



# **POLITICS AND LAW**

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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 Politics and Law ATAR course provides critical study of governance and the processes of decision-making concerning society's collective future. It examines the structures and processes through which individuals and groups with different interests, beliefs and goals deliberate and negotiate to make choices, respond to changing circumstances and enact laws. The course also examines the system of laws regulating the behaviours of people in a community or society to provide consistency and justice for all.

By studying the course, students develop an understanding of the interrelationship between politics and law in the Australian and alternative political and legal systems. They explore the roles, powers and relationship between the judicial, executive and legislative arms of government, which together constitute how societies are governed. Students examine how the three branches of government are held accountable and how the rights of individuals and groups are protected. They learn how history, and changing social and cultural values, influence how people interact with the political and legal system.

Students develop knowledge and understanding of the principles, structures, institutions, processes and practices of political and legal systems, primarily in Australia and, where appropriate, other countries. The course challenges students to critically examine the effectiveness of political and legal systems using criteria such as openness, responsiveness and accountability. Students gain an understanding of both historical and contemporary political and legal issues in society.

The course develops skills and values that enable students to become informed, active and effective participants in the political and legal decisions that affect their everyday lives. It contributes to their understanding of the functioning and issues associated with democratic and non-democratic governments, political and legal power, accountability and rights.

The Politics and Law ATAR course is valuable for careers in law, political advocacy, public administration, international relations, foreign affairs, community development, teaching, journalism, human resource management, government and commerce.

## Aims

The Politics and Law ATAR course aims to develop students’:

- understanding of liberal democracy, the rule of law and associated concepts
- understanding of the operation of, and the relationship between, the legislature, executive and judiciary in the Australian political and legal system and the power wielded within the system by various institutions
- understanding of the issues arising within the Australian political and legal system compared to other countries
- understanding of the role of the individual and groups within the political and legal system and the various ways that each can interact within a democracy
- understanding of the accountability of political and legal systems and the ways in which human rights are protected or undermined
- skills in research, analysis and communication through critical examination of historical and contemporary issues in Australia’s political and legal system and those of another country
- skills in the application of concepts to the functioning of Australia’s political and legal system and alternative systems.