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

BIOLOGY

ATAR course

Year 12 syllabus – What's changing: General capabilities

For teaching in 2027

Acknowledgement of Country

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

Background

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment to investigate the assessment and reporting of the general capabilities on the Western Australian Statement of Student Achievement (WASSA), the Authority has updated the statements about the general capabilities in each syllabus.

The Authority has mapped the general capabilities through the unit content and assessment types for each of the WACE courses. Students will have the opportunity to develop the general capabilities identified in the course through the teaching, learning and assessment programs. These general capabilities will be reflected on the WASSA.

Important information

WACE Refreshment: Investigating the assessment and reporting of the general capabilities on the Western Australian Statement of Student Achievement (WASSA)

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

Users of the syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

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

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. Teachers should find opportunities to incorporate the following capabilities into the teaching and learning program for the Biology ATAR course. The general capabilities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

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 12 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

A representation of the general capabilities for the two years is 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