



BIOLOGY

ATAR course

Year 11 syllabus for teaching from 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.

Important information

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) has revised the course rationale and aims, and updated the General Capabilities to create clearer connections with the syllabus content.

This syllabus is effective from 1 January 2027.

Users of this 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 Biology ATAR course gives students insight into the fascinating diversity of life as it has evolved and as it interacts and functions. Investigation of biological systems and their interactions, from cellular processes to ecosystem dynamics, has led to knowledge and understanding that enable us to explore and explain everyday observations, find solutions to biological issues, and understand the processes of biological continuity and change over time. Biology helps us understand life processes, advances medicine, supports environmental conservation, improves agriculture and drives technological innovation. It plays a crucial role in addressing health, environmental and food security challenges.

Students study ecosystems as interconnected systems, focusing on the relationships between biotic and abiotic components. They explore energy and matter flow, species interactions and how measurements of biodiversity help compare ecosystems. They also use classification tools to identify organisms and explore the role of global collaboration, technology and scientific knowledge in studying and conserving biodiversity. They take part in fieldwork, collecting and analysing data from local ecosystems and connecting their findings to broader global contexts. Students explore cells as the basic unit of life, focusing on how they exchange materials and the processes of photosynthesis, respiration and enzyme action. They also study how multicellular organisms organise cells into systems for efficient material movement. They use inquiry skills like dissection and microscopy to understand the relationship between structure and function, while considering ethical issues in biological research.

The course explores ways in which scientists work collaboratively and individually in a range of integrated fields. Students develop their investigative, analytical and communication skills through field, laboratory and research investigations of living systems and through critical evaluation of the development, ethics, applications and influences of contemporary biological knowledge in a range of contexts.

Students gain skills and understandings that prepare them to understand, address and successfully manage environmental, health and sustainability challenges facing society in the twenty-first century. These include the biosecurity and resilience of ecosystems, the health and wellbeing of organisms and their populations, and the sustainability of biological resources. Students learn to use their understanding of the interconnectedness of biological systems when evaluating both the impact of human activity and the strategies proposed to address major biological challenges.

Studying the course provides students with skills and understandings that are valuable to a wide range of further study pathways and careers. Understanding of biological concepts, as well as general science knowledge and skills, is relevant to many fields, including agriculture, biotechnology, environmental rehabilitation, biosecurity, quarantine, conservation, ecotourism and medical, veterinary, food and marine sciences. The course also provides a foundation for students to critically consider and to make informed decisions about contemporary biological issues in their everyday lives.

Aims

The Biology ATAR course aims to develop students':

- understanding of how biological systems interact and are interrelated; the flow of matter and energy through and between these systems; and the processes by which they persist and change
- understanding of major biological concepts, theories and models related to biological systems at all scales, from subcellular processes to ecosystem dynamics
- appreciation of how biological knowledge has developed over time and continues to develop; how scientists use biology in a wide range of applications; and how biological knowledge influences society in local, regional and global contexts
- ability to plan and carry out fieldwork, laboratory and other research investigations, including the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and the interpretation of evidence
- ability to use sound, evidence-based arguments creatively and analytically when evaluating claims and applying biological knowledge
- ability to communicate biological understanding, findings, arguments and conclusions using appropriate representations, modes and genres.

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 – Ecosystems and biodiversity

In this unit, students analyse abiotic and biotic ecosystem components and their interactions, using classification systems for data collection, comparison and evaluation.

Unit 2 – From single cells to multicellular organisms

In this unit, students investigate the interdependent components of the cell system and the multiple interacting systems in multicellular organisms.

Each unit includes:

- a unit description – a short description of the focus of the unit
- learning outcomes – a set of statements describing the learning expected as a result of studying the unit
- unit content – the content to be taught and learned.

Organisation of content

Science strand descriptions

The Biology ATAR course has three interrelated strands: Science Inquiry Skills, Science as a Human Endeavour and Science Understanding which build on students' learning in the Year 7–10 Science curriculum. The three strands of the Biology ATAR course should be taught in an integrated way. The content descriptions for Science Inquiry Skills, Science as a Human Endeavour and Science Understanding have been written so that this integration is possible in each unit.

Science Inquiry Skills

Science inquiry involves identifying and posing questions; planning, conducting and reflecting on investigations; processing, analysing and interpreting data; and communicating findings. This strand is concerned with evaluating claims, investigating ideas, solving problems, reasoning, drawing valid conclusions, and developing evidence-based arguments.

Science investigations are activities in which ideas, predictions or hypotheses are tested and conclusions are drawn in response to a question or problem. Investigations can involve a range of activities, including experimental testing, field work, locating and using information sources, conducting surveys, and using modelling and simulations.

In science investigations, the collection and analysis of data to provide evidence plays a major role. This can involve collecting or extracting information and reorganising data in the form of tables, graphs, flow charts, diagrams, text, keys, spreadsheets and databases.

The analysis of data to identify and select evidence, and the communication of findings, involve the selection, construction and use of specific representations, including mathematical relationships, symbols and diagrams.

Through the Biology ATAR course, students will continue to develop their science inquiry skills, building on the skills acquired in the Year 7–10 Science curriculum. Each unit provides specific skills to be taught. These specific skills align with the Science as a Human Endeavour and Science Understanding content of the unit.

Science as a Human Endeavour

Through science, we seek to improve our understanding and explanations of the natural world. The Science as a Human Endeavour strand highlights the development of science as a unique way of knowing and doing, and explores the use and influence of science in society.

As science involves the construction of explanations based on evidence, the development of science concepts, models and theories is dynamic and involves critique and uncertainty. Science concepts, models and theories are reviewed as their predictions and explanations are continually re-assessed through new evidence, often through the application of new technologies. This review process involves a diverse range of scientists working within an increasingly global community of practice and can involve the use of international conventions and activities such as peer review.

The use and influence of science are shaped by interactions between science and a wide range of social, economic, ethical and cultural factors. The application of science may provide great benefits to individuals, the community and the environment, but may also pose risks and have unintended

consequences. As a result, decision making about socio-scientific issues often involves consideration of multiple lines of evidence and a range of stakeholder needs and values. As an ever-evolving body of knowledge, science frequently informs public debate, but is not always able to provide definitive answers.

Science Understanding

Science understanding is evident when a person selects and integrates appropriate science concepts, models and theories to explain and predict phenomena, and applies those concepts, models and theories to new situations. Models in science can include diagrams, physical replicas, mathematical representations, word-based analogies (including laws and principles) and computer simulations. Development of models involves selection of the aspects of the system(s) to be included in the model, and thus models have inherent approximations, assumptions and limitations.

The Science Understanding content in each unit develops students' understanding of the key concepts, models and theories that underpin the subject, and of the strengths and limitations of different models and theories for explaining and predicting complex phenomena.

Safety

Science learning experiences may involve the use of potentially hazardous substances and/or hazardous equipment. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that duty of care is exercised in relation to the health and safety of all students and that school practices meet the requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth), in addition to relevant State health and safety guidelines.

Animal ethics

Through a consideration of research ethics as part of Science Inquiry Skills, students will examine their own ethical position, draw on ethical perspectives when designing investigation methods, and ensure that any activities that impact on living organisms comply with the *Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* (www.nhmrc.gov.au).

Any teaching activities that involve the care and use of, or interaction with, animals must comply with the *Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*, in addition to relevant State guidelines.

Mathematical skills expected of students studying the Biology ATAR course

The Biology ATAR course requires students to use the mathematical skills they have developed through the Year 7–10 Mathematics curriculum, in addition to the numeracy skills they have developed through the Science Inquiry Skills strand of the Science curriculum.

Within the Science Inquiry Skills strand, students are required to gather, represent and analyse numerical data to identify the evidence that forms the basis of scientific arguments, claims or conclusions. In gathering and recording numerical data, students are required to make measurements using appropriate units to an appropriate degree of accuracy.

It is assumed that students will be able to:

- perform calculations involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of quantities
- perform approximate evaluations of numerical expressions
- express fractions as percentages, and percentages as fractions
- calculate percentages
- recognise and use ratios
- transform decimal notation to power of ten notation
- substitute physical quantities into an equation using consistent units so as to calculate one quantity and check the dimensional consistency of such calculations
- solve simple algebraic equations
- comprehend and use the symbols/notations $<$, $>$, Δ , $\approx$
- translate information between graphical, numerical and algebraic forms
- distinguish between discrete and continuous data then select appropriate forms, variables and scales for constructing graphs
- construct and interpret frequency tables and diagrams, pie charts and histograms
- describe and compare data sets using mean, median and inter-quartile range
- interpret the slope of a linear graph.

Progression from the Years 7–10 curriculum

This syllabus continues to develop student understanding and skills from the Years 7–10 Science curriculum, Science Inquiry and Science Understanding. In the Science Understanding strand, the Biology curriculum draws on knowledge and understanding from across the four sub-strands of Biological, Physical, Chemical and Earth and Space Sciences.

In particular, the Biology curriculum continues to develop the key concepts in the Biological Sciences sub-strand: that a diverse range of living things have evolved on Earth over hundreds of millions of years, that living things are interdependent and interact with each other and their environment, and that the form and features of living things are related to the functions their systems perform.

Representation of the General Capabilities

The General Capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that will support students to live and work successfully now and into the future. They are not assessed unless identified within the specified unit content. Teachers should find opportunities to incorporate the following General Capabilities into the teaching and learning program for the Biology ATAR course.

Critical and creative thinking

Critical and creative thinking is developed in the course as students use the science inquiry process to construct, review and revise questions and hypotheses about increasingly complex and abstract scenarios and to design related investigation methods. Students interpret and evaluate data; interrogate, select and cross-reference evidence; and analyse processes, interpretations, conclusions and claims for validity and reliability, including reflecting on their own processes and conclusions. Science is a creative endeavour and students devise innovative solutions to problems, predict possibilities, envisage consequences and speculate on possible outcomes as they develop Science Understanding and Science Inquiry Skills. They also appreciate the role of critical and creative individuals and the central importance of critique and review in the development and innovative application of science.

Ethical understanding

Ethical understanding in Biology involves considering the implications of biological research and applications. Students learn to apply ethical guidelines in conducting their own research, and consider the implications of their investigations on others, the environment and living organisms. They use scientific information to evaluate the claims and actions of others and to inform ethical decisions about a range of biological issues and consider both current needs and future impacts.

Literacy

Literacy is developed in the course as students refine their Science Inquiry Skills and study content presented through the Science as a Human Endeavour and Science Understanding strands. Students interpret and create detailed descriptions, explanations and arguments relevant to biological processes and systems. They also develop skills in interpreting and producing multimodal texts like diagrams, biological drawings and flow charts, which are essential for effectively communicating complex scientific information.

Numeracy

Students develop their numeracy in the course by applying a wide range of Science Inquiry Skills, including making and recording observations; ordering, representing and analysing data; and interpreting trends and relationships. They employ numeracy skills to interpret complex representations, and to appreciate the ways in which biological systems are structured, interact and change across spatial and temporal scales. They engage in analysis of data, including issues relating to reliability and probability, and they interpret and manipulate mathematical relationships to calculate and predict values.

Addressing the other General Capabilities

Although the following General Capabilities have not been identified as a focus in the Biology ATAR Year 11 syllabus, teachers may find opportunities to incorporate these capabilities into the teaching and learning program.

- Digital literacy
- Intercultural understanding
- Personal and social capability

Such opportunities may occur through the application of different contexts, pedagogical practices and/or assessment strategies that relate to the syllabus as part of the teaching and learning program.

Summary representation of the General Capabilities in the Biology ATAR course

The unit content and assessment types for this course provide students with the opportunity to develop the General Capabilities summarised in the table below.

Year	Course	Course type	General Capabilities						
			CCT	DL	EU	IU	L	N	PSC
Year 11	Biology (AEBLY)	ATAR	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Year 12	Biology (ATBLY)	ATAR	✓		✓		✓	✓	

Key

CCT: Critical and creative thinking, DL: Digital literacy, EU: Ethical understanding, IU: Intercultural understanding, L: Literacy, N: Numeracy, PSC: Personal and social capability

Representation of the Cross-curriculum Priorities

The Cross-curriculum Priorities address contemporary issues that students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate the priorities into the teaching and learning program for the Biology ATAR 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

Contexts that draw on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures provide opportunities for students to recognise the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' knowledge in developing a richer understanding of the Australian environment. Students could develop an appreciation of the unique Australian biota and its interactions, the impacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People on their environments, and the ways in which the Australian landscape has changed over tens of thousands of years. They could examine the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' knowledge of ecosystems has developed over time and the spiritual significance of Country/Place.

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

Contexts that draw on Asian scientific research and development and collaborative endeavours in the Asia Pacific region provide an opportunity for students to investigate Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia. Students explore the diverse environments of the Asia region and develop an appreciation that interaction between human activity and these environments continues to influence the region, including Australia, and has significance for the rest of the world. By examining developments in biological science, students appreciate that the Asia region plays an important role in scientific research and development, including through collaboration with Australian scientists, in such areas as medicine, natural resource management, biosecurity and food security.

Sustainability

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority is explicitly addressed in the Biology ATAR syllabus. Biology provides authentic contexts for exploring, investigating and understanding the function and interactions of biotic and abiotic systems across a range of spatial and temporal scales. By investigating the relationships between biological systems and system components, and how systems respond to change, students develop an appreciation for the interconnectedness of the biosphere. Students appreciate that biological science provides the basis for decision making in many areas of society and that these decisions can impact on the Earth system. They understand the importance of using science to predict possible effects of human and other activity, and to develop management plans or alternative technologies that minimise these effects and provide for a more sustainable future.

Unit 1 – Ecosystems and biodiversity

Unit description

The current view of the biosphere as a dynamic system composed of Earth's diverse, interrelated and interacting ecosystems developed from the work of eighteenth and nineteenth century naturalists who collected, classified, measured and mapped the distribution of organisms and environments around the world. In this unit, students investigate and describe a number of diverse ecosystems, exploring the range of biotic and abiotic components to understand the dynamics, diversity and underlying unity of these systems.

Students develop an understanding of the processes involved in the movement of energy and matter in ecosystems. They investigate ecosystem dynamics, including interactions within and between species, and interactions between abiotic and biotic components of ecosystems. They also investigate how measurements of abiotic factors, population numbers and species diversity, and descriptions of species interactions, can form the basis for spatial and temporal comparisons between ecosystems. Students use classification keys to identify organisms, describe the biodiversity in ecosystems, investigate patterns in relationships between organisms, and aid scientific communication.

Through the investigation of appropriate contexts, students explore how international collaboration, evidence from multiple disciplines and the use of ICT and other technologies have contributed to the study and conservation of national, regional and global biodiversity. They investigate how scientific knowledge is used to offer valid explanations and reliable predictions, and the ways in which scientific knowledge interacts with social, economic, cultural and ethical factors.

Fieldwork is an important part of this unit. Fieldwork provides valuable opportunities for students to work together to collect first-hand data and to experience local ecosystem interactions. In order to understand the interconnectedness of organisms, the physical environment and human activity, students analyse and interpret data collected through investigation of a local environment. They will also use sources relating to other Australian, regional and global environments.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, students:

- understand how classification helps to organise, analyse and communicate data about biodiversity
- understand that ecosystem diversity and dynamics can be described and compared with reference to biotic and abiotic components and their interactions
- understand how theories and models have developed based on evidence from multiple disciplines; and the uses and limitations of biological knowledge in a range of contexts
- use science inquiry skills to design, conduct, evaluate and communicate investigations into biodiversity and flows of matter and energy in a range of ecosystems
- evaluate, with reference to empirical evidence, claims about relationships between and within species, diversity of and within ecosystems, and energy and matter flows
- communicate biological understanding using qualitative and quantitative representations in appropriate modes and genres.

Unit content

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

Science Inquiry Skills

- identify, research and construct questions for investigation; propose hypotheses; and predict possible outcomes
- design investigations, including the procedure(s) to be followed, the materials required, and the type and amount of primary and/or secondary data to be collected; conduct risk assessments; and consider research ethics, including the ethics of research involving living organisms
- conduct investigations, including using ecosystem surveying techniques (quadrats, line transects and capture-recapture) safely, competently and methodically for the collection of valid and reliable data
- represent data in meaningful and useful ways; organise and analyse data to identify trends, patterns and relationships; qualitatively describe sources of measurement error and limitations in data; and select, synthesise and use evidence to make and justify conclusions
- interpret a range of scientific and media texts, and evaluate processes, claims and conclusions by considering the quality of available evidence; and use reasoning to construct scientific arguments
- select, construct and use appropriate representations, including classification keys, food webs and biomass pyramids, to communicate conceptual understanding, solve problems and make predictions
- communicate to specific audiences and for specific purposes using appropriate language, nomenclature, genres and modes, including scientific reports

Science as a Human Endeavour

- classification systems are based on international conventions and are subject to change through debate and resolution; changes are based on all currently available evidence
- identification and classification of conservation reserve areas (terrestrial and marine) requires consideration of the commercial and recreational uses of the area, as well as Indigenous Peoples' usage rights
- keystone species may be special targets for conservation efforts; keystone species theory has informed many conservation strategies. Differing views about the effectiveness of single-species conservation in maintaining complex ecosystem dynamics is subject to debate
- international agreements about biodiversity encourage international cooperation in the protection of unique locations, including
 - World Heritage sites, for example, Shark Bay, Great Barrier Reef
 - biodiversity hotspots, for example, South West WA
 - international migration routes and areas used for breeding, for example, by birds, whales, turtles, whale sharks
- contemporary technologies, including satellite sensing and remote monitoring enable improved monitoring of habitat and species population change over time

Science Understanding

Describing biodiversity

- biodiversity includes the diversity of genes, species and ecosystems; measures of biodiversity rely on classification and are used to make comparisons across spatial and temporal scales
- biological classification is hierarchical and based on molecular sequences, different levels of similarity of physical features and methods of reproduction
- biological classification systems reflect evolutionary relatedness between groups of organisms
- most common definitions of species rely on morphological or genetic similarity or the ability to interbreed to produce fertile offspring in natural conditions – but in all cases, exceptions are found
- ecosystems are diverse, composed of varied habitats, consisting of a range of biotic and abiotic factors, and can be described in terms of their component species, species interactions and the abiotic factors that make up the environment
- relationships and interactions within a species and between species in ecosystems include predation, competition, symbiosis (mutualism, commensalism and parasitism), collaboration and disease
- in addition to biotic factors, abiotic factors, including climate and substrate, can be used to describe and classify environments

Ecosystem dynamics

- the biotic components of an ecosystem transfer and transform energy, originating primarily from the sun, and matter to produce biomass; and interact with abiotic components to facilitate biogeochemical cycling, including carbon and nitrogen cycling; these interactions can be represented using food webs and biomass pyramids
- species or populations, including those of microorganisms, fill specific ecological niches; the competitive exclusion principle postulates that no two species can occupy the same niche in the same environment for an extended period of time
- the dynamic nature of populations influence population size, density, composition and distribution
- keystone species play a critical role in maintaining the structure of the community; the impact of a reduction in numbers or the disappearance of keystone species on an ecosystem is greater than would be expected, based on their relative abundance or total biomass
- fire is a dynamic factor in Australian ecosystems and has different effects on biodiversity
- ecosystems have carrying capacities that limit the number of organisms (within populations) they support, and can be impacted by changes to abiotic and biotic factors, including climatic events
- ecological succession involves changes in the populations of species present in a habitat; these changes impact the abiotic and biotic interactions in the community, which in turn influence further changes in the species present and their population size

- human activities that can affect biodiversity and can impact on the magnitude, duration and speed of ecosystem change include examples of
 - habitat destruction, fragmentation or degradation, including erosion and dryland salinity
 - the introduction of invasive species
 - unsustainable use of natural resources
 - the impact of pollutants, including biomagnification and eutrophication
 - emissions contributing to the enhanced greenhouse effect which impact climate change
- conservation strategies used to maintain biodiversity are
 - genetic strategies, including gene/seed banks and captive breeding programs
 - environmental strategies, including revegetation and control of introduced species
 - management strategies, including protected areas and restricted commercial and recreational access
- models of ecosystem interactions (food webs, successional models) can be used to predict the impact of change and are based on interpretation of and extrapolation from sample data (data derived from ecosystem surveying techniques); the reliability of the model is determined by the representativeness of the sampling

Unit 2 – From single cells to multicellular organisms

Unit description

The cell is the basic unit of life. Although cell structure and function are very diverse, all cells possess some common features: all prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells need to exchange materials with their immediate external environment in order to maintain the chemical processes vital for cell functioning. In this unit, students examine inputs and outputs of cells to develop an understanding of the chemical nature of cellular systems, both structurally and functionally, and the processes required for cell survival. Students investigate the ways in which matter moves and energy is transformed and transferred in the processes of photosynthesis and respiration, and the role of enzymes in controlling biochemical systems.

Multicellular organisms typically consist of a number of interdependent systems of cells organised into tissues, organs and organ systems. Students examine the structure and function of plant and animal systems at cell and tissue levels in order to describe how they facilitate the efficient provision or removal of materials to and from all cells of the organism.

Through the investigation of appropriate contexts, students explore how international collaboration, evidence from multiple disciplines and the use of ICT and other technologies have contributed to developing understanding of the structure and function of cells and multicellular organisms. They investigate how scientific knowledge is used to offer valid explanations and reliable predictions, and the ways in which scientific knowledge interacts with economic and ethical factors.

Students use science inquiry skills to explore the relationship between structure and function by conducting real or virtual dissections and carrying out microscopic examination of cells and tissues. Students consider the ethical considerations that apply to the use of living organisms in research. They develop skills in constructing and using models to describe and interpret data about the functions of cells and organisms.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, students:

- understand that the structure and function of cells and their components are related to the need to exchange matter and energy with their immediate environment
- understand that multicellular organisms consist of multiple interdependent and hierarchically-organised systems that enable exchange of matter and energy with their immediate environment
- understand how theories and models have developed, based on evidence from multiple disciplines; and the uses and limitations of biological knowledge in a range of contexts
- use science inquiry skills to design, conduct, evaluate and communicate investigations into the structure and function of cells and multicellular organisms
- evaluate, with reference to empirical evidence, claims about cellular processes and the structure and function of multicellular organisms
- communicate biological understanding using qualitative and quantitative representations in appropriate modes and genres.

Unit content

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

Science Inquiry Skills

- identify, research and construct questions for investigation; propose hypotheses; and predict possible outcomes
- design investigations, including the procedure(s) to be followed, the materials required, and the type and amount of primary and/or secondary data to be collected; conduct risk assessments; and consider research ethics, including the ethics of research involving living organisms
- conduct investigations safely, competently, ethically and methodically for the collection of valid and reliable data
- represent data in meaningful and useful ways; organise and analyse data to identify trends, patterns and relationships; qualitatively describe sources of measurement error and limitations in data; and select, synthesise and use evidence to make and justify conclusions
- interpret a range of scientific and media texts, and evaluate processes, claims and conclusions by considering the quality of available evidence; and use reasoning to construct scientific arguments
- select, construct and use appropriate representations, including diagrams of structures and processes, and images from different imaging techniques, to communicate conceptual understanding, solve problems and make predictions
- communicate to specific audiences and for specific purposes using appropriate language, nomenclature, genres and modes, including scientific reports

Science as a Human Endeavour

- developments in microscopy and improved technologies have contributed to more sophisticated models of cell structure and function
- ethical treatment of animals, including the three strategies of replacement, reduction and refinement, forms the basis of many international guidelines in animal research

Science Understanding

Cells as the basis of life

- cells require energy inputs, including light energy or chemical energy in complex molecules, and matter, including gases, simple nutrients and ions, and removal of wastes, to survive
- prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells have many features in common, which is a reflection of their common evolutionary past, but prokaryotes lack internal membrane-bound organelles, do not have a nucleus, are significantly smaller than eukaryotes, usually have a single circular chromosome, and exist as single cells
- metabolism describes the sum total of the physical and chemical processes by which cell components transform matter and energy needed to sustain life
- eukaryotic cells carry out specific cellular functions in specialised structures and organelles, including
 - cell membrane
 - cell wall
 - chloroplasts

- endoplasmic reticulum (rough and smooth)
- Golgi apparatus
- lysosomes
- mitochondria
- nucleus
- ribosomes
- vacuoles
- the currently accepted model of the cell membrane is the fluid mosaic model
- the cell membrane separates the cell from its surroundings and controls the exchange of materials, including gases, nutrients and wastes, between the cell and its environment
- movement of materials across membranes occurs via
 - passive processes, including diffusion, facilitated diffusion, osmosis
 - active processes, including active transport, endocytosis and exocytosis
- factors that affect exchange of materials across membranes include
 - the surface area to volume ratio of the cell
 - concentration gradients
 - the physical and chemical nature of the materials being exchanged
- biological molecules are synthesised from monomers to produce complex structures, including carbohydrates, proteins and lipids
- biochemical processes in the cell are controlled by factors, including the nature and arrangement of internal membranes, and the presence of specific enzymes
- enzymes have specific functions which can be affected by factors, including
 - temperature
 - pH
 - presence of inhibitors
 - concentrations of reactants and products
- two models that are used to explain enzyme action are the lock and key model and the induced fit model
- photosynthesis is a biochemical process that uses light energy to synthesise organic compounds; light dependent and light independent reactions occur at different sites in the chloroplast; and make up separate parts of the overall process that can be represented as a balanced chemical equation
- the rate of photosynthesis can be affected by the availability of light and carbon dioxide, and temperature
- cellular respiration is a biochemical process that occurs in different locations in the cytosol and mitochondria, and metabolises organic compounds, aerobically or anaerobically, to release useable energy in the form of ATP; products of anaerobic respiration vary between organisms (plants, yeast, bacteria, animals); the overall process of aerobic respiration can be represented as a balanced chemical equation
- the rate of respiration can be affected by the availability of oxygen and glucose, and temperature

Multicellular organisms

- multicellular organisms have a hierarchical structural organisation of cells, tissues, organs and systems

- in animals, the exchange of gases between the internal and external environments of the organism is facilitated by the structure of the exchange surface(s), including spiracles, gills, alveoli and skin
- in animals, the acquisition and processing of nutrients is facilitated by the structure of the digestive system; animals may have a gastrovascular cavity or a specialised alimentary canal; specialisation of alimentary canals is related to diet, for example, herbivores and carnivores
- in animals, the transport of materials within the internal environment for exchange with cells is facilitated by the structure of open and closed circulatory systems according to the different metabolic requirements of organisms and differing environments
- in animals, waste such as carbon dioxide, water, nitrogenous compounds and salts are excreted; different types of nitrogenous wastes are produced by the breakdown of proteins; most aquatic animals excrete nitrogenous wastes directly into their surroundings; terrestrial animals require specialised mechanisms
- in vascular plants, gases are exchanged via stomata and the plant surface and does not involve the plant transport system
- in vascular plants, transport of water and mineral nutrients from the roots occurs via xylem through root pressure, capillary action (adhesion and cohesion of water molecules), transpiration; transport of the products of photosynthesis and some mineral nutrients occurs by translocation in the phloem

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 Biology ATAR Year 11 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

Assessment table – Year 11

Type of assessment	Weighting
Science inquiry Science inquiry involves identifying and posing questions; planning, conducting and reflecting on investigations; processing, analysing and interpreting data; and communicating findings. Science inquiry: Practical Practical work can involve a range of activities, such as practical tests; modelling and simulations; observation checklists; and brief summaries of practical activities. Science inquiry: Investigation Investigations are more extensive activities, which can include experimental testing; environmental and field work; conducting surveys; and comprehensive scientific reports. Field work or an environmental investigation must be conducted in Unit 1.	30%
Extended response Tasks requiring an extended response can involve selecting and integrating appropriate science concepts, models and theories to explain and predict phenomena, and applying those concepts, models and theories to new situations; interpreting scientific and media texts and evaluating processes, claims and conclusions by considering the quality of available evidence; and using reasoning to construct scientific arguments. Assessment can take the form of answers to specific questions based on individual research; exercises requiring analysis; and interpretation and evaluation of biological information in scientific and media texts.	10%
Test Tests typically consist of multiple choice questions, and questions requiring short and extended answers.	20%
Examination Typically conducted at the end of each semester and/or unit. In preparation for Unit 3 and Unit 4, the examination should reflect the examination design brief included in the ATAR Year 12 syllabus for this course.	40%

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 once over the year/pair of units. 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.

Grading

Schools report student achievement in terms of the following grades:

Grade	Interpretation
A	Excellent achievement
B	High achievement
C	Satisfactory achievement
D	Limited achievement
E	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 Biology ATAR 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.

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

A	Understanding and applying concepts Applies scientific principles to accurately explain and link complex biological systems and processes in detail. Applies models to explain, in detail, the dynamics and interrelationships within and between biological systems. Accurately applies scientific knowledge to unfamiliar contexts or examples. Selects and accurately evaluates scientific information from a variety of sources to solve problems and to support a point of view. Analyses issues, presents logical, well-developed arguments which are supported by relevant, detailed evidence.
	Science inquiry skills Formulates a testable hypothesis that specifically states the direction of change in the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Designs investigations to identify and explain how appropriate variables are controlled, describes the experimental method in detail and accurately collects data. Organises data logically, and accurately presents it in a range of forms, including appropriate graphs, tables and charts to reveal patterns and relationships. Processes data accurately and provides relevant suggestions to improve its validity and reliability. Identifies and offers an explanation for anomalous data. Comprehensively explains trends using numerical data and uses evidence to draw conclusions that relate to the hypothesis. Communicates detailed information and concepts logically and coherently, using correct terminology and appropriate conventions.
B	Understanding and applying concepts Applies scientific principles to accurately explain and link simple, and some complex, biological systems and processes. Applies models to explain the interrelationships within and between biological systems. Applies scientific knowledge to unfamiliar contexts or examples, sometimes lacking detail. Selects and evaluates scientific information to solve problems and to support a point of view. Presents some logical arguments which are supported by relevant evidence.
	Science inquiry skills Formulates a testable hypothesis that states the direction of change in the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Designs investigations to identify and control appropriate variables, describes the experimental method and accurately collects data. Presents data in a range of forms, including appropriate graphs, tables and charts to reveal patterns and relationships. Processes data and suggests ways to improve its validity and reliability. Explains trends and uses evidence to draw conclusions that relate to the hypothesis. Communicates information and concepts logically, using correct terminology and appropriate conventions.

C	Understanding and applying concepts Applies scientific principles to describe some biological systems and processes. Applies models to explain some relationships within and between biological systems. Applies scientific knowledge to some unfamiliar contexts or examples. Selects some scientific information to support a point of view with limited evaluation. Presents generalised arguments or statements supported by some evidence. Responses lack detail and may include irrelevant information.
	Science inquiry skills Formulates a testable hypothesis that states the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Designs investigations to identify and control some variables, briefly outlines the experimental method and collects data. Presents data using basic tables and appropriate graphs. Processes data and makes general suggestions for improving the investigation. Describes general trends in the data and draws simple conclusions that may not be linked back to the hypothesis. Communicates information and concepts, without detail, using some correct terminology and appropriate conventions.
D	Understanding and applying concepts Incorrectly applies scientific principles to describe biological systems and processes. Inconsistently applies models and includes some irrelevant or incorrect information. Inconsistently applies principles to unfamiliar contexts. Inconsistently selects scientific information and provides limited supporting examples. Presents statements of ideas with limited development of an argument. Makes little use of evidence.
	Science inquiry skills Identifies one or more relevant variables without making links between them. Identifies a limited number of controlled variables. Does not distinguish between the dependent, independent and controlled variables. Method lacks detail. Presents data that is unclear, insufficient and lacks appropriate processing. Includes anomalous results in the data without identifying them as anomalous. Identifies trends in the data incorrectly or overlooks trends. Offers simple conclusions that are not supported by the data or are not related to the hypothesis. Communicates information using everyday language with frequent errors in the use of conventions.
E	Does not meet the requirements of a D grade and/or has completed insufficient assessment tasks to be assigned a higher grade.

Appendix 2 – Glossary

This glossary is provided to enable a common understanding of the key terms in this syllabus.

Accuracy

The extent to which a measurement result represents the quantity it purports to measure; an accurate measurement result includes an estimate of the true value and an estimate of the uncertainty.

Animal ethics

Animal ethics involves consideration of respectful, fair and just treatment of animals. The use of animals in science involves consideration of replacement (substitution of insentient materials for conscious living animals), reduction (using only the minimum number of animals to satisfy research statistical requirements) and refinement (decrease in the incidence or severity of ‘inhumane’ procedures applied to those animals that still have to be used).

Biosecurity

Policy and regulatory frameworks designed to safeguard against biological threats to environments, organisms and human health; biosecurity measures aim to restrict entry of disease causing agents, genetically modified species, or invasive alien species or genotypes.

Biotechnology

The application of science and technology to living organisms, as well as parts, products and models thereof, to alter living or non-living materials for human purposes.

Comparative genomics

The study and comparison of the genome sequences of different species; comparative genomics enables identification of genes that are conserved or common among species, as well as genes that give each organism its unique characteristics.

Data

The plural of datum; the measurement of an attribute, for example, the volume of gas or the type of rubber. This does not necessarily mean a single measurement: it may be the result of averaging several repeated measurements. Data may be quantitative or qualitative and be from primary or secondary sources.

Ecological survey techniques

Techniques used to survey, measure, quantify, assess and monitor biodiversity and ecosystems in the field; techniques used depend on the subject and purpose of the study. Techniques may include random quadrats, transects, capture – recapture, nest survey, netting, trapping, flight interception, beating trays, dry extraction from leaf litter samples, 3-minute habitat-proportional sampling of aquatic habitats, aerial surveys and soil, air and water sampling.

Evidence

In science, evidence is data that is considered reliable and valid and which can be used to support a particular idea, conclusion or decision. Evidence gives weight or value to data by considering its credibility, acceptance, bias, status, appropriateness and reasonableness.

Field work

Observational research undertaken in the normal environment of the subject of the study.

Genre

The categories into which texts are grouped; genre distinguishes texts on the basis of their subject matter, form and structure (for example, scientific reports, field guides, explanations, procedures, biographies, media articles, persuasive texts, narratives).

Hypothesis

A scientific statement based on the available information that can be tested by experimentation. When appropriate, the statement expresses an expected relationship between the independent and dependent variables for observed phenomena.

Investigation

A scientific process of answering a question, exploring an idea or solving a problem that requires activities such as planning a course of action, collecting data, interpreting data, reaching a conclusion and communicating these activities. Investigations can include observation, research, field work, laboratory experimentation and manipulation of simulations.

Law

A statement describing invariable relationships between phenomena in specified conditions, frequently expressed mathematically.

Measurement error

The difference between the measurement result and a currently accepted or standard value of a quantity.

Media texts

Spoken, print, graphic or electronic communications with a public audience. Media texts can be found in newspapers, magazines and on television, film, radio, computer software and the internet.

Mode

The various processes of communication – listening, speaking, reading/viewing and writing/creating.

Model

A representation that describes, simplifies, clarifies or provides an explanation of the workings, structure or relationships within an object, system or idea.

Primary data

Data collected directly by a person or group.

Primary source

Report of data created by the person or persons directly involved in observations of one or more events, experiments, investigations or projects.

Reliable data

Data that has been judged to have a high level of reliability; reliability is the degree to which an assessment instrument or protocol consistently and repeatedly measures an attribute achieving similar results for the same population.

Reliability

The degree to which an assessment instrument or protocol consistently and repeatedly measures an attribute achieving similar results for the same population.

Representation

A verbal, visual, physical or mathematical demonstration of understanding of a science concept or concepts. A concept can be represented in a range of ways and using multiple modes.

Research

To locate, gather, record, attribute and analyse information in order to develop understanding.

Research ethics

Norms of conduct that determine ethical research behaviour; research ethics are governed by principles such as honesty, objectivity, integrity, openness and respect for intellectual property and include consideration of animal ethics.

Risk assessment

Evaluations performed to identify, assess and control hazards in a systematic way that is consistent, relevant and applicable to all school activities. Requirements for risk assessments related to particular activities will be determined by jurisdictions, schools or teachers as appropriate.

Secondary data

Data collected by a person or group other than the person or group using the data.

Secondary source

Information that has been compiled from records of primary sources by a person or persons not directly involved in the primary event.

Simulation

A representation of a process, event or system which imitates a real or idealised situation.

System

A group of interacting objects, materials or processes that form an integrated whole. Systems can be open or closed.

Theory

A set of concepts, claims and/or laws that can be used to explain and predict a wide range of related observed or observable phenomena. Theories are typically founded on clearly identified assumptions, are testable, produce reproducible results and have explanatory power.

Uncertainty

Range of values for a measurement result, taking account of the likely values that could be attributed to the measurement result given the measurement equipment, procedure and environment.

Validity

The extent to which tests measure what was intended; the extent to which data, inferences and actions produced from tests and other processes are accurate.

