ICAS English
and the
Australian Curriculum English (ACE)

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What is ICAS English?

- The International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) English is one of a suite of independent, skills-based assessment products with a competition element. ICAS tests include Computer Skills, English, Mathematics, Science, Spelling, and Writing.

- ICAS English currently extends from Year 2 to Year 12.
ICAS is an international assessment product

- There are more than one million student entries for ICAS tests annually from more than 6,300 schools in Australia and New Zealand.

- In addition, students from more than 20 countries including Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Singapore and South Africa participate in ICAS each year.
ICAS is a unique educational assessment

- ICAS is a comprehensive, generally available suite of academic assessments for students produced annually.
- ICAS is independent of any education department and systemic assessment program.
- ICAS tests are written by subject specialists and comprehensively reviewed to maintain the highest possible quality and to ensure that they accurately assess students’ skills and are relevant to what students are learning at school.
Some misconceptions about ICAS

- ICAS is a national assessment program.
- ICAS is designed only for students with high ability.
ICAS English Assessment Framework

- Since 2006, ICAS English has been aligned to its own assessment framework. These frameworks were developed by carefully examining the curriculum of each Australian state and indentifying common content, skills and overarching principles.

- In addition, curriculum documents from other countries, including New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom were looked at.

- This process of identifying the common aspects of each subject across Australia and overseas curricula has allowed ICAS to operate independently of any given curriculum while remaining relevant to what is taught in classrooms.
ICAS English and the ACE

- There is broad agreement between the ICAS English Framework and the ACE.

- ICAS English can form part of the evidence schools can use to monitor growth as described in the National School Improvement Tool endorsed in 2012 by the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

- If a school takes ICAS annually, then the tracking data in the English reports can assist with the systematic collection of student test data, establish where individual students are in their learning, diagnose details of student learning and monitor learning progress across the years of school.
What does ICAS English assess?

- Reading and language skills in a range of contexts
- Five aspects of texts are assessed and reported
  1. Reading for meaning in literary texts
  2. Reading for meaning in factual texts
  3. Textual devices
  4. Syntax
  5. Vocabulary
Assessment categories and skills

1. Reading – Literary texts
2. Reading – Factual texts

- Main focus is on reading comprehension.
- Recognise tone, attitude and purpose.
- Use and interpret information in diagrams, tables and illustrations.
- Recognise similar or opposing points of view.
- Identify text types, text purposes and character stereotypes.
Assessment categories and skills

3. Textual devices

- Focus on the ability to identify types of literary and rhetorical devices used by writers (e.g. metaphor, alliteration)

- Technical names given to aspects of text (e.g., label, caption, subheading)

- Ability to explain the use of textual devices in specific contexts
Assessment categories and skills

4. Vocabulary

- Focus on the ability to explain the meanings of words and phrases, including the use of synonyms and antonyms
Assessment categories and skills:

5. Syntax

- Focus on the ability to identify correct use of grammar, including pronoun reference, and punctuation (only at lower Primary level)
ICAS English questions

- Based on Bloom’s taxonomy

- Form a continuum from simple retrieval / factual recall questions to higher-order thinking skills on and about texts.
  - Locate
  - Identify
  - Interpret
  - Infer
  - Synthesise information
ACE (F–10) – three interrelated strands

1. **Language**: knowing about the English language

2. **Literature**: understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature

3. **Literacy**: expanding the repertoire of English usage.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 5
ACE (F–10) – three interrelated strands (contd)

- The three interrelated strands support students' growing understanding and use of Standard Australian English (English).

- The three strands focus on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking and writing.

*Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 5*
1. Language – knowing about the English language

- In the Language strand, students develop their knowledge of the English language and how it works.

- Students discover the patterns and purposes of English usage, including spelling, grammar and punctuation at the levels of the word, sentence and extended text, and they study the connections between these levels.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 8
1. Language – text structure and organisation

- Texts are structured to achieve particular purposes.

- Language is used to create texts that are cohesive and coherent.

- Texts about more specialised topics contain more complex language patterns and features.

- The author guides the reader/viewer through the text through effective use of resources at the level of the whole text, the paragraph and the sentence.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 8
1. Language – expressing and developing ideas

- Effective authors control and use an increasingly differentiated range of clause structures, words and word groups, as well as combinations of sound, image, movement, verbal elements and layout.

- The conventions, patterns and generalisations that relate to English spelling involve the origins of words, word endings, Greek and Latin roots, base words and affixes.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 8
2. Literature – understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature

- Aims to engage students in the study of literary texts of personal, cultural, social and aesthetic value.
- Builds students’ knowledge about how language can be used for aesthetic ends, to create particular emotional, intellectual or philosophical effects.
- Students interpret, appreciate, evaluate and create literary texts such as short stories, novels, poetry, prose, plays, film and multimodal texts. Texts recognised as having enduring artistic and cultural value are drawn from world and Australian literature.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 9
2. Literature – context and responding

- Ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters … expressed by authors in texts are drawn from and shaped by different historical, social and cultural contexts.

- Students learn how to … develop and refine their interpretations through discussion and argument.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 9
2. Literature – examining literature

- Explain and analyse the ways in which stories, characters, settings and experiences are reflected in particular literary genres, and how to discuss the appeal of these genres.

- Compare and appraise the ways authors use language and literary techniques and devices to influence readers.

- Understand, interpret, discuss and evaluate how certain stylistic choices can create multiple layers of interpretation and effect.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 9
3. Literacy – expanding the repertoire of English usage

- Interpret … texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy.
- Adapt language to meet the demands of more general or more specialised purposes, audiences and contexts.
- Different ways in which knowledge and opinion are represented and developed in texts, and about how more or less abstraction and complexity can be shown through language.
- Texts from different cultures or historical periods may reveal different patterns in how they go about narrating, informing and persuading.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 10
3. Literacy – interpreting, analysing, evaluating

- Students learn to comprehend what they read and view by applying growing contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge.
- Develop more sophisticated processes for interpreting, analysing, evaluating and critiquing ideas, information and issues from a variety of sources.
- Explore the ways conventions and structures are used in written, digital, multimedia and cinematic texts to entertain, inform and persuade audiences.
- Use … knowledge of textual features to explain how texts make an impact on different audiences.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 10
Texts provide the means for communication ... involve understanding ... imaginative, informative and persuasive texts.

The term ‘literature’ refers to past and present texts across a range of cultural contexts that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value. ... Literature includes a broad range of forms such as novels, poetry, short stories and plays; fiction for young adults and children, ... and a variety of non-fiction. Literary texts also include excerpts from longer texts.

... ‘literature’ is aimed at encouraging teachers ... not only to use texts conventionally understood as ‘literary’, but also to engage students in examining, evaluating and discussing texts in increasingly sophisticated and informed ‘literary’ ways.

Source: ACARA | The Australian Curriculum | Version 5.1 dated Monday, 5 August 2013, p. 8
ICAS English – texts

- Wide variety of texts which narrate, describe, explain, argue, persuade and review.

- Text types include extracts from picture books, novels, poems, play scripts, transcripts of interviews, letters, diary entries, advertisements, webpages, feature articles, opinion pieces and comics.

- These texts cover a range of topics and may include tables, diagrams, maps and other visual information.
ICAS English texts (contd)

- The texts increase in complexity within each paper, moving from simple texts dealing with familiar subjects and topics to complex texts incorporating abstract concepts and sophisticated language structures.

- Texts also increase in complexity from Year 2 to Paper J.

- In accordance with best practice in assessment theory, there are vertical link texts and questions between adjacent year-level tests. These maintain psychometric validity.

- There are also historical link texts from past ICAS tests. These maintain psychometric validity.
ICAS English texts (contd)

- About half of ICAS texts are classified according to the ACE as ‘literature’. These include poetry and extracts from picture books, short stories, novels and plays.

- The remaining ICAS texts include informative and persuasive texts such as interview transcripts, feature articles, webpages, opinion pieces and extracts from science magazines.

- Multimodal texts which cover print-based genres may also be presented.
Applying ICAS English to the ACE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICAS English category</th>
<th>Australian Curriculum strand and substrand</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading – Literary &amp; Reading – Factual</td>
<td>Language: Language for interaction</td>
<td>Year 5: <em>Understand how to move beyond making bare assertions and take account of differing perspectives and points of view</em> (ACELA1502)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading – Literary &amp; Reading – Factual</td>
<td>Language: Text structure and organisation</td>
<td>Year 6: <em>Understand how authors often innovate on text structures and play with language features to achieve particular aesthetic, humorous and persuasive purposes and effects</em> (ACELA1518)</td>
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### Mapping ICAS English to the ACE (2)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading – Literary &amp; Reading – Factual</td>
<td>Language: Expressing and developing ideas</td>
<td>Year 6: <em>Identify and explain how analytical images like figures, tables, diagrams, maps and graphs contribute to our understanding of verbal information in factual and persuasive texts (ACELA1524)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading – Literary &amp; Reading – Factual</td>
<td>Literature: Literature and context</td>
<td>Year 5: <em>Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608)</em></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Reading – Literary &amp; Reading – Factual</td>
<td>Literature: Responding to literature</td>
<td>Year 10: <em>Reflect on, extend, endorse or refute others’ interpretations of and responses to literature</em> <em>(ACELT1640)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading – Literary &amp; Reading – Factual</td>
<td>Literature: Examining literature</td>
<td>Year 3: <em>Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative</em> <em>(ACELT1599)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading – Literary &amp; Factual</td>
<td>Literacy: Texts in context</td>
<td>Year 5: <em>Show how ideas and points of view in texts are conveyed through the use of vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions, objective and subjective language, and that these can change according to context</em> (ACELY1698)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading – Factual</td>
<td>Literacy: Interpreting, analysing, evaluating</td>
<td>Year 8: <em>Analyse and evaluate the ways that text structures and language features vary according to the purpose of the text and the ways that referenced sources add authority to a text</em> (ACELY1732)</td>
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<td>Textual Devices</td>
<td>Language: Text structure and organisation</td>
<td>Year 7: <em>Understand and explain how the text structures and language features of texts become more complex in informative and persuasive texts and identify underlying structures such as taxonomies, cause and effect, and extended metaphors (ACELA1531)</em></td>
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Mapping ICAS English to the ACE (6)

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<tr>
<td>Textual devices</td>
<td>Language: Expressing and developing ideas</td>
<td>Year 3: <em>Identify the effect on audiences of techniques, for example shot size, vertical camera angle and layout in picture books, advertisements and film segments (ACELA1483)</em></td>
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# Mapping ICAS English to the ACE (7)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textual devices</td>
<td>Literature: Examining literature</td>
<td>Year 9: <em>Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes (ACELT1637)</em></td>
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## Mapping ICAS English to the ACE (8)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Language: Language variation and change</td>
<td>Year 5: <em>Understand that the pronunciation, spelling and meanings of words have histories and change over time (ACELA1500)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Language: Expressing and developing ideas</td>
<td>Year 5: <em>Understand the use of vocabulary to express greater precision of meaning, and know that words can have different meanings in different contexts (ACELA1512)</em></td>
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Mapping ICAS English to the ACE (9)

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<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>Language: Text structure and organisation</td>
<td>Year 4: Understand how texts are made cohesive through the use of linking devices including pronoun reference and text connectives (ACELA1491)</td>
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Summary: ICAS English and the ACE

- Teachers, students and parents can be confident that ICAS English addresses the core skills in the ACE.

- ICAS English is a reliable and valuable test instrument that provides an independent assessment of the Language, Literature and Literacy strands of the ACE.

- The comprehensive ICAS English student and school reports, which are delivered within 4–6 weeks of sitting the test, allow meaningful diagnosis and remediation in areas identified as weaknesses.