



PLANT PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

General course

Year 12 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 Plant Production Systems General course explores the production of food and fibre in the context of common agricultural plants. Agriculture is the world's biggest industry and is one of the most exciting as it embraces science and technology to supply high quality, safe food and fibre to a global population predicted to increase by 50 per cent by 2050. Along with the increase in on-farm production needed, there will be an increased need to cater for the off-farm (supply chain) infrastructure.

In this course, students study the sustainable use of resources in plant production systems and explore the ways that people manage natural resources, such as plants, soil and water, to meet global societal needs. They evaluate plant production systems, sustainable practices, new technologies, consumer-driven economics and product marketing.

The course enables students to develop knowledge, skills and understandings related to management of natural resources, the structure and function of major agricultural plants, their nutritional and health needs, breeding requirements and factors influencing management of plant production systems.

Australian, regional and global communities rely on an understanding of agricultural sciences to manage the ecological and sustainability challenges facing society to maintain and increase agricultural production to feed and clothe people. These include the biosecurity and resilience of agricultural and natural ecosystems, the health and well-being of organisms, both agricultural and non-agricultural, and their populations, and the sustainability of biological resources. Students use their understanding of the interconnectedness of biological systems when evaluating both the impact of agricultural activity and the strategies proposed to address major biological challenges now and in the future in local, national and global contexts.

As the global human population grows, international demand, particularly from Asia, for high quality, safe food and natural fibre products offers a positive outlook for the agriculture and food sector. There is already strong demand across Australia and around the world for people skilled in combining scarce resources with innovative methods of production. This demand can only continue to grow. The study of Plant Production Systems can provide students with pathways to further tertiary level studies in agricultural, including at TAFE, and employment opportunities in the agricultural sector such as agronomist, wool classer, agricultural technician, dairy worker, stock handler and biosecurity officer.

Aims

The Plant Production Systems General course aims to develop students’:

- ability to use investigative processes to address plant production challenges, including
 - investigating issues, needs and opportunities related to plant production challenges
 - generating proposals to address plant production challenges
 - collecting evidence and evaluating solutions and processes
 - communicating understandings and conclusions related to plant production systems
- knowledge and understanding of principles and practices underpinning efficient and sustainable plant production systems, including
 - the structure and function of various plants and plant production systems
 - the interdependence of natural systems and plant production systems
 - management strategies
- ability to apply skills and technologies to achieve efficient and sustainable plant production and marketing, including
 - selecting and safely using technologies and skills for plant production
 - applying skills to manage production in a sustainable manner
 - applying economic and management practices to optimise viable plant production
- understanding that agricultural science knowledge is used in a variety of contexts and is influenced by social, economic, environmental, ethical and cultural considerations.

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 12 syllabus is divided into two units which are delivered as a pair. The notional time for the pair of units is 110 class contact hours.

Unit 3

In this unit, students learn about plant anatomy, growth and development and how these contribute to the production of a marketable product.

Unit 4

In this unit, students learn about the improvement of the immediate plant environment to optimise growth and development through all phases of plant growth.

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

This course has nine content areas:

- Systems ecology
- Plant structure and function
- Plant environment
- Plant health
- Breeding and improvement
- Economics, finance and markets
- Sustainable production
- Investigating plant production
- Produce for purpose

The content should be based around one or more plant production enterprises.

Safety

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 or territory health and safety guidelines.

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 Plant Production Systems General course.

Critical and creative thinking

Critical and creative thinking is particularly important in the investigative process. This requires the ability 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.

Digital literacy

Students use a range of strategies to locate, access and evaluate information from multiple digital sources; to collect, analyse and represent data using information and communication technologies (ICT). Students also assess the impact of ICT on the productivity, efficiency and sustainability of agricultural systems.

Literacy

Literacy is important in students' development of investigative skills and their understanding of content. Students gather, interpret, synthesise and critically analyse information presented in a wide range of forms. They evaluate information sources and compare and contrast ideas, information and opinions presented within and between texts. They communicate processes and ideas logically and fluently, structure evidence-based arguments, and employ appropriate methods to communicate for specific purposes and audiences.

Numeracy

Numeracy is key to students' ability to apply a wide range of skills, including making and recording observations; ordering, representing and analysing data; and interpreting trends and relationships. They employ numeracy skills to interpret graphic representations, and to appreciate the ways in which agricultural systems are structured, interact and change. They engage in probability to predict outcomes in genetic crosses. In the Plant Production Systems General course, students also use numeracy skills in the form of budgets and marketing decision-making.

Addressing the other General Capabilities

Although the following General Capabilities have not been identified as a focus in the Plant Production Systems General syllabus, teachers may find opportunities to incorporate them into the teaching and learning program.

- Ethical understanding
- 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 Plant Production Systems General 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	Plant Production Systems (G1PPS)	General	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Year 12	Plant Production Systems (G2PPS)	General	✓	✓			✓	✓	

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 the contemporary issues that students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate them into the teaching and learning program for the Plant Production Systems 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

Through an investigation of contexts that draw on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, students could investigate the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' knowledge in developing a richer understanding of the Australian environment. Students develop an appreciation of the unique Australian biota and its interactions, the impacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 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 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 Asian 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 agriculture, students appreciate that the Asian region plays an important role in such areas as natural resource management, biosecurity and food security.

Sustainability

The Sustainability cross-curriculum priority is explicitly addressed in the Plant Production Systems General course. Agriculture provides authentic contexts for exploring, investigating and understanding the function and interactions of agricultural systems across a range of spatial and temporal scales. By investigating the relationships between agricultural systems and system components, and how systems respond to change, students develop an appreciation for the interconnectedness of the biosphere. Students appreciate that agriculture provides the basis for decision making in many areas of society and that these decisions can impact the Earth system. They understand the importance of using agricultural 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 3

Unit description

In this unit students learn about plant anatomy, growth and development and how these contribute to the production of a marketable product. They learn about plant responses to different growing conditions as well as the impact of pests, including options to minimise negative effects and promote sustainability. Students examine the properties of different soil types and how these affect the plant's ability to access requirements for growth. Students learn about the impacts of plant production on the natural environment, and stewardship of natural and farming resources. They learn about the value of domestic plant production, and marketing options. Students will be involved in an investigation and will learn to identify the elements of valid experimental design.

The content should be based around one or more plant production enterprises.

Unit content

An understanding of the Year 11 content is assumed knowledge for students in Year 12. It is recommended that students studying Unit 3 and Unit 4 have completed Unit 1 and Unit 2.

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

Knowledge and management of plant production systems

Systems ecology

- impact of plant production systems on natural ecosystems, including:
 - the effects on soils
 - water quality
 - atmospheric
 - soil pollution
 - loss of biodiversity
- effects of pesticides on the environment

Plant structure and function

- structure and function of stems, roots, leaves, flowers, fruit, seeds
- response of plant growth to limiting factors:
 - temperature
 - water
 - gases
 - nutrients
- nutrient requirements throughout plant growth stages

Plant environment

- the environment of the shoot, including gaseous exchange and light absorption
- the environment of the root, including water absorption, macro- and micro-nutrients and oxygen
- function of micronutrients and symptoms of deficiencies
- soil textures and their nutrient and water holding capacity
- comparison of long-term climate records with current weather patterns

Plant health

- impact of pests and diseases on production systems
- life cycles of selected pests and diseases
- assessment of pest and disease risk
- biosecurity measures to reduce risk from pests and diseases
- factors influencing pest and disease control programs

Breeding and improvement

- aims of breeding and selection, including
 - profitability
 - market requirements
 - environmental conditions.
- sources of genetic variation
- selection criteria, including subjective and objective characteristics
- legal requirements of plant production, including plant variety rights (PVR)

Economics, finance and markets

- quantity and value of domestic plant products
- marketing options for plant products
- assessment of resources used in enterprises
- marginal costs and marginal returns and the application of the law of diminishing returns

Sustainable production

- maintaining and improving the quality of soil and water
- stewardship of natural and farming resources, including technologies
- complying with industry codes of practice

Investigating Plant Production

- develop hypotheses to test based on prior information
- design and conduct an investigation, considering aspects of experimental design, including variables and controls
- analyse and interpret data, including calculating means
- present data using appropriate methods
- draw conclusions based on experimental data and validate from other sources

Produce for purpose

- implement a calendar of operations for a selected plant enterprise

Unit 4

Unit description

In this unit students learn about the improvement of the immediate plant environment to optimise growth and development through all phases of plant growth. This includes fertiliser application and soil management techniques. Students learn about the principles of genetics and the effect of interactions between genotype and environment and how this can influence plant breeding. They learn about monitoring and managing pest populations and identify risks to sustainable production. Students learn about the role of quality assurance (QA) programs in plant production systems and how to prepare budgets for an enterprise.

The content should be based around one or more plant production enterprises.

Unit content

This unit builds on the content covered in Unit 3.

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

Knowledge and management of plant production systems

Systems ecology

- benefits to plant production systems of ecosystem components, including
 - clean water
 - plant pollination
 - nutrient cycling
 - pest and disease management
- nutrient cycles, including nitrogen, carbon, phosphorus

Plant structure and function

- sexual reproduction by seeds through self-pollination and cross-pollination
- asexual reproduction by vegetative means
- phases of growth, growth curves, and plant requirements at different stages

Plant environment

- soil pH and its influence on nutrient availability
- interpreting soil and plant test results
- correcting soil acidity and alkalinity
- monitoring soil nutrients
- options for nutrient management, including rotations, artificial fertilisers and biological methods
- maximising the effectiveness of fertilisers through timing and placement
- identifying risks of nutrient pollution
- techniques to manage soil water, soil texture and soil structure, including
 - cultivation
 - drainage
 - weed control
 - surface mulches

Plant health

- monitoring pests and diseases in a production system
- pest and disease management options, including integrated pest management (IPM)
- factors affecting the selection of pesticides, including withholding periods

Breeding and improvement

- genetic terms and concepts, including
 - gamete
 - chromosomes
 - genes
 - alleles
 - dominant
 - recessive
 - genotype
 - phenotype
- predicting outcomes of crosses using punnett squares
- interactions between genotype and environment (GxE)
- breeding systems, including
 - cross breeding
 - backcrossing
 - selfing

Economics, finance and markets

- applying the law of the minimum to plant production
- factors affecting supply and demand
- interpretation of supply and demand information for a product
- preparation of simple budgets for an enterprise and identification of items likely to impact on profit

Sustainable production

- identification of risks to sustainable production
- review the sustainability of current management practices
- government legislation relating to a selected enterprise

Investigating plant production

- develop hypotheses to test based on prior information
- design and conduct an investigation, considering aspects of experimental design, including variables and controls
- analyse and interpret data, including calculating means
- present data using appropriate methods
- draw conclusions based on experimental data and validate from other sources

Produce for purpose

- select crops and cultivars to meet market requirements
- manage crops to optimise profitability
- assess quality of product against market specifications
- identify quality assurance programs for selected plant production systems, including their purpose and major features
- identify transport and storage requirements for plant products

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 Plant Production Systems General Year 12 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

Assessment table – Year 12

Type of assessment	Weighting
Investigation An investigation is an activity in which ideas, predictions or hypotheses are tested and conclusions are drawn in response to a question or problem. Tasks include: - planning investigations, proposing hypotheses and predicting outcomes - designing investigations, including the procedures to be followed, discussion of variables, type and amount of data to be collected, risk assessments and consideration of research ethics - conducting investigations in a safe, competent and methodical manner to collect valid and reliable data - processing, representing and interpreting data, and identifying relationships and limitations in the data - communicating findings in an appropriate form, including written, oral, graphic or combinations of these. Appropriate strategies should be used to authenticate student achievement of an investigation that has been completed as a group or outside of allocated class time.	10%
Production project Production projects involve the synthesis of theory and practice of a plant production system. Tasks can involve selecting and applying appropriate production concepts to existing or new situations; managing processes for optimal production and to meet industry standards, and proposing adaptations to improve the management of plant production systems. Tasks can take the form of specific questions based on a selected plant production system, related practical activities, and integration of relevant information from scientific or media sources. It is highly recommended that work completed out of class is authenticated using an in-class assessment task under test conditions.	45%
Test Tests are designed to assess knowledge and the application of concepts relating to plant production systems. Questions can involve comprehension, evaluation and application of information, and problem solving. Tests typically consist of multiple choice questions, as well as questions requiring short and extended answers.	30%
Externally set task A written task or item or set of items of 50 minutes duration developed by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority and administered by the school.	15%

Teachers are required to use the assessment table to develop an assessment outline for the pair of units.

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. The externally set task occurs in Term 2.

The set of assessment tasks must provide a representative sampling of the content for Unit 3 and Unit 4.

Assessment tasks not administered under test/controlled conditions require appropriate validation/authentication processes.

Externally set task

All students enrolled in the Plant Production Systems General Year 12 course will complete the externally set task developed by the Authority. Schools are required to administer this task in Term 2 at a time prescribed by the Authority.

Externally set task design brief – Year 12

Time	50 minutes
Format	Written
	Conducted under invigilated conditions
	Typically between two and five questions
	Questions can require students to refer to source material
Content	The Authority informs schools during Term 3 of the previous year of the Unit 3 syllabus content on which the task will be based

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information.

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. 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 Plant Production Systems General Year 12 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 12

A

Understanding and applying concepts

Applies concepts to describe production systems and enterprises and explains processes, in detail.

Selects and assesses the relevance of scientific information from a variety of sources to support a point of view.

Analyses issues, organises information and presents clear and logical statements which are supported by evidence.

Uses industry-specific and technical language frequently and accurately.

Science Inquiry Skills

Formulates a hypothesis that states the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Plans an investigation to collect appropriate data.

Identifies controlled variables with specific detail.

Provides a clear and logical experimental procedure with sufficient detail to allow the investigation to be repeated by others.

Organises data logically and presents it in a range of forms, including appropriate graphs and tables and identifies patterns and relationships.

Processes experimental data to describe trends and explains these using relevant scientific concepts.

Processes numerical data using appropriate units.

Uses evidence to make and justify conclusions that relate to the hypothesis.

Evaluates experimental method and makes specific suggestions to improve the design of the investigation.

Communicates information and concepts logically, using correct scientific language, conventions and representations.

Enterprise management skills

Selects and uses appropriate resources and equipment to confidently perform a range of tasks in a consistently safe and efficient manner.

Completes all aspects of tasks systematically, paying attention to detail.

Consistently applies the economic principles and tools that are required to evaluate viability and sustainability.

Applies theoretical concepts consistently when using a selected production system.

B

Understanding and applying concepts

Applies concepts to describe production systems and selected enterprises and partially explains processes.

Provides scientific information from a variety of sources to support a point of view.

Organises information and presents statements that are not always well supported by evidence.

Uses industry-specific and technical language frequently.

Science Inquiry Skills

Formulates a hypothesis that states the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Plans an investigation to collect appropriate data. Identifies some controlled variables without detail.

Provides a clear experimental procedure that lacks detail.

Presents data in a range of forms, including appropriate graphs and tables, and identifies relationships.

Describes trends and briefly explains these using relevant scientific concepts.

Processes numerical data using appropriate units.

Uses evidence to make conclusions that relate to the hypothesis.

Evaluates experimental method and makes general suggestions to improve the design of the investigation.

Communicates information and concepts logically, generally using scientific language and representations.

Makes some errors in the use of conventions.

Enterprise management skills

Uses appropriate resources and equipment to perform selected tasks safely and effectively.

Completes most aspects of tasks that sometimes lack attention to detail.

Uses the economic principles and tools that are required to assess viability and to address sustainability.

Applies theoretical concepts when using most aspects of a selected production system.

C

Understanding and applying concepts

Describes some key aspects of production systems and selected enterprises in a general way.

Selects some scientific information to support a point of view.

Presents general statements supported by some evidence including some irrelevant or incorrect information.

Generally uses industry-specific and technical language.

Science Inquiry Skills

With guidance formulates a hypothesis, that includes dependent and independent variables, within a context that has been provided.

Plans an investigation to collect appropriate data. Identifies some controlled variables without detail.

Outlines the main steps in the experimental procedure.

Presents data using basic tables and graphs.

Describes trends in the data with limited processing of numerical data.

Draws general conclusions that may not be linked to the hypothesis.

Describes difficulties experienced in conducting the investigation and suggests general improvements.

Communicates information and concepts, without detail, using some scientific language and conventions.

Responses are often not supported by appropriate examples and diagrams lack detail.

Enterprise management skills

With guidance uses appropriate resources and equipment to perform a range tasks, meeting safety standards.

Completes most aspects of tasks with inconsistent attention to detail.

Identifies the economic principles and tools that are required to assess viability but uses them only occasionally and/or with errors.

Applies theoretical concepts when using several aspects of a selected production system.

D	Understanding and applying concepts Describes some aspects of production systems and processes with limited linking to selected enterprises. Selects inappropriate scientific information or makes little use of evidence to support a point of view. Responses are incomplete and include irrelevant or incorrect information. Uses minimal industry-specific and technical language.
	Science Inquiry Skills Makes a simple prediction for an investigation. Does not distinguish between dependent, independent and controlled variables. Follows a provided experimental procedure to collect data. Presents data that is disorganised and lacks appropriate processing. Provides incomplete or incorrect tables and graphs. Identifies trends in the data incorrectly or overlooks trends. Offers conclusions that are not supported by the data. Identifies difficulties experienced in conducting the investigation. Communicates information using everyday language with frequent errors in the use of conventions. Provides responses which are often incomplete or irrelevant.
	Enterprise management skills Uses resources and equipment to carry out tasks, mostly collaboratively and with extensive reinforcement. Displays limited application of safety and industry standards. Attempts tasks, completing some but without attention to detail. Identifies simple economic tools to operate a production system. Displays limited linking between theoretical concepts and practical application.
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.

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.

Natural systems

Comprise ecological and physiological systems that exist without human intervention.

Plant production systems

Are those based on natural systems that have been managed, manipulated, adapted and refined to meet human needs for food, fibre, shelter and lifestyle.

Skills

Include handling plants, harvesting plant products, applying plant health remedies, testing and plant improvement methods.

Social systems

Are those that have evolved to manage human interaction with each other and the built and natural environments.

Sustainability

Can be considered as meeting the needs of current and future generations through integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.

Systems

Can include plant production and marketing systems, management systems, value-adding systems, service and maintenance systems, biotic systems and abiotic systems.

Technologies

Including genetic engineering, new plant production techniques, specialised equipment and machinery, global positioning systems, and information and communication technology (ICT).

