Sustainability

Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0

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# Introduction

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world that is experiencing significant socio-ecological challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation, it is imperative that students are empowered to think critically and ethically to assist them to be compassionate and informed agents of change. Sustainability can be defined as meeting ‘the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is a priority for study that connects and relates relevant aspects of content across multiple curriculum areas. This cross-curriculum priority is based on but not limited to the 4 pillars of sustainable development – economic, social, environmental and cultural[[2]](#footnote-2) – with opportunities to explore partnerships and peace.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In this cross-curriculum priority, economic sustainability refers to managing agricultural and horticultural practices in ways that support long-term economic production and waste management, water usage and carbon emissions. Social sustainability is about individuals having a decent standard of living in a healthy environment and extends to land custodianship that is considerate of the broad community and future generations of all species. Environmental sustainability refers to biodiversity and climate change, and protection, mitigation and rehabilitation strategies for land, soil, water and air. Cultural sustainability refers to maintaining and preserving ways of being, knowing and doing, including, but not limited to, customs, language and heritage; it is also about respecting and supporting cultural expressions and investigating the benefits of integrating traditional knowledge and practices with newer technologies.

Through this cross-curriculum priority, students investigate different knowledge systems and environmental management practices, both locally and globally, including partnerships, to develop the ability to engage with complex and significant ecological challenges, such as preventing biodiversity loss, reducing land degradation and mitigating the effects of climate change.

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority raises students’ awareness of the world around them. It encourages them to consider the impact of their choices and to take positive actions that will ensure ecological integrity and equitable use of natural resources for all species, thus creating a sustainable world. Students investigate and analyse the requirements for sustainable living, including ways to address poverty; appreciate and preserve diversity; and understand interdependence, connections and collaboration across systems. Students investigate, analyse and select ways that they can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

As well as developing an understanding of the impact of individual and collective actions and responsibility, through this cross-curriculum priority students are provided with opportunities to recognise the complexity and beauty of ecosystems and analyse the interconnections between economic, social, environmental and cultural systems and the importance of partnerships and peace.

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority provides opportunities for students to use current knowledge and analyse trends to predict what will happen in the future. When students envision the future, they can ask what actions must be taken to get there. Students reflect on how they interpret and engage with the world and consider possible actions that support more sustainable patterns of living, considering connections to people and places, and ensuring ecological integrity and meeting the need for social and ecological regeneration.

# Structure

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority is based on 4 sets of organising ideas: Interrelationship of systems, Worldviews, Responsible design and Futures thinking.

## Interrelationship of systems

These organising ideas address the interdependence of Earth’s systems (the lithosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere) and the economic, social, environmental and cultural systems that significantly impact Earth’s ecological integrity.

## Worldviews

These organising ideas address the role of worldviews (combinations of attitudes, values and beliefs) that shape individual and community ideas about how the world works and our role in achieving sustainability. Worldviews consider ideas of relationships between people from all cultures, life stages and socioeconomic positions, and values of human and non-human entities.

## Responsible design

Responsible design addresses the role of equity, innovation and creativity in sustainably designed solutions that prioritise notions such as the circular economy, including products, environments, services and waste management. These organising ideas aim to consider design thinking, land custodianship, and how to reduce negative or destructive impacts. Through these organising ideas, students investigate, develop and evaluate the restoration of the health and/or diversity of economic, social, environmental and cultural systems.

## Futures thinking

Through Futures thinking, students engage in critically creative and speculative thinking that seeks many solutions and acknowledges diversity and uncertainty. Futures thinking uses forecasting and backcasting to empower young people and communities to design action that will lead to an equitable, sustainable, inclusive and just future.

# Organising ideas

The organising ideas of the Sustainability cross-curriculum priority are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Organising ideas of the Sustainability cross-curriculum priority

| Version 2.0 organising ideas  |
| --- |
| Interrelationship of systems  |
| All lifeforms are connected through Earth’s systems (the lithosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere), on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival. VC2CCPSIS1 |
| Sustainable patterns of living require the responsible use of resources; circular economies; maintenance of clean air, water and soils; and the restoration of healthy environments and habitats with ecological integrity. VC2CCPSIS2  |
| Economic, social, environmental and cultural systems influence the sustainability of Earth’s systems. VC2CCPSIS3 |
| Worldviews  |
| Worldviews influence local and global action and, therefore, impact the interdependence of Earth’s systems. Worldviews can play a crucial role in achieving sustainability. VC2CCPSWV1 |
| Worldviews are formed by different experiences at a personal, local, national and global level, and are linked to individual, community and political mandates and actions for sustainability. VC2CCPSWV2  |
| Worldviews that are based on, but not limited to, the 4 pillars of sustainable development consider the intergenerational impact of current and future actions. VC2CCPSWV3 |
| Responsible design  |
| Responsibly designed products and services aim to minimise the human impact on the environment and restore the quality, ecological integrity and diversity of economic, social, environmental and cultural systems. VC2CCPSRD1 |
| Responsible design considers unexpected consequences that might impact individuals, communities and ecological integrity in the future. Creative, empathetic and innovative design is integral to the achievement of sustainable living. VC2CCPSRD2 |
| Responsible design requires a recognition and appreciation of land custodianship, past practices, contemporary research and technological advancements, and balanced and informed decisions based on understanding possible interconnected economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts. VC2CCPSRD3 |
| Futures thinking |
| Sustainable futures thinking is based on informed views that consider possible and desirable futures. It leads to individual, community, organisational and political action that reduces risk. VC2CCPSFT1 |
| Sustainable futures thinking creates desirable futures that value local, community, national and global equity and fairness across generations and into the future. VC2CCPSFT2 |
| Sustainable futures thinking requires individuals to think creatively, seek information, identify a variety of possibilities, reflect and evaluate actions, and collaborate with and influence others as they work towards desired futures. VC2CCPSFT3 |

1. United Nations (1987) [*Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf), p. 16, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals website. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (2010) [*Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development*](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/9890675406_%28EN%29_culture_fourth_pillar_sustainable_development_eng_0.pdf), policy statement, United Cities and Local Governments website. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. United Nations (2015) [*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*](https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda)*,* United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development website. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)