



ABORIGINAL AND INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

ATAR course

**Year 12 syllabus – What’s changing: Rationale and Aims
For teaching in 2027**

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

Background

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment for reviewing the nomenclature of courses, the Authority has updated the rationale and aims of each syllabus.

The revised rationale and aims are aligned with the mapping of the General Capabilities to provide clear connections between the rationale, aims and syllabus content. The rationale outlines what the subject is about and why it is important. It describes what students can expect to study in the course, along with the knowledge, skills and understandings they will develop throughout the course. It also explains how these can be applied in everyday life and references potential future pathways, outlining how students might connect what they learn in the course to further education, training and employment opportunities.

Important information

WACE Refreshment: Reviewing the nomenclature of courses

This document contains information that will be included in the syllabus effective from 1 January 2027.

Users of the syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

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

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Rationale

The Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies ATAR course explores the histories, cultures and contemporary experiences of Australian First Nations Peoples, emphasising their enduring connections to Country and their contributions to Australian identity. The course fosters intercultural understanding, respect and reconciliation by examining diverse perspectives, historical truths and social justice issues. Through critical thinking, ethical research and intercultural communication, students develop skills to engage meaningfully in discussions on complex cultural and historical topics.

Students engage with First Nations Peoples' connections to Country, the impact of historical and contemporary policies and the ongoing journey of truth-telling and reconciliation. They explore the continuing impact of colonisation, including dispossession, the Stolen Generations and the struggle for land rights, while also examining the strength and resilience of First Nations Peoples in preserving and revitalising culture. Students engage with First Nations voices through literature, oral histories, film, policy analysis, and case studies of community initiatives. They compare the experiences of Australian First Nations Peoples with those of First Nations Peoples globally, developing an intercultural perspective on historical injustices and social change.

Students learn to analyse diverse perspectives, assess the reliability and bias of sources and engage in respectful and informed discussions. The course enhances students' ability to navigate cultural differences with empathy, strengthening their skills in cross-cultural communication and problem-solving. Through inquiry-based learning, students refine their ability to interpret evidence, construct well-supported arguments and apply ethical research practices, privileging First Nations Peoples' voices and perspectives.

The knowledge and skills gained through the course have real-world applications as students develop the ability to work effectively in culturally diverse environments and contribute to reconciliation efforts in meaningful ways. Whether through community engagement, policy discussions, environmental conservation or education, students will be equipped to support initiatives that promote equity, respect and inclusion, and participate in broader discussions about reconciliation, national identity, human rights and global citizenship.

This course prepares students for further education and careers in a wide range of fields where cultural competence, ethical awareness and intercultural understanding are essential. Potential pathways include education, social work and community services, health and wellbeing, environmental and land management, law and justice, tourism and cultural interpretation, media and communications, arts and cultural industries, policy and government, and research. Students gain transferable skills in critical thinking, ethical research, respectful communication and cultural responsiveness, supporting active citizenship and lifelong learning.

Aims

The Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies ATAR course aims to develop students’:

- knowledge and understanding of Australian First Nations Peoples as the oldest living continuous cultures in the world
- awareness of the ways First Nations Peoples’ identities are expressed through unique ways of being, knowing and doing
- knowledge and understanding that there are different and changing perspectives of history and that these inform and influence people’s actions
- knowledge and understanding that members of different cultures have different world views as a result of their beliefs, values, practices and experiences
- appreciation of the diversity and richness of Australian First Nations Peoples’ histories and cultures
- critical thinking skills, including ethical research skills
- empathy and respect for the ways people think, feel and act
- growth as active and informed advocates for a just and inclusive world
- engagement in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world’s oldest living continuous cultures.