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

HEALTH STUDIES

ATAR 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 Health Studies ATAR course provides students with the knowledge and understandings to recognise health factors and the skills to convey information about healthy life practices for individuals.

Students learn why some groups in society do not have the same level of health as others in the general population. They investigate broader, global health inequities and develop arguments and draw evidence-based conclusions as to why such situations exist. Importantly, students learn about how health promotions are structured, with the aim of improving overall community wellbeing. They apply inquiry processes to analyse issues influencing the health of communities.

Students also develop twenty-first-century learning skills such as critical thinking, time management, reflection and inquiry through various learning activities. The course offers students the opportunity to not only be self-driven by demonstrating their individual abilities, but also to develop leadership qualities and teamwork skills through collaborating with their peers.

The course prepares students with the broad understandings they need to be advocates for healthy choices. They develop skills to engage and inform others about health behaviours and how to improve their overall wellbeing. Students understand health needs within the community and what actions they can take to improve community wellbeing.

The Health Studies ATAR course prepares students for career pathways in health promotion and introduces them to related allied health roles. With a clear focus on interpersonal and communication skills, the course equips students for further study in similar health fields.

Aims

The Health Studies ATAR course aims to develop students':

- understanding of the contexts that can impact health and ability to recognise contemporary health challenges
- ability to explore determinants of health and apply relevant frameworks, models and theories
- capacity to analyse how beliefs, attitudes, values and social and cultural norms shape health behaviours
- self-management and communication skills to make informed decisions and promote health and wellbeing
- application of critical thinking to health-related concepts and issues.

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

This unit focuses on the health of specific populations and reasons why some groups do not enjoy the same level of health as the general population. Students learn about factors creating these disparities and ways of improving the health and wellbeing of specific groups. Students apply inquiry skills to examine and interpret data, and explain and respond to inequities in health.

Unit 4

This unit focuses on local, regional and global challenges to health. Students learn about the impact of determinants on global health inequities and explore approaches to address barriers preventing groups from experiencing better health. Students apply well-developed health inquiry skills to analyse health issues, develop arguments and draw evidence-based conclusions.

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

For each unit, the content is organised as follows:

Content organisers	Sub-organisers
Health concepts	Holistic health
	Principles, frameworks, models and theories
	Actions and strategies
	Consumer health
Attitudinal and environmental influences	Beliefs, attitudes and values
	Social and cultural norms
Skills and processes	Self-management skills
	Interpersonal skills
	Health inquiry

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 Health Studies ATAR course.

Critical and creative thinking

Students collect, analyse and organise information to investigate risk and protective factors. They critically assess information and apply health promotion strategies to improve individual and community health. Through problem-solving and negotiation, students develop solutions in various situations and reflect on their own and others' actions to evaluate influences on health-related decisions.

Ethical understanding

Attitudes, values and beliefs shape health-related decisions and influence lifestyle choices as barriers or enablers. Students develop ethical understanding by examining how these factors, along with differing interpretations of health information, impact decisions and contribute to health disparities between populations.

Intercultural understanding

Cultural attitudes and perspectives significantly influence health and wellbeing. Students explore how cultural complexities shape beliefs, practices and health promotion initiatives.

Literacy

The course develops literacy by introducing health-specific terminology and language to describe factors influencing health, health status and related frameworks. Students enhance critical health-consumer skills to access, interpret and evaluate health information while navigating the healthcare system. Through practical and collaborative activities, they refine communication skills for effective interaction in personal and group settings.

Numeracy

Students develop data analysis skills by applying inquiry processes to investigate health issues. They interpret and evaluate quantitative health information, identifying trends and patterns to draw conclusions and make informed recommendations for health practices.

Personal and social capability

The course emphasises self-management, interpersonal skills and social responsibility. Students reflect on their emotional responses while developing decision-making and communication skills. Through this process they identify strengths, address health barriers, and refine their ability to work independently and collaboratively. They build resilience and adaptive coping strategies to navigate changing social and emotional circumstances. By exploring health promotion strategies, students examine how they and others can contribute to community wellbeing.

Addressing the other General Capabilities

Although the following General Capability has not been identified as a focus in the Health Studies ATAR Year 12 syllabus, teachers may find opportunities to incorporate it into the teaching and learning program.

- Digital literacy

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 Health Studies 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	Health Studies (AEHEA)	ATAR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year 12	Health Studies (ATHEA)	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 them into the teaching and learning program for the Health Studies 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

Through the study of relevant contexts, opportunities will allow for the development of students' understanding and appreciation of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' histories and cultures. For example, students learn about the importance of family and kinship structures for maintaining and promoting health, safety and wellbeing as they study determinants that influence personal and community health.

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

In this course, students engage with diverse cultures, traditions and belief systems and develop self-management and interpersonal skills that reflect cultural understanding, empathy and respect.

Sustainability

In this course, students explore how they connect and interact with environments and people in different social and cultural groups within personal networks and the wider community. They consider how these connections contribute to the creation of supportive environments in which healthy choices are made easier. Students explore factors influencing health, including the role of natural and built environments in supporting health-related decisions and behaviours.

Unit 3

Unit description

The focus of this unit is the health of specific populations. Within Australia and across the globe, there are groups who do not enjoy the same level of health as the general population. Students learn about factors creating these disparities and ways of improving the health and wellbeing of specific groups through priority health approaches. They examine models and social justice principles which can be applied to address health inequity, and review actions and strategies focusing on reducing inequities. The influence of attitudinal and environmental influences on the health of specific groups is explored. Students examine and interpret relationships in data which explain disparities in health through the application of critical inquiry skills.

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. This is the examinable content.

Health concepts

Holistic health

- characteristics and needs of specific populations
- access and equity issues of specific populations
- factors that create health inequities
  - discrimination
  - gender
  - access to health care
  - unemployment
  - social isolation
  - dislocation of land
  - occupation
  - access to and level of education
  - geographic location
  - racism
  - government economic and social policies
  - socioeconomic status
  - health literacy
- quantitative and qualitative measures for detecting health inequities and/or injustices
  - epidemiological data
  - social determinants of health

Principles, frameworks, models and theories

- socio-ecological model of health and its role in understanding and addressing public health problems
  - individual
  - interpersonal
  - organisational
  - community
  - society
- social justice principles in health
  - access and equity
  - diversity
  - supportive environments
- purpose and characteristics of the five levels of need within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- steps in the PABCAR public health decision-making model
  - identification of the problem
  - amenability to change
  - benefits and costs of implementing interventions
  - acceptability of proposed measures
  - recommended actions and monitoring

Actions and strategies

- purpose of a needs assessment
- types of need
  - comparative
  - felt
  - expressed
  - normative
- steps in needs assessment
  - identifying health issues
  - analysis of the problem
  - prioritising issues
  - setting goals
  - determining strategies
  - developing action plans
  - evaluating outcomes
- enabling, mediating, and advocating strategies in the *Ottawa Charter* to reduce inequities of specific groups
- actions to address health inequity
  - improving access to health care
  - improving health literacy
  - *Ottawa Charter* action areas
- actions to achieve social and health equity in the Rio Declaration on Social Determinants of Health

Consumer health

- healthcare system reforms
  - private health insurance rebate
  - public screening and/or vaccination programs
  - Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
- relationship between health literacy and health status

Attitudinal and environmental influences

Beliefs, attitudes and values

- influence of culture on personal beliefs, attitudes and values towards healthcare
- influence of environmental factors on the health behaviour of cultural groups
  - geographical location
  - social networks

Social and cultural norms

- conflict between norms of specific groups and majority norms

Skills and processes

Self-management skills

- skills that support positive health behaviours
  - assertiveness
  - stress management
  - resilience
- impact of culture on health decision making
  - organ and tissue donation
  - blood transfusions
  - childbirth

Interpersonal skills

- language and cultural influences on relationship building in health settings

Health inquiry

- planning a health inquiry
  - identification and analysis of a health issue
  - development of focus questions to research a health issue
- use of a range of information to explore a health issue
  - identification and use of a range of reliable information sources
  - identification and application of criteria for selecting information sources
- interpretation of information
  - summary of information
  - identification and analysis of trends and patterns in data
  - development of argument
  - development of evidence-based conclusions
- presentation of findings in appropriate format to suit audience

Unit 4

Unit description

The focus of this unit is local, regional and global challenges to health. Despite incredible improvements to health over many years, life expectancy rates within and across populations vary considerably. Students learn about the impact of social determinants on global inequities and other challenges to health, and approaches to address barriers which prevent groups from experiencing better health outcomes. Students examine international health agencies and global and local initiatives designed to improve health. Students further refine and apply investigative skills to analyse health issues, develop well-constructed arguments, and draw evidence-based conclusions.

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. This is the examinable content.

Health concepts

Holistic health

- impact of determinants on health inequities
  - social
    - the social gradient
    - stress
    - early life
    - social exclusion
    - work
    - unemployment
    - social support
    - addiction
    - food
    - transport
    - culture
  - environmental
    - features of the natural and built environment
    - geographical location
  - socioeconomic
    - education
    - employment
    - income
    - family
    - housing/neighbourhood
    - access to services
    - migration/refugee status
    - food security

  - biomedical
    - birth weight
    - body weight
- global and local barriers to addressing social determinants of health
  - poverty
  - disease outbreaks
  - famine
  - drought
  - availability of clean drinking water

Principles, frameworks, models and theories

- roles of the World Health Organisation (WHO)
  - provide leadership
  - shape the research agenda
  - set norms and standards
  - articulate ethical and evidence-based policy options
  - provide technical support
  - monitor the health situation and assessing health trends
- investment priorities of Australia's aid program, how and why Australia provides aid in the following:
  - humanitarian policy, with a focus on the humanitarian action principles
  - gender equality, incorporating the five strategic priorities
- purpose of, and progress towards, the following five United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
  - end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (Goal 2)
  - ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Goal 3)
  - ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Goal 4)
  - achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5)
  - ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Goal 6)
- definition of health promotion advocacy and when it is best used
- strategies for health promotion advocacy
  - lobbying
  - raising awareness
  - creating debate
  - developing partnerships
  - building capacity
  - mobilising groups
  - framing issues
  - using champions
  - influencing policy

Actions and strategies

- guiding principles of the National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions
  - equity
  - collaboration, partnerships and shared responsibility
  - evidence-based
  - person-centred, multi-disciplinary care
  - sustainability
  - accountability and transparency
  - climate resilience

Consumer health

- comparison of health indicators between Australia and developing countries
  - life expectancy
  - mortality
  - morbidity
- focus areas of the National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions
  - health promotion and education supporting self-management of risk factors and conditions
  - embedding prevention, early detection and intervention in the continuum of care
  - continuity of care
  - managing multimorbidity
  - enhanced and targeted support for priority populations

Attitudinal and environmental influences

Beliefs, attitudes and values

- influence of government policies and regulations on beliefs, attitudes and values
- government policies and regulations that restrict or promote healthy behaviour

Social and cultural norms

- relationship between health behaviours and proscriptive, prescriptive and popular norms

Skills and processes

Self-management skills

- impact of world events on personal, social and cultural identity of population groups
  - displacement from traditional homelands
  - war
  - violence
  - conflict
  - natural disasters

Interpersonal skills

- communication and collaboration skills in health settings
  - mediation
  - negotiation
  - compromise
  - managing conflict
  - arbitration
  - leadership
  - facilitation

Health inquiry

- planning a health inquiry
  - identification and analysis of a health issue
  - development of focus questions to research a health issue
- use of a range of information to explore a health issue
  - identification and use of a range of reliable information sources
  - identification and application of criteria for selecting information sources
- interpretation of information
  - summary of information
  - identification and analysis of trends and patterns in data
  - development of argument
  - development of evidence-based conclusions
- presentation of findings in appropriate format to suit audience

Assessment

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 Health Studies ATAR Year 12 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

Assessment table – Year 12

Type of assessment	Weighting
Inquiry Students plan, conduct and communicate the findings of a health inquiry. Evidence can include: oral and/or written reports, posters and/or wall charts, websites, PowerPoint presentations, debates, articles for publication, and/or any combination of these.	20%
Project Students explore ideas and manage the components of the task. Evidence can include: reports, displays, health fairs/expos, demonstrations, campaigns, merchandise (production or design), pamphlets, brochures, fact sheets, newsletters, web pages and/or any combination of these.	20%
Response Students apply knowledge and skills to analyse and respond to stimuli or prompts that can include: scenarios, diagrams, graphs, tables, media excerpts/scripts, photos and/or health promotion resources. Evidence can include: tests, in-class essays and/or responses to a specific stimulus.	20%
Examination Typically conducted at the end of each semester and/or unit and reflecting the examination design brief for this syllabus.	40%

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 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. For example, student performance for a health inquiry could be validated by a task (such as a structured essay or extended response) which is completed in class after the assessment is submitted.

Reporting

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 Health Studies ATAR 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.

ATAR course examination

All students enrolled in the Health Studies ATAR Year 12 course are required to sit the ATAR course examination. The examination is based on a representative sampling of the content for Unit 3 and Unit 4. Details of the ATAR course examination are prescribed in the examination design brief on the following page.

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information.

Examination design brief – Year 12

Time allowed

Reading time before commencing work: ten minutes
Working time for paper: three hours

Permissible items

Standard items: pens (blue/black preferred), pencils (including coloured), sharpener, correction fluid/tape, eraser, ruler, highlighters
Special items: nil

Section	Supporting information
Section One **Multiple-choice** 20% of the total examination 20 questions Suggested working time: 30 minutes	Questions can require the candidate to refer to stimulus material, such as scenarios, diagrams, graphs, tables, media scripts and/or photos.
Section Two **Short answer** 50% of the total examination 5–8 questions Suggested working time: 90 minutes	A series of closed and open questions. Questions can contain parts and can require candidates to refer to stimulus materials, such as scenarios, diagrams, graphs, tables, media scripts and/or photos.
Section Three **Extended answer** 30% of the total examination Two questions from a choice of four Suggested working time: 60 minutes	Questions can contain parts.

Appendix 1 – Grade descriptions Year 12

A	**Health concepts** Clearly and articulately explains health principles, frameworks and models, as well as actions and strategies that impact on the health of individuals, groups and societies. Identifies and analyses the impact of policy and a range of other social and cultural factors on health behaviour amongst individuals and groups. Evaluates the impact of health policy and reform; analyses and compares health indicators and priorities.
	Skills Clearly identifies appropriate health decisions and strategies and applies them consistently and effectively in a range of complex situations. Clearly describes the interrelationships between a range of overt and subtle contextual factors and comprehensively analyses their impact on personal and group interactions.
	Health inquiry Independently defines a health issue; produces precise and insightful research questions; gathers accurate and relevant evidence; critically analyses information. Develops accurate and thoroughly substantiated arguments and conclusions; effectively communicates information carefully tailored to context, audience and purpose.

B	**Health concepts** Clearly explains health principles, frameworks, models, actions and strategies that impact on the health of individuals, groups and societies. Identifies and conducts simple analysis of the impact of policy and other social and cultural factors on health behaviour amongst individuals and groups. Identifies the impact of health policy and reform and conducts simple evaluations; identifies health indicators and priorities, compares these and conducts a simple analysis.
	Skills Identifies appropriate health decisions and strategies and applies them effectively and with some consistency in a range of situations. Describes the interrelationships between a range of contextual factors and conducts simple analyses of their impact on personal and group interactions.
	Health inquiry Independently defines a health issue; produces precise research questions; gathers relevant evidence; analyses information. Develops clear arguments and conclusions; communicates information in formats suitable to context, audience and purpose.

C	**Health concepts** Provides generalised explanations of health principles, frameworks, models, and actions and strategies that impact on the health of individuals, groups and societies. Identifies the impact, in general terms, of given policies and social and cultural factors on health behaviour amongst individuals and groups. Provides generalised explanations of the impact of health policy and reform; identifies and makes simple comparisons of health indicators and priorities.
	Skills Identifies and applies appropriate health decisions and strategies in familiar situations. Provides generalised descriptions of contextual factors and their influences on personal and group interactions.
	Health inquiry With guidance, defines a health issue; produces research questions; gathers suitable evidence; undertakes some simple analysis. Develops mostly clear arguments and conclusions; communicates information in generally suitable formats.

D	**Health concepts** Provides limited explanations of health principles, frameworks, models, and actions and strategies that impact on the health of individuals, groups and societies. Identifies overt factors influencing health behaviour. Provides limited explanations of the impact of health policy; identifies few health indicators and priorities.
	Skills Occasionally identifies and applies appropriate health decisions and strategies. Provides limited descriptions of factors influencing personal and group interactions.
	Health inquiry With guidance, develops some simple research questions in relation to a given issue; uses evidence from some unreliable and/or unsubstantiated sources. Provides unclear, incomplete or inaccurate arguments and conclusions.

E	Does not meet the requirements of a D grade and/or has completed insufficient assessment tasks to be assigned a higher grade.

Acknowledgements

Unit 4

Principles, frameworks, models and theories

Adapted from: World Health Organization. (n.d.). *World Health Organization*. Retrieved July, 2025, from https://www.who.int/europe/about-us/about-who-europe/organization/who-worldwide

Adapted from: United Nations. (n.d.). *The 17 Goals*. Retrieved June, 2025, from https://sdgs.un.org/goals

Actions and strategies

Consumer health

Adapted from: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2022). *National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions: Reporting Framework.* Catalogue Number PHE 298, AIHW, Australian Government. Retrieved July, 2025, from https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/9a91142b-6207-4535-9c02-2f4bafcc5ca5/aihw-phe-298.pdf.aspx?inline=true
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