Committee processes. Throughout the development process, there will be scope for modifications to be made.

The provisional list of courses was developed through extensive national and international research and analysis of current patterns of course selection in Western Australia and elsewhere, and with the agreed criteria in mind (see page 65). Modifications have now been made to reflect changes proposed during the consultation process.

As part of that process, course of study focus groups were convened to discuss the specific groups of courses with which they were involved. These groups supported the overview and general directions for most courses, with clear directions being provided for improvement and further work. These issues will be addressed as part of the development process.

The feedback from the questionnaire and submissions suggested that there were some concerns about the course of study list as a whole. Analysis of this feedback indicated that the number of Languages other than English (LOTE) courses was the major problem and that there was a perception that some learning areas were being privileged over others because they were seen to have a greater number of courses with outcomes from their area. There was also a strong view that there were not enough courses that would enable VET competencies to be achieved and that a Career and Enterprise Pathways course should have been included. Other areas of concern were English as a Second Language (ESL), Religious Education and Aboriginal Studies.

The course list has been expanded to accommodate some of the proposals and further changes can be made throughout the development process. These include closer scrutiny of courses with the same or similar outcomes and those with overlapping content or contexts. In areas such as Mathematics and English, further consultation is needed to determine the configuration and number of courses that will best meet the needs of the full range of students. The proposal to have semesterised units at different levels of difficulty should help to alleviate the potential problems identified as part of the consultation.

Providing for VET in Courses of study

The Course of study provisional list identifies with an asterisk (*) courses where VET Units of Competency will be available through integration into a more general course and as a complementary course with VET competencies only.

These are courses where there is a strong connection between a course of study and a Training Package, the qualification(s) and Units of Competency. Currently, twenty-nine qualifications through fourteen Training Packages that are the focus for the implementation of the joint policy have been identified. In response to the feedback, the working titles for these courses have been changed to more closely reflect those of the Training Packages.

As outlined on page 43, VET Units of Competency that are not related to a course of study can be studied in a stand-alone mode. These **do not** appear on the course of study list because of the wide range of combinations and choices that are available to suit student preferences. As these competencies are drawn from Training packages endorsed under the AQTF, the Curriculum Council will automatically endorse them within guidelines for accrediting semesterised units.

In summary, three options will be available: VET integrated with a course of study, VET as a course of study in its own right and stand-alone VET. Detail of the three options is provided in Chapter 5.

It is noted that there are many other possibilities for limited integration of VET competencies into courses such as Chemistry and Economics, however, these are additional to the three options described above.

SUMMARY: Course of study list

A provisional list of courses will be the starting point for course development, with final decisions about the exact number and names of courses being determined as part of the development process. This process will build on the advice provided throughout the consultation period. See Appendix 3.

Where there is a strong connection between a course of study and a Training Package, the qualification(s) and Units of Competency identified as appropriate for school delivery will be available through:

• VET integrated with a course of study; and
• VET as a course of study.

VET Units of Competency that are not related to a course of study can be studied in a stand-alone mode. These will be endorsed by the Council but do not appear on the course of study list.

Curriculum

Substantial changes have been made to the curriculum design as a result of feedback recieved and the exploratory work and research undertaken throughout the review period. The changes are intended to attract students to post-compulsory education through motivating, outcomes-based courses.

Courses of study

A course of study is a defined area of study intended to enable students to continue their achievement of outcomes from within and beyond the *Curriculum Framework*. The essential content for students to achieve course outcomes along with optional contexts for learning will be set out for each course.

Courses will be designed to encompass the interests and post-school aspirations of the full range of post-compulsory students, including those completing VET Units of Competency. Each will provide for valid assessment of student achievement within a structure that will enable reliable and comparable judgements to be made for the purposes of certification.

Schools will use courses of study to develop learning programs to meet the diverse needs of their students.

Course of study outcomes

As there was general support for designing courses of study around a manageable number of outcomes from within and beyond the *Framework*, this aspect of the design has not changed significantly.

The starting point in designing courses of study will be the identification of outcomes from within and beyond the *Curriculum Framework*. Different approaches may be adopted to determine course of study outcomes, including:

- outcomes from learning area statements in the *Curriculum Framework*;
- a synthesis of *Curriculum Framework* outcomes;

- component parts of the *Curriculum Framework* outcomes; and
- outcomes not in the *Curriculum Framework*: for example, any implicit outcomes in existing subjects.

Course of study outcomes will identify what students should know, understand, value and be able to do as a consequence of their learning experiences through a course.

As requested throughout the consultation, the relationship between the course of study outcomes and the *Curriculum Framework* outcomes will be made explicit to teachers and students to ensure that there is a seamless connection between achievement in the compulsory and post-compulsory years.

Each course of study outcome will have a scale of achievement with level statements that describe and illustrate the standard at each level. This will provide a structure from which other elements of the course will be developed. This is consistent with the findings and recommendations of Andrich, Ball & Tognolini: "for each course of study there should be five or six outcomes that will typically be content-based or skills-based. Each outcome should have a minimum of five standards of performance" (2001, p. 9). Chapter 6 provides the detail in relation to standards.

The exploratory work undertaken throughout the consultation process demonstrated that course outcomes need to be more specific than *Curriculum Framework* outcomes, with wording that is precise and unambiguous as possible and relates to the intention or unifying idea of the course.

As the outcomes will be derived substantially from the *Curriculum Framework* outcomes, they will be similar in style. They will be written as open-ended statements with the level descriptors on a scale of achievement describing increasing levels of performance for the outcome. This means that limits will not be placed on students' achievement, as they will be able to continue to make progress on course of study outcomes at levels beyond those described on the scales of achievement.

Emerging directions in industry, academic research or society in general, and courses considered relevant as a result of national and international research will inform the development of course of study outcomes and the selection of learning contexts. Courses of study will reflect traditional, interdisciplinary and/or practical forms of study.

Catering for all students

The need to cater for the full range of students from the most able to those with disabilities and learning difficulties was highlighted in the feedback on course of study design. Particular emphasis was placed on meeting the needs of students at educational

risk. There was a view that to assist teachers to cater for all students in the planning of learning programs and appropriate assessment strategies, the scope of content for a course would need to be described with a range of possible contexts for learning.

Designing courses with semesterised units

As a consequence of these concerns and the need for maximum flexibility, the Council will package courses into semesterised units. This is consistent with current practice elsewhere in Australia. A two-unit combination for each course of study can be studied in the first post-compulsory year, followed by another two-unit combination in the second, as is shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Course of Study
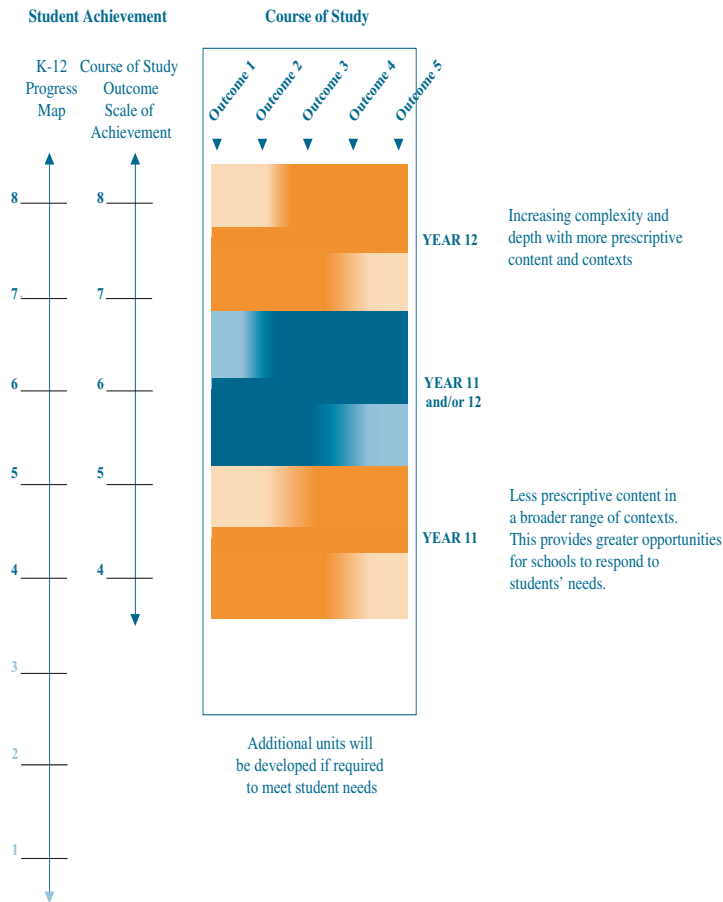
Notes:
VET Courses of Study
VET Units of Competency would be integrated into a course where appropriate. VET as a course of study would also be developed. VET units of competency not related to a course would be available in stand alone VET.

To cater for the full range of students, at least three sets of two-unit combinations will be developed for each course, with each of the combinations being designed with starting points appropriate for students achieving at specific levels on a scale of achievement. This means that a school can offer a course at the level of difficulty that best suits its student population to ensure that they make progress based on current achievement.

Each of the two-unit combinations will be designed around the same essential content to allow students to achieve the outcomes in a course to some extent. The combination of two units will encompass the full breadth and depth of content to be covered in a year and schools will be able to deliver the two-unit combination as an integrated program over the year.

The complexity and demand of the content and the context will vary between each set of two-unit combinations. The less demanding units will provide opportunities for students to have access to the valued content in more flexible ways, possibly through a wider range of contexts using more practical learning experiences. Students aspiring to tertiary entrance would be able to select units where the scope of the content would be similar to that in current TEE subjects.

This approach to developing curriculum will mean that progressive achievement of the outcomes can be measured on the same scale of achievement regardless of the units studied. At the same time it will enable recognition of students' overall performance for each unit using a grading system. The consultation process identified the need for the efforts of students to be recognised, regardless of the levels achieved against the levels on the scales of achievement (standards framework).

Providing for VET in course development

As outlined in the previous chapter, there will be three options for ensuring that students have access to VET. These options do not prescribe a delivery mode. All can be undertaken in a school (meeting Australian Quality Training Framework requirements through partnerships or achieving Training Provider status) or registered training organisation, or a combination of both.

Structured workplace learning will be built into the unit development of appropriate courses of study and contribute to the achievement of outcomes. Generic work-place skills could also be accessed through the Career and Enterprise course of study or similar. Workplace learning and assessment is an essential part of competency-based assessment.

Competencies and qualifications from Training Packages will be identified and negotiated through Training Package Expert Groups and the Training Accreditation Council as being appropriate for delivery as part of a general education program. This process is already underway. These will form the basis for VET integrated into courses and VET as a course of study.

VET integrated with a course of study

In these selected courses all of the requirements for a student to achieve the relevant VET Units of Competency will be built into the course during the development process, including the elements, performance criteria, range of variables and underpinning knowledge and skills in evidence guides, and will incorporate contemporary approaches to competency-based assessment to ensure that the AQTF standards are met. These courses of study also include a broader and more complex range of content than is required for students to achieve the competencies and will aim to enable students to achieve at all levels on the scale of achievement.

Centrally-developed materials will be provided to assist qualified VET assessors to carry out effective and high quality assessments for the Units of Competency. Competency-based assessment will be used as part of the multiple sources of evidence utilised by teachers to make a judgement about students' levels of achievement of course outcomes. This option is to cater for the many students who currently choose to study in this delivery mode and will build on current best-practice models of integration.

VET as a course of study

There will be a complementary VET only course for each of the courses of study that fall into the category discussed above. These courses will include only the content required for underpinning knowledge and skills for the selected competencies. None of the more general course content of the integrated version will be included.

The VET only courses are regarded as Council-developed courses, and in addition to the requirements outlined in the Training Packages, they will also indicate what students need to do to also record achievement in relation to the course outcomes. Students would still have the scope of learning experiences required to achieve the course outcomes at all levels on the scales of achievement. This option provides flexibility for students to spend a greater proportion of their time developing and demonstrating competencies in the workplace. It will suit students who wish to consolidate their learning in particular areas, and those choosing to study at Registered Training Organisations such as a TAFE college.

Stand-alone VET

Stand-alone VET will be Curriculum Council-endorsed course unit equivalents developed directly from Training Packages by Registered Training Organisations and consistent with Australian Quality Training Framework standards. To be equivalent to a course unit, the nominal hours for the Units of Competency will need to total 55 hours (see page 57).

The competency-based assessment for all of these options must be in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework, enabling the competencies to be recorded on students' Records of Achievement. Similarly for students' levels of achievement of course outcomes to be recorded on the Curriculum Council Record of Achievement, the provider, regardless of delivery mode, would need to meet Curriculum Council assessment and moderation requirements.

In addition, for students who do not want to take any of these VET options, workplace learning may be undertaken and would be considered to be a Council-endorsed unit.

Students with disabilities and learning difficulties

The system will also be sufficiently flexible to accommodate students with disabilities and learning difficulties. These students often require opportunities to demonstrate achievement in a variety of contexts over an extended time frame.

A range of specifically-designed units for selected courses will be developed along the lines of those available in New South Wales. These units will build on successful programs such as Fast Track and structured workplace learning, and enable students to demonstrate applicable VET Units of Competency and to meet the requirements for certification.

In addition, the education support post-compulsory schooling program, which is framed around Independent Living, Leisure and Recreation and Career Education, could be aligned to relevant courses with a view to modifying them into semesterised units following further consultation with the education support community.

SUMMARY: Designing courses of study

Courses of study will be designed around a manageable number of outcomes from within and beyond the *Curriculum Framework* to encompass the interests and post-school aspirations of all post-compulsory students.

Each course statement will include:

- a rationale;
- course of study outcomes;
- a scale of achievement for each outcome;
- scope of the course of study content, including a range of optional contexts; and
- a teaching, learning and assessment section.

Course statements will encompass the achievement range and scope of the curriculum for all students and form the basis of the semesterised course units.

Each course will be packaged into semester-long two-unit combinations (each being equivalent to 55 nominal hours) that are developed with starting points appropriate to Students' achievement. These units will provide details of learning and teaching strategies and complexity of content to enable students to achieve the intended outcomes for the course.

Access to VET will be made available through three options. These include VET integrated with a course of study, VET as a course of study or stand-alone VET. All can be undertaken in a school or TAFE setting, or a combination of both.

Flexibility to achieve outcomes

The Council has approached the issue of flexibility through a consideration of the need for students to be exposed to different learning contexts to maximise their potential as learners, and to achieve to a level that will enable them to succeed in their post-school endeavours.

Students will be able to change courses after a year or at the discretion of the school, at the end of a semester. Research indicates that almost one-third of students now make changes after a year. It should be noted, however, that post-compulsory destinations may require particular levels of achievement and combinations of units for students to be eligible for selection.

Typically, a student wishing to study four units from the one course of study will do so over a two-year period. A full-time load for the purposes of certification is twenty course units over two years. The notional hours for each unit are only intended to be 55 hours, which is the same as in the current system where a full-year subject is 110 hours. Currently, students typically study six subjects each year. This means that in the new system, students will have up to an additional 220 hours (over two years) to tailor their program to meet individual needs. Specifically, students in this time may undertake or participate in:

- achievement of outcomes to a desired level in shorter or longer periods of time and the recording of that achievement at the end of a semester, a year or two years;
- additional workplace learning as required by a traineeship;
- additional Council-endorsed units that will provide learning opportunities within and beyond the school environment and which respond to local contexts;
- additional Council-developed course of study units;
- part-time study; and
- school clubs and performances.

While it is acknowledged that in most cases schools are the most appropriate providers for the majority of years 11 and 12 students, there is a need for alternative approaches, including the encouragement of innovative ideas for learning and provisions for mature-aged students undertaking post-compulsory school programs.

Student-directed learning

In feedback to the Council, students expressed the desire for flexibility for them to be able to take greater responsibility for their learning and participate in learning experiences that would better prepare them for life beyond school. They considered that these experiences would test their capacities in situations in which they would need to rely on their own ingenuity and apply their knowledge, skills and values.

In the *Position Paper*, the concept of extensions, proposed to facilitate this, received almost unanimous rejection because of difficulties associated with implementation. Nevertheless, the new system will retain the underlying principles of extensions without the associated organisational complexity. Enriching tasks involving in-depth study, products, performance and portfolios will be built into course designs where applicable and will enable students to achieve greater breadth and depth of learning in specific contexts, explore issues of local relevance and develop self-management skills in settings that may be beyond the classroom. These will be sustained learning experiences which are integral to achievement of the course of study outcomes and consequently included as one of the assessment strategies for the course.

In addition, students will be able to undertake stand-alone units, including university/ TAFE studies, or access learning programs through other providers and extracurricular activities that offer opportunities to achieve course outcomes. These will be endorsed as unit equivalents and may make up four of the twenty units required for the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). The Curriculum Council will establish processes for curriculum officers to endorse such units.

The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) project (Parker, Figgis, Stanley, Bowden & Mooney, in press) investigating ways of recognising student achievement of university studies will inform recognition for certification purposes and the manner in which this recognition is certified.

SUMMARY: Flexibility

Curriculum, assessment and certification will be designed to allow students to enter and withdraw from courses on a biannual, annual or semester basis with an entitlement for their level of achievement of outcomes to be certified at the point of exit.

The flexible nature of the new arrangements will address the needs and interests of all students by:

- encompassing stand-alone VET Units of Competency that have not been packaged into a integrated form or as a VET course of study;
- facilitating the development of vocational learning through practical experience, which may include part-time work or community-based learning (such as involvement in the coaching or mentoring of others);
- enabling commencement of university studies; and
- enabling students to engage in independent learning in areas of interest.

Breadth and depth

The Council considers that requirements set for breadth and depth of learning will provide balance and address the wide range of student needs and interests. The *Position Paper* proposal that this would be achieved through extensions, and/or by drawing outcomes from at least four learning area statements received little support. There was concern that this latter requirement would disadvantage students who already knew their career path and wanted to specialise. This was seen as a particular issue for students whose overall learning program has a VET focus. There was also concern that it would be too difficult to determine whether students had met this criterion in courses that drew together outcomes from across learning areas.

Currently, the Council does not have a breadth requirement for the awarding of a WACE, however universities categorise subjects as humanities or science (currently known as List 1 and List 2 subjects) and require students to select at least one from each list. At this stage, the Council does not know whether this practice will continue; however, it is the intention that courses of study will be designed to provide scope for a broad general education with opportunities to specialise in areas of interest.

As a minimum, students will be required to achieve the outcomes to some extent from at least five courses of study through the completion of twenty course units, with at least three two-unit combinations. Sixteen of the units must be Council-developed and four can be Council-endorsed.

Overarching Outcomes

The breadth requirements for the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) will include students continuing to achieve the *Curriculum Framework*'s thirteen Overarching Outcomes (which are inclusive of key competencies).

These describe what all students need in order to become learners for life, achieve their potential in their personal and working lives and play an active part in civic and economic life (see page 60).

The Overarching Learning Outcomes apply across all learning areas and are the responsibility of all teachers. They are designed to encapsulate all of the general areas of learning and the key competencies. Particular emphasis is placed on maintaining a holistic view of curriculum and integrating knowledge, skills and values across all learning areas. The outcomes from each learning area contribute, to some extent to the achievement of the Overarching Learning Outcomes.

With this approach breadth will be achieved, as the Overarching Learning Outcomes can be categorised into a number of broad domains of knowledge, skills and values that have repeatedly been identified as essential for all students. The applicability of this approach will be tested as part of the course development process. Course developers will be asked to ensure that opportunities for students to continue their achievement of the Overarching Learning Outcomes are provided in as wide a range of contexts as possible. These will be listed in course introductions.

The Council will provide a mechanism for ensuring that the Overarching Learning Outcomes are identified when students make course selections. Where the course selection is deficient, students will need to ensure that enriching tasks, used as one of the assessments for the course, encompass the Overarching Learning Outcomes that are not included.

Overarching Learning Outcomes

Communication
1. Students use language to understand, develop and communicate ideas and information and interact with others.

Using Numerical and Spatial Concepts
2. Students select, integrate and apply numerical and spatial concepts and techniques.

Investigating and Using Information
3. Students recognise when and what information is needed, locate and obtain it from a range of sources and evaluate, use and share it with others.

Using Technologies
4. Students select, use and adapt technologies.

Thinking Critically
5. Students describe and reason about patterns, structures and relationships in order to understand, interpret, justify and make predictions.

Exploring Ideas, Opportunities and Solutions
6. Students visualise consequences, think laterally, recognise opportunity and potential and are prepared to test options.

Using Scientific Understandings
7. Students understand and appreciate the physical, biological and technological world and have the knowledge and skills to make decisions in relation to it.

Active Australian Citizenship
8. Students understand their cultural, geographic and historical contexts and have the knowledge, skills and values necessary for active participation in life in Australia.

Cultural Interaction
9. Students interact with people and cultures other than their own and are equipped to contribute to the global community.

Engaging in Creative Activity
10. Students participate in creative activity of their own and understand and engage with the artistic, cultural and intellectual work of others.

Valuing personal growth and well-being
11. Students value and implement practices that promote personal growth and well-being.

Learning Independently and Collaboratively
12. Students are self-motivated and confident in their approach to learning and are able to work individually and collaboratively.

Recognising Rights and Behaving Responsibly
13. Students recognise that everyone has the right to feel valued and be safe, and, in this regard, understand their rights and obligations and behave responsibly.

The Overarching Outcomes are inclusive of the Key Competencies
(Curriculum Council, 1998, pp. 18-19)

English language competence

Students will also be required to demonstrate English language competence for the purpose of gaining the Western Australian Certificate of Education. It is also highly likely that tertiary institutions will specify their own requirements.

English language competence will be defined, trialed and evaluated prior to any changes from the existing Council requirements. It is recommended that the universities and TAFE colleges discuss their English language competence requirements with the Council during the development period so that their requirements and those of the Council will be compatible.

Each course of study, where appropriate, will include an outcome that amongst other things will enable students to develop English language competence. Students will be encouraged to build on their functional and critical literacy skills as well as their understandings of the special ways in which language is used. They will learn how to use the specialised vocabularies of particular disciplines, the typical text types and the conventions of these text types.

The decision with respect to the number of compulsory units of English will be made following the establishment of an English language competence standard.

Enriching tasks

Course developers will be asked to include enriching tasks as an integral part of each course where appropriate, to ensure that opportunities for students to continue their achievement of the Overarching Learning Outcomes are provided in as wide a range of contexts as possible. Students will be provided with the maximum choice and flexibility, including an opportunity to focus on values.

The following outcomes and contexts were identified repeatedly throughout the review process as being essential for students moving into the world of work and further study and are examples only:

- **Enterprise and vocational learning:** outcomes and contexts that will enable students to participate or initiate projects that foster and develop enterprise skills, including skills that will allow them to become flexible and adaptive in future situations. There need to be opportunities for students to develop an awareness and understanding of workplace culture and become confident in their approach to working cooperatively with others, as well as in developing skills in adopting enterprising behaviours and promoting personal growth and well-being (Overarching Outcomes 4, 6, 11, 12 and 13).

- **Literacy:** outcomes and contexts that will enable students requiring extra support to develop reading, viewing, listening, speaking and writing skills. They need to have opportunities to understand the ways in which language is structured and learn to use language effectively to deal with everyday situations (Overarching Outcome 1).

- **Numeracy:** outcomes and contexts that will enable students to learn to choose and use mathematics effectively to meet the general demands of life at home or in paid work and for participation in community and civic life. There need to be opportunities to use a combination of mathematical skills and ways of thinking to solve problems in situations beyond the classroom. These could also involve the ability to 'read' a variety of quantitative and spatial 'texts' (Overarching Outcomes 2, 3, 5 and 6).

- **Values and active citizenship, including community-based learning:** outcomes and contexts that will enable students to initiate projects in the community or become involved in existing community-based or environmental activities. There need to be opportunities for students to develop the skills to work collaboratively with others and to understand issues that relate to the welfare of different groups in the community or the environment (Overarching Outcomes 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13).

- **Specialisation in a particular area:** outcomes and contexts that will enable students to reinforce knowledge, skills and understandings in an area of interest or a particular discipline to demonstrate achievement of the course of study outcomes to a high level of complexity and abstraction, for example, students may undertake university studies while still at school (a range of Overarching Outcomes as relevant to particular areas of specialisation).

- **Information and Communication Technologies (ICT):** outcomes and contexts that will enable students to apply specific technologies and integrate them for a variety of purposes. There need to be opportunities for them to develop an awareness of how technologies work, demonstrate autonomy in carrying out application processes and learn strategies for applying technologies in creative and original ways
(Overarching Outcomes 3 and 4).

- **The Arts:** outcomes and contexts that will enable students to participate in creative activities of their own and understand and engage with artistic, cultural and intellectual work of others in local communities (Overarching Outcome 1, 5, 6 and 10).

- **Humanities:** outcomes and contexts that will enable students to understand the values and beliefs that exist in, and are transmitted through, a culture. In addition, there will be opportunities for them to understand their cultural, geographic and historical contexts and develop the knowledge, skills and values to participate actively in society. There will be opportunities to interact with people and cultures other than their own and develop the skills to contribute to local and global communities (Overarching Outcome 1, 8, 9 and 13).

- **The physical world:** outcomes and contexts that will enable students to understand and appreciate the physical, biological and technological world and acquire the knowledge and skills to make decisions about it. They learn to appreciate science as a human endeavour, to value the processes that support life on earth and contribute to societal and personal wellbeing. They learn to make informed decisions about the world (Overarching Outcome 5, 6, 7, and 8).

Developing learning programs

Schools and teachers will use the course of study outcomes, scales, contexts and scope of content to design and deliver learning programs to enable their students to achieve course of study outcomes within a coherent assessment structure. Although each school will use the scales of achievement to measure achievement of course of study outcomes, the design and delivery of programs may be different.

The courses will be designed to enable schools to provide learning programs based around the principles of learning and teaching in the *Curriculum Framework* (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 33-36).

Opportunity to learn
Learning experiences should enable students to observe and practice the actual processes, products, skills and values which are expected of them.

Connection and challenge
Learning experiences should connect with students' existing knowledge, skills and values while extending and challenging their current ways of thinking and acting.

Action and reflection
Learning experiences should be meaningful and encourage both action and reflection on the part of the learner.

Motivation and purpose
Learning experiences should be motivating and their purpose clear to the student.

Inclusivity and difference
Learning experiences should respect and accommodate differences between learners.

SUMMARY: Breadth of study

The breadth of study requirement is reflected in the eligibility requirements for certification.

Students must have:

- achieved, to a designated level, outcomes from at least five courses;
- met all assessment requirements of twenty course units (including at least three two-unit combinations) while being awarded a grade in at least sixteen developed by the Council;
- met the requirements for English language competence;
- completed at least a two-unit combination in English (a decision as to whether further units will be compusory will be made following trialing and testing); and
- ensured that all thirteen Overarching Learning Outcomes have been included in their course selections.

Four of the units required may be Council-endorsed units that meet designated criteria and are not necessarily aligned to course of study outcomes. These could include stand-alone VET, university study and community-based study.

Each course will, where appropriate, include outcomes that provide opportunities for students to:

- learn how to use language and specialised vocabularies of particular disciplines, their typical text types and conventions;
- explore and develop the *Curriculum Framework* values;
- demonstrate VET competencies; and
- participate in workplace learning.

Criteria for courses of study

A clear set of criteria will be applied to each course as it is developed. These criteria are framed around the premise that the full range of courses will offer the scope to include all learners by enabling them to choose areas of interest, as well as providing them with opportunities to achieve their post-school aspirations.

Each course of study will need to:

- be consistent with the principles of the *Curriculum Framework;*
- have unifying ideas or purposes for learning and reflect the aspirations of a diverse group of students;
- build on students' achievement of the *Curriculum Framework's* learning outcomes;
- include a manageable number of outcomes that reflect:
    - ~ areas of learning and contexts that are relevant and motivating to students;
    - ~ emerging directions in academic research, industry or society in general; and
    - ~ international and national standards for course provision, to enable comparisons to be made if required;
- include the *Curriculum Framework's* Overarching Learning Outcomes, where appropriate;
- make the values in the *Curriculum Framework* explicit, where appropriate;
- cater for the full range of students by being inclusive of general and vocational education by encompassing VET Units of Competency (where appropriate), cross-curriculum perspectives and local collaborative arrangements;
- have a set of outcomes with scales of achievement that can be aligned with the Curriculum Council-endorsed progress maps and with which comparable judgements can be made about student achievement;
- demonstrate their potential for viability of enrolment numbers;
- offer challenging opportunities for students to achieve to their maximum potential and to develop prerequisite knowledge to the depth identified by post-school destinations; and
- provide sufficient scope for standards of achievement to be made explicit and assessed.

Provision for adding to the initial courses of study

In the very rare situation of a school not being able to meet students' needs through the flexibility provided by the course of study structure, there could be a process for accreditation of additional courses or units, assuming that such courses met all the criteria. It is expected, however, that schools will explore the possibilities that the flexible course of study structure provide. The present proliferation of courses must be avoided.

SUMMARY: Criteria for courses of study

A clear set of criteria will be applied to ensure that the courses are designed to accommodate the interests and needs of all students and enable them to achieve to their maximum potential.

Process for developing courses of study

Course development based on the above curriculum model will occur in three stages from now to 2009.

In the adaptive process for developing courses, the systems and sectors will be consulted to identify the list of courses to be fast tracked in the first phase of development and trialing. The courses to be fast tracked will include, if possible, at least one from each learning area, with a mixture of courses that have the potential to remain substantially the same and others that are new or bring together a number of existing subjects.

The provisional list of courses in Appendix 3 will be used to establish course reference groups (which will have a similar membership structure to the syllabus committees) to enable further consultation where there is uncertainty about whether one or two courses are needed in particular areas.

A writing group will be established for each proposed course so that development work can commence according to the adaptive timeline. Following the identification of the outcomes, scales of achievement and the broad overview of possible content and contexts, there will be consultation to resolve any outstanding issues.

At this stage of the process, existing subjects will be aligned to courses to determine the range of units required. In some areas, existing subject syllabuses may continue as the equivalents of course of study two-unit combinations for a short time. Sample assessment tasks for course units will be available before trialing begins.

The reference groups will identify the likely professional development needs, based on the extent of change that will be expected of teachers currently working in each area.

The Post-compulsory Education Committee will endorse courses for trialing and accredit them for introduction into all schools following the trial process.

SUMMARY: Development and accreditation of courses

A formal process for the development and accreditation of courses and their units using Curriculum Council committee processes will be implemented, with accreditation subject to review every five years. This will involve:

- establishing course reference groups to develop the initial conceptual framework of outcomes, standards, content and contexts and provide feedback on the courses as they develop;

- including sector and system representatives, a wide range of classroom teachers and other experts in the reference groups to provide feedback;

- developing courses using a small writing team working with a member of the secretariat;

- consulting widely at an early stage in the development of each course statement;

- aligning existing subjects to the course outcomes, scales and content before the first consultation, with feedback identifying the units needing to be developed;

- endorsing course statements through the Post-compulsory Education Committee processes; and

- trialing, testing and evaluating each new course for a period of a three years before it is introduced.

Standards

Students, parents, potential employers and post-school destinations need to have a clear understanding of the achievement standards attained by students. Students need to know about the standards for which they are aiming, and teachers need to know explicitly what is expected of students. It is important for schools and school systems to track student achievement from year to year, and for the government and community to know whether standards are improving.

An outcomes standards framework will provide a profile of student achievement and enable consistent judgements to be made about student achievement over time and over a range of contexts.

Making standards explicit

Standards are explicit descriptions and illustrations of what must be understood and/or performed at specified levels on scales of achievement for each course outcome. While standards exist to some extent in the current system, they are not explicit and there is no means of equating performance between Tertiary Entrance, Wholly School Assessed and Vocational Education and Training courses.

The standards in the new system will aim to be consistent with the proposed Curriculum Council-endorsed kindergarten to year 12 progress maps for the *Curriculum Framework* outcomes and the competency standards of the National Training Framework. It seems possible, judging from recent research that VET competency assessment may be used to make appropriate judgements about achievement of levels on the scale of achievement, and efforts will be made to test this possibility.

One of the main purposes for adopting a standards-referenced approach to recording student achievement is to make explicit what students actually know, understand, value and can do.

The extent of student achievement for each outcome will be described at five levels on a scale of achievement. Within a course of study, there will be no predetermined number of students for a level and no limit placed on the number of students for any particular level on the scale. This is in contrast to the current system where students' performance is ranked relative to the achievements of others using the Curriculum Council's statistical processes, rather than against explicit published standards.

It should be noted, however, that in the first instance the writing of a description for a level is done with a particular sense of the intended difficulty of that level. Difficulty is defined in terms of the expected proportion of the total age cohort that (with given resources, etc.) could attain that level. It is in this sense of equivalent difficulty that the scales across all outcomes are intended to be 'comparable'. The new standards-based Higher School Certificate (HSC) in New South Wales and the National Certificate of Educational Achievement in New Zealand will provide valuable information throughout the development and trialing process.

Recognising student achievement

Scales of achievement will be used to measure progressive achievement of course of study outcomes, identify the standards required for entrance eligibility for post-school destinations, identify the levels required for certification and to provide a basis for comparing the interpretation of standards within and across schools. Some form of statistical moderation and/or scaling for calculating students' ranks for university entrance will be retained until confidence in the comparability of achievement within and across courses is achieved.

Progression of achievement of outcomes for a course will be measured as levels on the scales for course outcomes. In response to concern that reporting on levels that have comparable difficulty would have negative consequences for the motivation and esteem of lower-achieving students, grades will be awarded for each of the course units. The trial process will be used to determine whether grades should be 'A', 'B' or 'C' or some other agreed terminology as currently used for Common Assessment Framework (CAF) subjects or as in the New Zealand system such as 'merit', 'credit' or 'excellence'. This grading system will enable high relative achievement to be acknowledged in course units at all levels of difficulty.

In addition to the level statements (standards) at each of the five levels on the course of study scales of achievement, there will be more detailed and specific statements that indicate the essential understandings and skills students require to progress from one level to the next. Progress should be seen as the achievement of outcomes at increasing levels of complexity and depth and be illustrated by movement up the scales of achievement.

Connection to student achievement in the compulsory years

This view of progression was supported by feedback from teachers who requested a seamless focus on outcomes from kindergarten to year 12. The view was that levels on the scales of achievement would need to be consistent with progress maps being used for the compulsory years of schooling. The preliminary findings in the Assessment Research Project (Appendix 2) show that this is possible, as achievement in years 11 and 12 generally ranged from Levels 4 to 8 of the Department of Education's *Student Outcome Statements*. This will therefore be the approach adopted after further research.

As course of study outcomes will be derived from *Curriculum Framework* outcomes, it is intended that the scales of achievement be derived from and consistent with the K-12 progress maps. This means that the five levels on the scales of achievement will align, in terms of difficulty, with levels four to eight of the progress maps. These more specific scales of achievement for course outcomes will also be numbered '4' to '8' to make the K-12 coherence explicit, as is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Scales of Achievement
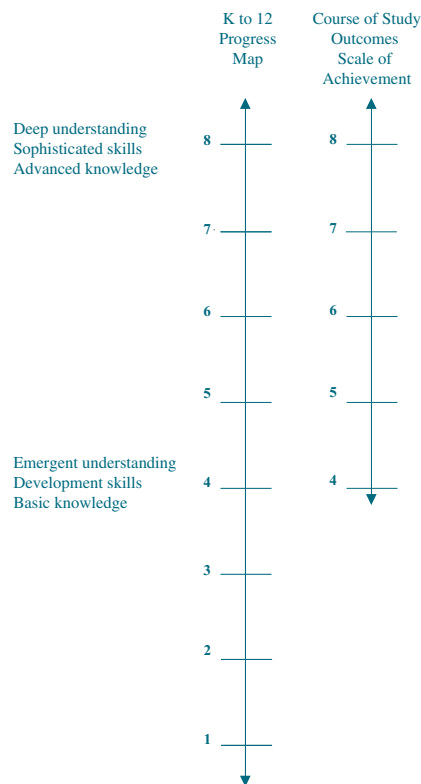
By the end of year 10, students should know how their levels of achievement of *Curriculum Framework* outcomes relate to the levels on the scales of achievement of outcomes for the post-compulsory courses of study in which they are interested. Monitoring Standards in Education (MSE) data will be used for the preliminary identification of the range of achievement for the cohort of students moving from year 10 to year 11. At present, schools that are experienced in using the *Student Outcome Statements* counsel students achieving at Level 6 or above at the end of the compulsory years into the more-demanding TEE courses and students at around Level 4 into courses that are less demanding.

A coherent and explicit standards framework that links the progress from the compulsory to the post-compulsory years will enable schools to counsel students into the course units that best suit their achievement levels without inhibiting or limiting future progress.

To accommodate the full range of students and diverse entry points on the scale, there will be support material for teachers working with students progressing towards the first level (Level 4) on the scale of achievement for course outcomes. These will be suitable for students at educational risk and enable schools to develop programs for students with special needs. Similarly, at the top of the scale there will be provision for achievement beyond the highest level.

Trialing and testing

It is intended that a given level on a scale of achievement will be comparable in difficulty with a similar level on all other scales of achievement within and across courses of study. Further research and trialing will be conducted to test the feasibility of this proposal.

In the first instance, this will involve using empirical data to attempt to validate the sequences on the K-12 Curriculum Council-endorsed progress maps and align the levels within and across learning areas. This work will then inform the development of the scales for course outcomes. Past Tertiary Entrance Examination papers, class work samples, Monitoring Standards in Education results, Queensland Core Skills Test data and New South Wales and Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) data will be used to provide evidence for the standards and the development of outcomes-focused assessment items. The results of this work and further research will be applied to the development of scales of achievement and the trialing of the units in the courses.

Assessment exemplars will be provided to demonstrate achievement for each of the levels on the scales of achievement. These same exemplars will be used to illustrate the grading paradigm for each course unit.

Modifications to scales of achievement and/or grading processes will be made after feedback from trialing and statistical analysis. Work being undertaken by boards of study in Australia and New Zealand will also inform the process of recording and reporting student achievement.

The standards to be achieved for students to be awarded a WACE will be determined as a result of testing, trialing and evaluation. The Council's principal aim in setting standards will be to improve young people's foundation skills for lifelong learning.

SUMMARY: Standards

An outcomes standards framework will be established to provide a profile of student achievement. This will assist teachers to judge student achievement consistently over time and contexts and present students, parents, potential employers and post-school destinations with a clear understanding of the learning standards achieved by students, irrespective of the context in which they are achieved.

The outcomes standards framework will provide the basis for meeting the requirements for comparability of standards as set out in section 12 of the *Curriculum Council Act 1997* and will aim to include:

- explicit standards, consisting of level descriptors and exemplars, on scales of achievement for each course outcome which are consistent with the broader frameworks provided by the *Curriculum Framework* outcomes, the proposed Curriculum Council-endorsed progress maps and the competency-based National Training Framework;
- research and trialing to test the extent to which the standards are comparable within and across courses; and
- ongoing consultation with sectors and systems to evaluate and refine the standards framework.