

Senior History Curriculum Draft

HTAV Initial Response

The HTAV is aware that this is a draft document and is subject to change. These initial observations are made keeping in mind that there are still elements of the K-10 course to be refined which may have an impact on the development of the Senior History curriculum. These issues have been raised by the HTAV to VCAA and ACARA.

Positive Features:

Ancient History Course appears to be strong and comprehensive and developed against the backdrop of a complimentary theme.

Scope has been provided for choice in the courses.

Initial Observations: Modern History Course

1. Upon examination, there appears to be a lack of continuity in the Modern History course which lends itself to a fragmented study of topics, diminishing the integrity that a senior history course should offer students. When compared with the Ancient History course the Modern History course appears particularly fragmented in structure. HTAV values disciplinary integrity, coherence and depth. These qualities are lacking in the current Modern History proposal.
 - 2) The first unit "Investigating Modern History" asks students to use two case studies to anchor their learning. The compulsory unit, "World War 1", whilst an interesting study in its own right, seems misplaced when considered in relation to the draft Year 10 course. Whilst some may argue that the study as it is presented here takes a different perspective to that of the Year 10 course (and presumably in more sophisticated detail), the HTAV would still argue that the pedagogical value of such a repetition is questionable. Further to this, the HTAV notes that the Modern History course is war-oriented with two compulsory units that include war that act as book-ends to it. The HTAV sees that there are more diverse topics to be explored.
- 3) Having Revolutions as a one-semester option in the Modern History course at Year 12 does not seem to be appropriate. Even if teachers chose to develop a Modern History course with an Asian perspective, which would provide *some* (in the most tenuous of ways) continuity to the study, this would seem completely out of place when students are then compelled to study Unit 4 Asia and Australia.
- 4) The HTAV believes that there is a political obligation for a curriculum authority to give students the opportunity to study the history of their own country in a sophisticated a manner at senior level. This concern, (raised in 2009 with the Education Minister, Julia Gillard, ACARA and the VCAA), that the Australian History component of any course proposed by ACARA would be integrated into a perspective which limits the scope of the study of Australian History, has been realised.

Initial Observations: Ancient History Course

The draft is promising, but some important areas require further attention.

1. The final version of the course should be Ancient History, not Classical Studies or Archaeology. There are pivotal distinctions between these areas. The document needs to be edited on the basis of these distinctions. At the moment, the failure to do so creates questions of focus and balance.
2. In light of this, attempts to engage students should not compromise disciplinary integrity. For example, there is a great deal of Archaeology in the course. This is an imbalance. Source studies of Homeric epic or Greek drama or can easily stray from an historical focus to a literary or cultural one. The analysis of a modern representation has potential (2a), but the primary focus should be Ancient History.
3. The source studies do not sufficiently underscore the fact that historians *use* sources to construct interpretations of the past. The primary source is not the main objective of the discipline; it is the foundation on which historical interpretation is built. The material on p.16 (Unit 4) is helpful, but not sufficient in itself.
4. The draft lacks fully developed key learning focus statements. Improving this area of the draft would help to address many of the abovementioned concerns

Some questions that the HTAV has posed to the VCAA and ACARA:

- 1) Will it be possible to choose specific units within the Australian Curriculum to make a post-compulsory course?
- 2) Will Units 1 & 2 be the pre-requisites for Units 3 & 4?
- 3) Would it be considered by the State and Territory Curriculum Authorities and ACARA that the proposed Modern History course involves *considerable "overlap"* with current History courses? For example, in Queensland the Medieval component of the Ancient History Course / Historiography – Extension in NSW/ Revolutions / Australian History in Victoria?

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