Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia

Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0

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# Introduction

The Australian Human Rights Commission states, ‘Australia is a vibrant, multicultural country. We are home to the world’s oldest continuous cultures, as well as Australians who identify with more than 270 ancestries … This rich, cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths. It is central to our national identity.’[[1]](#footnote-1) The Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priority provides students with the opportunity to engage with this great strength and build upon this foundation as they develop their own identities as Victorians, Australians and global citizens.

Learning about this cross-curriculum priority is embedded throughout the curriculum areas of the Victorian Curriculum F–10. This learning enables students to develop knowledge, skills, capabilities and attitudes to effectively navigate and contribute to our regional neighbourhood and to emerge as active and informed global citizens. To understand the Asia region and its diversity, students require an insight into the societies, beliefs, histories, cultures, languages and environments of Asian nations. They need to develop an appreciation of the significant historical contributions from Asian countries and build an understanding of the region’s contemporary opportunities and challenges. Knowledge, understanding, respect and active engagement between Australia and Asia will build positive relationships when guided by critical thinking, respect and reflection.

Students will understand that, throughout history, countries from the Asia region have shaped human endeavour in ways that have significantly changed the world, such as through the development of metal movable type and the compass in China, and India’s contributions to mathematics, astronomy, cartography and metrology. They will learn that Australia’s engagement and connectedness with the countries of Asia and the Indo-Pacific is reflected in relationships that have developed over thousands of years. For example, Australia is home to more than one million Chinese-Australians, some of whom were born in Australia to ancestors who immigrated to Australia several generations ago. Since 2000, the countries of birth for many permanent migrants to Australia have been Asian countries.[[2]](#footnote-2) The people, environments, economies, technologies, transport systems, communications systems, security, cultures and histories of the Asia region and Australia are interdependent. Migrants from the Asia region have contributed to Australia’s development historically and will continue to do so in the future.

Students will understand the significant roles imperialism and conflict have played in the Asian region and that this has led to tense relationships between Asian countries, as well as between Asian countries and Western nations. There are a range of political systems within the Asia region. Many countries in the region are increasingly divided in their position on national sovereignty and international intervention.

Through learning about Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia, students will understand that, today, the Asia region is the largest producer and consumer of goods and services in the world and exerts significant influence globally. They will learn that Australia continues to seek opportunities to engage with Asian nations strategically, politically, culturally and economically and that Australia’s future will be determined by the choices we make and how we engage with our regional neighbours. They will understand that current historic shifts in global innovation networks and economic, security and technology systems, alongside global environmental and social challenges, heighten the need for Asia–Australia engagement to continue.

Connection, consultation and collaboration are essential for all people to understand Asia and Indo-Pacific–Australia engagement. Opportunities that can generate diverse cultural perspectives and experiences include opportunities provided by family and local community links; resources such as the Immigration Museum, the Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo, the Melbourne Museum and the National Gallery of Victoria; and connections made through travel initiatives, study programs and social media platforms.

## Defining Asia

There is no simple definition of ‘Asia’. It can be defined in terms of cultural, religious, geographical, historical and language boundaries or commonalities, but these definitions are not simple either.

Geographically, different definitions can be applied to Asia and different subregions can be identified. For example, the United Nations divides the countries of the Asian continent into the subregions of East Asia, South-East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. It does not include Russia as part of Asia, although millions of Russians live in Asia, in the part of Russia east of the Ural Mountains.

Other geographical- or geopolitical-based groupings include Asia, or parts of Asia, alongside nations from other regions, such as:

* the Asia-Pacific, which includes countries across Asia, as well as Australasia and the Pacific Islands
* the Indo-Pacific, which includes the nations of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean and the land masses that surround them
* ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), which is a regional intergovernmental organisation comprising 11 South-East Asian nations, with Australia included as an ASEAN partner.

While the subregions of South-East Asia and South Asia are Australia’s closest neighbours geographically, Australia also has a close connection with the East Asia subregion. These 3 subregions are often the primary focus of Australia’s engagement with Asia, particularly when considering trade in goods and services, but Australia has strong connections across the whole Asia region.

It is important to note that people from the Asia region do not necessarily identify as ‘Asian’, just as most people in Australia may not identify as ‘Oceanians’ but may instead identify as ‘Australian’. It is best to consult with individuals and use their preferred term, such as their nationality or ethnic group.

# Structure

The Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priority is based on 3 sets of organising ideas: Knowing Asia and its diversity, Understanding Asia’s global significance and Growing Asia–Australia engagement.

## Knowing Asia and its diversity

These organising ideas emphasise the need to appreciate the backgrounds, traditions, stories, religions, beliefs and perspectives within and among the nations of the Asia region and the interconnections with Australia. This appreciation is supported by an understanding of Asia and Australia’s interconnected environments – natural, managed and constructed – and the political, economic and technological systems that drive relationships.

## Understanding Asia’s global significance

These organising ideas examine the ways in which different nations in Asia have effected change and contributed historically and in modern times to global developments, with human endeavour expressed through the arts, and political, economic and scientific pursuits. Highlighting key individuals, events, developments or nations reinforces how they have contributed to Asia’s global significance.

## Growing Asia–Australia engagement

These organising ideas include the relationship-building contribution of Australians with Asian heritage and explore how active connections between young people and Asia’s diverse communities can be deepened and contribute to global citizenship. Interaction builds empathy, respects cultural and linguistic differences, and leads to collaborative economic, political and social opportunities and outcomes. These active connections provide lived experiences of global citizenship for students, including through popular culture, and foster relationships that reflect the historical and contemporary interdependency of Australia and the nations of Asia.

# Organising ideas

The organising ideas of the Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priority are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Organising ideas of the Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia cross-curriculum priority

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| Version 2.0 organising ideas |
| Knowing Asia and its diversity |
| Peoples of the Asia region are diverse in their backgrounds, experiences, traditions, cultures, histories, stories, religions, beliefs, perspectives and languages. VC2CCPASK1  |
| The interrelationships between people and the diverse environments and systems across the Asia region have global implications. VC2CCPASK2 |
| Understanding Asia’s global significance |
| The nations of Asia influence historical and contemporary global relationships, including international responses to global developments and events. VC2CCPASU1 |
| The peoples of Asia shape human endeavour through the arts and political, sporting, economic, technological and scientific domains. VC2CCPASU2 |
| Growing Asia–Australia engagement |
| Australia’s deep and continuing relationships with the peoples of Asia develop and influence mutual understandings and expressions of citizenship and culture nationally, regionally and globally. VC2CCPASG1 |
| Australia and Asia are interdependent through a range of historical and contemporary connections. VC2CCPASG2 |

1. Australian Human Rights Commission (n.d.) [*Face the facts: Cultural Diversity*](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/FTFCulturalDiversity.docx), p. 2, Australian Human Rights Commission website. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) [*Permanent migrants in Australia*](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/permanent-migrants-australia/latest-release#:~:text=In%20August%202021%3A,Australian%20citizens%20(1.8%20million%20people)), ABS website. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)