



## Towards Foundation Victorian Curriculum F-10 Guidelines for Students with Disabilities

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These guidelines were developed in consultation with the Student Inclusion and Engagement Division, Department of Education and Training, State of Victoria.

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## Table of Contents

Towards Foundation Victorian Curriculum F-10 .....	1
Guidelines for Students with Disabilities.....	1
Introduction .....	4
Structure of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 .....	4
Background to the Victorian Curriculum F-10.....	4
Disability Standards for Education.....	7
Curriculum planning .....	9
Whole-school structures .....	9
Classroom-based approaches.....	9
Program planning steps.....	10
Role of the student support group.....	10
Personalised Learning and Support Planning .....	11
Making reasonable adjustments .....	11
Assessment and reporting advice .....	14
Assessment.....	14
Reporting to parents.....	15
Additional resources .....	16

## Introduction

*Towards Foundation: Victorian Curriculum F-10 Guidelines for Students with Disabilities* provides advice for school leaders and teachers to support the delivery of high quality curriculum for all students, with a focus on those students with disabilities.

These guidelines:

- reflect current educational reform at an international, national and state level, and are informed by the principles and practices of inclusive education
- support inclusive education and the rights of every student to participate in, or have access to, the full range of programs and services offered by the education system on the same basis as their non-disabled peers
- provide a framework for planning inclusive curriculum so teachers can equip all students with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to help them succeed in a world that is increasingly complex, rapidly changing and rich in information and communications technology.

*Towards Foundation: Victorian Curriculum F-10 Guidelines for Students with Disabilities* provides an overview of the Victorian Curriculum F-10, and how it may be used with students with disabilities. The guidelines also includes a summary of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Standards for Education, advice for principals and teachers on whole-school and classroom-based inclusive practices, and assessment and reporting advice.

While these guidelines focus on students with disabilities, the approaches outlined are consistent with good curriculum and pedagogical practices and are valuable for all students.

## Structure of the Victorian Curriculum F-10

The Victorian Curriculum F-10 provides a single, coherent and comprehensive set of prescribed content and common achievement standards, which schools use to plan students' learning programs, assess student progress and report to parents.

The Victorian Curriculum F-10 uses an 11-level structure that reflects the design of the Australian Curriculum, while retaining Victorian priorities and approaches to teaching and learning. While the curriculum sequentially identifies knowledge and skills, the progress of individual students through the 11 levels will vary, with students in a nominal year or grade working at different levels. The Victorian Curriculum F-10 accommodates this by organising the content and achievement standards by 'levels' rather than 'year levels', which offers teachers the flexibility to tailor their teaching to provide rigorous, relevant and engaging learning and assessment opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities.

## Background to the Victorian Curriculum F-10

Since 2010, Victorian schools have had access to *Towards Level 1 VELs*. These were curriculum materials designed for students with disabilities, and supported the delivery of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) curriculum. These materials were updated in 2013, to reflect the changes that occurred when the VELs curriculum was replaced by the AusVELS curriculum.

A key component of the AusVELS curriculum was the incorporation of four Australian Curriculum areas (English, History, Mathematics and Science) into the VELS framework, including *Towards Foundation* ('Levels A to D') curriculum for these areas.

In September 2015, the VCAA published the Victorian Curriculum F-10, which incorporated the remaining curriculum areas from the Australian Curriculum. The Victorian Curriculum F-10 includes *Towards Foundation* curriculum ('Levels A to D'), with achievement standards, in the areas outlined below (see table 1). Levels A to D (students with disabilities) curriculum is integrated within the Victorian Curriculum F-10, under each specific curriculum area e.g., Level D, 'Dance' is found under the curriculum for The Arts/Dance  
<http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-arts/dance/curriculum/f-10>.

Table 1: Victorian Curriculum F-10 Levels A to D (Students with disabilities) with Achievement Standards.

Victorian Curriculum F–10		Students with Disabilities (Levels A to D)				Foundation
		A	B	C	D	
English		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
Mathematics		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
The Arts	Dance	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
	Drama	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
	Media Arts	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
	Music	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
	Visual Arts	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
	Visual Communication Design					
Critical and Creative Thinking		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→
Ethical Capability						→
Health and Physical Education		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
The Humanities	Civics and Citizenship					
	Economics and Business					
	Geography	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→
	History	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→
Intercultural Capability						→
Languages	F–10 Sequence					→
	7–10 Sequence					
Personal and Social Capability		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard
Science		Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→
Technologies	Design and Technologies	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→
	Digital Technologies	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	→

## Aims

The objectives of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 are the same for all students. The curriculum offers flexibility for teachers to tailor their teaching in ways that provide rigorous, relevant and engaging learning and assessment opportunities for all students, including those students with disabilities.

Most students with disabilities can engage with the curriculum provided the necessary adjustments are made to the complexity of the curriculum content and to the means through which students demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding.

For some learners, making adjustments to instructional processes and to assessment strategies enables students to achieve educational standards commensurate with their peers. For other students, teachers will need to make appropriate adjustments to the complexity of the curriculum content, focusing instruction on content different to that taught to others in their age group. It follows that adjustments will also need to be made to how the student's progress is monitored, assessed and reported.

For a small percentage of students with disabilities, their learning will be well below the Victorian Curriculum Foundation level achievement standards. Most of these students have a significant intellectual disability. 'Levels A to D' *Towards Foundation Victorian Curriculum* provides this cohort of students with access to curriculum content and standards that enables students to move toward the learning described at Foundation level.

'Levels A to D' focus on progressing students from a pre-intentional to intentional engagement in learning. They support students to develop their independence as they explore, participate and engage in the world around them. As students' progress through these levels, the amount of support decreases as they proceed towards becoming independent learners.

'Levels A to D' are not associated with any set age or year level that links chronological age to cognitive progress. Rather the learning descriptions for levels A to D are structured by the following continuum:

<p><b>Level A: Beginning to Explore</b></p>	<p>At Level A, students experience a range of learning activities that will assist them to attend to and explore the world around them with as much independence as possible. Experiences are designed to move students from a pre-intentional level of responding to a level where the response indicates beginning intention. Students need high levels of coactive support and focused attention from the teacher to help them initiate and refine their responses. Students demonstrate some awareness and recognition of familiar people and routine activities.</p>
<p><b>Level B: Active Exploration</b></p>	<p>Students at Level B become less reliant on high levels of coactive support and become more reliant on verbal prompts and gestures to facilitate their learning. They begin to explore their world independently and engage in simple cause-and-effect play activities. Students are able to focus on structured learning activities for short periods of time. They respond to familiar people and events and begin to use 'yes/no' responses.</p>
<p><b>Level C: Intentional Participation</b></p>	<p>Students at Level C are less dependent on coactive support and respond more consistently to prompts and simple clear directions from the teacher to support them in their learning. They are displaying the first signs of independence and becoming more peer focused. Students participate in structured learning activities with others and they begin to use pictures, photos and objects to communicate personal interests and experiences. They start to use and link some familiar words and images to construct a meaningful communication.</p>

**Level D:  
Building  
Independence**

With teacher support and curriculum scaffolding, students at Level D participate cooperatively in group learning activities. They express their feelings, needs and choices in increasingly appropriate ways and combine and sequence key words and images to communicate personal interests and to recount significant experiences. They indicate beginning understanding of social rules and expectations and are beginning to reflect on their own behaviour.

## Disability Standards for Education

Every student has their own learning characteristics including strengths and abilities. To ensure all students make good progress, schools and teachers need to focus on the individual student's learning needs. Students with disabilities are not students who are underperforming but who have a learning difficulty that may require additional support and reasonable adjustments, beyond those typically offered in a differentiated classroom.

Students with disabilities are a diverse group. They include students with high-level complex needs, multiple or severe disabilities, or learning disabilities, and mild impairments. The student's individual characteristics will dictate the type of adjustments they need, what supports are required, when they are required and what good progress 'looks like'. It is important to note that many students with disabilities are able to achieve at or sometimes above the same standards as their peers. High expectations ensure that a student's disability is not a barrier to their success.

Success for all students is derived from high expectations followed by effective assessment and well-targeted learning and teaching. Addressing the needs of students with disabilities cannot be treated separately to wider student learning improvement strategies. All schools both need and are obligated to embed an inclusive culture and related practices in their school communities, to respond to the diverse needs of students with disabilities. An effective way schools can meet these challenges includes tailoring curriculum and organisational arrangements to cater for all their students' learning needs.

The [Disability Standards for Education](#) (the Standards) were formulated by the Commonwealth Attorney-General under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The Standards clarify and elaborate the obligations of education and training providers to ensure that children and young people with disabilities are able to access and participate in education without experiencing discrimination on the same basis as students without disabilities.

The Standards impose obligations on education and training providers with which all Victorian schools must comply. These obligations include the right to comparable access, services and facilities, and the right to participate in education and training unimpeded by discrimination, including on the basis of stereotypical beliefs about the disabilities and choices of students with disabilities.

The Standards cover:

- enrolment
- participation

- curriculum development
- student support services
- the elimination of harassment and victimisation.

Effective schools have high expectations for all learners, and recognise that all students have the potential to learn. To comply with the Standards, providers must make 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate student with disabilities.

An adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist students with disabilities to participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disabilities.

The Standards provide that in determining whether an adjustment is reasonable, consideration should be given to all relevant circumstances and interests, including:

- a) the student's disability
- b) the views of the student or the student's associate
- c) the effect of the adjustment on the student, including the effect on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes, ability to participate in courses or programs, and independence
- d) the effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including the education provider, staff and other students
- e) the costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

Adjustments may, or may not, require additional resources. Some students benefit from small adjustments to the curriculum such as delivery of instruction in writing rather than verbally, sitting at the front of the class, or taking regular breaks to get up and move limbs or stretch their back. Others require substantial adjustments, such as assistance with self-care or intensive supervision.

When planning an adjustment for the student, the school should consult with the student's parents, guardians or carers and, where appropriate, the student, through the student support group process about the proposed adjustment. Issues that ought to be considered include whether the adjustment is reasonable, the extent to which the adjustment would achieve its intended aim, and whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that would be more suitable.

To maximise opportunities for students with disabilities to succeed, policy and practice should reflect:

- collaboration between teachers and students, parents, guardians or carers, education and health professionals to develop criteria for agreed understanding and responses to a student's behaviour, communication skills and learning needs
- curriculum-based learning plans developed by a student support group that set out the student's learning goals
- teaching and learning strategies that take account of the student's background, experiences and individual goals



- opportunities for the student to develop knowledge, skills and behaviour in a range of learning areas and contexts
- opportunities for all students to participate in classroom activities with other students.

## Curriculum planning

### Whole-school structures

All students, given sufficient time and support, can learn and achieve. To ensure school practices are inclusive, schools may choose to implement some of the following organisational approaches.

#### *Collaboration with parents/guardians/carers*

As the primary source of knowledge about the student, the involvement of parents, guardians or carers is central to achieving student success. Such an approach recognises the student as a functioning member of the broader community and through acknowledging and involving the student's parents, guardians or carers, can establish positive relationships and communication.

#### *Implementation of a whole-school curriculum plan*

There is no single approach to curriculum planning. However, an inclusive approach incorporates the belief that all students can learn and progress, and a commitment to a collaborative relationship between students, parents/guardians/carers, the school and the community. Advice on whole-school curriculum planning is available from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) websites here

<http://curriculumplanning.vcaa.vic.edu.au/home> and here

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/foundation10/viccurriculum/curriculumplanning.aspx>.

#### *Use of appropriate language*

Using plain language for curriculum planning with students and parents/guardians/carers helps promote shared understandings.

#### *Implementation of a student support group*

The student support group (SSG) is a team of people who work collaboratively to develop, monitor and evaluate an individual's learning plan. The learning plan should identify a pathway for educational progress for students with disabilities, their learning goals and any adjustments that could be made.

### Classroom-based approaches

Teachers are responsible for planning and implementing the curriculum for their students. Teachers aim to meet the learning needs and goals of all students through developing appropriate teaching and learning programs, based on the Victorian Curriculum F-10. It is important to remember that within any typical class there are students covering multiple levels.

The curriculum offers flexibility for teachers to tailor their teaching in ways that provide rigorous, relevant and engaging learning and assessment opportunities for students with disabilities.

For some learners, making reasonable adjustments to instructional processes and to assessment strategies enables students to achieve educational standards commensurate

with their peers. For other students, teachers will need to make appropriate adjustments to the complexity of the curriculum content, focusing instruction on content different to that taught to others in their age group.

For a very small percentage, the Victorian Curriculum F-10 is neither appropriate nor meaningful, even with adjustments. Most of these students have a significant intellectual disability. For this cohort, the 'Levels A to D' *Towards Foundation Victorian Curriculum* should be used to design relevant learning experiences.

## Program planning steps

The following steps will assist with addressing the learning needs of all students. The process applies to all students, regardless of their circumstances, progress in learning or the setting or location of the school they attend. The process reinforces every student's entitlement to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning experiences across all areas of the curriculum and that students have access to comparable opportunities and choices in their education.

*Step 1:* Teachers refer to Victorian Curriculum F-10 as the starting point in planning teaching and learning programs.

*Step 2:* Teachers take account of the range of their students' current levels of learning, strengths, goals and interests, and personalise learning where necessary through adjustments to the teaching and learning program. Adjustments are made according to the individual's learning needs by drawing from learning area content at different levels along the Foundation to Level 10 sequence, which for students with disabilities could include the 'Levels A to D' *Towards Foundation*.

*Step 3:* Teachers assess students' progress in relation to achievement standards. Some students' progress will also be assessed in relation to their individual learning goals. Approaches to assessment and reporting may differ across schools and sectors.

It is important to note that when planning for students with disabilities, that:

- student learning adjustments are discussed at the SSG, reflected in the learning plan and student report, and reviewed and evaluated
- regular reviews of student progress towards achieving the educational and social goals include assessing the effectiveness of goals, strategies and adjustments
- while there are specific strategies that support students with particular disabilities, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach. Hence every student's learning plan needs to be individualised.

It is beyond the scope of these guidelines to give explicit student-centred adjustments, strategies and unique methods for every type of disability that may be encountered in a classroom.

## Role of the student support group

Where a student has a disability, planned and effective support can be coordinated by a student support group (SSG). The SSG may:

- share an understanding of the student as a learner so as to deliver the most effective educational program for the student

- set educational goals that are appropriate for a student
- identify student strengths, skills, preferences and abilities
- understand the learning environment by considering the layout and location of facilities and equipment requirements
- plan for future education and training, employment or life style
- decide on what needs to be taught when program planning, ensuring content relates to that which the rest of the class is learning
- select priorities for the content to be taught so that it builds on and extends the strengths of the student
- reference personal, achievable and measurable program goals to Victorian Curriculum F-10
- evaluate and review progress.

## Personalised Learning and Support Planning

The learning plan process provides a structure for ensuring students with disabilities are engaged in the classroom curriculum. The primary purpose for developing personalised learning plans is to provide a framework and guide that links the specific learning needs of the student to the classroom curriculum.

Personalised learning plans:

- sit within whole-school curriculum planning
- link to a student's learning goals developed by the SSG
- include age-appropriate learning activities and assessment tasks
- allow for alternative learning pathways for demonstrating achievement
- include suggested home activities, if appropriate
- identify next steps in a student's learning
- have agreed dates for ongoing monitoring and review, usually through the SSG process.

## Making reasonable adjustments

To ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all learners, reasonable adjustments may be required for students with disabilities. These include modifications or accommodations to the curriculum, instructional or environmental adjustments, and strategies.

Modifications are changes to the learning task, the way material is presented, or the way students respond to show their learning and the physical environment. One or more of these adaptations may take place during a learning experience.

Accommodations are adaptations that support students with disabilities to access an inclusive education through changes to the classroom or curriculum. They are linked to a

student's individual learning plan and provide general guidelines for supporting a student's learning.

It is important to consider that:

- many students with disabilities are able to achieve educational standards commensurate with students without disabilities
- not all students with disabilities will require adjustments to the curriculum, instruction or environment
- not all students requiring adjustments to the curriculum, instruction or environment will have a disability
- students with disabilities requiring adjustments to one aspect of their learning may not require the same adjustment, if any, to another
- students with the same disability may not require equivalent adjustments
- not every student with a disability will require ongoing adjustments
- students with disabilities may also be gifted and talented and/or have English as an additional language or dialect
- adjustments must be reviewed regularly, and changed or withdrawn where necessary
- reasonable adjustments should be discussed in the SSG.

Curriculum adjustments may include drawing from learning area content at different levels along the F–10 sequence, to adjust to an age-equivalent content. For example, a Grade 6 class is undertaking the sub-strand Chemical Science, from Victorian Curriculum F-10 Science. Students could be completing the same learning experiences and experiments but have a different focus, appropriate to their learning needs. So for students working at Level 6, this cohort of students would describe what happens when materials are mixed. For students with disabilities working at Level D, they would observe that some objects can be mixed and changed. Students with disabilities working at Level A would be exploring and responding to a variety of natural materials in the environment.

Personalised learning plans would reflect these types of curriculum adjustments. For example (and staying with the examples given above from Chemical Science), the individual learning plan for the student working at Level A could include 'explore an object in a structured activity'. For the student working at Level D, their learning plan could include 'offer comment/question to a peer about an object within a structured session such as 'the ice is cold'.' And for the student working at Level 6, their learning plan could include 'compare observable changes to materials and classify these changes as reversible or irreversible'.

Instructional adjustments may include:

- providing alternative representations of teaching and learning materials (for example, using multimedia, braille, illustrated texts, simplified texts or captioned video)
- motivating students through engagement with personal interests
- modelling and demonstrating skills, knowledge and cognitive strategies
- explicit and systematic instruction

- levels of prompting
- modelling problem-solving
- providing opportunities for the student to think aloud (verbalisation)
- scaffolding student learning through guided practice and support
- providing feedback and correction
- identifying key vocabulary for explicit instruction
- organising and connecting knowledge, skills and values to promote generalisation
- using cross-curricular and naturally occurring learning opportunities to respond to individual learning goals
- alternative opportunities for students to represent their learning (for example, using technology and augmentative and alternative communication systems)
- frequent cumulative review
- providing opportunities for maintenance of knowledge and skills.

Environmental adjustments may include:

- providing physical access to the teaching and learning environment
- providing peer assistance (for example, using buddy systems, peer-assisted learning and peer tutoring)
- providing access to alternative equipment and furnishings
- use of support personnel
- scheduling (for example, a sequence of events) or additional time allocation for a test
- use of technology and augmentative and alternative communication systems
- changes to buildings and classrooms.

## Assessment and reporting advice

The Victorian Curriculum F-10 is a framework of essential learning for all students. The Achievement Standards describe the learning students need to concentrate on at each level and the expectations for student achievement.

All students will participate in programs that allow them to achieve the maximum extent possible. For schools, this means developing individual learning plans for students with disabilities that are tailored to individual circumstances and designed within the curriculum described in the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Through curriculum-based assessment and reporting, valuable information about student progress is provided.

### Assessment

A key purpose of assessment is to improve student learning, making curriculum planning and the development of teaching and learning goals crucial. The key principles of assessment are:

- the primary purpose of assessment is to improve student performance
- assessment should be based on an understanding of how students learn
- assessment should be an integral component of course design and not something to add afterward
- good assessment provides useful information to report credibly to parents on student achievement
- good assessment requires clarity of purpose, goals, standards and criteria
- good assessment requires a variety of measures
- assessment methods used should be valid, reliable and consistent
- assessment requires attention to outcomes and processes
- assessment works best when it is ongoing rather than episodic
- assessment for improved performance involves feedback and reflection.

To assess student performance, schools may decide to take an integrated approach to assessment across a number of learning areas. Some students with disabilities will make similar progress in a number of learning areas as their peers without disabilities. Goals developed for students from SSG meetings will provide alternative ways of achieving specific standards.

In assessing students, teachers:

- develop a common understanding of the learning content and achievement standards
- collaborate with students and parents on the assessment process
- collect a variety of evidence through using a range of strategies
- make on-balance judgment as to whether students have demonstrated achievement against the achievement standards after taking into account all available evidence

- consider alternative or authentic ways in which students can demonstrate achievement based on the goals developed in the individual learning plan.

## Reporting to parents

Reports to parents will provide information on what students know, what they can do and how they can improve. While the SSG goals and learning plans provide an important focus for reporting to parents, for Victorian government and Catholic schools, student achievement is reported against the Victorian Curriculum F-10, which provides a continuum of learning for all students.

Program modifications and alternative learning pathways for demonstrating the performance against the achievement standards should be considered in the reporting process. Reporting student achievement to parents can also be facilitated through student work samples, portfolios, parent, student and teacher conferences, communication diaries and student self-assessment.

While Victorian schools should refer to their specific sectoral guidelines for advice with regard to the relevant reporting requirements, the VCAA has published guidelines to provide advice for schools on the effective use of the curriculum to develop whole-school teaching and learning plans and to report student learning achievement (a copy can be found on the VCAA website, under Victorian Curriculum F-10 curriculum planning resources <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/foundation10/viccurriculum/curriculumplanning.aspx>)

## Additional resources

### **Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) websites**

Victorian Curriculum F-10

<http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

VCAA Curriculum Resources and Support

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/foundation10/f10index.aspx>

Curriculum Planning Resources

<http://curriculumplanning.vcaa.vic.edu.au/>

Curriculum Planning and Reporting Guidelines (revised December 2015)

[Victorian Curriculum F–10: Revised curriculum planning and reporting guidelines \(pdf - 1,010.58kb\)](#)

Contact Victorian Curriculum F-10 Unit

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### **Department of Education and Training websites**

Programs Student with Disabilities

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/needs/Pages/disabilityprogram.aspx>

Students with Disabilities resources

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/Pages/programforstudentswithdisabilities.aspx>

### **Australian Government Department of Education website**

The Disability Standards for Education

<http://education.gov.au/disability-standards-education>