

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM – CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

INFORMATION FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

In October 2010, a sample of Year 6 primary students and a sample of Year 10 secondary students from across Australia will take part in a national assessment of civics and citizenship. The students will be asked to complete a written assessment that examines civic knowledge and understanding and the skills and values needed for active citizenship.

The test window when schools can select to conduct the assessment is from:

- **11 - 22 October for VIC, QLD, TAS, NT and**
- **18 - 29 October for NSW, SA, WA, ACT.**

This assessment of civics and citizenship is part of a national plan that is progressively being put in place to monitor and report on student achievement against the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century*. The national goals and the importance of monitoring student achievements in relation to the goals were agreed to by all state, territory and federal education ministers in 1999. The monitoring and reporting program is being implemented by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

As part of the national plan, student achievements in science were assessed in 2003, 2006 and 2009, civics and citizenship in 2004 and 2007 and information communication and technology assessments were conducted in 2005 and 2008. Reports on these assessments are available on the MCEECDYA website at <http://www.mceecdy.edu.au/mceecdy/>.

Assessment of civics and citizenship is not new in Australia. In 1999, Australia participated in the international IEA Civic Education Study, which examined the factual knowledge and attitudes of about 90,000 14-year-olds from 28 countries towards issues related to democracy, national identity, social cohesion and diversity, economics/media and the environment. Australian students achieved results similar to the international average in the knowledge aspects of the test, but had lower than average support for civic attitudes and engagement than their international peers.

This information bulletin explains:

- what the National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship will test and why
- how the assessments will be conducted
- who will be assessed
- how the results will be used to benefit students and help teachers and school systems.

Further information about the National Assessment Program may be obtained from state and territory education officers.

WHAT WILL BE ASSESSED?

The National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship will assess the civic knowledge and understanding and the skills and values needed for active citizenship of Year 6 and Year 10 students. These aspects of civics and citizenship have been identified from the national goals of schooling in Australia most recently defined in the Melbourne Declaration on the National Goals of Schooling, 2008. The goals state that when students leave school they should 'be active and informed citizens' who:

- act with moral and ethical integrity
- appreciate Australia's social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and have an understanding of Australia's system of government, history and culture
- understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life
- are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia
- work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
- are responsible global and local citizens.

The 2010 National Assessment Program sample assessment of Civics and Citizenship is the third triennial assessment (previous assessments were conducted in 2004 and 2007).

The 2004 and 2007 were constructed with reference to, two key performance measures (KPMs) for civics and citizenship:

KPM 1: Civics: Knowledge & Understanding of Civic Institutions & Processes
Knowledge of key concepts and understandings relating to civic institutions and processes in Australian democracy, government, law, national identity, diversity, cohesion and social justice.

KPM 2: Citizenship: Dispositions & Skills for Participation
Understandings related to the attitudes, values, dispositions, beliefs, and actions that underpin active democratic citizenship.

These KPMs have been described in assessment domains for Year 6 and Year 10. The assessment domains and Professional elaborations of them can be found on the MCEECDYA website.

Currently the assessment domains are being revised to reflect the current status of Civics and Citizenship. The revised assessment domains (to be released as an assessment framework) aim to better reflect the contents of the National Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship and the Melbourne Declaration that were released in 2006 and 2008 respectively. The Statements of Learning can be found on the Curriculum Corporation website and the Melbourne Declaration can be found on the MCEECDYA website.

The assessment is being developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Examples of the type of assessment items, along with examples

of the marking keys that will be used to score students' responses, can be found on the MCEECDYA website.

Students are not expected to study specifically for this test – indeed, last-minute preparation is unnecessary.

The assessment is specifically designed to provide nationally comparable state and territory data and overall trends. No individual student or school results will be published.

HOW WILL THE ASSESSMENT BE CONDUCTED?

ACER has been contracted by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to conduct the assessments and prepare a report showing the national results. ACER will contact all schools selected to take part in the assessment by August 2010.

A class of Year 6 students or Year 10 students in each of the sample schools will be selected to participate in the assessment. Wherever possible, the assessments will be conducted in the students' regular classroom and administered by the students' usual classroom teacher or another teacher from the school. Students will complete the pencil and paper test individually. Teachers will receive detailed instructions about the general conduct of the assessment, which will take no more than two hours to complete (including the student background survey).

The assessment will include multiple choice responses, short responses and extended responses. Teachers will be able to read out the test items if students request it, but they will not be allowed to explain or interpret the questions.

Students should find that the procedures involved in this assessment are very similar to the procedures followed during other classroom assessments they are used to completing. Special attention has been paid to making the assessment items and the whole 'atmosphere' of the testing procedure an engaging experience. Underpinning the design of the assessments is a well-recognised requirement to 'bring out the best' in the students and to encourage their full participation by making the test an engaging and interesting experience.

The main difference from an ordinary classroom activity is that specified standardised procedures will need to be followed exactly so that comparable data can be collected from all sample classrooms across Australia.

Each participating school will receive a payment to offset administration costs which may enable classroom teachers administering the tests to be provided with time to familiarise themselves with the procedures, prepare the classroom for testing and complete data collection forms.

A range of quality assurance mechanisms is being put in place. Each school selected in the sample will nominate a school contact person who will receive a very detailed manual defining and explaining procedures. There will also be an 1800 telephone number and email contact for schools to clarify any concerns. Suitably qualified and trained individuals will visit some of the schools to observe the tests being administered. The assessments will be marked by trained curriculum experts.

WHO WILL BE ASSESSED?

Not all Year 6 and Year 10 students will be assessed – in fact, only about five per cent of the total national cohort for each year level will take the civics and citizenship assessment. That figure is the outcome of a rigorous stratified random sampling process. The sample is ‘stratified’ to ensure that metropolitan, rural and remote schools and government, Catholic and independent schools are appropriately represented. Within each weighted category or sampling strata, schools are selected at random. Classes or groups of students in the school are also selected at random. As mentioned previously, schools that are selected for inclusion in the sample will be informed by August 2010.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

It is important to recognise that the principal purpose of the national Year 6 and Year 10 civics and citizenship assessment is to monitor and report on the overall progress that is being made towards achieving the national goals related to civics and citizenship. However, there will be a number of other valuable ‘products’ and benefits from the assessment program.

In terms of national reporting, this assessment will deliver a number of specific outcomes.

- Proficiency levels and standards for civics and citizenship will be used in the analysis of the range of student achievement in both Year 6 and Year 10.
- A public report on the assessment results will document students’ attainment in relation to the proficiency levels. Comparisons of the performance of different groups of students will be included – for example, the relative attainment of boys and girls across Australia and metropolitan students and rural students. The overall results in each state and territory will be reported, but the results of government and non-government schools will not be compared.
- It will be possible to draw some comparisons about the development of civic knowledge and understanding and the skills and values needed for active citizenship by examining the two sets of data gained from the Year 6 and the Year 10 assessments.
- Baseline performance data was established in 2004. It has been agreed that a national sample of Year 6 and Year 10 students will be assessed in civics and citizenship every third year – that is, in 2007, 2010 and so on. Thus any changes in Australian students’ attainment in civics and citizenship, or within particular groups of Australian students, can be observed over time.

At the school level there will be two immediate ‘products’.

- Schools that are involved in the sample assessment will receive information summarising their students’ performance on the tests before the end of the 2010 school year.
- All schools will be able to obtain a package of materials that will enable Year 6 and Year 10 teachers to administer a subset of the test items under similar conditions to gauge their own students’ proficiency in civics and citizenship in comparison with the national standards. The 2004 and 2007 School Release Materials for both Year 6 and Year 10 students are available on the MCEECDYA website.