



Government of **Western Australia**  
School Curriculum and Standards Authority

# POLITICS AND LAW

GENERAL COURSE

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Year 11 syllabus

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

This syllabus is effective from 1 January 2015.

Users of this syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

Syllabuses are formally reviewed by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority on a cyclical basis, typically every five years.

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## Rationale

The study of politics and law provides students with knowledge and understanding of the principles, structures, institutions, processes and practices of political and legal systems. It contributes to students' intellectual, social and ethical development. The Politics and Law General course is an analysis of the processes of decision making concerning society's collective future.

The Politics and Law General course challenges students to examine the effectiveness of political and legal systems using criteria, such as representation, openness, responsiveness and accountability of those systems and come to an understanding of the complexities of governing nations. The course promotes skills of research and analysis as students engage with investigations and critical thinking as they examine opinions and viewpoints of the relevant aspects of the political and legal systems. They are encouraged to use evidence to formulate and support their explanations, which are communicated in a variety of ways.

The Politics and Law General course allows students to gain insights into the social and political values underpinning Australia's political and legal system as well as alternative political and legal systems. It provides students with a basis for engaging in an effective, and informed, way with the political and legal system in the future.

## Course outcomes

The Politics and Law General course is designed to facilitate achievement of the following outcomes.

### Outcome 1 – Political and legal inquiry

Students use inquiry skills to communicate an understanding of the principles, structures, institutions, processes and practices of political and legal systems.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- plan ways to collect and organise information for the purpose of a political and legal investigation
- conduct an investigation using a variety of sources of information
- process and translate information to make findings and judgements
- apply and communicate findings according to purpose and audience.

### Outcome 2 – Political and legal systems

Students understand the operation of, and the relationship between political and legal systems.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand the principles, structures, institutions, processes and practices of political and legal systems
- understand the relationships between making, applying and enforcing the law.

### Outcome 3 – Stability and change in political and legal systems

Students understand the nature of stability and change in political and legal systems.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand that a variety of factors can influence the stability of, and changes to political and legal systems
- understand that individuals and groups can influence the stability of, and changes to political and legal systems.

### Outcome 4 – Citizenship in political and legal systems

Students understand the skills and practices of citizenship and the factors that influence participation in the political and legal system.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand the skills and practices of citizenship that can allow individuals and groups to participate in the political and legal system
- understand that political and legal rights can be influenced by the operation of the political and legal system.

## Organisation

This course is organised into a Year 11 syllabus and a Year 12 syllabus. The cognitive complexity of the syllabus content increases from Year 11 to Year 12.

### Structure of the syllabus

The Year 11 syllabus is divided into two units, each of one semester duration, which are typically delivered as a pair. The notional time for each unit is 55 class contact hours.

#### Unit 1 – Political and legal decision making

This unit examines Australia’s democratic political and legal system, and the participation of individuals and groups within it, and makes comparisons with political and legal decision making in non-democratic political and legal systems.

#### Unit 2 – Civil and political rights

This unit examines the nature of legal disputes in society, and the avenues to resolve them, along with the development of rights and the protection of civil and political rights in Australia and one other political and legal system.

Each unit includes:

- a unit description – a short description of the focus of the unit
- unit content – the content to be taught and learned.

### Organisation of content

The Politics and Law General course develops student learning through three content areas:

- Political and legal systems
- Political and legal issues
- Political and legal research skills.

### Progression from the Year 7–10 curriculum

This syllabus continues to develop student understanding and skills from the Years 7–10 Civics and Citizenship curriculum. It focuses principally on Australia’s political and legal system and continues to provide opportunities to make comparisons with alternative political and legal systems. The examination of continuing, and contemporary, political and legal issues provides opportunities to understand participation in political and legal systems.

The Politics and Law General course continues to develop the skills of inquiry with a greater focus on problem solving, decision making and analysis.

## Representation of the general capabilities

The general capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate the capabilities into the teaching and learning program for the Politics and Law General course. The general capabilities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

### Literacy

Students develop literacy capability as they research, read and analyse sources of information on aspects of Australia's political and legal system and contemporary issues. They learn to understand and use language to discuss and communicate information, concepts and ideas related to the course.

### Numeracy

Students develop and apply numeracy knowledge and skills to analyse, interpret and present information in numerical and graphical form and to make sense of data presented in relation to Australia's political and legal system.

### Information and communication technology capability

Students develop information and communication (ICT) capability as they learn to use it effectively and appropriately to access, create and communicate information and ideas. Students develop the knowledge and skills to use digital technologies to research and source information on Australia's political and legal system, and other systems where required, including through internet search engines and websites, and library catalogues. Students develop and apply their ICT skills through organising and presenting information.

### Critical and creative thinking

Students develop capability in critical and creative thinking as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, clarify concepts and ideas, seek possibilities, consider alternatives and solve problems. Critical thinking skills develop through the investigation of Australia's political and legal system, and other systems as required. Critical and creative thinking is further developed through the examination of contemporary political and legal issues.

### Personal and social capability

Students develop personal and social capability as they learn to understand themselves and others, and manage their relationships, lives, work and learning more effectively. Students are encouraged to develop and apply personal, interpersonal and social skills, behaviours and dispositions through working collaboratively and constructively in groups. This allows them to develop their communication, decision-making, conflict resolution and leadership skills, learning to appreciate the insights and perspectives of others.



### **Ethical understanding**

Students develop ethical understanding as they identify and investigate ethical concepts, values and principles, and understand how reasoning can assist ethical judgement. Students recognise different perspectives and have opportunities to explore ambiguities and ethical considerations related to political and legal issues.

### **Intercultural understanding**

Students develop intercultural understanding as they engage with their own cultures, values and beliefs and those of others. The capability involves students in learning about, and engaging with, diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences and create connections with others in the context of political and legal systems.

## **Representation of the cross-curriculum priorities**

The cross-curriculum priorities address contemporary issues which students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate the priorities into the teaching and learning program for the Politics and Law General course. The cross-curriculum priorities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures**

The Politics and Law General course provides an opportunity for students to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customs, systems of governance, customary lore and perspectives. They increase their understanding of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' experiences of Australia's political and legal system.

### **Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia**

The Politics and Law General course provides an opportunity for students to learn about alternative political and legal systems through Australia's engagement with Asia and to build understanding of the connections between the peoples of Asia and Australia. Students have the opportunity to explore the experiences of people with Asian heritage in Australia's political and legal system.

### **Sustainability**

The Politics and Law General course provides an opportunity for students to learn how environmental and social wellbeing can be impacted by political and legal systems and how individuals and/or groups can work together to develop strategies to promote sustainability.

# Unit 1 – Political and legal decision making

## Unit description

This unit examines the similarities and differences between democratic and non-democratic systems of government; how laws are made and enforced in Australia compared to one other political and legal system; and the means of participation by individuals and groups in Australia and an alternative political and legal system.

## Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

### Political and legal systems

At the completion of this unit, students should have an understanding of the principles of the rule of law, democracy, totalitarianism, the Westminster system, representative government, social cohesion, and citizenship.

- functions of laws
- characteristics of an effective law
- the relationship between societal values and the law
- political decision making in Australia's Westminster system and one non-democratic country
- the ways individuals, political parties and pressure groups can participate in the Australian political and legal system
- the ways individuals and groups can participate or oppose in one non-democratic political and legal system, such as a military regime, a one party state or a theocracy
- how laws are made in Australia, both statute and common law, making reference to the hierarchy of courts and precedent
- how laws are made in one non-democratic country

### Political and legal issues

The political and legal issues are best addressed in combination with the relevant political and legal systems content. This requires an examination of:

- at least one issue centering on law enforcement in Australia and/or a non-democratic country.

## Political and legal research skills

Research provides the opportunity to examine aspects of political and legal systems. The following skills will be developed in this unit.

### Research and analysis

- identify, define, distinguish and analyse principles and terms
- describe, discuss and analyse the operation and key features of a political and legal system
- analyse statute law, common law, political decisions and legal decisions
- distinguish between fact and opinion, theory and practice and formal and informal processes
- form and justify conclusions
- predict intended or unintended consequences

### Communication

- use political and legal formats, terminology and techniques to suit an audience
- utilise techniques to explore ideas and construct reasoned arguments
- use an appropriate method of referencing

## Unit 2 – Civil and political rights

### Unit description

This unit examines the mechanisms for dispute resolution in Western Australia; the development of human rights over time; the protection of civil and political rights in Australia and one other country/system; and how individuals and groups may participate to effect change to political and legal decisions.

### Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

#### Political and legal systems

At the completion of this unit, students should have an understanding of the principles of natural justice, the rule of law, civil rights, political rights and fairness.

- types of legal disputes
- different avenues for individuals and groups to resolve disputes
- overview of the adversarial system with reference to Western Australia
- overview of the alternatives to the adversarial system
- factors that promote and limit access to dispute resolution processes
- development of rights that emerged from the Magna Carta (1215), the Glorious Revolution (1688), the American Revolution (1775–1789), the French Revolution (1787–1799) and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- the ways of protecting human rights in Australia, including in the Constitution, common law, statutory rights, and charter of rights, such as the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Victoria) and the *Human Rights Act 2004* (Australian Capital Territory)
- civil and political rights within one other country/system and the extent to which they are protected
- how individuals respond when rights are being ignored or abused by the political and legal system

#### Political and legal issues

The political and legal issues are best addressed in combination with the relevant political and legal systems content. This requires an examination of:

- how individuals exercise civil and political rights to express dissatisfaction with political and legal decisions and effect change in Australia and/or one other country.

## Political and legal research skills

Research provides the opportunity to examine aspects of political and legal systems. The following skills will be developed in this unit.

### Research and analysis

- identify, define, distinguish and analyse principles and terms
- describe, discuss and analyse the operation and key features of a political and legal system
- analyse statute law, common law, political decisions and legal decisions
- distinguish between fact and opinion, theory and practice and formal and informal processes
- form and justify conclusions
- predict intended or unintended consequences

### Communication

- use political and legal formats, terminology and techniques to suit an audience
- utilise techniques to explore ideas and construct reasoned arguments
- use an appropriate method of referencing

## School-based assessment

The Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Manual contains essential information on principles, policies and procedures for school-based assessment that needs to be read in conjunction with this syllabus.

Teachers design school-based assessment tasks to meet the needs of students. The table below provides details of the assessment types for the Politics and Law General Year 11 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

**Assessment table – Year 11**

Type of assessment	Weighting
<p><b>Investigation</b></p> <p>Students examine a political or legal concept, event or issue. The investigation can be based on sources provided by the teacher, or require students to locate sources for research.</p> <p>Source material can be drawn from print and electronic media, journal articles, texts, speeches, court judgements or statutes and can include information, such as reportage, analysis, opinion pieces, news, current affairs and documentary transcripts and/or programs, opinion polls, election results, legal decisions, Bills/Acts, pictures and/or letters.</p> <p>The format of the final presentation can be written, digital or oral.</p> <p>One investigation should be completed for each unit.</p>	20%
<p><b>Explanation</b></p> <p>A response in the form of a short answer or extended answer.</p> <p>A short answer is a response to a series of closed or partially open questions that can require the student to respond to a question, statement or proposition. The question can require a definition, description, explanation, discussion and/or comparison.</p> <p>An extended answer, that can be scaffolded or sectionalised. The student could be required to respond to a question, statement or proposition. The question can require description, discussion, examination, and/or comparison.</p> <p>At least two explanation tasks should be completed under test conditions.</p>	30%
<p><b>Source analysis</b></p> <p>Students respond to questions based on one or more sources. Source material can be drawn from print and electronic media, journal articles, texts, speeches, court judgements or statutes and can include information, such as reportage, analysis, opinion pieces, news, current affairs and documentary transcripts and/or programs, opinion polls, election results, legal decisions, Bills/Acts, pictures and/or letters.</p> <p>Questions can require both short and longer written responses.</p> <p>At least two source analysis tasks should be completed under test conditions.</p>	20%
<p><b>Test</b></p> <p>Can be conducted during or at the end of each semester and/or unit.</p>	30%

Teachers are required to use the assessment table to develop an assessment outline for the pair of units (or for a single unit where only one is being studied).

The assessment outline must:

- include a set of assessment tasks
- include a general description of each task
- indicate the unit content to be assessed

- indicate a weighting for each task and each assessment type
- include the approximate timing of each task (for example, the week the task is conducted, or the issue and submission dates for an extended task).

In the assessment outline for the pair of units, each assessment type must be included at least twice. In the assessment outline where a single unit is being studied, each assessment type must be included at least once.

The set of assessment tasks must provide a representative sampling of the content for Unit 1 and Unit 2.

Assessment tasks not administered under test/controlled conditions require appropriate validation/authentication processes. For example, student performance for an investigation could be validated by, a student/teacher interview; or use of a learning journal or research organiser; or a written task completed in class.

## Grading

Schools report student achievement in terms of the following grades:

Grade	Interpretation
<b>A</b>	Excellent achievement
<b>B</b>	High achievement
<b>C</b>	Satisfactory achievement
<b>D</b>	Limited achievement
<b>E</b>	Very low achievement

The teacher prepares a ranked list and assigns the student a grade for the pair of units (or for a unit where only one unit is being studied). The grade is based on the student's overall performance as judged by reference to a set of pre-determined standards. These standards are defined by grade descriptions and annotated work samples. The grade descriptions for the Politics and Law General Year 11 syllabus are provided in Appendix 1. They can also be accessed, together with annotated work samples, through the Guide to Grades link on the course page of the Authority website at [www.scsa.wa.edu.au](http://www.scsa.wa.edu.au)

To be assigned a grade, a student must have had the opportunity to complete the education program, including the assessment program (unless the school accepts that there are exceptional and justifiable circumstances).

Refer to the WACE Manual for further information about the use of a ranked list in the process of assigning grades.

## Appendix 1 – Grade descriptions Year 11

<b>A</b>	Presents a discussion or an argument demonstrating some reason about political and legal decision making or civil and political rights.
	Provides predominantly accurate descriptions of political and legal decision making or civil and political rights.
	Utilises relevant examples in attempting to support explanations.
	Communicates predominantly using relevant political and legal terminology.
<b>B</b>	Makes predominately accurate statements about political and legal decision making or civil and political rights.
	Provides generally accurate descriptions of political and legal decision making or civil and political rights.
	Utilises mostly relevant examples in attempting to support explanations.
	Communicates using mostly relevant, political and legal terminology.
<b>C</b>	Makes general statements about political and legal decision making or civil and political rights.
	Provides general descriptions of political and legal decision making or civil and political rights.
	Utilises some relevant examples in attempting to support explanations.
	Communicates using little relevant political and legal terminology.
<b>D</b>	Makes limited statements about political and legal decision making or civil and political rights.
	Provides limited descriptions of political and legal decision making or civil and political rights.
	Includes minimal examples.
	Communicates using minimal political and legal terminology.
<b>E</b>	Does not meet the requirements of a D grade and/or has completed insufficient assessment tasks to be assigned a higher grade.