



## HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES: KEY CONCEPTS

The Humanities and Social Sciences knowledge and understanding identifies key concepts that are the high-level ideas involved in teaching students to think from a Humanities and Social Sciences perspective. The concepts from Civics and Citizenship, Economics and Business, Geography, and History are introduced across the appropriate phases of schooling and continue to build through to Year 10 to develop students’ understanding of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

### Concepts for developing an understanding of Civics and Citizenship

In Civics and Citizenship the key concepts are democracy, democratic values, the Westminster system, justice, participation, rights and responsibilities. They are integral in developing students’ civics and citizenship understanding. These are high level concepts that can be applied across the subject to identify a question, guide an investigation, organise information, suggest an explanation or assist decision-making.

In Years 3 to 6, there is a more personal approach to these concepts, exploring how and why the individual operates in their local community and then extending this to the wider Australian community. In Years 7 to 10, the institutions, function and values that are central to Australia’s democracy and justice system are explored with comparisons made to other nations, including those in the Asian region.

#### Democracy

The concept of democracy is about the acceptance of the will of the majority combined with constitutionalism, the rule of law and particular freedoms. An understanding of the concept of democracy is developed in the following ways:

- decision-making within the local and wider community and the ideas of sovereignty and government restraint
- roles and responsibilities of the individual within society
- the roles of the Commonwealth Constitution and its key elements
- the political and legal institutions and their roles.

#### Democratic values

The concept of democratic values is about shared values of Australian citizenship, the Judeo-Christian traditions, the diversity of Australia as a multicultural and multi-faith society and factors that shape identity. It is about equality, tolerance, popular sovereignty and the common good. An understanding of the concept of democratic values is developed in the following ways:

- why governments exist and the various forms of government
- the historical development of laws and government, with a focus on Australia
- the role and place of the Commonwealth and State Constitutions
- the diversity of Australian society and how differences are accommodated within the political and legal system.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of Civics and Citizenship

### The Westminster system

The Westminster system is central to Australia's system of government and includes bicameralism, the separation of powers, responsible government and representative government. An understanding of the concept of the Westminster system is developed in the following ways:

- the structure and roles of the executive, legislature and judiciary in Australia
- how governments are elected and formed
- the operation of Parliament in Australia.

### Justice

The concept of justice is about understanding the rule of law and its application; the idea of equality before the law, the importance of judicial independence and objectivity leading to the law being perceived as fair. An understanding of the concept of justice is developed in the following ways:

- the principles of 'natural justice' and how these are upheld or undermined with a focus on Australia and with a comparison made to other nations, including those in the Asian region
- the processes of the courts and the parliaments in Australia and the centrality of the rule of law
- the individual within the legal system.

### Participation

The concept of participation is about how an individual can be involved in the political and legal system as both a decision maker and as an agent of change in terms of being proactive and reactive. An understanding of the concept of participation is developed in the following ways:

- the role and place of political parties, pressure groups and community groups within society
- the electoral system and the conduct of elections in Australia.

### Rights and responsibilities

The concept of rights and responsibilities is about particular rights and freedoms an individual has within Australian society as well as the obligations of citizens, especially within the political and legal system. An understanding of the concept of rights and responsibilities is developed in the following ways:

- the various ways rights are protected in Australia
- citizenship within Australia
- the obligations of the individual within Australian society, including the political and legal system
- Australia as an international citizen.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of Economics and Business

In Economics and Business the key concepts are scarcity, making choices, specialisation and trade, interdependence, allocation and markets, economic performance and living standards. They are integral in developing students' economics and business understanding. These are high level concepts that can be applied across the subject to identify a question, guide an investigation, organise information, suggest an explanation or assist decision-making.

In Years 5 to 6, the focus on these concepts is from a personal perspective, exploring why choices need to be made, alternative use of resources, factors that influence personal decision-making, the ways businesses provide goods and services and the effect of their decisions on individuals, the community and the environment. In Years 7 to 10 the concepts are examined in a national and global context with the ways that decisions about the allocation of resources are made in the Australian economy and the place of the Australian economy in the broader global economy; the interdependence between countries and the impact on economic performance and living standards.

### Scarcity

Scarcity is the central idea in economics and business and is about the shortage of resources relative to wants. The wants of society are unlimited but the resources available to satisfy these wants are limited. An understanding of the concept of scarcity is developed in the following ways:

- the imbalance between wants and resources
- types of resources (natural, human and capital)
- the trade-offs in decision-making
- the economic problem facing consumers, producers and the government.

### Making choices

The economic problem is a dual problem of scarcity and choice. When making decisions, consumers, businesses and governments must compare the costs and benefits of using their limited resources. The cost/benefit framework is the basis for all decision-making in economics and business. An understanding of the concept of making choices is developed in the following ways:

- the imbalance between wants and resources
- how the concept of opportunity cost involves choices about the alternative use of resources
- influences on consumer choices and factors that influence purchase decisions
- strategies for making informed consumer and financial decisions (comparing costs and benefits).

### Specialisation and trade

Specialisation by both workers and businesses leads to increased production and provides for the most efficient use of resources. The exchange of goods and services between countries (trade) results in increased interdependence between the sectors in, and between, economies. An understanding of the concept of specialisation and trade is developed in the following ways:

- the reasons businesses exist and the different ways they provide goods and services
- how consumers rely on businesses to satisfy their wants
- characteristics of entrepreneurs and successful businesses
- why individuals work, different types of work and how individuals derive an income.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of Economics and Business

### Interdependence

The concept of interdependence is about the connections between the different sectors (or groups) in an economy, and between countries, and how the actions of one sector impact on the other sectors in an economy. An understanding of the concept of interdependence is developed in the following ways:

- the link between specialisation and trade among consumers and producers, and between countries
- how participants in the global economy interact
- who Australia trades with
- how consumers, businesses and governments are impacted by, and react to, changing conditions in the global economy.

### Allocation and markets

How will an economy's scarce resources and goods and services be allocated? Every society must decide how to answer the basic questions of what goods and services to produce, how to produce these goods and services, how many goods and services to produce and for whom to produce these goods and services. A market provides a way to allocate resources, goods and services, based on the actions of consumers, producers and governments. An understanding of the concept of allocation and markets is developed in the following ways:

- the role of key participants in the Australian economy
- how consumers and producers respond to and influence each other in the market
- the rights and responsibilities of consumers and businesses in Australia
- how markets operate in Australia and why they may be influenced by government.

### Economic performance and living standards

Improving the living standards of people over time is an economic objective of government. The level of economic activity, which influences people's living standards, is measured by key indicators such as gross domestic product, the unemployment rate and the inflation rate. An understanding of the concept of economic performance and living standards is developed in the following ways:

- indicators of economic performance and how Australia's economy is performing
- factors that affect a country's living standards and quality of life
- how the government manages the economy to improve living standards
- how businesses respond to opportunities and changing circumstances and conditions.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of Geography

In Geography the key concepts are place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change. They are integral in developing students' geographical thinking. These are high level concepts that can be applied across the subject to identify a question, guide an investigation, organise information, suggest an explanation or assist decision-making.

In Pre-primary to Year 2, there is a particular emphasis on the use of the concepts of place, space and environment in studies at a personal and local scale. The concept of interconnection is introduced in Year 2 to develop students' understanding of how people are connected to places in Australia and across the world. These concepts continue to be a focus of study in Years 3 to 6 but the scale of the places studied moves from the local to national, world regional and global. The concepts of sustainability and change are also introduced in these years. In Years 7 to 10, students further develop their understanding of place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability and change and apply this understanding to a wide range of places and environments at the full range of scales, from local to global, and in a range of locations.

### Place

The concept of place is about the significance of places and what they are like. They range in size from a part of a room or garden to a major world region. An understanding of the concept of place is developed in the following ways:

- the location, shape, boundaries, features and environmental and human characteristics
- how places are perceived, experienced, understood and valued differently
- where people live can influence their wellbeing and opportunities
- how places are important to people's sense of security, identity and belonging
- how the environmental characteristics of places are influenced by human actions and environmental processes
- how the human characteristics of a place are influenced by its environmental characteristics and resources, relative location, connections with other places, the culture of its population, the economy of a country, and the decisions and actions of people and organisations over time and at different scales
- how the places in which we live are created, changed and managed by people
- how the outcomes of similar environmental and socioeconomic processes vary in different places, and similar problems may require different strategies in different places
- how the sustainability of places may be threatened by a range of factors.

### Space

The concept of space is about the significance of location and spatial distribution, and ways people organise and manage the spaces that we live in. An understanding of the concept of space is developed in the following ways:

- how the environmental and human characteristics of places are influenced by their location
- how the effects of location and distance from other places on people are being reduced, though unequally, by improvements in transport and communication technologies
- how the individual characteristics of places form spatial distributions, and how the analysis of these distributions contributes to geographical understanding
- how spaces are perceived, structured, organised and managed by people, and can be designed and redesigned, to achieve particular purposes.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of Geography

### Environment

The concept of environment is about the significance of the environment in human life, and the important interrelationships between humans and the environment. An understanding of the concept of environment is developed in the following ways:

- the environment is the product of geological, atmospheric, hydrological, geomorphic, edaphic (soil), biotic and human processes
- how the environment supports and enriches human and other life
- how the environment presents both opportunities for, and constraints on, human settlement and economic development
- how culture, population density, type of economy, level of technology, values and environmental worldviews influence the different ways in which people perceive, adapt to and use similar environments
- how the management of human-induced environmental change requires an understanding of the causes and consequences of change, and involves the application of geographical concepts and techniques to identify appropriate strategies
- how each type of environment has its specific hazards and the impact of these hazards on people is determined by both natural and human factors, and can be reduced but not eliminated by prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

### Interconnection

The concept of interconnection emphasises that no object of geographical study can be viewed in isolation. An understanding of the concept of interconnection is developed in the following ways:

- how places, and the people and organisations in them, are interconnected with other places in a variety of ways and how these interconnections have significant influences on the characteristics of places
- how environmental and human processes, for example, the water cycle, urbanisation or human-induced environmental change, are sets of cause and effect interconnections that can operate between and within places, and can sometimes be organised as systems involving networks of interconnections through flows of matter, energy, information and actions
- thinking holistically and seeing the interconnections between phenomena and processes within and between places.

### Sustainability

The concept of sustainability is about the capacity of the environment to continue to support our lives and the lives of other living creatures into the future. An understanding of the concept of sustainability is developed in the following ways:

- how sustainability is both a goal and a way of thinking about how to progress towards that goal
- how progress towards environmental sustainability depends on the maintenance or restoration of the environmental functions that sustain all life and human wellbeing (economic and social)
- unsustainability requires a study of the environmental processes producing the degradation of an environmental function; the human actions that have initiated these processes; and the attitudinal, demographic, social, economic and political causes of these human actions
- the variety of contested views on how progress towards sustainability should be achieved and these are often informed by worldviews such as stewardship.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of Geography

### Scale

The concept of scale is about the way that geographical phenomena and problems can be examined at different spatial levels. An understanding of the concept of scale is developed in the following ways:

- how generalisations made, and relationships found, at one level of scale may be different at a higher or lower level
- the cause and effect relationships across scales from the local to the global and from the global to the local

### Change

The concept of change is about explaining geographical phenomena by investigating how they have developed over time. An understanding of the concept of change is developed in the following ways:

- how environmental change can occur over both short and long time frames, and both time scales have interrelationships with human activities
- how environmental, economic, social and technological change is spatially uneven, and affects places differently
- how the current processes of change can be used to predict change in the future and to identify what would be needed to achieve preferred and more sustainable futures.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of History

In History the key concepts are sources, evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, perspectives, empathy and contestability. They are integral in developing students' historical understanding. These are high level concepts that can be applied across the subject to identify a question, guide an investigation, organise information, suggest an explanation or assist decision-making.

From Pre-primary to Year 2, there is an emphasis on the use of the concepts of continuity and change, cause and effect, perspectives, empathy and significance as they are developed through personal, family and local contexts. In Years 3 to 6, the concept of sources is introduced as students' understanding shifts from the familiar to making broader connections, both in Australia and other places around the world. In Years 7 to 10, students also consider the more abstract concepts of evidence and contestability as they examine a range of topics from the ancient to the modern world.

### Source

The concept of source refers to any written or non-written materials that can be used to investigate and provide information about the past (e.g. coins, photographs, letters, interviews, gravestones, buildings). Primary sources are those created or written during the time being investigated. Secondary sources are accounts that are developed after the time period being studied. An understanding of the concept of source is developed in the following ways:

- exploring sources such as oral histories, photographs, newspapers, stories and maps to learn about the past
- analysing a range of sources to identify similarities and/or differences and describing what they reveal about the past
- interpreting sources to identify their origin, purpose and context
- evaluating the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources.

### Evidence

The concept of evidence is about the information obtained from sources that is valuable for a particular inquiry. Evidence can be used to help construct a historical narrative, to support a hypothesis or to prove or disprove a conclusion. Sources become evidence when they are used to support or dispel a claim. An understanding of the concept of evidence is developed in the following ways:

- identifying information within a source that can be used as evidence to support an interpretation
- analysing and synthesising information from a range of primary and secondary sources and using it as evidence to answer inquiry questions
- identifying different interpretations of the past and referencing the evidence used to support these interpretations, when developing historical texts.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of History

### Continuity and change

The concept of continuity and change refers to aspects of life or society that have remained the same or changed over a period of time. The causes of change, or reasons why change has been resisted, can be investigated. Continuity and change are evident in any given period of time and concepts such as progress and decline may be used to evaluate continuity and change. An understanding of the concept of continuity and change is developed in the following ways:

- comparing objects from the past and present to identify the nature of change or continuity
- analysing aspects of daily life to identify how some have changed over recent times, while others have remained the same
- sequencing events and creating timelines in order to identify broader patterns of continuity and change
- recognising and explaining patterns of change and continuity over time through the examination of beliefs and values, key events and the actions of individuals and groups.

### Cause and effect

The concept of cause and effect is used to examine the relationship between historical events or actions, where one event or action occurs as a result of the other. Historians use cause and effect to identify chains of events and developments over the short term and long term. An understanding of the concept of cause and effect is developed in the following ways:

- identifying the causes and effects of change on particular communities
- demonstrating the relationship between events and developments in different periods and places
- analysing the causes and effects of events and making judgments about their importance.

### Perspective

The concept of perspective is a person's point of view, the position from which they see and understand events going on around them. People in the past may have had different points of view about a particular event, depending on their age, gender, social position and their beliefs and values. Historians also have perspectives and this can influence their interpretation of the past. An understanding of the concept of perspective is developed in the following ways:

- recognising that stories of the past may differ depending on who is telling them
- examining sources to identify differing points of view, attitudes and values in the past and present
- identifying and explaining the significance of events and developments from a range of perspectives
- analysing the views of individuals and groups at different times and explaining how these views might reflect changing values and attitudes.

## Concepts for developing an understanding of History

### Empathy

The concept of empathy is an understanding of the past from the point of view of a particular individual or group, including an appreciation of the circumstances they faced, and the motivations, values and attitudes behind their actions. An understanding of the concept of empathy is developed in the following ways:

- describing and comparing the different experiences of people in the past
- identifying the motives and actions of people at a particular point in history
- identifying differing views in sources and how individuals and groups were influenced by the beliefs and values of their society
- explaining the context for people's actions in the past.

### Significance

The concept of significance is the importance that is assigned to particular aspects of the past (e.g. events, developments, individuals, groups, movements and historical sites). Significance includes an examination of the principles behind the selection of what should be investigated and remembered. An understanding of the concept of significance is developed in the following ways:

- retelling personal and family events that have significance
- examining an historical site of a cultural or spiritual significance
- recognising the significance of people and events in bringing about change
- investigating the significance of people, events and developments, over the short and long term.

### Contestability

The concept of contestability occurs when particular interpretations about the past are open to debate, for example, as a result of a lack of evidence or different perspectives. An understanding of the concept of contestability is developed in the following ways:

- identifying past events and developments that have been interpreted in different ways
- discussing the contestability of particular historical terms such as 'settlement', 'invasion' and 'colonisation' in the context of Australia's history
- identifying and analysing the variations in perspective which can lead to different historical interpretations, including their own.