



# Guidelines for the Provision of Specialised Curriculum Approaches in Years P-10 in Victorian Government Schools

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The Department of Education & Training has developed guidelines for the provision of specialised curriculum approaches in years P–10 applicable to all Victorian government schools.

Specialised curriculum approaches relevant to this policy include, but are not limited to; the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary and Middle Years Programs, Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Steiner.

The Guidelines include key principles, the approval process for schools wishing to introduce specialised curriculum approaches and criteria for Departmental approval.

Key principles have been developed to ensure the provision of quality learning outcomes for all students in Victorian government schools. The key principles apply to Victorian government schools currently operating specialised curriculum approaches in years P–10, as well as those schools considering or in the process of introducing specialised approaches.

It should be noted that Departmental approval does not constitute authorisation by the organisation responsible for the specialised approach. For example, government schools wishing to offer the IB Primary or Middle Years programs need to obtain approval from the Department prior to seeking authorisation from the International Baccalaureate Organisation. (Approval for government schools to deliver the IB Diploma Program is managed by the Post Compulsory Division, Office of Learning and Teaching.)

## Principles for the provision of specialised curriculum approaches in years P–10 in Victorian government schools

- **Appropriateness:** the provision of a specialised approach is focused on and is capable of delivering quality educational outcomes for all students.
- **Responsiveness:** the approach is responsive to the existing school culture and school community needs.
- **Alignment:** the approach is aligned with Department of Education & Training policy requirements and Victorian Government legislative requirements are met.
- **Feasibility:** the approach is supported by the school community, sound governance, and allocation of resources (budget and staffing arrangements).
- **Equity:** the provision of a specialised curriculum approach does not disadvantage any student at the school, and the notion of choice is maintained.
- **Quality:** appropriate quality assurance mechanisms exist for all curriculum approaches with regard to teaching standards and educational outcomes for students.
- **Accountability:** the school maintains accountability to its school community by operating, communicating and reporting in an open and transparent manner.

## Approval process for the provision of specialised curriculum approaches in years P–10 in Victorian government schools

Government schools wishing to offer specialised curriculum approaches in years P–10 in Victoria need to obtain approval from the Department of Education & Training. To do so, they will need to prepare a business case in consultation with the school community and follow the application process outlined below.

### **Business Case**

The school is required to present a business case, based on a clear educational rationale, identifying the advantages of the proposed specialised curriculum approach to the school community, the school's ability to meet the approval criteria and an implementation plan.

#### **A. Educational rationale**

In establishing an educational rationale, schools need to respond to the following underpinning questions:

- Why does the school want to introduce the specialised curriculum approach?
- In what ways will the school's provision of the proposed curriculum approach benefit the local community, including students, parents/guardians and the school community?

#### **B. Key approval criteria**

School applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Capacity for the proposed approach to deliver quality educational outcomes for all students.
2. Demonstrated evidence of responsiveness to the existing school culture and local school community needs.
3. Evidence of effective delivery of existing school programs and the ability to meet Department of Education & Training curriculum policy and legislative requirements.
4. Evidence of community support and the capacity for governance arrangements and resource allocation to continue in a sound manner under the proposed approach.
5. Demonstrated capacity to ensure equity and access for all students in the school community, including students with special needs.
6. Evidence of quality assurance mechanisms to ensure quality teaching standards and educational outcomes are met.
7. Capacity to operate a specialised curriculum approach in a transparent manner, including reporting and communicating to the school community in an open manner.

### **C. Implementation plan**

Schools need to include a summary of their proposed implementation plan, including:

- key objectives and intended outcomes;
- description and scope;
- implementation schedule and timelines;
- budget and resource allocation, including internal staffing arrangements and professional learning and/or accreditation requirements;
- stakeholder consultation and communication strategy;
- risk assessment and management strategies; and
- evaluation and review processes.

### **Approval process**

A government school considering the introduction of a specialised curriculum approach in years P–10 must follow this process:

#### **1. Initial planning**

- Consideration of a new curriculum approach within the context of the school strategic plan.
- Discussion with the regional director regarding the school's strategic direction, goals and targets, performance data, identified student and community needs, existing capacity and proposed curriculum approach.

#### **2. Consultation**

- Extensive consultation by the school council with the parent body, school community, neighbouring schools and local community organisations on the appropriateness of the specialised approach to the school, and the school's capacity to provide it.

#### **3. Regional recommendation**

- Written summary of approach to the regional director (2–3 pages) briefly outlining the rationale, ability to meet key approval criteria and implementation strategies. At this stage, particular consideration will be given to the resource implications of the approach. The regional director will discuss the submission with the school and make a recommendation to school council on one or a combination of the following:
  - a. that the submission will/will not be recommended
  - b. that the school undergoes further planning/consultation
  - c. that the school proceed with a full application to the Department.

#### 4. Application

- Full application to the Department signed by the principal and school council president (*to be developed within four weeks from receiving the regional director's endorsement*) including:
  - a. School information:
    - i. School name and contact details
    - ii. Numbers of students and teaching staff
  - b. A business case including:
    - i. educational rationale
    - ii. statements addressing Key Approval Criteria
    - iii. implementation plan
  - c. Additional supporting documentation (if required).

#### **Application to be sent to:**

Community and Stakeholder Relations Branch  
Office of School Education  
Department of Education & Training  
Level 1, 33 St Andrews Place  
EAST MELBOURNE 3002

Applications will be considered by the Office of School Education *within four weeks* of receipt. A recommendation will be made to the Deputy Secretary, Office of School Education, who will make a decision and advise the school of the outcome of the application in writing.

**Approval process for the introduction of specialised curriculum approaches within the P - 10 years in Victorian government schools**

