

# Victorian Curriculum Reform 2004: Report on Consultation

July 2004

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) commissioned the Consultancy and Development Unit at Deakin University to analyse qualitative and quantitative data from an online questionnaire and prepare a report on their findings.

The VCAA would like to acknowledge the work of Dr Geoff Beeson, Dr Robin Matthews, Shirley Marshall, Gillian Milne and Warren Prior in producing this report.

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## 1. Background

The Minister for Education and Training, Lynne Kosky, MP, 'has directed the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) to identify a broad *framework of "essential learning"* for all students within Victorian schools. This framework will include defined standards of learning at key points of schooling, while still providing schools with the flexibility to develop school-based curriculum programs that support essential knowledge for students within a local context.'

The VCAA will also develop performance standards against which student learning can be measured and a range of assessment processes and reporting formats to support schools in improving the quality and clarity of communication to parents and the broader community on student progress and achievement.

The *Victorian Curriculum Reform 2004 Consultation Paper* outlined the curriculum direction being developed by VCAA. The consultation paper was sent to all schools at the beginning of Term 2, 2004 and is available on the VCAA website. The consultation paper includes a number of open-ended questions which were used to frame an online questionnaire through which teachers and other stakeholders could respond to the consultation paper. The VCAA also produced and distributed to schools a *Guide to Proposed Reform of Victorian Curriculum* which assists parents and the wider community in discussing the new framework. The online questionnaire was available for response until June 28, 2004.

## 2. Methodology

The online questionnaire was developed by the VCAA and included twenty-three questions. The questions were aimed at gaining comments from schools, teachers, parents and the wider community on the new framework and the key features of the consultation paper including values, core discipline concepts and skills, generic skills, performance standards, assessment, reporting to parents and support materials. The questions were designed to generate quantitative data through a Likert scale response as well as allowing for open-ended comment.

The online questionnaire was also available as a downloadable Microsoft Word version on the Deakin website. The questionnaire is included as Appendix 1. Respondents were able to answer the questions online and had the option of answering some of the questions and returning at a later time to complete their responses.

As the online questionnaire responses were confirmed by the respondents as being complete, they were downloaded directly into a database which in turn was transferred in batches to a NUD\*IST database.

Using a sample consisting of both complete and incomplete responses, Deakin University team members worked with representatives from the VCAA to identify the key ideas in the responses to each question and to develop corresponding coding categories. These categories became the nodes in the NUD\*IST database. Responses to all of the questions were then coded, and the NUD\*IST software was used to sort the key ideas from each response into the various categories (nodes), quantify the data and cross-tabulate responses originating from different groups of respondents. Each category was used as a basis for reporting. If further categories were identified early during the coding process they were added to the database. The coding of the online responses for entry into the NUD\*IST database was undertaken throughout the period of online consultation.

### 3. Profile of respondents

This report is based on 788 full responses which were confirmed as completed plus 198 partially completed responses where respondents answered at least one question. Respondents were able to return to the survey to complete it at a later date.

Some responses were individual responses, while others were made on behalf of a group. Groups were asked to indicate the number of people whose views were represented by the response. The 'No represented by group responses' was calculated by multiplying the number of groups by the number each represented. Table 1 shows the number of each response type.

Approximately a further thirty responses were posted on the site after the data for the draft report closed. These responses have been included in the final analysis.

**Table 1 - Total number of respondents**

Response categories	Number of responses
A Individual responses	545
B Group responses	441
C No represented by group responses*	3392
<b>D Total respondents represented (A + C)</b>	<b>4158</b>
E Responses confirmed**	788
F Responses not confirmed but partially completed	198
Additional data	
G Submissions not in questionnaire format	15
H Questionnaire responses already included above but which include large submissions	(115)
<b>Total number of responses (A + B + F + G)</b>	<b>1001</b>

\* The maximum number of people represented by a single group response was limited to 100.

\*\* Confirmed (see page 1).

A list of the large submissions has been placed in a folder along with a brief summary of the content of each. This has been provided to VCAA for their information.

In addition, forty-four consultation meetings were held with a variety of groups, including principals, curriculum leaders, unions and subject associations. The feedback from these groups was collated separately.

Table 2 shows the make-up of the group responses as a percentage of all group responses.

**Table 2 - Status of group responses**

Category	Number of group responses	% of all group responses
Small team response (representing 1-10 people)	223	50.6
Large team response (representing 10-50 people)	99	22.4
Whole school teacher response	83	18.8
School Council response	14	3.2
Other	22	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 summarises the experience of the respondents on the basis of information supplied in Question 3 of the online questionnaire.

**Table 3 - Experience of all respondents**

Initial training completed	Number	%
In the last 5 years	70	7.9
5-20 years ago	253	28.5
More than 20 years ago	508	57.3
Not a teacher	56	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>887</b>	<b>100</b>

Over half of the teacher respondents were very experienced, having completed their training more than 20 years ago. There were a few respondents who graduated in the last five years. All but 6% of the respondents had completed initial training.

Table 4 sets out the various roles of the respondents by category, showing the number and percentage of all responses.

**Table 4 - Role of all respondents**

Role of respondents	Number	%
KLA Specialist	215	23.4
Curriculum Coordinator	193	21.0
Generalist teacher	158	17.2
Principal	147	16.0
Educator (other than P-12)	57	6.2
Parent	47	5.1
Other	103	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>100</b>

As indicated on the above table above, almost 80% of respondents were KLA specialists, curriculum coordinators, generalist teachers or principals. In addition, approximately 6% were educators (other than P-12), most of whom were university personnel or officers from professional associations, Department of Education and Training or a Catholic Education Office. There was also a group of respondents representing other organisations. The VCAA has a full listing of organisations and groups that contributed detailed responses.

For group responses, Table 5 shows the distribution of respondents by location, and indicates that metropolitan responses closely reflect the percentage of the school population which is located in the metropolitan area (69%).

**Table 5 - Location of organisation (for groups)**

	Number	%
Metropolitan	296	67.3
Regional city or large town	70	15.9
Rural	54	12.3
Other	20	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>100</b>

Tables 6 and 7 show the distribution by education sector of all responses and group responses respectively.

**Table 6 - Sector represented (all respondents)**

	Number	%	% of school responses
Government	628	64.4	75.2
Catholic	112	11.5	13.4
Independent	95	9.7	11.4
TAFE	0	0.0	
Not relevant	45	4.6	
Other	95	9.7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Table 7 - Sector represented (for groups)**

	Group	Individual
Government - school	281	347
Catholic - school	66	46
Independent - school	39	56
TAFE	0	0
Not relevant	5	40
Other	50	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>534</b>

Finally, for school group responses, Tables 8 and 9 display the distribution of responses by type and school size. A small number of responses were submitted from schools with a student population of 1-100.

**Table 8 - Type of organisation (for groups)**

	N	%
School - years P-6	182	41.6
School - years P-12	45	10.3
School - years P-10	3	0.7
School - years 7-10	9	2.1
School - years 7-12	118	27.0
School - special setting	10	2.3
TAFE	0	0.0
University	9	2.1
Not relevant	11	2.5
Other	50	11.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 9 - School enrolment numbers (groups)**

	Number	%
1-100	14	3.9
101-500	176	49.2
500-1000	93	26.0
More than 1000	75	20.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>100</b>

## **4. Key messages for the VCAA from the Consultation**

### **4.1 Strong endorsement**

Overall, there was a strong level of endorsement for the proposal. This was evident especially through the responses to Q 3 (Strengths of the proposal), and also Qs 1 and 2 concerning flexibility and adaptability, and many of the comments in Q23 (Other comments). Especially encouraging for the VCAA was the frequent nomination of the rationale for the proposal, greater relevance and coherence, and the inclusion of broadly applicable generic skills, values and attributes as strengths of the proposal.

Teachers frequently reported that this matched their current practice and that this proposal legitimised what they were already doing.

### **4.2 Concerns and reservations**

Concerns and reservations were also expressed, including from those who expressed broad support for the framework. Responses in this category included:

- Implementation issues (see 4.3 below)
- How the defining of ‘essential learning’ relates to the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) II and what the proposal will mean in practice. This included the concern that the situation could be more difficult if the essential learning was just added onto the existing CSF
- Anxiety over the status of some existing key learning areas (KLAs). This anxiety was expressed especially in Health and Physical Education and Technology and Design, and was accompanied by extensive argument
- The issue of the extent of commonality in the curriculum and the implications. Concern was expressed over the possibility of large and unmanageable (for transferring students at least) variations from one school to another, inequities resulting from very different access to resources by schools in very different socio-economic contexts, and the need to resolve the relationship with Years 11 and 12 programs and requirements for university entrance. Issues of state-wide versus local were expressed regarding agreed values and who decides.
- The need for clarity and lack of ambiguity, including the need for the framework to be communicated widely and in simple straightforward language that can be readily understood
- The level of detail and information available at this stage made some respondents wary of committing to a definite view in many cases. It also no doubt led to a range of interpretations not intended by the VCAA.

### **4.3 Implementation**

Issues concerning implementation were identified as being a significant challenge for the proposal. These included the following:

- Getting agreement on the structure, including agreement from all levels of the school system
- Ensuring essential learning is agreed on, including across “a diverse cultural divide”
- Ensuring a common understanding and interpretation of the framework (implied from the large number of responses bearing on this, rather than stated directly)
- Producing a curriculum at school level, including deciding what is to be learned beyond the essential learning; maintaining balance in the curriculum

- Putting the framework into practice, including making adjustment from the CSF; adapting/changing the existing curriculum; restructuring schools; ensuring consistency of standards over the change; providing depth rather than breadth; cutting back the KLAs to accommodate the change in focus; ensuring the curriculum is not overcrowded
- Ensuring necessary support for teachers, including preparation, empowerment and resources
- Ensuring teachers are willing to adopt the change and ‘get moving’, especially in the climate of continuous change that has existed “in the last 15 years”; dealing with ‘the blockers’; teachers making the change from the CSF II;
- Ensuring teachers will adapt to a new way of teaching
- Providing needed materials and resources in a timely manner
- Ensuring appropriate and timely professional development for teachers.

Other related issues included:

- The new approach could lead to significant variations between schools
- “Not throwing the baby out with the bath-water”
- Ensuring appropriate input from/involvement with the community
- Sufficient time will be needed to communicate and implement the new approach effectively, including to educate teachers and the community appropriately.

#### **4.4 Assessment, standards, reporting and accountability**

Respondents expressed some concern about the relationship between this deeper and more flexible approach to the curriculum, and standards and accountability. Respondents were concerned about the extent to which the curriculum would be driven by accountability requirements, and also by the interface with the existing VCE requirements in secondary schools.

The use of a much wider range of assessment measures was supported, but again the focus on preparing students for VCE was a concern and the relationship of the VCE to the new framework.

#### **4.5 Range and depth of responses**

A large number of very substantial responses were received. While most of this input has been incorporated in the following responses to the questions, a summary of the key points from these submissions is included in Section 6. All documents were indexed and provided to VCAA. They contain essential key advice beyond that required by the questionnaire which can be used to inform the development and the implementation processes.

## 5. Analysis of feedback

### 5.1. Introduction

The consultation questions on the questionnaire are arranged under the following nine headings:

- General (Questions 1-4) Section 5.2
- Values (Questions 5-8) Section 5.3
- Core discipline concepts and skills (Questions 9-11) Section 5.4
- Generic skills (Questions 12-15) Section 5.5
- Performance standards (Questions 16-17) Section 5.6
- Assessment (Questions 18) Section 5.7
- Reporting to Parents (Questions 19-21) Section 5.8
- Support materials (Questions 22) Section 5.9
- Other comments (Questions 23) Section 5.10

Responses to each question are reported separately, with

- a statement of the question
- a table showing the responses to the Likert scale (where applicable)
- a table showing the distribution of comments under the key categories of comments
- a commentary reporting the responses to the question including:
  - an overview of the responses
  - a summary of the responses in each category and some quotes which illustrate the range of views expressed. The categories of response are labelled ABC... in each question.

Note the following:

The number of respondents (N) in the 'Distribution of comments' tables in this section will usually be less than the sum total of the other columns because many longer comments were broken up into several different categories. Similarly percentages will not total one hundred percent.

In some instances no comment has been made on a particular category as the relevant tables, in conjunction with the overview, provide sufficient information.

Comments used throughout the report to illustrate particular responses are quoted verbatim, as appropriate, from the questionnaire responses.

## 5.2. General Questions

### 5.2.1. Question 1

The proposed framework of essential learning (comprising core discipline concepts and skills, generic skills, and personal and social skills and values) will provide flexibility for schools to include innovative programs that will improve student learning.

#### Response data

**Table 10 – Level of agreement Question 1 (percentage)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	19.9	54.7	21.9	3.5	100.0	863
Individual responses	19.4	48.7	27.0	4.9	100.0	485
Group responses	20.6	62.4	15.3	1.6	100.0	378
<i>Government schools</i>	21.7	52.8	22.6	2.9	100.0	561
<i>Catholic schools</i>	11.9	72.3	11.9	4.0	100.0	101
<i>Independent schools</i>	20.2	58.3	19.0	2.4	100.0	84
<i>Other groups</i>	21.0	42.0	28.4	8.6	100.0	81

**Table 11 - Distribution of comments Question 1**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Endorsement of approach	Implementation	Flexibility	More detail required	Reducing crowding; depth rather than breadth	Strengths/Weaknesses and implications for new	Other, including disagreed
N=							
Total responses (no.)	524	147	101	77	64	31	15
Percentage response to this question	28.0	19.3	14.8	12.2	5.9	2.9	25.2

## Commentary

### Overview

The majority of respondents – approximately three-quarters - agreed with the proposition put in this question. About one-quarter provided endorsement in one form or another for the approach to ‘essential learning’ outlined in the consultation paper. Others raised issues concerning implementation, flexibility, and/or curriculum crowding in their responses, and a smaller number referred to characteristics of the CSF.

Approximately one-quarter of the respondents made comments concerning their disagreement with the proposition, or put an alternative view. About half of these comments were based on the place of Health and Physical Education, or Technology, in the curriculum framework proposed.

### **A: Endorsement of the approach to essential learning, values, beliefs, generic skills, processes, etc**

The number of responses for the question was the greatest in this section, representing more than one-quarter of the comments for Question 1 overall. About half of these comments showed clear support, and included justifying comments concerning such matters as structure, the inclusion of generic skills and values, comprehensiveness, provision of a strong framework, provision for ‘deep learning’, links between KLAs, and so on. The following four comments are illustrative of various emphases:

*“The proposed framework provides a more sound opportunity to focus on the whole student. It provides more thorough guidelines for curriculum planning than in the past, as it provides a systemic way of identifying skills that students require.”*

*“The concept is well overdue. We have been working like this for time and are glad to see recognition of the type of framework.”*

*“We agree with essential learnings, but why has this taken so long? Many of us were saying this many years ago”*

*“Good that values and learning are integrated. Coming to understand that teachers’ professional responsibility is to address all student needs. Is flexible and able to cater for individual students and differing communities.”*

Some of the other supportive comments were hedged with qualifications or provisos, including the need for detail and clarity, and comments that there is concern at the omission of Visual Art, Technology and Physical Education from the ‘essential learning’. The main qualifications are illustrated in the following four comments:

*“Schools have been engaging in explicit social skills teaching for some time but have not had curriculum recognition.”*

*“Our school has always tried, and continues to introduce innovative programs. I am pleased that DE&T seems to be giving ‘permission’ to deviate from ‘hard-line’ CSF adherence, thus attempting to regain the feeling of ‘freedom’ to make decisions more appropriately.”*

*“This is not a lot different to our present situation e.g. CSF II. However the 3 pillars will foster cross-curriculum activities that will better prepare students to participate effectively in society.”*

*“Must include core discipline concepts, deep learning -as found in the design concept.”*

While still endorsing the approach, a minority of the comments expressed stronger qualifications or provisos, as shown in these three examples:

*“I hope that it will but am concerned that it will change the names of things but not really alter the curriculum in any substantial and meaningful way. There are many many teachers who have not ever opened any of the previous curriculum documents...”*

*“But may result in huge differences between curriculum offered in different schools and vital learnings not taught.”*

*“However most programs will be affected by the VCE requirements. This will generate a push down block to real innovative changes.”*

## **B: Issues concerning implementation**

A number of respondents made reference to implementation of the new framework. These included reference to: the need for adequate support for schools (curriculum details, resources, professional development, time), the need for adequate commonality to minimise difficulties for students changing schools and ensure adequate background for the VCE, inequities between schools, clear communication of the framework, and the need for teachers to be encouraged to “think outside the way they have done things in the past”. There was also some reference to specific programs such as the need to be able to continue programs such as ‘You Can Do It’ and the need for emphasis to be given to physical education.

Comments made included the following:

*“As long as resources are provided - eg: money, personnel. As long as we know about innovative programs. There is still a need to adopt things as a whole school - not willy nilly individually.”*

*“The essential learnings must be specified to ensure consistency across all schools while allowing for individual school flexibility.”*

*“It is not clear how the proposals will lead to equitable support across a range of communities and schools whose ability to use their flexibility is far from equally distributed.”*

*“...it is essential that schools are still required to cover basic information in the same year levels to allow for students who change schools and to ensure some uniformity of information background prior to VCE.”*

*“We embrace the concept and would appreciate further chance to feedback on the draft version after the initial implementation. THIS IS CRITICAL. It is hard to fully endorse something that has not been implemented - warts and all. Is this a fait accompli? Have decisions already been made?”*

## **C: Issues concerning flexibility**

A moderate number of respondents made comments that focussed on the issue of flexibility. Some of these endorsed or illustrated the way they saw the proposed framework providing flexibility, others stated provisos relating to flexibility, and others again raised questions or perceived obstacles to flexibility. The endorsing comments referred to more room for teachers to add or adapt programs to suit their schools’ and students’ needs, and being “less dictated to by CSF dot pointed outcomes”.

The provisos included covered the need for a reduction in prescribed curriculum outcomes, the test of whether it translates into true flexibility in practice, and the inevitable dependence on further detail. The proposed standards and the methods of assessment were raised as possible obstacles to flexibility by a small number of respondents. There was also a comment expressing wariness of the proposed flexibility “resulting in non core discipline subject to become somewhat optional”.

The following examples are illustrative of the range of comments:

*“There will be a strong core of commonality between schools, but the framework allows flexibility for communities to put their individual “stamp” on the learning requirements.”*

*“This flexibility though will only be possible if there is a reduction in the number of outcomes expected to be covered in schools.”*

*“The provision of a framework that guides rather than prescribes will be beneficial, although there is a concern that mandated assessment will limit flexibility to some extent”*

## **D: More detail needed**

A significant number of respondents who made comments considered there was not enough detailed information provided to give a meaningful answer to this question. Of these, a small number indicated the proposed framework *may* provide sufficient flexibility for innovative programs, and some included conditions, such as “if the content is kept broad and not too specific”, or “This depends on how you frame the core disciplines”. Almost all made additional comments or raised questions.

These comments included views that the paper was “too general” or “too vague” and more concrete examples were required, that the information was “too convoluted and lacking in

substance” and/or that a more specific draft needed to be developed. Questions raised concerned the links to the VCE, what is meant by some of the terms, such as ‘innovative programs’, and whether there is provision for multiple intelligence models.

Comments included:

*“paper is too vague to comment can't say to what extent agree more concrete examples required - what is, what isn't left CSF levels don't match up”*

*“On page 4, you mention the exact content of general skills, values and attributes and core discipline concepts is being developed. Tough to make a judgement when one is looking for something to judge it against.”*

*“Difficult to ascertain the extent to which the proposed framework will benefit students. Do not believe there will be flexibility.”*

### **E: Reducing crowding; depth rather than breadth**

Some respondents made comments relating to the need to reduce curriculum crowding, and the importance of making provision for depth in learning. The points made are exemplified in the following:

*“Important that curriculum in not overcrowded. The notion of deepening knowledge rather than broadening is better.”*

*“It is important to allow children time for in depth study, to become totally engrossed in what they are learning rather than just skimming the surface of many subjects. Such learning will encourage children to become lifelong learners and to enjoy the process. We believe the aim of getting less clutter is sound”*

*“The proposed framework must include deep learning as found in the design process.”*

### **F: Strengths and weaknesses of the CSF, and implications**

A few respondents answered the question by commenting on the CSF. Most of these were critical or implied criticism of the CSF (e.g., “far too crowded”), but there were positive comments as well. The flavour is summed up reasonably well in the following:

*“Over the past decade the CSF has provided schools with a great skeleton to build a curriculum. However, it did miss vital aspects of learning especially in the areas of social learning, values and community”*

*“Do not make the essential learnings an add on to the CSF. The CSF is overly technical, proscriptive and wordy and needs to be ditched. The essential learnings also need to prioritise the most critical student learnings.”*

### **G: Other comments, including ‘disagree’ comments**

The comments in this section either expressed disagreement with the proposition in Question 1 or put an alternative view. In a number of cases, agreement or disagreement was not specifically registered. There was a substantial number of such comments – second only to the number for categories 1 (Endorsement of the approach...). Approximately half were concerned with arguing that Health and Physical Education, and Technology, should be part of the core, or questioning where they fit into the framework proposed. Some of the comments concerning Health and Physical Education were quite lengthy.

Other comments were that innovation was already occurring, that it is possible within the CSF, that the proposal will only add to the teacher’s burden of assessment, that the terminology is ‘soft’, and the sequencing of the curriculum is more random in nature.

The following comments are illustrative:

*"Knowledge is, ought to be, the key category in this discussion. The proposed framework offers little in seriously considering this key marker of the current era. It is treated as a given yet it is far from clear what assumptions underpin the document about: the nature of knowledge, how it is produced and leveraged and the social dimensions of its production and maintenance "There is still not enough change. The focus is on the same things instead of making it different. There appears to still be too much emphasis on knowledge and not skills. This is disappointing. There is no discussion on how skills can become transferable between essential learnings."*

*"By recognising citizenship as something that is "taught" by schools you place a burden on them to stray from their own demographical boundaries and force them to become parental in their guidance of students. The need for students to acquire "in depth knowledge" comes second to the need for fancy terminology and descriptors of students."*

*"All learning is holistic and cannot be restricted to separate learning disciplines."*

*"The proposed framework as outlined in the Consultation Paper appears to be without clear structure. The statement that "schools will be expected to interpret the new approach in innovative ways that reflect the learning requirements of their students", makes the assumptions that all teachers are innovative and that they have the time available to read, interpret, and then plan, implement and evaluate these skills and values. There seems to be an assumption that currently no innovative programs are currently occurring with the current CSFII - I do not believe that this is the case!"*

*"Not very clear in what they want, and how will this impact on Technology? Will Technology remain as a KLA?"*

*"An assumption is being made that the CSF II does not allow for innovation. This is not the case for the Health and Physical Education KLA. This KLA is unique to the curriculum and offers many opportunities that enhance student engagement, incorporates various learning styles and provides opportunities for student leadership. The proposed framework also denies the students the opportunity to remain physically active. Physical inactivity has been associated with several cardiovascular risk factors in childhood, including hypertension and obesity. For some students Physical Education classes are the only opportunity for them to engage in physical activity that is sufficient in improving their own health and fitness levels. Of particular concern is the increasing number of overweight or obese children and adolescents in Australia, and the proposed framework does not address this nationwide health problem."*

## 5.2.2. Question 2

The proposed framework of essential learning will provide an appropriate basis for local implementation of the curriculum in ways that meet specific circumstances and needs of the school.

### Response data

**Table 12 - Level of agreement Question 2 (percentage)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	18.4	54.8	23.6	3.2	100.0	857
Individual responses	16.4	50.8	28.8	4.0	100.0	480
Group responses total	21.0	59.8	17.0	2.2	100.0	377
<i>Government schools</i>	22.9	63.6	11.9	1.7	100.0	239
<i>Catholic schools</i>	18.0	65.6	11.5	4.9	100.0	63
<i>Independent schools</i>	17.1	62.9	20.0	0.0	100.0	35
<i>Other groups</i>	20.0	27.5	50.0	2.5	100.0	40

**Table 13 - Distribution of comments Question 2**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	School Community Needs	Implementation	More detail needed	Interpretation	Links to year 11 and 12	Other	Will it work in practice (and crowded curriculum)
Total responses (no.)	475	143	89	74	12	85	17
Percentage response to this question	30.1	18.7	15.6	14.9	2.5	17.9	3.6

### Commentary

#### Overview

Thirty per cent of respondents made comments expressing agreement that the proposed framework will provide a basis for local implementation of the curriculum in ways that meet the needs of the school. Significant numbers of comments also raised issues concerning implementation – covering a range of themes - and interpretation of the framework and/or the curriculum, and a small number referred to linkages with Years 11 and 12. There were also a significant number of comments that suggested further detailed information was needed to make a confident response, and there was a mixture of ‘other’ comments. Most of the comments expressing disagreement with the proposition of Question 2 fell into the ‘Interpretation of the curriculum’ and ‘Other comments’ categories.

## **A: Should allow for meeting School Community's Needs**

Thirty per cent of respondents made comments in support of their agreement with the proposition that the framework will allow for the specific needs of the school to be met. These formed the most numerous responses to Question 2 and are exemplified by the following:

*"Structure allows flexibility to cater for the needs of the school with key skills, etc expected to be taught."*

*"Schools need flexibility as do students. Things happen in the lives of students which must be used in their learning, e.g. farming cycles in a farming community; news of gas leaks in an industrialised area etc."*

*"Schools must recognise their individual strengths/needs and socio economic situations, and form their curriculum around this."*

*"Allows for flexibility and in depth learning - Gives schools greater opportunity to initiate real curriculum reform."*

A small number of comments contained a qualification or proviso, such as:

*"If constructed properly framework should allow for this."*

A further small number of comments consisted of the observation that it will be

*"similar to what already happens in schools."*

## **B: Implementation issues**

As for Question 1, a significant number of respondents made comments concerning implementation issues. These covered a range of themes, including principles, practical matters including curriculum crowding, support and resources, the influences of standards, and a dash of scepticism. Examples are:

*"It will still be a critical part of the processes of implementation that schools work through the educational philosophy informing the approach underpinning the reform."*

*"my experience of self-managing schools makes one point very strongly. schools in Victoria have only become as self-managing as their principals have been personally. while leadership selection criteria have emphasised things like 'vision' and 'change management', I have worked in too many schools where these were much more honoured in the breach than in the observance. a 'self-managing' curriculum would be heir to the same weaknesses. a few schools would be the lights of the new system; most schools would be as like each other as they could strive to be; a few schools would outright fail. the 'appropriate basis' mentioned above will need to be quite new and different in some key essentials to what we have had for the last fifteen years."*

*"Assuming schools are allowed to determine what is appropriate, in the way that the new guidelines suggest."*

*"As long as the framework is not too crowded we should be able to integrate our local priorities into the framework. (Water Safety Program, Cluster initiatives)"*

*"The potential is there. Teachers will need to be provided with TIME to understand the framework, learn and work and plan together. If it is not adequately resourced then the required changes will not happen (need change in structures and pedagogy too)."*

*"As long as schools and teachers aren't unnecessarily bogged down with constantly comparing and reporting against standards. Standards are important to guide the development of learning materials and school programs and class lessons and to help students"*

*"The proof will have to be in the pudding. But there is nowhere that shows this will be the case. The cynic in me tells me that money will be available for certain programs or taken away for the lack there of."*

### **C: More detail/information needed**

As for Question 1, there were a significant number of comments to the effect that it is not possible to answer the question with the limited amount of information available. A few of these comments referred to lack of definition or specificity of terms, and a few raised questions about the proposed framework. Approximately one-fifth of the responses in this group made the point that the question should be about meeting the needs of students rather than schools. The following examples illustrate the different types of comments:

*"Unable to comment due to lack of information. To pass comment we felt we needed specific details."*

*"poorly worded question - more specificity needed."*

*"How can this be possible if CSF II is still determining standards for assessment?"*

*"Education is not about the needs of the school, it is about the needs of the students attending that school (this is not what the question states)."*

### **D: Interpretation of the curriculum**

A significant number of comments included issues related to the interpretation of the proposed framework. Many of these were favourable to the proposal, but there were also numbers of disagreements, a small number expressed doubts, and a few observed that "it is already happening". There were also many comments concerning the importance of Physical Education, and of Technology, to learning and the needs of students. There was a wide variety of points raised, but the most common themes concerned issues of commonality, meeting local needs, definition of what constituted essential learning, and clarification/specification of terms. The following are illustrative examples.

*"The level of 'commonality' is important to me. I am concerned that too much will be left to local implementation and that we will end up with the kind of state-wide diversity we experienced prior to 1995."*

*"It will; however, be essential to define what is meant by local. If it is too limited then congestion within immediate communities will result and the aims retarded. Local can mean Australia."*

*"Schools would need to remember that the essential learning is just a basis. There could be a danger in some schools viewing it as the only learning that needs to occur."*

*"It is important that the essential learnings are specific enough to provide a clear framework for teachers."*

*"We are already selecting areas that people see as essential learning. We already teach thinking skills, social competencies etc. How different will this be from what we are already doing? The paper is not clear on exactly what the changes are."*

*"Our school is within a region where trade skills, technical skills, manual labour, and similar style occupations are in high demand. Additionally we have a substantial amount of students (and families) with poor literacy levels and this model may cause problems for those challenged students."*

*"(We) understands that language learning is a form of literacy, with reading, writing, speaking and listening as its defined key strands. To learn a language is to improve literacy in one's first language. To learn a second language, or to use more than one language concurrently, is to enhance literacy skills. With increased globalisation and local demographic changes, foreign languages are fast becoming familiar languages. The Curriculum Reform process should aim to have language learning embraced by our education system as "essential learning", as literacy for life, as a way of improving student outcomes. Self managing schools provide the strongest model for tailoring programs to local community needs. Local implementation must remain linked to performance standards in each KLA or this could lead to disintegration in provision at the local level."*

*"However, teachers of non "core" subjects are fearful that their areas of teaching and learning will be devalued in this process. The CSF is over-complicated for teachers (too many outcomes), and translating the outcomes into meaningful assessment and reporting to parents is extremely difficult. The Framework should help to overcome this and will provide an opportunity for secondary colleges to teach a more integrated curriculum."*

*"...but if school diverge too greatly within the framework there is a possibility of first and second class schools developing."*

*"However, some members of parent community would strongly disagree."*

*"Seems to be a step back into the '70's where school based curriculum was in vogue. Will this create MORE work for overworked teachers re. curriculum planning and documentation?"*

## **E: Linkages to Year 11 and 12**

A small number of respondents made reference to the connection with programs of Years 11 and 12. The following examples illustrate the points made:

*"CSF and VCE currents! After addressing this segment of the curriculum we must revisit VCE / VET and VCAL"*

*"Provided that the outcomes as expected for Year 12 students are recognised by the intake requirements for tertiary institutions. Flexibility in local provision for local needs also needs to be widened to flexibility for tertiary intake."*

## **F: Other**

A considerable number of other comments were made which were not easily categorised in the above groups. Some of these were supportive of the proposition in Question 2, some included the observation that the current programs allow for meeting the school's needs, some were negative, and others appeared to be 'neutral' comments. The following examples illustrate the range.

*"However, we feel that the framework will need to be statements that are understood by the public, are owned by us as professionals and allow for REAL learning to take place."*

*"there is enough scope in our current curriculum to meet the needs of the school. The reform simply reinforces current practice undertaken in schools. I support this aspect of the reform as it will enable schools to continue meeting their specific needs."*

*"No evidence that the framework will do this. Our school currently meets the needs of its students."*

*"This is always an attractive notion. After all, there must be something that is essential, core, at the base of how we operate in the world. But the trap is once you get past the bleeding obvious: read, communicate, work with number-based systems that are socially important and have agency in the world you get drawn back into an interminable wish list that takes from the intent of declaring the stuff that every child ought to be able to do."*

*"It is not 'an appropriate basis' if it disadvantages primary students by not providing, or diminishing the importance of, some areas of the curriculum especially Physical Education."*

*"Transfer of skills across KLAs is vital."*

*"I have taught in four other countries and in my experience too rigid a framework is not beneficial, however it is also true that teachers can take the easy way out and a certain framework must be provided."*

### 5.2.3. Question 3

What are the major strengths of the proposal?

#### Response data

Table 14 - Distribution of comments Question 3

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Emphasis on skills etc	Rationale	Greater relevance	Flexibility	Crowded curriculum	Implications for T & L	Standards and assessment	Implementation	Other
Total responses (no.)	281	181	179	162	94	39	37	9	63
Percentage response to this question	36.4	23.4	23.2	21.0	12.2	5.1	4.8	1.2	8.2

#### Commentary

##### Overview

A range of factors were mentioned as strengths of the proposal. The most common of these was the emphasis on broadly applicable skills, values and attributes. The rationale for the approach to the proposed framework, a perceived greater relevance and coherence, and greater flexibility were all mentioned as strengths by approximately the same number of respondents. Reducing the crowded curriculum, provision of opportunities for studies in greater depth, implications for teaching and learning, standards and assessment, implementation issues, and a range of other matters were also mentioned by many – though fewer – respondents as strengths.

##### A: Emphasis on broadly applicable skills, values, attributes

The most frequently nominated strength of the proposal was the inclusion of an emphasis on generic skills, including the social and cultural skills, values and attributes. This strength was not infrequently mentioned in conjunction with the importance of preparation for lifelong learning, a reduction in subject matter content and ‘cross-KLA’ learning. “The inclusion of values” was mentioned in a number of responses. Most statements were quite short, but a few contained some elaboration. A sample of responses follows.

*“That it is focusing on key skills rather than content-based outcomes. Once skills have been developed students are able to apply them to new learning and a variety of situations.”*

*“Some Flexibility but identification of CORE that define proposed framework of essential learning (comprising core discipline concepts and skills, generic skills, and personal and social skills and values)”*

*“The implementation of this new framework would allow all schools to have a curriculum based on generic skills and values which are essential to children’s life long learning as well as giving them the skills necessary to function and survive in society.”*

*“The move away from content to competency and skills. Highlights generic skills, values and attributes. Raises the status and importance of these. Skills are transferable. Prepares students for a world of change.”*

*“The strength of the framework is that it considers the elements ignored by the CSF - personal growth, team work, thinking, problem solving etc.”*

*“The inclusion of attributes, purposes and values is a most worthwhile contribution to developing the full person. None of this is new and best practice.”*

*"The emphases on social competencies, personal development and also on developing thinking skills are strengths. However, the thinking skills are already being given a high priority in most schools so this is not really a change. The statement about values is also a strength, even though this is also already covered in most schools. However, we have some reservations about how these specific values are expressed."*

*"Council welcomes the emphasis of depth over breadth of knowledge and the concentration on thinking skills."*

## **B: Rationale of the approach**

A substantial number of respondents listed the rationale of the proposal as a strength (though not usually using that term). Points of strength included under this heading are: its connection to 'real life' and the social and economic challenges facing the country; its basis in research; that it has a holistic approach; it is geared to social change; its attempt to address lifelong learning; its basis in the identification of essential learning; its attempt to use current pedagogies and to adopt a fresh approach; and a collection of factors such as flexibility, inclusion of generic skills and 'deep learning'. These are illustrated in the following comments:

*"The research into other systems in Australia and overseas. The recognition that curriculum reform is necessary to meet the social and economic challenges of a new century."*

*"That there is more focus on technology, this shows that the curriculum is keeping up to date with change."*

*"Identifies the 'essential / generic learnings' as the basis for our programs [have they ever been in dispute? why have we largely ignored them for so long?]. Enables us to take advantage of the rich diversity within our system (as against imposing the lowest common denominator - CSF). It acknowledges the importance of the learning process and our societies value system - once out in the open we can investigate, debate and clarify these."*

*"Allows students to develop greater depth of understanding in key disciplines. Encourages integration and transfer of knowledge, which provides students with the key to becoming lifelong learners. Aims to challenge and extend students ...."*

*"The framework is a holistic approach, hopefully won't be as outcome based as the CSF 11"*

*"Sets a clear educative purpose for the government system"*

*"The opportunity to cater for the Schools' clientele, the opportunity to develop skills of citizenship, thinking, and life long learning through what is appropriate for each specific school. It will enable students to take responsibility for their own learning"*

*"The proposal documents/formalises and brings to the fore good teaching and learning practices and makes it possible to assess and validate these skills etc. to report to parents."*

*"The proposal has the admirable ambition of creating a framework that encourages education for the whole person."*

## **C: Greater relevance and coherence**

Greater relevance and coherence were also nominated as strengths by a substantial number of respondents – about the same number who nominated the rationale of the proposal. Aspects concerning relevance that were mentioned included: meeting students' needs, learner centred, making links between learning and life experience, and the "relevance to the society of today" Several responses also linked the inclusion of values to relevance and were of the form:

*"The inclusion of values and the desire to make the curriculum more relevant to students and to the society of the future are the major strengths."*

Aspects concerning coherence mentioned included:

*"There is a connectedness from P-10"; the opportunity for integrated learning opportunities; and the removal of overlap."*

Other comments were:

*"Major strengths are the implementation of integrated learning opportunities for students, the removal of content and skill overlap from subject to subject, the opportunity for us to reflect on what is essential, an opportunity to build on good practice,..."*

*"It is teaching in a more realistic manner. Learning is driven by student needs rather than learning outcomes."*

*"The strengths of the proposal include:• The linkage between content, pedagogy and assessment• they are almost all equally important; this represents a mind shift from the past• Acknowledgement of the need for ...education of the whole child has a greater focus than in the past; it is very learner-centred?"*

*"By making links between learning and life experience, curriculum becomes more relevant for children."*

#### **D: Flexibility/freeing up the curriculum**

The capacity of the proposed framework to provide flexibility allows schools to make adaptations to meet local needs, to include innovations, and to meet individual needs of students was also mentioned frequently as a strength of the proposal. The perceived flexibility was mentioned by some as enabling the "teacher not to feel so pressured to complete everything", and therefore allow greater depth of learning. The comments below are illustrative. However, many comments were brief, simply referring to "the proposed flexibility of the curriculum" or similar wording.

*"Increased flexibility of schools to meet local needs. Inclusion of social skills and competencies to cater for the whole child. Providing a greater degree of flexibility and teaching for real understanding"*

*"Flexibility, concentrating on depth rather than breadth, providing curriculum that is suitable for students at own school..."*

*"Flexibility in curriculum planning for local needs but still provides a state framework."*

*"Schools will have the flexibility to deliver a learning program that meets the specific needs of their children."*

*"It will be strength if it does free up schools to take innovative and creative responses to the needs of Year 9 students in particular."*

#### **E: Crowded curriculum, including depth rather than breadth**

Reducing the crowded curriculum was also mentioned by many respondents as a strength. It was often associated with comments concerning the advantages of providing opportunity for studies in depth. The following comments illustrate this.

*"Uncrowding the curriculum will facilitate learning that is richer and at a greater depth."*

*"The potential for the current 'crowded curriculum' to be addressed to get rid of time-filling content and enable an approach that focuses on depth of learning and skills that are applicable in life not just for formal schooling and never used again."*

*"That it redresses the balance between depth and breadth of learning and explicitly aims to enhance depth of knowledge. One should not be at the expense of the other."*

*"The number of learning outcomes in the CSF will be reduced. It allows for development of thinking and depth of understanding."*

*"Flexibility in planning curriculum to better cater for local needs. P - 4 classes can concentrate more fully on skills etc in English and Maths without 'guilt' at not having time to cover all KLAs thoroughly. Not all outcomes in all KLAs need be covered."*

*"Great to see the understanding and depth of learning is being expanded."*

## **F: Implications for Teaching and Learning**

Implications for teaching and learning were also mentioned as strengths of the proposal. These included, in the words of respondents:

- An emphasis on authentic tasks
- Providing clear direction for teachers
- It will help teachers focus on the core purpose of their job
- Assist teachers to set priorities, assess students and report clearly to parents
- Validating current good teaching and learning practice
- Allows for an integrated approach to learning and skill development
- Better student engagement.

Respondents also commented that:

*"This approach allows for an integrated approach to learning and skill development. Knowledge and skills learned in this fashion are strongly reinforced and integrated into the learner's ongoing development. Integrating knowledge across KLAs allows for the use of multiple methodologies, multiple starting points and responds much more closely to the learners' needs. Integrating KLAs ensures that knowledge and skills developed in each area are validated and practised by all students. This prevents narrow specialization and the marginalization of some areas and skills. "*

*"Fresh and challenging new approach to learning styles of students and Blooms taxonomy and multiple intelligences."*

## **G: Standards and assessment**

Aspects relating to standards, assessment and reporting were also mentioned by a number of respondents as strengths of the proposal. These included:

- The inclusion of performance standards
- More specific standards
- Allows for meaningful assessment
- Promotes a range of assessment procedures.

Comments included:

*"Will assist teachers to plan their units of work with a clear idea of standards, expected at a wide range of schools, against which we can monitor and assess our children. "*

*"That assessment is not being considered separately to the reform project. Assessment must be for learning and must be considered in an integral way as it drives particular (often narrow forms of teaching and a 'coverage of content' and consequently predominantly transmissive rather than constructivist approaches to pedagogy."*

## **H: Implementation issues**

As part of their response to Question 3, or as a separate comment, a smaller number of respondents raised issues concerning implementation. Following are three examples:

*"I am looking forward to receiving support and articulation for the essential learnings. A great amount of resources exists on subject area basis - do have improved and diverse resources and articulation of descriptors and programs to address the initiative."*

*"Flexibility is important but what guidelines are available to ensure that schools are providing a quality curriculum that truly meets the needs of their students and represents what students need to know across the state."*

*"Great if we can get enough teachers who are prepared to put in all the extra work required."*

## I: Other

There were also a number of comments that did not fit easily into the above categories. A few respondents mentioned that there was too little detail available. The following examples provide a general coverage of the main points made:

*"The major strengths of the proposal are that it continues the excellent teaching practice of Early Numeracy and Literacy and builds on this foundation."*

*"Builds on and supports the CSF."*

*"It's based on making decisions about content. The cart is before the horse."*

*"Essential learning" is a tricky concept. Who deems what is really essential? "*

*"The biggest strength would be integration of the curriculum for secondary schools. Educators could potentially broaden their own scope."*

*"For technology - none. With these proposals we are seen as an adjunct to other subjects not as a subject that can stand as a whole."*

## Question 4

**What are the major challenges of the proposal?**

### Response data

**Table 15 - Distribution of comments Question 4**

	N=	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
		Implementation - general	Interpretation	Communication	Implementation - resources	Implications	Implementation - PD	Links to 11and12	Standards/assessment and reporting
Total responses (no.)	786	406	239	67	68	56	32	30	119
Percentage response to this question		51.7	30.4	8.5	8.7	7.1	4.1	3.8	15.1

### Commentary

#### Overview

By far the greatest number of comments identifying major challenges concerned implementation. These constituted more than 60% of the comments overall. The majority – half of all comments – concerned a range of implementation issues, and these were placed under a ‘General’ heading. A further 8.2% specifically identified materials and resources issues and another 4% made specific mention of the need for professional development. However, it should be noted that mention of materials, resources and professional development was sometimes included implicitly or explicitly in the identification of ‘general’ implementation issues.

The other main category of major challenges identified was made up of comments concerning interpretation of the proposal, and these constituted 30% of all comments. Matters concerning standards and assessment, communication of the proposal, teaching and learning, and links to Years 11 and 12 made up the rest.

#### A: Implementation issues - general

When respondents were asked to identify the major challenges of the proposal, by far the greatest number of responses fell into the category of general implementation issues (as distinct from implementation issues specifically associated with materials and resources, or professional development and training).

Areas mentioned included:

- Getting agreement on the structure, including agreement from all levels of the school system
- Ensuring essential learning is agreed on, including across “a diverse cultural divide”
- Producing a curriculum at school level, including deciding what is to be learned beyond the essential learning; maintaining balance in the curriculum
- Putting the framework into practice, including making adjustment from the CSF; adapting/changing the existing curriculum; restructuring schools; ensuring consistency of standards over the change; providing depth rather than breadth; cutting back the KLAs to accommodate the change in focus; ensuring the curriculum is not overcrowded
- Ensuring necessary support for teachers, including preparation, empowerment and resources
- Ensuring teachers are willing to adopt the change and ‘get moving’, especially in the climate of continuous change that has existed ‘in the last 15 years’; dealing with ‘the blockers’; teachers making the change from the CSF II
- Teachers to adapt to a new way of teaching
- The new approach could lead to significant variations between schools
- “Not throwing the baby out with the bath-water”
- Ensuring appropriate input from/involvement with the community
- Time will be needed to communicate and implement the new approach effectively, including the need to educate teachers and the community appropriately.

The following selection from the very large number of comments gives an indication of the nature of these comments.

*“Getting all to agree with the program as different stakeholders hold different views therefore this program will face contestation on particular areas.”*

*“Deciding what will be learnt above and beyond the essential learning. Who will make this decision? What will happen if local communities and the staff cannot agree?”*

*“The challenges will be (I imagine) to restructure schools so that implementation of this framework is not simply overlaid on existing structures.”*

*“Staff will need support - many of those who are blinded with content based approaches may struggle to come to terms with the new framework. We need to identify a base learning process - such as that embodied in action research // quality learning (Plan - Do - Study - Act). We need to be aware of the troglodytes within our universities - bastions of reaction that tragically torpedoed new approaches in VCE Maths in 1987 (for once we must let our key stakeholders play the major role in the reform agenda instead of imposing tertiary inspired models based on research data and their literature that has long since passed its use by date).”*

*“Defining what is essential in each KLA and not being lobbied into developing exhaustive lists of ‘essential outcomes’. The challenge to make linkages between disciplines and making explicit the types of pedagogies that will support the development of deep understanding, metacognition and transferable skills. This requires structural adjustments in secondary schools that is integral to its success. I think the relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment needs strengthening in the document, as well as the environments that support its implementation. ”*

*“Ensuring that this actually happens in schools, and that all schools do end up with a broad and balanced curriculum.”*

*“Ensuring the essential learning is agreed on - who decides? Secondary Colleges may find some of the underlying beliefs of the reform challenging - narrowing content and broadening/deepening understandings, also providing multiple demonstration options for assessment may be challenging to some teachers.”*

*“How to develop the curriculum into worthwhile classroom programs and the assessment that is part of it. Presently we are data driven (annual report and triennial review etc) how will ‘value added’ curriculum be measured?”*

*"Asking staff to give up their grasp of CSF II and for them to start thinking about their students as individuals learning for today's community with the future in mind."*

*"For teachers to adapt to a new way of teaching and re-educating teachers who may not be able to adapt to the idea of teaching values as opposed to only teaching skills.."*

*"Getting teachers to take any notice of the changes. Establishing a process to assist schools seriously interact with and reflect upon the new documents and then make changes. Just dumping a document on schools will achieve nothing. Having resources ready, not always coming soon, will help."*

*"Correlation to other areas, eg western suburb schools and eastern suburb schools. Discrepancies in funding, cultural outlooks."*

*"Getting staff to respond to the challenge and to believe that their input will be valued and not change within a short time frame. Lots of work to be done over an ever changing environment that needs response but ideas need to be long term, big picture."*

*"Support for staff to develop and implement the changes, including the availability of examples of programs and the provision for staff to take a leading role in each school to assist with staff."*

*"Breaking down KLA power and how the essential learnings integrate with the current CSF."*

*"DE&T needs to have the courage to trust individual institutions and allow them to build their own programs. Naturally, checks and balances must occur, but it must not panic and impose blanket requirements which will result in general mediocrity."*

*"facilitating change amongst teachers, teachers accepting that this change is essential for the children given our current society educating parents."*

*"As with any change designed to bring about improvement, some teachers will feel that it is being forced upon them from above. So it will be necessary that school leaders treat this reform in such a manner as to give them ownership at school level"*

*"To implement these changes will require significant professional development resources, funds, time and support for teachers, parents and school communities. Otherwise the new document will become something that we pay lip-service to and will not be implemented effectively."*

*"Many of the ideals expressed in the proposals are in direct conflict with the ambient consumerist selfishness of contemporary society. For schools to nourish healthy values among children who are often receiving entirely different messages from their families and the media may require a second layer of educative effort."*

## **B: Interpretation of the proposal**

There was also a large number of respondents who identified major challenges in terms of interpretation of the proposal. Challenges identified included relationship to the CSF, the inclusion of values, the role of KLAs, definition of essential learning, composition of the core and specification of details. A substantial proportion of the comments concerned the place of Physical Education and Health in the curriculum. The following selection of comments is illustrative:

*"I have a concern with how it will sit with CSF II. Are they on equal terms is on document stronger? Will teachers be more confused when setting up curriculum about which document they should refer to. If we are to refer to both documents is this not making things more confusing."*

*"ensuring that the core discipline concepts and skills, generic skills, and personal and social skills and values are truly basic to the learning and student development and not "trendy" ideas that lack a solid base for the development of future knowledge"*

*"Where to draw the line on values. Linking this with CSF - time needs to be available for teachers and curriculum groups."*

*"Deciding what is necessary, what content/skills are essential for the students across each KLA strand. Need-to-know basis. Who identifies the criteria, what criteria apart from generic are."*

*"It is going to be hard to keep the core of essential learning small enough to allow flexibility."*

*"Parents seem to want a generic curriculum across all schools to make comparisons. Parents need an understanding that schools and the world have changed. Also teachers do not have the same teaching philosophy."*

*"fundamental changes" fears that some KLAs would disappear or be reduced in importance. Many teachers of LOTEs have already expressed concerns about this issue. Art / drama / history would possibly face a similar dilemma."*

*"it appears to be very open ended. -challenges the way curriculum is introduced and how well it will be taught so that our students will gain maximum benefits."*

*"Terminology needs to be teacher and parent friendly. Skills and concepts need to be explicit. Drawing them from several KLAs may lead to confusion Sample on page 7 clear. No mention is made of the ESL child and special needs children. What about category 9 schools?"*

*"As a Phys Ed and Health teacher it seems we are fighting the same battles we did in the 1980's and early '90's when physical activity and health is not given sufficient credit in terms of its life long effect upon the well being of students. How this happens in today's climate where obesity is recognised as a huge problem in our society and is set to impact significantly upon the lives of our students, beggars belief."*

A significant number of respondents identified challenges that were associated with standards, assessment and reporting. Some of these concerned how aspects of the framework such as values or deep understanding could be assessed. Others identified accountability, reporting to parents, applicability of national (and other) benchmarks, and developing appropriate assessment approaches. The following is a selection of the comments:

*"Ensuring academic rigour across schools."*

*"The major challenges are being able to effectively measure and report on student achievement at all levels of the school community."*

*"Accountability and delivery of standards within flexible component."*

*"Assessment and reporting. Having a range of assessment tools, and modes of reporting to the necessary stakeholders."*

*"Accountability - the system seems to expect schools to meet benchmarks and this model will not fit with is framework. We will need to develop rich assessment tasks to measure progress in these areas, some of appear subjective, need to be shown by student"*

*"Assessment and Reporting - ensuring a balanced approach that caters for all learning style and abilities. Student with poor literacy skills should not be compared to students with good literacy skills across the state. Many socio-economic groups will be disadvantaged if results are standardised."*

*"Benchmarks no longer minimum standards - need to re educate about what benchmarks are."*

*"Current CSF levels: For many schools, the current CSFII levels are unachievable, due to inadequate time allowed in the timetable. If these levels are maintained in the performance standards, schools again will be placed in the position of not being able to report against these standards. However, for single KLA providers (Victorian School of Languages) and for schools with immersion or bilingual programs, the current CSFII levels are too rigid and do not cater for students with exceptional skills in languages. The development of performance standards must take into account these difficulties. Currently, 2 pathways exist in the LOTE KLA. The performance standards must take into account the starting point of the students."*

*"To carefully define the limited number of standards required for those few area where there is a need for large scale comparison of student achievement - eg. reading, number, writing."*

### **C: Communication of the new curriculum**

Effective communication of the new curriculum to stakeholders was also considered to be a major challenge by a number of respondents. The main themes were clarity, freedom from jargon, need for a user-friendly document, and the need for some 'convincing' of groups of stakeholders of its worth. The following examples of comments illustrate these:

*"Clarity: it is important that the framework clearly outlines and supports the "essential learning" and that the links between CSFII and the new framework are made. The relationship between the framework and KLAs must be clear."*

*"It is a challenge in itself to understand what is being proposed. The documentation does not clearly present the issues, in particular, it fails to clearly define the key changes that are being proposed and what these will mean on the ground in terms of redirection of resources, provision of centralised curriculum and other services, and new requirements for assessment and reporting."*

*"Steering clear of jargon and keeping everything in plain English."*

*"Getting it right. It needs to be written in a way that is accessible so that teachers don't spend hours arguing over semantics and definitions, or what should be taught and how. Time is a challenge."*

*"Convincing academically oriented schools that they should embrace the new philosophy."*

## **D: Implementation issues – materials and resources**

Implementation issues specifically concerning the availability of materials and resources (including time) were identified by many respondents as major challenges. Mentioned in this group of responses were:

- Support materials and guidelines
- Samples of work
- Time – to plan for and make curriculum changes, to develop, trial and evaluate new curricula and materials
- Financial assistance
- Resources.

The following comments are illustrative:

*"Resourcing the implementation phase - giving teachers time to reflect and workshop how it will impact on them. Must be a long-term approach. Consultation of teachers at all stages as opposed to consultants who are often removed from process and are costly anyway."*

*"The provision of support materials relevant to the reform that will be helpful in schools developing innovative and exemplary strategies."*

*"1. Time to plan an effective curriculum, time implement change and not cause stress. 2. Resources- Are we getting detailed guidelines on how to teach values. Is a values ed. program proposed or is something else envisaged? How do we use the CSF 11 and still remain true to the essential learnings framework?"*

## **E: Implications for Teaching and Learning**

A significant number of respondents identified various implications of the proposal for teaching and learning as major challenges. These included using new approaches, focussing on 'deep learning', individualising programs, and also touched on curriculum planning. Examples of comments are:

*"Teachers and support staff re-thinking the way we teach and looking for more depth of learning."*

*"Providing a balanced approach that is going to encompass all learning styles and abilities and allow for teacher knowledge to be used for children in assessing and not a standardised test whereby some children will be challenged."*

*"How to individualise the programs such that each student's needs are served."*

*"To encourage teachers to see themselves as learners, to take risks changing their practice, and to dedicate their time to the learner, rather than the content"*

*"Changing teaching pedagogy that has been used by many experienced teachers for a long time. Have to gain an acceptance that we want quality rather than quantity. In fact, teachers have been saying this for many years, ie, the crowded curriculum."*

## **F: Implementation issues – Professional Development**

A smaller number of respondents separately identified professional development and initial teacher preparation as major challenges of the proposal. (Other respondents mentioned the need for professional development in conjunction with other challenges identified.). Examples of comments are:

*"Training all staff in understanding how people learn, so that they can build explicit understanding of learning opportunities and processes into their courses."*

*"Ensuring that teachers are given enough PD to implement the proposal effectively."*

*"as mentioned above under self-managing curriculum funding the professional development of teachers so that they are comfortable and knowledgeable about the new approach. this is particularly important given our pathetic experience of the CSF have not met personally any school that was able to grapple successfully with the teacher judgement issues of the CSF as a teacher and as a parent I am sick of cut-and-paste blather about our children and young people. if this is to be avoided this time around, there must be a coordinated program of extensive and expensive professional development for every single teacher in the state."*

## **G: Links to Year 11 and 12**

A smaller number of respondents identified issues related to the needs of Years 11 and 12 as major challenges of the proposal. These mainly concerned how links between the proposed framework and the Years 11 and 12 programs would be made, but there was also suggestion of changes to Years 11 and 12, as the following examples show.

*"The post-compulsory years transition - how will the diversity build on the 'essential learning' expected of the VCE/VCAL and tertiary and training sectors."*

*"A significant challenge will be to make a linkage and tie the Essential Learning Framework to the current emphasis on exam orientated learning in the VCE at least in relation to traditional types of VCE studies."*

*"Revamping or augmenting the VCE to reward problem-solving and logical thinking skills (perhaps with an additional SAT [US] type arrangement for tertiary entry rather than just the VCE studies alone."*

## **H: Standards/assessment and reporting**

A significant number of respondents identified challenges that were associated with standards, assessment and reporting. Some of these concerned how aspects of the framework such as values or deep understanding could be assessed. Others identified accountability, reporting to parents, applicability of national (and other) benchmarks, and developing appropriate assessment approaches. The following is a selection of the comments:

*"Ensuring academic rigour across schools."*

*"The major challenges are being able to effectively measure and report on student achievement at all levels of the school community."*

*"Accountability and delivery of standards within flexible component."*

*"Assessment and reporting. Having a range of assessment tools, and modes of reporting to the necessary stakeholders."*

*"Accountability - the system seems to expect schools to meet benchmarks and this model will not fit with is framework. We will need to develop rich assessment tasks to measure progress in these areas, some of appear subjective, need to be shown by student"*

*"Assessment and Reporting - ensuring a balanced approach that caters for all learning style and abilities. Student with poor literacy skills should not be compared to students with good literacy skills across the state. Many socio-economic groups will be disadvantaged if results are standardised."*

*"Benchmarks no longer minimum standards - need to re educate about what benchmarks are."*

*“Current CSF levels: For many schools, the current CSFII levels are unachievable, due to inadequate time allowed in the timetable. If these levels are maintained in the performance standards, schools again will be placed in the position of not being able to report against these standards. However, for single KLA providers (Victorian School of Languages) & for schools with immersion or bilingual programs, the current CSFII levels are too rigid & do not cater for students with exceptional skills in languages. The development of performance standards must take into account these difficulties. Currently, 2 pathways exist in the LOTE KLA. The performance standards must take into account the starting point of the students.”*

*“To carefully define the limited number of standards required for those few area where there is a need for large scale comparison of student achievement - eg. reading, number, writing.”*

### 5.3. Questions about values

#### 5.3.1. Question 5

The framework should be underpinned by an explicit statement of broadly agreed values.

#### Response data

**Table 16 – Level of agreement Question 5 (percentage)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	54.6	41.1	2.7	1.5	100.0	<b>822</b>
Individual responses	56.6	38.9	3.4	1.1	100.0	<b>448</b>
Group responses	52.3	43.9	1.9	1.9	100.0	<b>374</b>
<i>Government schools</i>	49.8	46.4	1.7	2.1	100.0	241
<i>Catholic schools</i>	47.5	47.5	3.4	1.7	100.0	61
<i>Independent schools</i>	61.8	35.3	2.9	0.0	100.0	34
<i>Other groups</i>	65.8	31.6	0.0	2.6	100.0	38

**Table 17 - Distribution of comments Question 5**

	A	B	C	D	
	N=	The process	Current practice	Values	Other
Total responses (no.)	449	120	58	47	241
Percentage response to this question		26.7	12.9	10.5	53.7

#### Commentary

##### Overview

The overwhelming majority of respondents – over 90% - either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition put in this statement. There was consistency of support across all sectors with a slightly higher level of support coming from respondents from independent schools.

Approximately one quarter of respondents raised some concerns about the process of deciding whose values would be chosen to underpin the framework. The issue was one of across the state or local school community decision making. A number of schools, a little above 10%, noted that they were already informing their curriculum with a set of values.

## **A: The process – who decides?**

The responses to the issues of who decides on the set of broadly agreed values raised some heated arguments and detailed responses about hidden agendas, political interference and inclusion/exclusion. One respondent commented –

*"A values framework is always selective. Perhaps we should know which values are excluded as well as which values are included."*

The complexity of this process issue was summarised by the comments from one school that posed the central question –

*"A big question here is Who decides on the agreed values (why?), and what authority is invoked as a foundation for the validity of any such schema in a post-modern, pluralistic, multi-faith and multicultural environment? Will the values be predominately white, Anglo, western? Where does this leave other ethnic, cultural or ideological groups?"*

It was clear from the many responses to this question that a clearly and explicitly stated rationale for the selection of any set of values, particularly those values claimed to be ‘broadly agreed values’ would be needed before schools would incorporate them into their school programs.

As a summary statement by one respondent -

*"I do not envy the jobs of those who will frame these."*

## **B: Current practice**

Some schools that strongly supported the underpinning of the framework by an explicit statement of broadly agreed values did so on the grounds that they already had a school program underpinned by a set of values. A typical comment was:

*"We already work within in a foundation of agreed values but we are pleased that these have become an explicit part of the framework."*

Other schools, mostly primary schools, commented that particular programs in their schools, for example, “Friendly Wembley”, “Program Achieve” or the Health and Physical Education KLA, all focused on values.

A minority of schools believed that their School Charters were underpinned by a set of values.

## **C: Values must reflect school communities**

Many respondents commented about the importance of whole school communities agreeing on a set of values. However there was an issue, perhaps contradictory, about on the one hand having a common set of broadly agreed values but also having flexibility for individual schools to develop their own set of values.

*"Generic values, yes, but there are differences for some schools and some areas where to be too explicit would be 'wrong' as explicit values might not apply*

*"families have differing values - may be a point of conflict."*

*"Must be broad enough to accommodate different desirable family attitudes. These are usually well established before students enter formal schooling. Great care would need to be taken to avoid confusion, hostility, judgement or rejection."*

The most common rationale for agreeing with the importance of a set of values related to enhancing attributes of global citizenship.

#### **D: Other**

In summary there was broad agreement on the need for a set of explicitly stated values underpinning our schools. Many respondents saw this as the starting point of any education system:

*"Without a common set of presuppositions there can be no common starting point."*

The key point throughout the responses was that education be seen as springing from community values and not as separate from them. Basing education on these values would ensure that programs were not developed to meet specific needs of, for example, an employment market.

A number of respondents expressed the view that

*"Many of the listed values are taught through a good physical and health education program."*

### 5.3.2. Question 6

The suggested set of values included on pages 4 and 5 of the Consultation Paper is appropriate.

#### Response data

**Table 18 – Level of agreement Question 6 (percentage)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	46.4	47.9	4.7	1.0	100.0	798
Individual responses	51.0	42.6	5.0	1.4	100.0	429
Group responses	41.0	54.0	4.4	0.6	100.0	369
<i>Government schools</i>	38.5	55.8	5.2	0.4	100.0	237
<i>Catholic schools</i>	41.7	55.0	1.7	1.7	100.0	61
<i>Independent schools</i>	48.5	48.5	3.0	0.0	100.0	34
<i>Other groups</i>	45.9	48.6	5.4	0.0	100.0	37

**Table 19 - Distribution of comments Question 6**

	A	B	C	D
	Interpretation and clarification	Additional values	Critical comments	Other
Total responses (no.)	95	51	33	189
Percentage responses to this question	26.5	14.2	9.2	51.8

#### Commentary

##### Overview

Having agreed in Question 5 about the concept of a curriculum framework being underpinned by a set of values, the respondents in this question then overwhelmingly agreed (over 90%) with the suggested set of values as included in the Consultation Paper.

However one issue for approximately one quarter of respondents was that some of the values needed clarification and were open to a range of interpretations. As a result of this perception of ambiguity, over 10% of respondents offered additional values or were (8%) critical of the suggested list. In particular ‘tolerance’ was criticised as being equated to ‘tolerated’.

##### A: Interpretation and clarification

This question offered the opportunity for respondents to comment on the appropriateness of the supplied list of values located in the Consultation Paper. One stumbling block was reaching agreement about the meaning of ‘values’ and only then could the supplied set be examined. Some of the values were seen as lacking clarity, particularly ‘tolerance’:

*“I have an issue with the word tolerance. Can we be so bold as to replace it with acceptance?”*

Many respondents argued that clarity might be gained if the supplied list was reduced in number by reducing apparent overlapping and combining headings, as some values were seen as subsets of others.

*“Four would be better - things like mutual respect, could encompass several values like respect, social justice, honesty, being ethical.”*

One respondent made detailed comments that summarised many other responses.

*“Values are volitionally based: they are the priorities we set on, or the importance we attach to objects, experiences and ideas and which prompt our choices in life. They are inclinations that drive us to act, feel or think in certain ways. ‘Virtues’ refers to the voluntary observance of moral standards (OED) - how we conduct ourselves in relation to others and to the environment (moral excellence). What is lacking in*

*this document is the recognition that underlying the choices we make, there is a life stance (Professor Brian Hill) or worldview (ideology, belief system) which governs the values we choose or reject. Without reference to this foundation, a values education programme will be a toothless tiger. Most sensible people will give wholehearted assent to values such as those listed on pp.4-5. But when it comes to understanding why most intelligent people revert to a different set of values when something is felt to be gained by it (e.g. speeding, adultery, deception, bigotry, war) such values become more like motherhood statements which have little substance."*

### **B: Additional values**

When given the opening to offer additional values, respondents produced long and varied lists of additional values. Some additional values included love of learning, spirituality, risk taking, learning, resilience, independence, self esteem, self discipline, persistence. It could be argued that some of these are not values, but rather processes underpinned by values. However these additional values highlights the interpretive nature of selection any set of values. Some additional values included:

*"I hope that the values of the IB Primary Years Program have also been considered: inquirers, thinkers, risk-takers, knowledgeable, principled, caring, open-minded, well-balanced, reflective"*

### **C: Critical comments**

There were only a small number of substantive critical comments. Criticisms of the supplied set of values were of the most general kind. Mostly the comments revolved around clarification of particular values, but here there was no common pattern, and the issue of the process of selecting the values, for example, community expectations.

*"The values need to be generic enough to be relevant to all sectors of the community. Must be careful not to preach a particular standard or viewpoint."*

### **D: Other**

Most other comments gave overwhelming support to the concept of explicitly including a set of values in a curriculum framework.

*"These are all values that we aspire to."*

The issues identified were to do with process, including the role of parents, the need for descriptors, assessing values.

*"What are parents role in this? Already values in pre school students. Need parental support in this area."*

*"How will these values be assessed? Are there indicators to report against? Will teachers interpret values differently."*

### 5.3.3. Question 7

Which if any of this list of values should be deleted or modified?

#### Response data

Table 20 - Distribution of comments Question 7

		A	B	C	D
	N=	Satisfied	Deletions	Modified	Other comments
Total responses (no.)	504	251	5	214	39
Percentage responses to this question		49.8	1.0	42.5	7.7

#### Commentary

##### Overview

While approximately half of the respondents were satisfied with the suggested set of values, 42% suggested some form of modification rather than suggestions for deletions. The most common form of suggested modification was to combine or regroup the values.

##### A: Satisfied

About half of the respondents agreed with the set of values as suggested.

*"They are fine the way they are. None - all are vital to support the values of Citizenship and to help create well-rounded, tolerant and well-educated individuals."*

##### B: Deletions

There were very few suggestions to delete values from the given set.

##### C: Modifications

Many respondents commented that they had addressed the issue of deleting or modifying the list of values in their responses to question 6. There was no common pattern in the responses about deletions or modifications. The most common responses focused on modifications and the need to clarify certain of the values, especially tolerance, freedom, excellence, ethical.

*"Some of the values are hard to define eg. freedom, care"*

The most common suggestion was to combine some of the values

*"I think that perhaps care, respect and inclusion and trust are essentially the same thing. Social justice and freedom are also rather similar. And 'being ethical' doesn't quite seem to fit the list. I question whether being ethical really equates to 'action' "*

One suggestion for modification was to regroup in the following manner –

*"The following could be collapsed to form one: Group 1: tolerance and understanding, respect, care, inclusion and trust Group 2: responsibility, being ethical, honesty Group 3: social justice, freedom Group 4: excellence"*

##### D: Other comments

In summary, respondents were satisfied with the given set of values. Some clarification and regrouping was suggested as means of improving the set. One respondent however was at pains to remind us that

*"All of the assumptions and preferred positions of the paper are values and need to be seen as such. I read the list under values as a commitment to a set of democratic/humanist values which are fine but are choices, just as the rest of the paper reflects"*

### 5.3.4. Question 8

What, if anything, should be added?

#### Response data

Table 21 – Distribution of comments Question 8

		A	B	C
	N=	Additions	Satisfied	Other comments
Total responses (no.)	366	171	116	95
Percentage responses to this question		46.7	31.7	26.0

#### Commentary

##### Overview

Nearly one third of respondents expressed satisfaction with the suggested set of values, usually commenting that they had given their opinion in the previous two questions.

The suggested additional values fell into three categories. Firstly, a strong push for the inclusion of ‘resilience’; secondly, a value associated with a love of learning per se ; thirdly , as in question 7, a modification from tolerance to a word that suggested more compassion.

##### A: Additions

The additional values suggested by respondents fell into a number of categories. The first and most mentioned category focused on values associated with the individual with comments often suggesting that the given list was leaning too much towards society’s outcomes. Typical comment were,

*“Resilience, self esteem, self belief and care for oneself as an individual”*

*“striving, diligence, personal best”*

A second category was linked to valuing learning itself.

*“A love of learning and learning how to learn needs a much higher status in our society as it does have in many other countries”*

Another category related to humane intercultural and environmental understandings and empathy, where tolerance was often equated with just being tolerated.

*“Compassion takes tolerance into a deeper realm and I would replace it accordingly. Reconciliation and care and respect for the environment.”*

*“Environmental responsibility should encompass the concept of sustainability – Individual and community behaviour that contributes to long term CARE and RESPECT for the environment - to conserve and enhance as well as use the natural resources of our environment to produce food, etc in a responsible, informed and sustainable manner. It is important that environmental responsibility is balanced and realistic between the essential use we must make of our environment and conservation and preservation - ie sustainability”*

##### B: Satisfied

The issue of whether any additional values should be added to the suggested set of values resulted in a mix of ‘No’ comments and an additional list of values for inclusion. Those respondents who were overwhelmingly satisfied with the list and gave very brief comments like:

*“ it covers everything”*

*“After brainstorming our outcomes were very much in line with the documented values.”*

## **C: Other comments**

Most additional comments were a repetition of statements of agreement with the given list. The one group of comments to emerge related more to process than to comments about the list of values. Here the concern was with how values would be integrated into the curriculum with appropriate teaching pedagogies and then assessed.

Typical comments included:

*"Each value could be articulated with a set of indicators/behaviours that measured the application of that value in practice. This would help communities go beyond lip service to auditing their practice against the values. E.g. Responsibility Indicators"*

*"Nothing to add but how to teach values without upsetting people and a worry about how to make the set of values explicit enough to be teachable at school."*

*"...No modification to the values themselves but that there be flexibility for schools to adapt and select values for greater focus according to their needs and needs of the school community".*

## 5.4. Core discipline concepts and skills

### 5.4.1. Question 9

The identification of core discipline concepts and skills is an appropriate way to address the need to focus on depth of learning rather than breadth of content.

#### Response data

Table 22 – Level of agreement Question 9 (percentage)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	30.8	42.0	8.5	18.7	100.0	790
Individual responses	26.8	35.6	10.5	27.0	100.0	429
Group responses	35.6	49.4	6.2	8.8	100.0	361
<i>Government schools</i>	37.8	48.9	7.6	5.8	100.0	229
<i>Catholic schools</i>	33.9	61.0	3.4	1.7	100.0	61
<i>Independent schools</i>	40.6	46.9	0.0	12.5	100.0	33
<i>Other groups</i>	21.1	39.5	7.9	31.6	100.0	38

Table 23 - Distribution of comments Question 9

	N=	A General agreement	B Identification	C Other
Total responses (no.)	472	203	40	236
Percentage responses to this question		43.0	8.5	50.0

#### Commentary

##### Overview

There was a high level of agreement overall to this question. A small number of respondents queried the definition of discipline being used, and others argued that the depth versus breadth issue was not the central one. There were a number of groups of respondents who responded from the perspective of one KLA or area of study. These groups included those pushing a very strong line for inclusion of a discipline such as Health and Physical Education, and those from the Technology area who also considered that all the necessary learnings from a generic perspective can be gained through their subject or area of study. The proportion of these responses increased over time.

##### A: General agreement

The responses under this category gave general support for the statement in the question. However, the reasons or the qualifying comments that went with the positive responses covered many issues. Among some of the more common reasons or explanations as to why the proposition is seen as a good idea were: depth of learning, link to lifelong learning, give students greater understanding, overcoming problem of crowded curriculum. Some indicative quotes include:

*"Excellent idea, will get rid of the crowded curriculum."*

*"Absolutely agree. Children must have basic skills to decode and understand their world."*

*"I would hope that the concepts and skills would reflect a breadth of learning, however there will need to be some guidance offered to teachers in the beginning."*

*"In the past too much has been covered too thinly. Students complain that they would like to pursue a topic further but time constraints don't allow this... Could be a reason for some to become disconnected with school."*

*"Will enable teachers to use a broad foundation and give them more opportunities to use their creativity when designing units of work".*

## **B: Identification/definition of concepts**

The major issue raised by about 50% of those responding under this category, was how to define the notion of a 'discipline'. Are they the same as KLAS? Also, some argued that it was not a breadth versus depth issue. Some even questioned what the question meant by 'depth of learning'. Some indicative quotes were:

*"I have a problem with the notion of "discipline" being used in this document."*

*"The disciplines are fairly arbitrary anyway, but the task of altering these at this time is too daunting."*

## **C: Other**

As with the second category above, the range of responses in this category were extremely varied. On the one hand there were philosophical discussions about the notion of 'depth versus breadth', and how to measure depth of learning. Other comments focused on the omission of physical education (see earlier), and scepticism about the VCAA and its agenda and that decisions have already been made. Some indicative comments were:

*"The theory sounds good but difficult to comment on until we see the framework".*

*Concepts and skills look the same. There needs to be more specific information about what skills are being developed. This shouldn't just be thinking skills."*

*"I simply cannot see the inferred relationship between identifying a 'smaller' core and therefore greater depth in content. AS mentioned previously, the omission of physical development from core is backwards step."*

*"The creation of a dichotomy between 'depth of learning' and 'breadth of learning' is, in my view, a serious flaw in the paper. To try to learn concepts without consistently grounded knowledge of 'content' is a pathway to abstraction, disassociation, and eventually, powerlessness. It is true that many of today's students have difficulty in distinguishing between 'information', 'knowledge', and 'understanding'. But it is illusory to think you can get to understanding without going through the other two."*

*"It would appear that the VCAA has already determined the main disciplines of knowledge, namely language, mathematics, science, the arts and humanities. This is disappointing as physical education can arguably be defined as a discipline..."*

*"An issue here is how you measure depth of learning'. Factual or empirical knowledge is only one aspect of the learning process. You can't have depth in a crowded curriculum, because time and space have to be created for – silence, reflection, sense-making, critiquing."*

### 5.4.2. Question 10

Which disciplines should be represented as core disciplines in a framework of essential learning?

#### Response data

Table 24 - Distribution of comments Question 10

	N=	All or most KLAs	A different approach	Other
Total responses (no.)	668	384	57	232
Percentage responses to this question		57.5	8.5	34.7

#### Commentary

##### Overview

The responses to this question were divided between the majority who felt that the existing KLAs provide a workable base from which to start, and those who argued that the term discipline was not clearly defined or is currently not very helpful. About half of this latter group argued, sometimes very strongly and at length, for the inclusion of their particular KLA as a discipline.

##### A: All or most of the KLAs

The responses under this category either nominated a number of existing KLAs or simply said that all KLAs should be included.

##### B: A different approach

The responses included under this category, after removing those that specifically nominated some of the existing KLAs, described their suggestions in the following ways:

*"Calculating, literacy, communication, social skills, physical health, design."*

*"This is very difficult to decide but literacy, numeracy, the arts, science, the environment and design come to mind."*

##### C: Other

About one-third of the responses were coded under this category and within those responses about half were arguing the case for the inclusion of Physical Education and Health. Some indicative quotes were:

*"This is going to be a difficult question to answer for the VCAA because many teachers will just opt for their own KLAs and may see it as an affront to their job security...need to tackle this first and then try to have all teachers see themselves as teachers of learners/young people NOT as teachers of a particular discipline."*

*"Disciplines is used broadly here. There are lots of disciplines. How deeply do we go. Do we say history or do we say Ancient History, Modern History, etc. Are philosophy, ethics, psychology, sociology, forensic medicine going to be part of this framework?"*

*"The term discipline is the problem. The question should be what are the specialist communities that a school might draw on to support its work? Knowledge is THE key category in all of this but there is no consideration of theories of knowledge."*

*"This is a hard one. The traditional notion of "disciplines" has undergone much transformation, and most of what we use to call disciplines now pride themselves on varying degrees of inter-disciplinarity. I would say that all students, and our society, would benefit from a curriculum that provided effective levels of competency in ; the study of the natural world (various sciences), mathematics, the study of the human past (various forms of history), the study of social and political institutions, the study of English (as a language and as a collection of cultural texts), the study of other than English languages and cultures."*

*“Physical Education should be represented as a core discipline in a framework of essential learning based upon the following points. PE is different to other areas of the curriculum It is the only area which has the potential to impact directly on the physical health of children. It offers instruction and knowledge about health related physical fitness, motor skill development and sport education. For many young people, school is the primary provider of skills that will enable them to feel sufficiently confident to participate in recreation and activity in the community.”*

*“Developing generic skills, creative thinking skills and problem solving should be included in the framework.”*

*“Core disciplines of developing generic skills creative thinking skills and problem solving must be included in the framework, these are the core skills of technology.”*

### 5.4.3. Question 11

Within these, what are some core concepts you would identify for inclusion in the framework of ‘Essential Learning’?

#### Response data

Table 25 - Distribution of comments Question 11

	N=	A Suggestions re core concepts	B KLA comments	C More detail clarification	D Other/ different approaches	E Other	F Ways of determining
Total responses (no.)	516	352	60	18	17	68	4
Percentage responses to this question		68.2	11.6	3.5	3.3	13.2	0.8

#### Commentary

##### Overview

There was a small percentage of respondents who suggested existing KLA strands as being some of the key concepts that should be included. Within this group there were again many responses arguing the case from the perspective of a particular KLA. The vast majority of responses provided suggestions outside of the existing KLAs at least in terms of the language used. These responses covered the full gamut of human learning from the traditional areas of school learning such as listening, communication, gross and fine motor skills, calculating, computer skills; more recent focuses of school learning such as creativity, problem solving and finding one’s own learning style; and some more innovative thoughts including sustainability, community and our place in it. A very small number of respondents provided ideas outside of the above categories focusing on theories of knowledge and organising concepts and understanding the process of ‘knowing’.

##### A: Suggestions regarding: core concepts

This category had the vast majority of responses. These responses covered the full gamut of human learning from the traditional areas of school learning (Group A), more recent focuses of school learning (Group B), and some more innovative thoughts (Group C).

Group A:

*“Literacy and Numeracy, Communication”*

*“Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening”*

*“Number, reading, writing, Living things etc”*

*“the ability to read, write and listen to others. The ability to use numbers to solve problems in the real world. The way of the future is to care for the environment and try to overcome some of the excesses of the past and damage to the environment. How cultures throughout the world can work together to achieve peace, each group of people has rights and responsibilities that they need to work to achieve in order for communities to work together.”*

*“English - listening, speaking, reading and writing. Maths - number, space, measurement, chance and data. The Arts - drama, dance, music, visual art. Health and P.E - fine and gross motor skills, games, personal health, swimming. Science - S.O.S.E - Technology”*

*“Literacy - Reading, writing, speaking and listening, computers, Calculating - mathematical processes, estimating and measuring, strategy development, problem solving Communication - drama, music, visual art Social skills - (see values) Physical health - nutrition, fitness, motor skills Design - the arts, technology, reasoning and strategies”*

## Group B

*"Creativity, ability to solve problems, tolerance of ideas. open mindedness."*

*"Creative thinking - Problem solving - Life/practical/hands on skills" Clear thinking, so the students can learn to solve problems by utilising their existing skills and building on the ones they are learning."*

*"Would add: learning how to learn and finding own learning style. A surprising number of students have no idea. Handwriting and formal research skills need to be taught. These are rarely observed."*

*"The Thinking Curriculum would go across all these core disciplines."*

## Group C

*"Sustainability, environmental responsibility, life and living, community and our place within it."*

*"Critical literacy and the ability to discern the way the media (all forms) shape our views and values."*

*"Development of teamwork, leadership, problem solving, skill development (throwing and catching, striking, kicking etc)"*

*"Each learning area should incorporate the following objectives into the instructional and evaluative structures of each discipline: development in students of self-esteem and life goals, of rational processes (inquiry, a sense of purpose and civility), of emotional growth, of space for personal reflection and class discussion on the significance and value of a particular subject, of self-initiated learning, imagination and creativity, of skills of empathy, interpersonal/social competencies, moral obligation."*

*"Resilience, questioning, reflection, risk-taking, compassion, autonomous, inspired"*

*"Literate- extending beyond meaningful reading and writing including computer technologies excitement and passion for learning preparation for current and future life numerate- extending beyond mathematical skills and automatic recall- creative problem solving, real life problem solving"*

## B: KLA comments

Responses under this category ranged from including all current KLAs to comments about one or two KLAs. Some comments indicating the range of responses were:

*"Literacy: Speaking and Listening, reading and writing. Numeracy: Number, Space, Measurement and Data."*

*"Core skills would need to be reading and writing, speaking and listening, need to be numerate and to measure."*

*"Current KLAs should be considered and represented in the appropriate manner."*

*"Core concepts would include those that are included in the KLA under the 'Movement and Physical Activity' strands such as fundamental motor skills, physical activity knowledge (personal and community)."*

*"English - Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening Maths - number, measurement, space, chance and data, problem solving"*

*"English - Reading, writing, speaking, listening. Mathematics - Number, Space, Measurement, Reasoning and strategies. Science - Physical world, life and living, chemistry, space and beyond. Arts - Performing Arts - Dance, drama, music; visual arts. SOSE - Living in the community, history, geography. PE/Health - Health of individuals, self and relationships, movement and physical activity."*

*"Already listed in the KLA under 'Movement and Physical Activity' strand concepts such as fundamental motor skills, physical activity knowledge and health related fitness."*

## C: More detail / clarification

A few respondents noted the need for more detail or clarification. A few comments indicative of this were:

*"Not clear as to the difference between skills and concepts. There needs to be clearer information regarding this in the consultation paper."*

*"Very difficult due to needing more clarity on definition."*

## **D: Other / different approaches**

Some different perspectives were provided by just seven respondents but they do provide a view that is different from those already expressed. Some of the ideas included:

*"We like the idea of Key Insights that overarch disciplines and the curriculum in general. What are the big picture ideas and concepts? e.g. all students need to have an understanding of interdependence. What is the key knowledge I require? What are the unique methods I need to be able to use in this discipline? What is the purpose of this discipline? What forms to I need to be able to use to demonstrate my learning in this discipline?"*

*"Theories of knowledge, and drawing on Moore and Young (p. 456): (a) the intrinsically social and collective character of knowledge production, (b) the complexity of intellectual fields and the processes of knowledge production and transmission, and (c) the asymmetry between cognitive and other interests that are involved in knowledge acquisition and production."*

*"I prefer to call them 'organising concepts'. They need to provoke high level thought processes and be suggestive of investigation / stated as problematic - 'What does it mean to be Australian?'"*

## **E: Other**

The main thrust of the responses coded under this category suggested that it was too big an issue for the respondents to decide on in the time available. Comments included:

*"This was a bit too large for me to tackle given the range of core disciplines."*

*"Need more time and detail for true consultation."*

*"This is a vast question. It would need to be teased out by a series of specialists in each of the fields. I would be quite happy to work with others in doing so for the field of languages other than English, which is my own area of expertise."*

*"We are independent and interdependent simultaneously. We are the product of our location, our past, our present, ourselves, and of others, and we have the capacity to create our future."*

## **F: Ways of determining**

There were two responses under this category:

*"We would prefer to see a think tank of the best brains and best practitioners in these disciplines sit together for several lengthy sessions."*

*"This will take time to sift through and decide - perhaps groups of people with expertise in these disciplines could decide. The list should be short and inclusive."*

## 5.5. Generic skills

### 5.5.1. Question 12

A set of explicitly stated generic skills is an important part of a curriculum framework that aims to promote lifelong learning, active citizenship and a productive social and economic future.

#### Response data

**Table 26 – Level of agreement Question 12 (percentage)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	46.1	49.7	3.4	0.8	100.0	741
Individual responses	39.0	55.4	4.2	1.3	100.0	385
Group responses	53.7	43.5	2.6	0.3	100.0	356
<i>Government schools</i>	57.0	39.5	3.1	0.4	100.0	225
<i>Catholic schools</i>	60.7	39.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	56
<i>Independent schools</i>	45.5	54.5	0.0	0.0	100.0	34
<i>Other groups</i>	36.6	58.5	4.9	0.0	100.0	41

**Table 27 - Distribution of comments Question 12**

		A	B	C
	N=	General agreement	Assessment	Other
Total responses (no.)	355	145	6	220
Percentage responses to this question		40.8	1.7	62.0

#### Commentary

##### Overview

The overwhelmingly majority (more than 95%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition put in this question. There was little discussion about reasons given for their support, although a minority queried the connections between the inclusion of a set of generic skills and the total list of given outcomes.

There was strong voice from some respondents in the physical education area where the argument was made that physical education should be a separate KLA and already promoted the outcomes include in the statement.

##### A: General agreement

The overwhelming majority of respondents to this question supported the idea that a set of explicitly stated generic skills was an important part of a curriculum framework. They were less sure about the implied connection being made between this curriculum framework and lifelong learning, active citizenship and a productive social and economic future. To that extent the question appeared to respondents to have too many components so they mostly expressed a view about the value of generic skills per se. Only a minority attempt to respond to the promotional aspects of the curriculum framework. For example, one respondent commented,

*"I agree but it is important to promote an inclusive civil society as well as an 'economic future'."*

Another teacher took up the issue of life-long learning.

*"These are the skills that underpin all learning. They are essential for students to learn these skills to ensure that life-long learning is maintained."*

Other respondents distinguished between social and individual well being.

*"We partially agrees with this, however the curriculum framework should also promote individual wellbeing"*

Teachers were enthusiastic about the role a set of explicitly stated generic skills might play as a central component in both the development of curriculum and classroom activities.

*"It would be difficult to imagine a rich task, ensuring deep learning, that did not take into account the Generic skills, values and attributes listed on pages 8 and 9. It is important that these generic skills be explicitly stated, to prevent schools from becoming too focussed on one area, or one community need. Explicit statement of these skills will ensure that the values underpinning this framework remain as the central focus."*

This question brought forth some very broad and detailed responses that reflected serious thinking about the goals of education. Issues of enhancing students' attributes to live in a rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain global world were often mentioned. As one school commented,

*"Focussing on these may promote increased harmony in society, and a sense of social responsibility of benefit to all."*

### **B: Assessment**

Only a small minority of respondents raised issues about assessment of student performance with a set of generic skills. When they did, it was in relation to the difficulties of this task.

*"difficult to observe and measure for to a large extent they will be internalised by students."*

### **C: Other**

In summary, a vast majority of the many detailed comments supported the development of a set of explicitly stated generic skills. Some respondents noted the existence of other sets of generic skills developed by Mayer and in the National Goals. This led them to conclude that the generic skills in the Consultation Paper were based on a set of values and assumptions and that these also needed to be explicitly stated.

The following comments are representative of the view of a number of respondents who were concerned about the status of physical education within the new framework.

*"Physical Education as a core discipline enables students to have skills which will give them access to participate in the wider community and promote students wellbeing."*

*"Partially agree with this however the curriculum framework should also promote individual wellbeing. The educational experience for students needs to reflect a strengthening of the individual wellbeing. This can be achieved by Physical Education as a core discipline, similar to the other five core disciplines identified by the VCAA"*

### 5.5.2. Question 13

Which important generic skills, if any, ought to be added to the proposed list on pages 8 and 9 of the Consultation Paper?

#### Response data

Table 28 - Distribution of comments Question 13

		A	B	C	D
	N=	Generate a new list, rationale/ supporting comments	Comments on the list/list ok	Sources/how you get the skills	Other
Total responses (no.)	522	320	170	1	36
Percentage responses to this question		61.3	32.6	0.2	6.9

#### Commentary

##### Overview

Approximately one-third of respondents expressed satisfaction with the given list of generic skills as in the Consultation Paper. Approximately 60% suggested that additional skills should be included.

As in the previous question, there were many respondents from the physical education area and they were consistent in arguing for the inclusion of skills more related to their physical education area. Also there were a number of similar calls for inclusion of visual/ design skills from respondents from the Arts area.

##### A: Generate a new list, rationale / supporting comments

Although respondents were very satisfied with given list of generic skills, many other suggested skills were requested for inclusion. There was some confusion between skills and values. For example, resilience and empathy were mentioned as skills, and it would have been helpful for respondents to articulate what precisely were the skills underpinning these attributes. The list of additional skills fell into six categories. The six quotes below are typical of each of the categories:

Metacognitive skills:

*"metacognitive skills-analyse how their learning takes place, how they know this and how they communicate these understandings."*

Practical skills:

*"A lot more emphasis on practical learning, more hands on learning. A large group of students in schools are disadvantaged because there is far too much emphasis on academic skills. Many boys in particular leave school early because we do not cater for their practical abilities."*

Visual literacy skills:

*"Visual and graphic representation, spatial and graphic representation I believe the Visual and Graphic representation as listed needs further development. Visual literacy is a cognitive process that includes a range of skills in visual processing, analytical thinking etc. A learner's world is highly visual".*

Information literacy skills:

*"Information literacies - How to search for information and analyse it. This should be separate from ICT. It should be placed in the "cognitive and meta cognitive skills or thinking skills section."*

Physical skills:

*"The importance of physical activity within the curriculum must be reflected within the generic skills."*

Family skills:

*"Family skills - looking at ways in which students can identify, cope and manage their home life ie. dysfunctional families"*

### **B: Comments on the list / list ok**

In question 12, respondents overwhelmingly supported the development of generic skills and in question 13 this was largely restated. Mostly comments referred to the extensive nature of the list, and a typical comment was:

*"They all look good to me. I really like the social and cultural, values and attributes list."*

### **C: Sources / how you get the skills**

Only a very small number of respondents articulated concerns or identified other issues about the source of the given set of generic skills. When this was addressed Mayer and Covey were mentioned as useful sources for a different perspective about generic skills.

### **D: Other**

Mostly there was little in the way of supporting evidence, data or a rationale for the inclusion of additional skills.

## **5.5.3. Question 14**

Which important generic skills on the proposed list, if any, should be deleted or modified?

### **Response data**

**Table 29 - Distribution of comments Question 14**

	N=	Comments on the list/list ok	Generate a list of skills and the comments	Other
Total responses (no.)	398	169	195	37
Percentage responses to this question		42.5	49.0	9.3

### **Commentary**

#### **Overview**

Although about 42% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the proposed list of generic skills as in the Consultation Paper, other respondents rarely offered suggestions for deletions. Rather they mostly took the opportunity to restate their position as expressed in the previous question. The majority of respondents were therefore from the physical education area, making suggestions for modifications to include more physical skills.

#### **A: Comments on the list / list ok**

There were very few suggestions for deleting generic skills from the given set. Overwhelmingly respondents replied 'Nil' or took another chance to suggest additional skills, rather than, as the question asked, to identify which skills, in their opinion, should be deleted. This latter strategy was particularly noticeable among supporters of visual literacy and physical education. Typical comments included,

*"page 8, suggest a change to dot point 4 to read 'visual and graphic representation, including technical and creative skills in trialling, design, making and presenting'"*

*"Teaching Physical Education in order to develop fine and gross motor skills."*

#### 5.5.4. Question 15

Are any of the listed skills more appropriately located within specific disciplines?

#### Response data

Table 30 - Distribution of comments Question 15

	A	B	C	
	N=	Yes, plus comments	No, plus comments	General comments
Total responses (no.)	447	212	178	59
Percentage responses to this question		47.4	39.8	13.2

#### Commentary

##### Overview

Respondents to this question were divided roughly equally about the appropriate location of the listed skills. The responses were often passionate in their defense of particular KLAs, especially PE or HPE, and equally passionate about a cross curriculum location.

Some confusion occurred with a minority of respondents who sought clarification about the meaning of 'specific disciplines'.

##### A: Yes responses, plus comments

This question about the appropriateness of placing generic skills within specific disciplines aroused much passion, mostly in the form of defence statements, about specific key learning areas.

Arguments were made for communications skills to be located in the English KLA, for ICT to be seen as a separate KLA, for mathematical representation to be within mathematics, for civic understandings to be located in Studies of Society and Environment, and especially for physical skills to be in physical education, where there were a significant number of similar responses.

Typical comments included –

*"the communication skills should remain within their discipline."*

*"ICT should also be a separate subject that looks at how data becomes information through the processing of it. This should not be confused with generic skills."*

*"Design is a skill that is found specifically in the Technology discipline."*

*"civic understanding- SOSE Personal development- Health and PE"*

*"Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening = Literacy; Mathematical, Representations, Visual and Graphical Representation = Numeracy"*

##### B: No responses, plus comments

In terms of numbers, if not equal passion, there was significantly more support for locating the listed skills across all key learning areas. As one respondent commented,

*"I thought the aim was to focus more on the learning underlying the disciplines, and to emphasise becoming a learner, indeed a "lifelong" learner. Communication, thinking, social, etc., and organisational skills seem to be relevant to all areas of learning."*

The general consensus was that every skill can be integrated, but the supporters of this cross curriculum approach were also aware of the challenges of attempting this..

*"One of the challenges will be to meld the generic skills, values and attributes with previous concepts of teaching specific subject areas"*

*"I hope that these are taught through all disciplines and not seen as the preserve of just one subject."*

## **C: General comments**

Some respondents were unclear about the meaning of ‘specific disciplines’ in the question and questioned whether disciplines equated with key learning areas. This issue will need to be clarified. In summary, the majority of respondents supported a cross key learning area approach to locating generic skills. The issue for them was more one of working out a process of doing this.

*“While some skills may be more appropriate to some disciplines than others, it is essential that students are capable of transferring these skills across disciplines with the disposition to do so. What is important is that teams of teachers collectively take responsibility for explicitly teaching generic skills and reinforcing them with students having time to practice them with feedback provided.”*

## 5.6. Performance standards

### 5.6.1. Question 16

As outlined in the Consultation Paper, the Framework will include performance standards at each level. The framework should also provide extension standards at each level for those students who excel.

#### Response data

**Table 31 – Level of agreement Question 16 (percentage)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	35.2	55.1	7.0	2.6	100.0	703
Individual responses	33.6	58.2	5.9	2.3	100.0	365
Group responses	37.0	51.8	8.2	3.0	100.0	338
<i>Government schools</i>	38.4	48.3	9.4	3.9	100.0	207
<i>Catholic schools</i>	39.0	52.5	6.8	1.7	100.0	61
<i>Independent schools</i>	39.4	54.5	6.1	0.0	100.0	35
<i>Other groups</i>	28.6	62.9	5.7	2.9	100.0	35

**Table 32 - Distribution of comments Question 16**

	N=	A For comments	B Against comments	C Implications	D Other comments on standards
Total responses (no.)	348	189	56	80	34
Percentage responses to this question		54.3	16.1	23.0	9.8

#### Commentary

##### Overview

Over half the comments made (54.3%) were supportive of the proposition that there should be extension standards at each level. A smaller number (16.1%) made comments in opposition. Many other respondents made comments concerning implications of the adoption of extension standards, or more general comments on the use of performance standards. These contained a mixture of ‘agreeing’ and ‘disagreeing’ comments. A considerable number of relevant issues was raised and an attempt has been made to capture these in the comments selected within each category below.

##### A: ‘For’ comments

In response to Question 16, more than half the total number of comments supported the proposition put in the question. In the majority of these the theme was the importance of encouraging students to extend their learning or the need to cater for the range of student abilities. Examples include:

*“It is as important to allow those students who excel to do so as it is to help those who need extra assistance. Providing extension standards would help in this regard, it would give those students something further to aim for.”*

*“Naturally, extension benchmarks are vital in order to challenge and reward our more able students.”*

*“The standards need to be wide ranging enough to cater for all students, not just some ethereal notion of a typical student.”*

*“This is a concern that I highlighted earlier in this survey. The last thing that needs to emerge in practice from the Blueprint is a one for all model. Extension would allow for the individual differences between schools to be addressed more satisfactorily.”*

A number of respondents argued for lateral extension rather than vertical, in order to improve depth of understanding or breadth of experience. Some made comments suggestions or added provisos. The examples below show the nature of the responses.

*"it is a different idea to have extension standards, particularly if they are not just extensions into the next level. They could be more lateral extension? Deeper knowledge or understandings."*

*"Except that these are provided by the level above in the current CSF - only exceptions to this would be in Science and SOSE which are more content specific."*

*"But considerable freedom for assessment, especially in the areas of extension - related to content, ability, interests, needs (the individual student)."*

*"In general terms, learning is a continuum and students and indeed all people are on this continuum. It is probably necessary to publish standards so that parents and possibly employers know where a particular student stands in relation to either a particular standard or in relation to his peers."*

*"Unless schools have written lots of individual learning Improvement Plans, parents can't often tell exactly where their child is in relation to the CSF strands. The 'consolidating' grading seems to go on for too long for most parents."*

## **B: 'Against' comments**

A considerable number of respondents made comments in opposition to the ideas of extension standards at each level. These comments generally encompassed or implied their reasons for opposition. A significant proportion queried why, instead of extension standards, students would not proceed to the next level. Others saw other difficulties, in principle or in practice, as the comments below show:

*"A two-tiered system is bound to be flawed."*

*"if they excel at there level they move to the next unless it is the highest level. we seem to not want to put our students into a higher level. if we structure it correctly the child will flow into the next level because their skills are there. we should not need extension work to broaden a child it should naturally happen as they move through the levels."*

*"WE feel it is more important to measure the GROWTH of a child's learning rather than measuring them against a benchmark. This is a political tool and not necessarily one that is good for education. We believe it would be better to develop learning continuums so that each child's progress can be tracked over time (like West Australian First Steps Literacy continuums?)"*

*"Why limit our students to a set of pre-determined standards / boundaries?"*

*"Question is ambiguous! What happens to students who don't meet the standard? How are these standards going to be measured? Will they be suited to all learning styles and capabilities."*

*"It contradicts the concept of deep learning if learning has to be done in a limited framework. Each child should be enriched and extended everyday."*

## **C: Implications**

Many of the respondents' comments focussed on implications of the provision of extension standards. Many of these comments were supportive of extension standards. Others expressed or implied doubt and raised questions or issues needing addressing. Some of these were issues for teachers and teaching, including resources. Others concerned equity and others again raised more general issues.

The following examples are a cross section.

*"This is most important as outlined earlier. For programs to effectively develop language skills performance standards need to take into account the starting point of the learner and the amount of contact time. Performance standards must realistically reflect these 2 points. If there is insufficient contact time allowed for a language program to reach achievable outcomes these performance standards will be ignored and language programs will be under threat of being sidelined by this curriculum reform. It is vital that extension standards be set in the language area to allow for students with background in the language. These extension standards will also allow for the different settings: immersion programs, bilingual programs and single language/KLA providers."*

*"The major issue is to develop a performance continuum that allows teachers to assess and evaluate progression in relation to generic skills. What are the developmental assessment indicators that we would expect to see in a student demonstrating certain thinking skills e.g. metacognition / cooperative learning at Year 5 compared with Year 9? This should also include students taking responsibility for monitoring and evaluating their own progression in their growth as learners. 'If performance standards are developed only for the generic skills, but 'probably not [for the] values and attributes' (12), teachers will only concentrate on standards that are assessed. This means that values and attributes inevitably receive tokenistic coverage in class]."*

*"teachers will need enhanced skills to be able to do this consistently. That means money."*

*"I can see the argument for it however the premise should be that the curriculum approach is differentiation and individualisation. The current approach has led to teachers across the State being conservative in their judgements 'because we haven't taught that content yet, so how can I assess it'. Once again strengthen the interrelationship between the elements of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment."*

## **D: Other comments on standards**

A few respondents included thoughtful and/or extensive comments on the idea of extension standards. Others indicated that they were unsure whether they supported the idea or not, at this stage. There was also some comments that the term 'performance standards' was rather vague, and questions were raised in relation to how prescriptive they would be. The relationship of the extension standards to the CSF was also questioned. Some of the comments raising issues for consideration are included below.

*"Children don't learn in a linear fashion. Children should expand their knowledge through deep understanding. They may learn in different ways."*

*"How do these standards work with the current CSF standards? Do they complement or over-ride the current CSF? Are they mutually compatible? What gradations are there within the performance standards and do they replace or complement current reporting standards such as letter grades for specific tasks? Gradations within the performance standards would replace the need for extension levels i.e. performance to a higher order."*

*"It is very hard to comment on something that as yet does not exist. What are the proposed performance standards? Hopefully these performance standards will be measured against? National Benchmarks? set against each student? Year Level?. Teachers, employers and parents will find it much easier to monitor a student's progress and/or ability if, for example, a Year 7 students is measured against the 'national benchmark's for the level."*

*"We would like "performance standards will also be set at a challenging level, not minimum competence" more specifically defined. We would also hope that there is no intention to "keep students down" if they do not meet minimums. We wondered if the intention accompanying this was to introduce streaming and we would be opposed to this in general. However we see the benefits of some ability grouping for some essential disciplines at some times not permanently nor across the board. Unanimously, we are concerned that there is a move towards more testing and data gathering which we feel given the current regulations about face to face teaching would impact detrimentally on classroom teaching. When testing becomes dominant learning is trivialised. AIMS tests (etc) do not result in better learning. These tests should not be over valued. They are an indicator of the starting point for a full learning program. We are concerned about weaker students who would receive consistent damming results even when they are trying hard but never able to catch up. Special Education can only compensate -it rarely can bring students right up to their peers' standard when they are significantly behind. These students are damaged and daunted by "realistic" results."*

*"In whose interests is it that we divide up holistic performances into bits that can be assessed. As Einstein (that heroic promoter of the virtues of schooling!) suggested: Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted. Can we get away from industrial age thinking about assessment and perhaps learn from some of the practices that operate beyond school and which employ more holistic judgements about a performance or the worth of a product or task? To reproduce, for the sake of technical instrumentalism the silly measuring of children that we have endured for over a century is not a forward step. We need to disconnect the expensive university selection system we call schooling and put in place ways of making judgements about students that serves their and the community's broad interests."*

### 5.6.2. Question 17

**For which of the generic skills listed on pages 8 and 9 would it be appropriate to develop a set of performance standards?**

#### Response data

**Table 33 – Distribution of comments Question 17**

		A	B	C	D
	N=	Named skills to have standards	Named skills to not have standards	Clarification/interpretation	General comments (other)
Total responses (no.)	589	492	73	52	44
Percentage responses to this question		83.5	12.4	8.8	7.5

#### Commentary

##### Overview

There was a range of responses to this question, and an attempt has been made to indicate the trends in the skills and groups of skills nominated as appropriate/not appropriate to have performance standards developed. Respondents' comments on the identification of skills, including clarification/interpretation comments, further elaborated the range of positions and desired practices in relation to performance standards. A number of respondents also made more general comments concerning matters relevant to this question, and these are informative.

##### A: Named skills to have standards

There was strong support for the following generic skills or skill areas to have a set of performance standards developed. As an indication of the relative strength of support, the approximate frequency of (separate) mention, as a percentage of a sample of 80 responses, is given for each.

All generic skills	33%
All communication skills	26%
Reading	20+%
Writing	20+%
Speaking and Listening	13%
Mathematical representation/numeracy	20%
Thinking skills (Cognitive and Meta-cognitive)	20%
ICT	11%

(As would be expected, respondents who wrote 'All.....' did not also list separately items that make up the 'All'. Therefore some of the categories are additive.)

There was also moderate separate mention of Visual and Graphic representation skills (6%), problem-solving skills and organisational skills. Some other skills such as reasoning, civil understanding, social and cultural skills, and values and attributes got occasional mentions.

A significant number of comments were of the form:

*"A set of Performance Standards could be developed for physical education and health education (and many of the components listed under personal development)."*

A few respondents answered the question with a comment, including the following:

*"We need to avoid the detailed approach - performance statements should be developed for the groups (learning process, language literacy, computer literacy, ..... ) as against 'reading', 'spelling', ... etc"*

*"The ones which already exist in the present framework."*

*"As a guide, a set of performance standards could be developed for all skills, so long as they were used as a guide."*

*"Communication, and other skills that can be observed and measured. Eg: working as member of a team."*

*"only where relevant-ie KLAs already covered (reading skills, mathematics etc) formal performance standards should not interfere with day-to day interaction with students, or provide greater workload for teachers."*

*"If you are serious about them all, then develop performance standards for them all! This will require a 'paradigm shift' in the thinking of teachers (and coordinators and principals)."*

*"All of them. Students need not be formally evaluated on social and cultural values but they need to have expectations stated. These would be based on the values incorporated into the framework."*

## **B: Named skills to not have standards**

Respondents nominated a number of skills and/or skill areas where they thought it was impossible or inappropriate to develop performance standards. The most frequently-mentioned were values and attributes, social and cultural skills, and non-verbal and/or physical communication. Also mentioned were: personal development, organisational skills, and visual and graphic communication, although such mentions were infrequent. It should also be noted that many skills and skill areas were referred to by exception, for example by nominating only "communication skills" as those which should have performance standards attached (see above section).

Comments made often shed light on respondents' thinking, as in the following:

*"It is far too difficult or even impossible to standardise a value which lies within the affective domain of learning. Spirituality, for example, can not have a standard placed on it because each person's spiritual development is different and not tangible."*

*"No for moral and spiritual attributes under Social and cultural skills, values and attributes and under personal development you would look for evidence of behaviours as opposed to performance standards."*

*"as stated in the answer above many of the value areas would seem to be more suited to teacher comment than to grade levels."*

*"There are some skills that are very subjective and should not be standardised."*

*"The problem with generic standards is that there is no-one to assess them. English teachers will set English tasks involving communication and assess them in the context of English. Music teachers could do the same. What will be the common assessable criteria?"*

*"I don't think you can standardise any of these given that each child has different background factors and situations that are individual to them, can a standard chart of development be formed that takes into account all of these factors??"*

*"The generic skills in column 3, if reported against, need careful consideration on how. Please do not place teachers into tricky or libellous situations."*

## **C: Clarification / interpretation**

Some respondents made comments or raised questions concerning clarification or interpretation of the use of performance standards, including whether they were necessary. Others made suggestions, and others again indicated a preference for guidelines rather than standards:

*"Not sure - all kids develop differently on this."*

*"How do you develop appropriate guidelines for children who are not developing at the same pace because of a particular learning disability, Should there be a set of performance standards for them as well?"*

*"I believe all of them although the terminology used should differ depending on the generic skill. For example: Reading may have a rating such as excellent, very good or satisfactory or perhaps established, beginning etc. However a skill such as working with others in a team may adopt the terminology- Highly commendable, commendable, satisfactory etc."*

*"Cognitive and meta-cognitive skills could be best represented on a bar graph from entry level to advanced. Social and cultural skills are best summarized in a 'Tutor', 'Pastoral Care' report. Organisation and employability skills could be accurately recorded and gauged in Visual Communication tasks and could be judged against performance standards."*

*"Need to develop guidelines not performance values."*

## **D: General comments (other)**

Of the other comments made in response to Question 17, some expressed opposition to the notion of performance standards, or questioned their applicability. A few made supportive comments. Others made suggestions or added a qualification they saw as relevant to the application of extension standards. The examples below show the nature of the comments.

*"I disagree with benchmarks."*

*"This is cumbersome and a huge challenge to report meaningfully on all performance standards for all generic skills."*

*"The term performance standard is inappropriate. We are talking about human beings and their learning not horses. If we are interested in students achieving certain habits of mind and body that are nuanced around their cultural, socioeconomic and local community contexts then we need ways of monitoring their progress that alerts teachers to potential problems but does not impose a mindless age-based approach to learning."*

*"I think that performance standards are important, and wide consultation in their development is imperative. If we do not have standards, then it is left open to wide and loose interpretation - values are so personal and individual that a common and agreed"*

*"This would depend on how much PD teachers had to fully implement the development of these skills. This would be done in many different ways in different schools to best meet the needs of individual students. - Hence state wide testing would be very difficult. It may even be counter productive."*

*"It is recommended that the VCAA provide models of performance standards for generic skills where appropriate, as it is pointless for every school in Victoria to develop its own models, when we believe that Schools would be looking for guidance from the VCAA in this area. Levels of competency are currently provided in VET certificates. This could be used as a model to guide development."*

*"They should be assessed within the context of core discipline concepts and skills but schools need to be mindful of allowing students the opportunity to demonstrate them as generic skills across core disciplines."*

*"Many of these skills involve continuous learning, don't need to be assessed, just recognised where a student is at."*

## 5.7. Assessment

### 5.7.1. Question 18

What sort of assessment techniques will best enable students to demonstrate deep understanding?

#### Response data

Table 34 – Distribution of comments Question 18

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
	Wide range of assessment tasks	Other	Scaffolding	Portfolios	Projects	Authentic assessment rich	Open ended tasks	Self assessment	Goal based assessment	
N=										
Total responses (no.)	627	248	205	1	36	6	54	52	53	4
Percentage responses to this question		39.6	32.7	0.2	5.7	1.0	8.6	8.3	8.5	0.6

#### Commentary

##### Overview

In analysing the data from this question, nine categories were identified, each corresponding to a single assessment technique. Some of these received several individual mentions such as portfolios, self assessment, and rich tasks. However, the majority of respondents combined a number of the techniques and these, along with those who used the words ‘wide range’, were coded under A, i.e. ‘wide range of assessment tasks’. This category and the category B ‘other’ received the most mentions and are the only two categories reported on below. The category ‘other’ contained responses that questioned the use of national benchmarks, the need to use more oral assessment techniques, and comments about the complexity of assessing deep learning.

##### A: Wide range of assessment tasks

Responses were coded under this heading if they indicated a number of specific assessment strategies or used the words ‘a range’, or ‘wide range’ in their responses.

*“A wide range of assessment would need to be used. It would be impossible to determine deep understanding with a single form of assessment such as a test or essay.”*

*“Must have a wide range of assessment tasks to cater for learning styles and obvious transfer of skills.”*

*“A wide range of techniques, including application problems that take in a range of scenarios, conferencing with the teacher, peer teaching of other students, tasks requiring the student to write about or discuss their understanding and learning.”*

*“I don’t understand this question. (No pun intended!) The assessment techniques required will run the full gamut (and indeed far beyond the existing gamut). As a simplistic answer, “problem solving” types of assessment are more likely to test deep understanding.”*

*“There has to be a real mix of short answer, extended response and verbal interaction for students to have an opportunity to demonstrate deep understanding. Sometimes additional opportunities for creative representation are extremely valuable, but can also be much more subjected to interpretation rather than easily identified demonstrations of knowledge.”*

*“It would seem necessary to use many different assessment techniques depending on the age, learning style and ability of the students. Eg: oral presentations, students taking on teacher role, small group, whole class, independent activities.”*

*"Techniques which are multi-faceted, allowing for students to respond using a wide variety of approaches Techniques that allow students to return to a task at different points to show understanding Techniques that allow student input If the tasks have been truly integrated, assessment techniques should allow for input from the range of different teachers involved."*

*"I think you need a range of strategies that the teacher can use to give their students the best chance of doing well. Having a set style means that some children suited to a type of task are at a disadvantage if the teacher does not select that type of task."*

*"Assessment techniques for health and physical education would need to utilise a range of strategies; performance tasks (skill acquisition tests, technique drills, class discussion, oral reports, role plays), written tasks (workbooks, reports, surveys, worksheets, tests), self and peer assessment (student evaluation, checklists, journals), creative tasks (writing, posters, media presentations)"*

## **B: Other**

The range of responses in this category is quite large. The indicative quotes below provide the flavour of the responses. Some of these are lengthy but are included here to retain the thinking behind the comments.

*"Oral assessment needs to be developed and used for all units of work. Lack of success in written assessment tasks – we know kids know more than they show through written responses – ability in written and reading literacy unfairly promotes some kids and severely impacts on others. Most of our communication at school, in the workplace and in the community is orally based yet school based assessments are generally •based on reading and writing skills •gives lack of success •leads to decreasing engagement etc. My classroom research in using oral assessment in all assessment tasks in year 9 maths shows improvement in student outcomes and increased engagement – by giving the an opportunity to show what they know orally, we show we value their success and access to it. Through assessment we also need to show that we value learning behaviours– one example - I assess their ability to find theory / examples in their textbook and their ability to follow an example in solving a similar problem."*

*"National benchmarks seem contradictory to the assessment required on the new understandings of curriculum eg self assessment, portfolios, self-understandings, monitoring of ongoing progress is totally contradictory to being measured against a benchmark."*

*"By definition a deep understanding will be different for different students, it is not a simple set of facts to be regurgitated. It is information learned in many different ways so it must be assessed in ways suited to the learner."*

*"An initial comment regarding this question is that the assessment doesn't enable the understanding; it measures what understanding has taken place. Our grasp of the phrase? deep understanding? used in the context of this paper, suggests an ability to transfer learning and apply this new learning in a new context. Learning therefore needs to be measured in terms of outcomes, which includes the three domains of :•Knowledge - What do they know? •Attitudes - How do they feel? •Skills - Can they do it? The techniques chosen to assess this transfer of skills, knowledge and attitudes must be based on the objective that was identified at the outset of the learning, tailored to the three domains of learning and tested in both the short and long term. To list a set of generic assessment techniques is therefore inappropriate, until exactly what is to be tested has been identified. The process is more complex than this question implies."*

## 5.8. Reporting to parents

### 5.8.1. Question 19

Reports to parents should include clear summary statements of student achievement against performance standards, including generic skills.

#### Response data

Table 35 - Distribution of Responses Question 19

		A	B	C	D	E
	N=	General agreement comments	Alternative approaches	Issues, cautions, qualifications, negatives	Agreement count	Disagreement count
Total responses (no.)	585	119	17	274	181	8
Percentage responses to this question		20.3	2.9	46.8	30.9	1.4

#### Commentary

##### Overview

Nearly 90% of the responses to this question fell under the categories for general agreement with the proposition, and the category, 'issues, concerns and qualifications'. There were a number of responses which, when agreeing with the proposition, suggested that as schools they were already doing what was proposed. Under the issues category, comments were made about the need for a new approach to replace CSF reporting formats, the challenge of reporting on generic skills, the perceived desire for simpler reports for parents, and concerns from teachers about workload and assessing against wider norms.

##### A: General agreement comments

While all of the statements under these categories were in general agreement, there was a range of responses and the following examples indicate this range.

*"A clear descriptive assessment of what the child has achieved should be given. Their progress should also be shown compared to their peers. ie. a parent should be able to look at a report and instantly see how their child is going compared to others."*

*"There is no doubt that parents should have a report which includes a clear statement of student achievement against performance standards. Parents need to know not only about skill developments but also at what level their children are performing."*

*"Reports to parents should include clear summary statements of students' achievements against performance standards, including generic skills."*

*"This type of assessment is already being used in many schools. In the senior levels the students themselves could identify samples of their own work that they believe best measures up against the performance criterion. Student portfolios have already been included into the assessment and reporting procedures for many schools. This work should demonstrate the learning that has taken place and reflect their achievements. It could then be filed as a record, not only for the purpose of providing parents and teachers with a snapshot of student progress but also to encourage a sense of ownership for the student. Using authentic assessment strategies, which provides students with greater ownership and more relevant assessment, is a current trend in many schools."*

## **B: Alternative approaches**

The number of suggestions for alternative approaches was quite small, and these were often embedded in longer comments.

*"Approaches such as student - led conferences based on capacity matrices and work records obviate the need for some of this. Parents want reports to be honest, frank and readily understandable. Reports need to demonstrate that the teacher had a personal knowledge of this student's learning."*

*"Suggest reporting should reflect back on state norms to place a context around achievement. Would be good if cohort average from school placed a local context on achievement."*

*"This is a good idea. Are you going to give us some computer software to do this. KIDMAP was a good piece of software and for those schools which developed their computer skills to be able to use the program, in 1996-2000 it was good."*

*"PLEASE GIVE US A DEFINED REPORT FORM!! If this framework produces standards that are for the whole State, then why can't a report form be written to complement these? NEARLY EVERYONE I KNOW WANTS DE&T TO GIVE US A REPORT FORM. WE HAVE SPENT NOT HOURS BUT WEEKS, OVER THE YEARS WRITING AND RE-WRITING REPORT FORMS."*

*"A good way to report on Generic Skills would be through a 5-point scale where 1 represents excellent, or extremely high and 5 represents poor or not shown."*

## **C: Issues, cautions, qualifications, negatives**

As indicated above, there were many comments that indicated some level of support for the question but which had qualifications attached. Some responses were negative but even then made positive suggestions as what might fix the situation.

### **Group A: Teachers**

*"Reports must be manageable for teachers (that means they need time to do it - and that means money spent to allow the time)... a clear summary of a young person's achievement would be great. It will need to be in plain English and unique to each student."*

*"Beware of filling up report forms with such information which will preclude space for teachers to make personal comments about the student. It's interesting and informative but not more important than teacher comment."*

*"More information is needed about how this will work. What will the school be asked to reports on? Will we be required to place students on a scale? Will the report compare students in the class or worse-from the State?"*

*"I worry sometimes about marking students against state or like-school norms. We have a huge focus on teaching kids according to their individual needs and yet we compare them against each other all the time. I would prefer to see a developmental scale."*

*"Reports at this time, are ridiculously time consuming and wallow in jargon and actually do little in improving students. This would be a perfect time to provide templates and a data base program linked through CASES that can be administered by DE&T technical staff/office managers."*

*"Yes, but what support will teachers have to develop this into meaningful reporting?"*

*"Difficult to comment because It is not a part of values education to rank and compare children and this is what is implied here. This would not be supported if this was the case. We do not want write summaries for all outcomes when this will not be used in a valuable way whereby it becomes confusing to do for the teacher and confusing for parents to read. It far exceeds teacher workload which is already at the max."*

### **Group B: Measurement and approach**

*"Standardised testing must be used carefully (note findings out of UK and USA show that it does impact on curriculum with decreases in creative curriculum being the cost) and be only one of many measures and as such not single to measure school effectiveness. They are snapshots after all and must be accepted as such - they are not regarded well by teachers as anything more than that... CSF reporting again is not well regarded by teachers - it is too complicated and demanding to execute as it is - it ends up being a "gut" feeling type assessment in reality. The use (some politically) of both AIM and CSF data has been disappointing - taken out of context."*

*"Yes but a standard form across all schools in Victoria."*

*"Not necessarily - we need to get away from reducing a highly complex process such as educating children to mere number crunching and data gathering."*

*"Yes, however, it is more important to report on value-added progress for individual learning."*

*"In some areas this would be achievable and beneficial. Is it ever going to be possible to come up with a reporting format that is acceptable to all communities across the state?"*

*"Depends how performance standards are framed. If performance standards embrace / support student development then yes. If performance standards can be used to further highlight the social divide as an advertising tool forget it. What about integration students?"*

#### **Group C: Generic skills**

*"Will be difficult to assess Generic skills and values and report on these."*

*"It is difficult to report on many of the generic skills against performance standards and not our place to do so."*

*"This is OK, but who is going to decide on the 'performance standards'?"*

*"Generic skills will be hard to report on, especially if all a child's teachers are expected to comment on it - they are likely to disagree. This could be done on a different scale to subject specific criteria."*

*As long as it is not a new list of skills for teachers to maintain intense reports on. Generic statements eg. uses methods of inquiry to source relevant information. Just not too specific."*

#### **Group D: Parents**

*"Written reports to parents should be in a more user friendly and easy to understand format than is currently in place."*

*"There is far too much detail put in reports to parents. Parents require much simpler reports. From a parent's point of view I rarely read all the CSF information that came home in my children's reports."*

*"These standards will need to be very clear in terms of parent speak. I believe we report very well against the CSF now but it is not popular with parents because basically they want a picture of where their child sits in the class not where they are against a standard or their own performance. I'm not sure this area of development will do anything to ease the present criticism of reporting to parents."*

*"Disagree. Parents should be explicitly aware of what values and skills we are trying to foster in school-aged children, and encouraged to support these at home. I see no necessity to inform a parent that their child is a 'below-average team-worker'."*

*"No, reports to parents should be an ongoing communication in a mutual discussion of where the student is as and what they will need to do next. The discussion should be started with information on where the educational program is aiming to take the child."*

*"First we need to educate parents regarding the concept of measuring their own child's performance against others in the class as well as ABC type assessments."*

*"Need to remember to place value and report on the 'values and attributes' which are just as important as the performance standards. Some parents are hung up on a 'mark' for their child. Parent friendly language can be a challenge for teachers."*

*"Yes, however we must be careful not provide parents with too much written information and we must make sure that the language used is clear, simple and easily understood. A 'quality' teacher parent interview often reinforces/explains issue more effectively than a written report."*

*"Reporting to Parents has presented as a potentially contentious issue that needs a lot of careful research, planning and trialing. Concerns about reporting to parents particularly on values. It is easier to report to parents that students can or cannot count to ten (and provide evidence of this) rather than they do or do not challenge or question one's own beliefs."*

*"Parents get confused when information is not written in 'plain English' They want it clearly identified where their child is at, and what needs to be done to move their child on."*

## 5.8.2. Question 20

Schools should report progress students have made against the standards from one reporting period to the next and also next steps for learning.

### Response data

**Table 36 – Level of agreement Question 20 (percentage)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	29.6	56.1	10.8	3.5	100.0	708
Individual responses	29.9	58.4	8.3	3.4	100.0	364
Group responses	29.3	53.6	13.5	3.6	100.0	344
<i>Government schools</i>	31.8	51.6	12.4	4.1	100.0	224
<i>Catholic schools</i>	29.3	46.6	20.7	3.4	100.0	58
<i>Independent schools</i>	13.3	73.3	13.3	0.0	100.0	31
<i>Other groups</i>	29.0	64.5	6.5	0.0	100.0	31

**Table 37 - Distribution of comments Question 20**

	N=	A Issues, cautions, qualifications, negatives	B More clarification needed	C Agreement/ elaboration to the statement	D Ideas on how to do it	E General or other
Total responses (no.)	455	172	3	105	131	34
Percentage responses to this question		37.8	0.7	23.1	28.8	7.5

### Commentary

#### Overview

There was a wide spread of responses falling into three main groups. There were many responses which generally agreed with the question, and a similar number which provided ideas as to how to do it, including what schools are currently doing in this regard. The third group of similar size indicated some concerns, including parent understanding of the reports, and the value of doing the task in electronic formats.

#### A: Issues, cautions, qualifications, negatives

Again, there was a range of comments under this section focusing on confidentiality, time demands, and issues in providing for the next steps.

*"Needs to be in language parents can understand."*

*"Yes but these results should be kept confidential."*

*"I'm not convinced this has historically been done very well. There would need to be significant community education to enable parents to understand this type of reporting system."*

*"Commendable. I am not sure how it should be done; reporting is something that is difficult for teachers and also quite onerous."*

*"Yes from one reporting comment to the next, but will be too confusing to provide next steps for learning."*

*"There will need to be a digital State-wide program for development of a report format that does this - it is ridiculous for every school to attempt to make up their own! Something along the same format as the current AIM report would be great. We would keep our portfolio reporting."*

*"Don't have the answers for this. It is very difficult to keep continuity in reporting when students move from one teacher to the next each year and so much of what we report on is very subjective."*

*"If you have a set of expected outcomes then it is an important thing for parents to understand how their child is performing in the school context. It is important that the standards are very clear and assessment tools are explained.*

*"As long as this is not onerous on teachers or overly complicated for parents. We must streamline reporting process and remove the increasing stress on teachers. It is crazy that teachers are expected to write reports on students they might only see once a (week?)."*

*"The whole purpose of reporting is to determine 'next steps'. If the report does not do this, it was a waste of everyone's time. Perhaps it is sometimes assumed that parents or students will work the 'next steps' out for themselves: study harder, do more homework."*

*"This is almost like completing an Individual Learning Plan for each child - if parents can see where their child is heading next, then it makes it helpful, but can also hinder their progress if the parents push them too far too soon."*

*"If reports are computerised, as most schools seem to now do, then it is a logical step to be able to report each semester, how much improvement each student has made over the course of their time at school."*

*My wariness comes from reading hundreds of reports which report very little and seem to bear little relation to student ability level. Currently there appears to be a high degree of subjectivity in assessing whether students have met criteria of different CSF levels."*

*"The NEXT steps for learning could be a rather restrictive area. This may make some teachers feel that there is no choice in how to support any given student in his or her learning. Whilst there are many examples of best practise, teachers are free to teach individually, select their own strategies, and in that way can best teach the individual."*

*"Predicting the next steps is objective. This creates more work for teachers. The syllabus should clearly state this. In secondary schools students usually have a different teacher from one reporting period to the next, making comparisons could be a problem."*

## **B: More clarification needed**

Comments in this category were generally along the lines of:

*"What are we discussing here? Which set of standards, core concepts or values or skills? Even within the core concept reporting students are only doing sequential skill development in some subjects."*

## **C: Agreement / elaboration to the statement**

There was a great deal of general agreement to the proposition in the question and some elaborative comments as the following examples show:

*"Reports should offer advice on an area/strategy for improvement, as well as student progress. Need a one line statement or skills strategies to be ticked to show what student must implement to improve. Must guard against reports becoming too cumbersome for teachers."*

*"Student progress should be reported as part of an individual learning plan that has been negotiated with parent and student. This should be done on a regular basis depending on the needs of the student - monthly, term, half year- via interview."*

*"Written statement outlining areas of improvement together with what areas require improvement. Accompanied by verbal discussion with student/parent in an attempt to reach agreement on steps to take for improvement to occur."*

*"We already do this in primary schools via student reports and parent-teacher interviews where we state to parents what children have achieved and what they need to do next."*

*"It is necessary to spell out in very clear and plain English what level students were at in the last reporting period, what level they are now at and what actual skills have developed. It should also clearly be suggested what steps now need to be taken for the student to progress to the next level."*

*"Reporting needs to state the level of competence and achievement to date; strategies for improvement and progression to the next stage/level; encouragement to learn, achieve and succeed: praise for the effort and attitudes that value learning, challenge, leadership and fitness."*

## **D: Ideas on how to do it**

There were a number of suggestions as to how to make this kind of reporting effective. Of interest was the number of suggestions which included the use of electronic approaches to managing the data and generating reports.

*"Make up BOOKLETS examples of work at different stages to show examples of work at the next expected level."*

*"The WA First Steps Program method, which some teachers use, does this effectively."*

*"There will need to be a digital State-wide program for development of a report format that does this - it is ridiculous for every school to attempt to make up their own! Something along the same format as the current AIM report would be great. We would keep our portfolio reporting as part of the school's package. We want the continuum to be retained, and we would like to see an expected level marked so that parents get a clear picture of where their child is at against this benchmark."*

*"Would be a good feature. Even being given access to a web interface to compare data with all past results. Access could be protect with unique identifier and password."*

*"I totally agree. I have developed a very simple excel spreadsheet which tracks students over time. I have done away with the Beginning, Consolidating and Established categories (a) because they were misleading for parents, students and teachers and (b). kids don't learn in jumps as is currently being recorded.."*

*"There should be ratings against learning outcomes so that parents can see the degree to which achievement has been reached. There should also be work samples to support/clarify recording of achievement level. There should be discussions with parents when Reports are issued. There should also be a communication of where a student's level of achievement sits on the continuum of learning."*

*"Again yes but it may in some cases be more effective to talk to the parents rather than presenting a written evaluation and set of recommendations. Often students will have special qualities, circumstances and needs that result in a written set of ratings not doing the child's progress justice."*

*"Via portfolios as mentioned above. They should be presented to parents at three way interviews between teachers, parents and students and next steps should be discussed between the parties involved."*

*"Perhaps we could consult with the learner in regards to the direction and depth of learning. Is a teacher's role to then scaffold the student within the next level of learning in a variety of areas?"*

*"This is done via individual learning plans, interviews with parents and children, self assessment and reflection, portfolios, at mid year so that direction is given for key individual goals for future learning."*

*"Reporting should show progress from one period to another (a portfolio is a good way of showing this) The next steps of learning should be written as a Learning Improvement Plan to help the parent work with their child."*

Again, there was a range of comments under this section focusing on confidentiality, time demands, and issues in providing for the next stages.

*"Needs to be in language parents can understand."*

*"Yes but these results should be kept confidential."*

*"I'm not convinced this has historically been done very well. There would need to be significant community education to enable parents to understand this type of reporting system."*

*"Commendable. I am not sure how it should be done; reporting is something that is difficult for teachers and also quite onerous."*

*"Yes from one reporting comment to the next, but will be too confusing to provide next steps for learning."*

*"There will need to be a digital State-wide program for development of a report format that does this - it is ridiculous for every school to attempt to make up their own! Something along the same format as the current AIM report would be great. We would keep our portfolio reporting."*

*"Don't have the answers for this. It is very difficult to keep continuity in reporting when students move from one teacher to the next each year and so much of what we report on is very subjective."*

*"If you have a set of expected outcomes then it is an important thing for parents to understand how their child is performing in the school context. It is important that the standards are very clear and assessment tools are explained."*

*"As long as this is not onerous on teachers or overly complicated for parents. We must streamline reporting process and remove the increasing stress on teachers. It is crazy that teachers are expected to write reports on students they might only see once a (week?)."*

*"The whole purpose of reporting is to determine 'next steps'. If the report does not do this, it was a waste of everyone's time. Perhaps it is sometimes assumed that parents or students will work the 'next steps' out for themselves: study harder, do more homework."*

*"This is almost like completing an Individual Learning Plan for each child - if parents can see where their child is heading next, then it makes it helpful, but can also hinder their progress if the parents push them too far too soon."*

*"If reports are computerised, as most schools seem to now do, then it is a logical step to be able to report each semester, how much improvement each student has made over the course of their time at school."*

*My wariness comes from reading hundreds of reports which report very little and seem to bear little relation to student ability level. Currently there appears to be a high degree of subjectivity in assessing whether students have met criteria of different CSF levels."*

*"The NEXT steps for learning could be a rather restrictive area. This may make some teachers feel that there is no choice in how to support any given student in his or her learning. Whilst there are many examples of best practise, teachers are free to teach individually, select their own strategies, and in that way can best teach the individual."*

*"Predicting the next steps is objective. This creates more work for teachers. The syllabus should clearly state this. In secondary schools students usually have a different teacher from one reporting period to the next, making comparisons could be a problem."*

## **E: General or other**

These responses were quite mixed.

*"This statement says much about how the paper (its authors) understand learning and its progression. If a student wrote an essay which described student learning in those terms I'd send them back to read non-trivial accounts of how we think humans learn."*

*"Too often a student may receive a C one year, a C the next year etc - but this gives little indication of the real learning that has taken place. Teachers need to be able to intervene and demonstrate the real learning that has occurred. We need far better tools to assess progression though."*

*"Documentation needs to be kept of student progress throughout the year but not necessarily compared with each phase of school reporting. Next steps for learning can be discussed at a Parents/Teacher interview and mentioned briefly in the general comment."*

### 5.8.3. Question 21

Schools should report on the development of personal and social competencies.

#### Response data

**Table 38 - Level of agreement Question 21 (percentage)**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	N=
All responses	36.2	50.4	9.7	3.7	100.0	661
Individual responses	33.0	52.3	9.2	5.5	100.0	333
Group responses	39.4	48.4	10.2	1.9	100.0	328
<i>Government schools</i>	43.1	44.1	10.9	1.9	100.0	213
<i>Catholic schools</i>	31.6	50.9	14.0	3.5	100.0	57
<i>Independent schools</i>	24.1	72.4	3.4	0.0	100.0	30
<i>Other groups</i>	39.3	57.1	3.6	0.0	100.0	28

**Table 39 - Distribution of comments Question 21**

	A	B	C	D
	Agreement, elaboration, expanding upon the statement	Issues, cautions, qualifications, negatives	How to do it?	General/other
N=				
Total responses (no.)	473	67	170	93
Percentage responses to this question	14.2	35.9	33.2	19.7

#### Commentary

##### Overview

There was considerable support for this proposition, with an equal number of concerns raised, ranging from confidentiality and teacher subjectivity to the view that primary schools can, and already often do, this quite well. There were many suggestions made as to how to report it and also negative comments on the wording of the question with respect to the inclusion of the term 'personal competencies' in the question when it is not in the document.

##### A: Agreement / elaboration, expanding upon the statement

Many respondents indicated that they believe that their schools already report on personal and social competencies while a few agreed with the proposition in the question but felt that it may be difficult.

*"At our school we report these types of social skills to parents at the end of the report. These are important as it allow parents and teachers to deal with any social problems faces by the child together."*

*"This will be subjective to a certain degree, but in my experience most teachers are well able to do this and students are very interested. At primary level it is an excellent indicator of attitude and effort."*

*"Yes, the whole concept of these values is that they underlie the whole framework. If they are not transparent and kept in the forefront they will cease to hold their value. As students do not normally learn in isolation, the development of personal and social competencies forms part of the classroom interaction. The purpose of this Framework is to highlight the importance of these competencies. These are skill-based competencies and should be assessed as such."*

*"Yes - there are social competencies listed - but I can't see anywhere that list personal competencies."*

*"With a clearly defined set of parameters of what personal and social competencies are, teachers should be able to clearly state which of the competencies have been met. If there are performance indicators to match the competencies, it would make it easier to give an accurate and commonly-understood assessment."*

*"This is a difficult one. I think parents need to be told if there are problems in personal and social development so they can take some action or if they are ill equipped for this, given information on resources for help."*

*"This is more tricky, but it should not be kept secret if a student cannot work cooperatively with others, tolerate the opinions of others or show positive relationships."*

## **B: Issues, cautions, qualifications, negatives**

In this category issues mentioned a number of times included the potential lack of agreement about which competencies, the difficulties teachers may have in making judgements, and the over-riding matter of the impact of making such judgements on adolescents.

*"In some ways, there is merit in this. But I also have a problem with the possible judgmental attitude that could be developed in teachers if they had to report on this (without, perhaps, understanding the student's background sufficiently). At best, perhaps, it could be an item for discussion at parent-teacher meetings."*

*"Again, I believe this is something well done at primary level but at secondary level appears to relate only to work effort. This is a difficult area because not all areas of society value the same personal and social competencies"*

*"We agree with this statement but are concerned about assessing and reporting on personal and social competencies as elements. We feel that teachers would need Pd to help them design tasks that will measure the achievement of these competencies."*

*"If these are important elements of the essential learning program, then they must feature in any evaluation of a student's progress."*

*"The level of personal and social competency that a student has is developed and moulded by the parent and environment from infancy. Any report on these competencies should be delivered with care in a report to tactfully show parents that their work or failure to produce a well mannered and well adjusted citizen has contributed directly to the child's success or failure in particular aspects of their education."*

*"This question is poorly worded as there are no "personal competencies". However if this is reflected through the development of physical skills, it is very easy to place a child on a developmental scale."*

*"Again, this is very subjective. What a student says in class in response to a hypothetical situation, may not be how they actually react in a real life situation, and so the reporting aspect of social competencies can be variable."*

*"Too many subjective value judgements from teachers in what is a diverse culture. Extensive PD would be required in this area with a strong element on counselling skills. Consequences of making a statement."*

*"Schools have enough work reporting on academic competencies."*

*"The development of personal and social competencies need to be reported. The competencies need to be measurable, not teachers passing judgement."*

*"If we are teaching these then we must report on them. However, we need to respect the individual's background, beliefs and values. Care needs to be taken with written reports."*

*"Our group is divided on this. This would have to be approached with care. Such a report could undermine the students' personal development. Personal and social competencies should, however be reported on."*

## **C: How to do it?**

Under this category many suggestions were made including checklists, overall comments, no grades, tick boxes on spectrum. A number of these are shown below:

*"Agree, but need to ensure it doesn't become 'personal' comments, rather needs factual observations and examples. Possibly tick a box, or a set project that is used to observe personal and social competencies."*

*"Teachers should keep notes on particular students interactions and those on yard duty."*

*"An overall comment explaining the competencies they have and which ones could be improved. Or- tick competencies they have and display those that need improving."*

*"Reporting should be based on: interview, checklist, statement, personal development. Work by Dr Julia Atkin would be valuable resource for further development in this area."*

*"We base this on The Keys to Success Program and relate personal and social competencies to the keys of confidence, persistence, getting along and organisation eg. "Attempts set tasks" (confidence and persistence)."*

*"It could indicate frequency of demonstration of these attributes/competencies-eg consistently, usually, sometimes. rarely for eg. it could also include descriptive comment noting evidence of such demonstrations. It should focus on development and not on performance against standards."*

*"With student input and evidence based teacher observation."*

## **D: General / other**

A range of issues was raised here.

*"Schools do this, but to set out a pro-forma or a set way of reporting against standards would be dreadful. As one noted educator once said, "The report is the beginning of a conversation between a teacher, a student and a parent, not the end of the conversation."*

*"It is these aspects of students' lives that determine their success in life. respect for others and for self are fundamental to democratic, inclusive education."*

*"We already do this in our primary school reports. They take an enormous amount of time to complete, given that I have just spent 30 hours plus to complete 25 reports. I have commented upon each child's academic, social, physical and emotional progress as I see it."*

*"Sometimes difficult as socio-economic and family situations are explanations for behaviours. Sometimes, it's the parents who should be taught social competencies, not the children!"*

*"Already schools are taking on far too much of what the rest of the community should be prepared to take responsibility for. Families still exist and should be allowed to take responsibility for this."*

*"If this involves assessment as in grading a student I disagree. How can you assess honesty or respect?"*

*"Partially Agree. The question is poorly worded as there are no 'personal competencies'."*

*"What are the "Personal and Social competencies"? I contend they would differ between social classes / schools. Should they be generic or school specific?"*

## 5.9. Support materials

### 5.9.1. Question 22

What kind of materials would be most useful in supporting schools to assess student achievement against the standards and report to parents?

#### Response data

Table 40 - Distribution of comments Question 22

		A	B	C	D	E
	N=	A list e.g. work samples	Implications issues	State-wide documentation compared with local development	A range required	Other
Total responses (no.)	575	404	83	68	29	30
Percentage responses to this question		70.3	14.4	11.8	5.0	5.2

#### Commentary

##### Overview

Approximately two-thirds of respondents to this question supplied a list of suggestions for types of support. These suggestions took two forms. Firstly, materials in the form of exemplars, for example, assessment proformas, software packages, and secondly, support in the form of professional development.

Two issues emerged. One related to practical areas like the need for time for teachers to attend professional development and the need to clearly communicate any changes with parents. The second issue, mentioned by approximately 12% of respondents, related to the tensions between state-wide documentation and flexibility given to schools to develop their own processes.

Teachers and schools strongly requested centralised delivered support materials to assist them in assessment and reporting. Professional development was seen as critical in an effective delivery of any new format. There was also a feeling to involve parents in the process although how this was to be done was not made clear

##### A: A list eg work samples

The second form of request was the most typical in that it consisted of an often large list of materials that were seen to be of use in assessment and reporting. Of the vast number of materials the following were requested by a majority of respondents. In each case respondents urged the need for criteria, indicator statements and standards for each level. The requests are in priority order.

- sample assessment /report formats/templates/items annotated at each level
- annotated snapshots/descriptors of students' work samples
- professional development
- online reporting /software tracking package
- assessment bank items at each level
- student (digital) portfolios proformas
- examples of cross curriculum assessment tasks

## **B: Implications / issues**

Four issues were identified by respondents relating to any implementation of a new curriculum framework and especially those parts that relate to assessment and reporting.

Professional development for teachers was seen as being critical:

*"Professional development and time allocated for planning and resource development will be essential for teachers working collaboratively across discipline and study areas. Assessing student achievement needs to include student goal-setting and self-assess"*

Liaison with parents:

*"Please organise brochures for parents so that they too can be part of the change and understand it."*

Clearer expectations:

*"Clearer understanding of expected stages. eg. Beginning, Consolidating and Establishing/Established have been inappropriate, as the variation between and within schools has been very significant. "*

Time:

*"Time provided for teachers, other staff to complete assessment with each student"*

## **C: State-wide documentation compared with local development**

A significant debate emerged in the responses to this question. This debate centred on the value of having state-wide and therefore centralised documentation compared to local school and therefore diverse development. In between there was a group who wanted State direction but with also flexibility for schools to adapt.

There was overwhelming support for state-wide documentation giving explicit directions and expectations to all schools in Victoria.

*"standardised materials from a central point"*

There was some support for the midway position of State and local development

*"Models of suggested reports for modification by individual schools."*

but almost no support for purely local school-based development.

*"Schools know their clientele - they are in the best position to report to them in meaningful ways."*

## **D: A range required**

The last question asked respondents to consider what materials would be most useful in supporting schools to assess student achievement against the standards and report to parents. The many detailed responses fell in to four broad categories.

Firstly, there was a request for a broad range of integrated support materials that directly and explicitly related to the curriculum framework. The following comment was typical of this type of request.

*"An integrated set of documents that demonstrate in an holistic manner the inter-relationship between curriculum, assessment, pedagogy as a means of developing deep understanding. I believe that the best type of understanding comes from a variety of examples (must be the way I learn). This would give practical interpretations on how to design the learning processes."*

Some respondents believed that a full and rich range of materials would best be delivered on a central database where there would be a full range of assessment tasks and reporting procedures related to core concepts and generic skills.

## 5.10. Other comments

### 5.10.1. Question 23

Any other comments.

#### Response data

Table 41 – Distribution of comments Question 23

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Supporting or endorsing comments about the proposal	Other questions and comments about curriculum aspects	Support for teachers and schools	Connections with future eg. uni entrance etc	Process and timing issues	General (other)	Issues re staffing, crowding, flexibility
Total responses (no.)	46	130	66	9	106	90	5
Percentage responses to this question	11.1	31.3	15.9	2.1	25.5	21.6	1.2

#### Commentary

##### Overview

Many respondents took the opportunity to make additional comments. Some of these were supportive of the proposal, some critical, and some made specific or general suggestions. The comments covered a wide range, with the most numerous being comments on curriculum issues and 'Other' comments. A substantial number of respondents made comments or suggestions, or raised questions concerning the consultation process itself. There were also significant numbers of comments concerning the need for support for teachers and schools, and expressing support for the proposal.

Many of the comments were far from brief. While it has not been possible to do justice to them all here, an attempt has been made to provide a fair representation of the views expressed.

##### A: Supporting or endorsing comments about the proposal

A significant number of respondents made additional endorsing comments about the proposal in response to this question. Most of these were very positive; a few also contained a qualification about the size of the task involved in implementing it. Examples are:

*"Good Luck. This is a very big task, if it works well it would made education relevant to all students."*

*"This is a wonderful opportunity to reform the system and to empower teachers within a clear framework of values and standards. I support this initiative in the hope that it will move the curriculum toward the learner."*

*"This could be an incredibly valuable step for education but the time it takes and the resources needed to be innovative need to be recognised. Many teachers have great ideas but they are not fully developed or utilised due to lack of time or resources."*

*"This framework has the potential to achieve the aim of producing thinking people who are interested in learning and becoming prepared for a successful future. It is learner centred but that will be a major challenge to some teachers who still see themselves in the role of a traditional teacher."*

*"Shrinking the outcomes is just lovely! Let's just make sure we don't go from one extreme to the other."*

*"The number of Essential Learning should be kept to minimum. I think SA has five. It is then up to the KLA and individual teachers to determine which and how they relate to specific disciplines. This is an OK approach I expect."*

*"Everything here has merit, but its a huge proposal. Teachers are exhausted, and change should be introduced in stages. If the common learning process and thinking skills become more of a focus, rather than content, it will update pedagogy,..."*

## **B: Other questions and comments about curriculum aspects**

A large number of respondents to Question 23 made comments or raised questions concerning various curriculum aspects. These included observations, suggestions, and cautions, and covered general curriculum matters, specifics, and arguments for inclusion of various studies/opportunities. There was a substantial number of moderate to lengthy comments, and while a selection has been included here, it is not possible to represent all comments. The substantial comments below capture the issues raised about specific curriculum issues.

*"A new curriculum should build on the strengths of the current CSF - sequential learning, essential learning, Early Years programs that tie directly into the content of the curriculum, Middle Years with a real push in multi-literacies (without too much of the esoteric jargon) and depth of understanding aligned with problem-solving and reflective thinking."*

*"We do not want to formalise student schooling or add to teacher workload unnecessarily. Particularly in areas which are being addressed currently at our school. Assessment should not detract from teaching and learning, and effective interactions with students"*

*"It is important to set a state-wide pro-forma for reporting. Parents and teachers should have a consistent reporting format no matter where their child goes to school. Schools should be able to use their own chosen assessments."*

*"I honestly believe that a significant amount of the proposed changes are already being implemented in schools- naturally for many reasons some more effectively than others. Thinking Skills is perhaps the most recent area to be developed by some schools. The proposed changes will act as an 'insurance policy' in that they will guarantee that no school can claim that they were not aware or confident in implementing these most important components of education. One of the challenges is to make the document which will act as the springboard or foundation for a broad education, as user friendly and attractive to schools as possible."*

*"We are a Level 9 school. Reports should cater for the development of students outside the age appropriate CSF level, a sort of between level report bridging the say level 3 and level 4 child in certain KLAs The inclusion of a sliding scale of development would be a good way to show progress .more than 3or 4 measures are needed as in old (Beg,Dev,Cons,Established)."*

*"It was very disappointing to see physical education devalued in the new VCAA framework. Working in a very poor area, it is becoming more essential that children are exposed to as much physical education as possible. Children need to feel connected to their school, their classmates and their school community in a very positive and meaningful way. This can be achieved through a comprehensive physical education and sport program. I would have thought that as leaders in the educational field, the VCAA would have also viewed PE as a necessary compulsory discipline."*

*"Parent comment: It is our responsibility to teach values to our children and we expect schools to support us by reinforcing 'acceptable behaviour' we are not ready to give over the raising of our children to the school system."*

*"We strongly believe Australian Identity (History, Geography, tradition) needs to be better covered across all year levels, P-12."*

*"In all this process it should be remembered that children learn when they are ready, at their own rate, have their own individual learning styles and are born with different capabilities. We are not producing robots. We are developing an individuals potential intellectually, physically and socially and should be able to report their progress against their own capabilities and personal achievement."*

*"Teaching and assessing values is not my job, while I encourage the students to use manners and be polite, respect others etc etc. I DO NOT wish this to be come part of my prescribed job. It is difficult enough dealing with many parents currently with out this added burden. I would feel very uncomfortable teaching most of the values suggested and would careful consider my future in this profession if told to do so."*

*"(We believe) that statistical literacy is a vital skill for living and working in the information age: it is required to help us understand the world around us and in making sensible, informed decisions, whatever our job..."*

*"The document acknowledges that meta-cognition is a strategy for encouraging deep learning; however these strategies tend to be subject (domain) specific rather than generic. As a subject, Music is placed under the generic heading of The Arts. Thus it is argued that this has lead to a reduction of the unique ways that the subject can contribute to the development of met-cognitive skills. Without adequate development of these skills, students are unlikely to be able to transfer understanding to new settings and events and to monitor their own learning. We recommend that the VCAA needs to address the needs of subject specificity in the new reforms."*

*"Chaplaincy is unique in that it offers welfare and pastoral care in a framework which enables students to explore issues of deep significance to them - the search for meaning and transcendence, spirituality, self-awareness and acceptance, hope in the midst of grief and loss, conflict resolution, self-esteem and -awareness, civic responsibility and leadership. Principals who have chaplains tell us 'Every school should have a chaplain!' It is time that educational authorities recognised the limitation of an education system that pours most of its eggs into a cognitive and affective curriculum basket. The so-called 'knowledge economy' is becoming more bankrupt because educators ignore the fact that human beings are more than a materialist worldview suggests. Emotional, aesthetic and spiritual wellbeing (a sense of wonder) are equally important. A religious framework - whether the religion is theism, consumerism, pantheism, rationalism or hedonism - provides the backdrop against which every human being makes daily choices about food, entertainment, relationships and career. (We) respectfully recommends the insertion of a 'Religion and Values' component within the Arts CSF, or of the creation of a new CSF by the same name."*

*"It is becoming more and more obvious that health and physical education area of primary school children's education is being severely neglected. The Council urges the VCAA to address this issue in the curriculum reform, and, the Department of Education & Training to address the issue in teacher training, provision of specialist physical education teachers in primary schools and promotion of daily physical education programs."*

## **C: Support for teachers and schools**

A substantial number of respondents to Question 23 made additional comments concerning support for teachers and schools. The support nominated included: professional development, materials, assessment guidelines, time to discuss, understand and implement the program, financial support, 'resources', availability of packages for tracking student progress, assessment and reporting systems, teacher aides, and time to trial the program. Examples of comments follow.

*"I believe the Curriculum document should be broad and uncluttered with effort being put into Teacher Professional Development and production of support materials."*

*"To obtain quality support materials teachers should be paid to submit units of work, teaching strategies they believe have been their most successful."*

*"Don't allow these changes to go unsupported, so that teachers have to reinvent the wheel, yet again."*

*"Detailed assessment guidelines used in the VCE are very useful to teachers in their assessment regimes. Similar guidelines would be useful here."*

*"Please resource schools and teachers so that they are empowered to really understand the framework and make it work for them and their students and communities."*

*"This framework sounds exciting. But its acceptance depends on how much quality support material will be available and whether it is written in plain English and not as open to interpretation as aspects of the CSF English. Please remove jargon."*

*"This could be an incredibly valuable step for education but the time it takes and the resources needed to be innovative need to be recognised. Many teachers have great ideas but they are not fully developed or utilised due to lack of time or resources."*

*"With such an innovative change to be developed in Schools - perhaps some consideration could be given to provide for teachers to write programs. Dare I suggest that change is only effective if it is supported and this means in real terms - staff need to be given time to process and develop these changes. How innovative would it be to apply some of the concepts expressed in the document to the work of teachers and actually give teachers a curriculum day state-wide? Obvious support with documents and examples of courses and curriculum innovation are needed too."*

## **D: Connections with future e.g. university entrance**

A small number of comments concerned connections with future studies. The three main points covered in these comments were:

- The "foundational studies" done in Prep-10 are crucial for students going on to further education
- Time-tabling is a 'blocker' for introduction of a new model
- The new approach must have no direct application to university entrance.

Comments made on the second and third of these points included:

*"It represents a new model and the biggest block is time tabling, especially when a school timetables form the VCE down. Most schools do this. For the essentials approach you can't get the right people in the right spot as they are already locked in to the VCE structure and requirements. Split the school structure to senior colleges and junior essential colleges. This way the time table does not become an issue. The essential approach should go to year 12 if it cannot be split and tertiary institutions should offer a general first year then they themselves stream students into courses."*

*"this new approach must have no direct application for university entrance. We need to be focused on developing each student to the best the student is capable of. University selection is irrelevant to much more than 50% of my students. They will never cross the threshold of a uni in their lives and the uni should be glad of that! it is well time that those parasites were cut loose to do their own weeding. Secondary education is a domain in its own right."*

## **E: Process and timing issues**

A significant number of respondents took the opportunity to raise questions and make comments about the development and consultation process, and the timing of the consultation and implementation. The main themes in the comments were:

- The proposed implementation time-table is tight or unrealistic
- There needs to be opportunity for further feedback on the draft framework.

The selections of comments below illustrate these points.

*"It would seem that a draft framework if made available in Term 4 would need to be a document that could be changed. Therefore a structure for additional feedback on this document would be important."*

*"Your implementation time table is unrealistic and does not comprehend how schools operate. Planning for 2005 has already begun and is being locked in. 2006 is your best bet."*

*"There is significant concern regarding the timeline for implementation. 2005 should be a planning and development period for implementation in 2006. Two additional curriculum days should be given to schools over 2005."*

*"It has been stated that the draft framework will be available in Term 4. Will there be further opportunity for comment and feedback, as much of the new approach seems to be conceptual and not pragmatic. Many of the concerns raised may be overcome in the draft framework."*

*"The final version must be rich and deep and presented in a way that is readily understood and embraced by teachers and school communities. Schools must have the opportunity to feedback on the draft after it has been trialled for a period of time."*

*"It would be good to see schools that have been trialling the system, see their examples of core discipline work, and what structures they have used. A range of different sample structures would be useful."*

## **F: General (other)**

A large number of respondents, made comments about a variety of issues that did not fit into the other categories for this question. There some very brief and some longer responses. They covered:

- the need for clarity and simplicity in the documentation, including reducing ambiguity in terminology
- issues concerning standards, assessment, benchmarks and reporting
- teaching strategies
- attitudes and values
- the CSF and its relationship to the proposed framework
- sharing resources
- argument for a national approach to core curriculum
- the place of Health and Physical education
- appreciation for the opportunity to have input
- just a touch of cynicism.

A sample of comments to illustrate the range and substance of the comments follows.

*"Why isn't there a place for sharing of resources, of teachers developing units of work around the essential learnings. To develop a web site where you can down load examples and to also add work. I loved the Curriculum@work CD - another of these would be good"*

*"how do they reconcile their statements about CSF being bad at Years 9 and 10 with their intention to maintain CSF? How can they make work experience easier for students to undertake at Year 10 not harder?"*

*"generic anything is not suitable. The paper seems to be a contradiction in that it is saying "teach to each student's needs" and flexibility of content BUT there is discussion on a National Benchmark. This does not allow to teach to student's individually."*

*"Schools really need to have a say in the assessment and reporting process, and reporting needs to take into account the literacy and numeracy testing, which is already a part of school programs, Content covered should be students centred, school based, logical and sequential, and be relevant to the lives and experiences of students."*

*"Avoid over complexity and make it real!"*

*"I have serious reservations about the 'assessment against standards' process as it is currently described. It seems to have been considered far too narrowly. The introduction of the new framework is the ideal time to reconsider some of the current assessment....."*

*"As a result of MYAD and recent social wellbeing clip-ons and other such surveys of student wellbeing/values etc. - I find this interest and attitudinal data dribble. Kids don't have the depth to undertake genuine reflection worth making meaning of."*

*"Is it going to be trialled? If so, for how long? Is this really flexible? If there are standards to meet how can Like school 7 hope to reach the same standards of a Like school 1? Are the results going to be published in the National Press?"*

*"It is very difficult at this stage to comment on the core skills and disciplines as how this will look in reality is not overly clear in the consultation paper. I would hope that there is further consultation regarding the actual content of the essential learnings document before it progresses from draft to final copy. I would also hope that current research in Education e.g. Early and Middle Years research projects and the thinking curriculum are used and reflected in the final document so they form an integral part of the essential learnings document. Perhaps too, there needs to be some indication with regard to teaching strategies that should be used to implement the disciplines and skills."*

*"Everything that is presented needs to be clearly written in easy to interpret English. No ambiguity allowing for confusion as to what is expected. Don't need wordy, cumbersome phrasing, leave the flair to the presentation by teachers. The package needs to come as a whole not bits and pieces."*

*"Stop re-inventing the wheel. The CSF as it stands has been revised along with the various changes in government, so it's whimsical. Having taught within this framework, I have found that topics, learning outcomes are piecemeal and no one topic is covered completely. It just drags from one level to another. Students find this frustrating as there is no conclusion. Findings have shown this, ref: Andrew Fuller"*

*"The questions in this survey were well posed and very relevant to the idea of curriculum change. The idea of a new set of documents for the sake of appeasing bureaucrats is unfortunate and poses implications upon undergraduate teaching institutions and PD facilitators. Bringing about massive educational change for corporate and national benefit is also unnecessary. Good luck finding relevant submissions from people without a money-driven agenda."*

*"These comments come from individual staff members but are agreed to by most: Interpretation by individuals of all areas of the proposed framework caused difficulties - statements that will have such an impact on what happens within schools MUST NOT be ambiguous. Some of this (the new framework) is an attempt to make schools responsible for parents abdicating their responsibilities. The burden shouldn't be placed on schools but on the social systems and parents. I believe that the curriculum changes are a response to a change in the fundamental nature of society eg values not taught at home, dysfunctional families and the implications for child learning/employment and what can be contributed by individuals to society."*

*"This project appears to be a step in the right direction, but I fear it will have to be implemented carefully to avoid it resulting in a lowering of standards. When we begin to focus on thinking and skills instead of knowledge, it is easy to let standards slip. It is easy to say that "Johnny does not need to know X, Y or Z, because he is now equipped to find it out for himself" and use it as an excuse to lower the standards of teaching and transfer of knowledge. Vigilance must be maintained to optimise outcomes."*

*"What is the intention of the reform? It is not comprehensive enough to give more than the impression of fiddling with the edges of the curriculum. If the intention is to formally teach values, base learning skill acquisition and to give credible reporting then it should really say how this is to be done and by whom. The impression is of reaction to vague unease and suspicion of inadequacy. Why is there such reluctance to openly acknowledged goals and honesty in reporting when this is often regarded as fundamental in many countries. Parents do not understand verbage and are not interested in attempting to decipher it. some concise examples of what is intended would be useful."*

*"This should be done at a National scale and not piecemeal. We are supposed to be the clever country and yet each State has its own curriculum and methods of assessment. In reality, we are the divided country. We are too fragmented. Australia should have a common education. Teachers should be told specifically what to teach and when so that the country has a common education. This means that students who transfer from one school to another will not be overly disadvantaged. A national organisation should be set up to develop a common education for Australia. A national approach will allow employers to have confidence that job applicants will have common core skills and knowledge regardless of which school or state they come from. This organisation should • Develop the core curriculum. What to teach and when? • Develop a common textbook and/or support material for each subject at each year level .• Develop resources to support teachers (projects, assignments, visual and electronic aids, etc).• Develop common tests and examinations where applicable. • Develop a common assessment and reporting structure. • Update the above as required. This will allow teachers to concentrate on delivering courses and to focus on improving student performance instead of having to worry about creating curriculum and resources. At the moment every school has its teachers recreating the wheel over and over again. What a waste of human resources and time! The current system also places enormous stress on teachers. There are not enough hours in a day for teachers to achieve a balanced lifestyle. Quite a few of our staff work from 8.00am to 6.00pm and then often do more school work at home. This is a 10 hour day! The sooner this country has a common approach to education and the sooner real support is given to teachers the sooner Australia will become the clever country."*

*"1. The number of primary schools providing quality Physical Education programs for students has decreased alarmingly. 2. This has been caused by:- (a)the reduction of Physical Education teachers (b)a reluctance/inability of classroom teachers to teach quality Physical Education programs due to lack of knowledge and training in this specialist area (c)a lack of adequate facilities for Physical Education in many primary schools. 3. Teachers in training do not receive adequate curriculum preparation especially to teach subjects considered to be "specialist" areas. 4. Recent concerns regarding the increase of obesity in the community reflect the deterioration of Physical Education in schools. (We urge):- (a) the VCAA to place much more emphasis on Physical Education, Health and Recreation skills in the curriculum of early and middle years of learning to ensure an active, healthy community in the future; (b) the Department of Education & Training to require schools to: - provide daily quality physical education programs in all primary schools; - have specialist physical education teachers teaching physical education in primary schools; - improve teacher training in the curriculum and teaching methods in physical education; - increase suitable facilities for physical education in primary schools."*

*"I appreciated the chance to have some input into this major curriculum reform proposal. I look forward to the project developing and being introduced into schools."*

## **6. Concluding comments**

Overall, there was a strong level of endorsement for the proposal. It was especially encouraging for the VCAA that the education community nominated the rationale for the proposal, greater relevance and coherence, and the inclusion of broadly applicable generic skills, values and attributes as strengths of the proposal.

Section 4 of this report outlines the key messages for the VCAA arising from the Consultation. This includes a list of areas which need to be addressed in the development of the new framework.

## 7. Appendix 1

### Curriculum Reform Consultation Questionnaire 2004

#### About the online questionnaire

The *Victorian Curriculum Reform 2004 Consultation Paper* was distributed to all Victorian schools at the beginning of Term 2, 2004. The consultation paper outlines a proposal for a framework of 'essential learning' and includes a number of open-ended questions to provide a focus for responses.

Following consideration of the paper, individuals, groups, schools and other education stakeholders are invited to respond through the Deakin University online questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire is to collect the views of the education community and use them to inform the writing of a draft framework of 'essential learning' and the development of implementation materials.

#### VCAA privacy statement

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) is a statutory authority established under the *Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority Act 2000*. The VCAA is committed to protecting all personal information collected and handling this data in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2000*.

The information we collect from you may be used as part of a report to the VCAA Board. All the information we collect from you will be kept secure and confidential. It will only be disclosed to authorised VCAA staff.

If you have concerns about the way in which your information is collected and stored please contact the Manager, Corporate Governance, VCAA on (03) 9651 4311.

You have the right, under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, to seek access to your personal information held by the VCAA. Please contact the VCAA if you want access to any information we hold about you. In some circumstances you may have to seek access under the Freedom of Information Act.

#### Helpline

If you have any questions or need assistance with this questionnaire, please contact Rosalind Horne at Deakin University.

**Telephone: 9244 6391 Fax: 9244 6163**

**Email: [rmhorne@deakin.edu.au](mailto:rmhorne@deakin.edu.au)**

#### Part A Respondent's details

1. **Name of person responding:** .....
2. **Respondent's organisation:** ..... **Phone No:** .....
3. **If a teacher, when did you complete your initial teacher training?**
  - In the last 5 years
  - 5-20 years ago
  - More than 20 years ago
  - Not a teacher
4. **Role of respondent:**
  - Principal Class
  - Curriculum Coordinator
  - Generalist teacher
  - KLA Specialist
  - Educator (Other than P-12)
  - Parent
  - Other, Please specify.....

If this is an **individual response** go to Part C

If this **response is on behalf of a group**, please complete **Part B** before proceeding to **Part C**

**Part B Organisation or school details**

5. **Name of organisation:** .....

6. **Status of this response: Select one option only**

- Individual response
- Small team response (representing 1-10 people)
- Large team response (representing 10-50 people)
- Whole school teacher response
- School Council response
- Specify other response type: .....

7. **Number of people who are represented by this response:** .....

8. **Location of organisation:**

- Metropolitan
- Regional city or large town
- Rural
- Other Please specify.....

9. **Sector:**

- Government
- Catholic
- Independent
- TAFE
- Other Please specify .....
- Not relevant

10. **Type of school:**

- Years P-6
- Years P-12
- Years P-10
- Years 7-10
- Years 7-12
- Special setting
- TAFE
- University
- Other (Please specify) .....
- Not relevant

11. **School enrolment numbers:**

- 1-100
- 101-500
- 501-1000
- More than 1000
- Not relevant

## Part C

## Consultation questions

The following questions relate to the Victorian Curriculum Reform 2004 Consultation Paper. Copies were distributed to all Victorian schools in the week beginning Monday 19th April 2004. This document is also available on the VCAA website [www.vcaa.vic.edu.au](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au).

In this questionnaire, expanding boxes are provided for extended comment on each question.

### General

1. **The proposed framework of essential learning (comprising core discipline concepts and skills, generic skills, and personal and social skills and values) will provide flexibility for schools to include innovative programs that will improve student learning.**

To what extent do you agree? (Select relevant button))

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Comment

2. **The proposed framework of essential learning will provide an appropriate basis for local implementation of the curriculum in ways that meet specific circumstances and needs of the school.**

To what extent do you agree?

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Comment

3. **What are the major strengths of the proposal?**

Comment

4. **What are the major challenges of the proposal?**

Comment

### Values

5. **The framework should be underpinned by an explicit statement of broadly agreed values.**

To what extent do you agree? (Select relevant button)

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Comment

6. **The suggested set of values included on pages 4 and 5 of the Consultation Paper is appropriate.**

To what extent do you agree? (Click relevant box)

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Comment

7. **Which if any of this list of values should be deleted or modified?**

Comment on the reasons

8. **What, if anything, should be added?**

Comment on the reasons

### **Core discipline concepts and skills**

9. **The identification of core discipline concepts and skills is an appropriate way to address the need to focus on depth of learning rather than breadth of content.**

To what extent do you agree? (Click relevant box)

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Comment

10. **Which disciplines should be represented as core disciplines in a framework of essential learning?**

Comment

11. **Within these, what are some core concepts you would identify for inclusion in the framework of 'Essential Learning'?**

Comment

### **Generic skills**

12. **A set of explicitly stated generic skills is an important part of a curriculum framework that aims to promote lifelong learning, active citizenship and a productive social and economic future.**

To what extent do you agree? (Click relevant box)

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Comment

13. **Which important generic skills, if any, ought to be added to the proposed list on pages 8 and 9 of the Consultation Paper?**

Comment

14. **Which important generic skills on the proposed list, if any, should be deleted or modified?**

Comment

15. **Are any of the listed skills more appropriately located within specific disciplines?**

Comment

### **Performance standards**

16. **As outlined in the Consultation Paper, the Framework will include performance standards at each level. The framework should also provide extension standards at each level for those students who excel.**

To what extent do you agree? (Select relevant button)

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Comment

17. **For which of the generic skills listed on pages 8 and 9 would it be appropriate to develop a set of performance standards?**

Comment

### **Assessment**

18. **What sort of assessment techniques will best enable students to demonstrate deep understanding?**

Comment

### **Reporting to parents**

19. **Reports to parents should include clear summary statements of student achievement against performance standards, including generic skills.**

Comment

20. **Schools should report progress students have made against the standards from one reporting period to the next and also next steps for learning.**

To what extent do you agree? (Click relevant box)

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Comment explaining how it should be done

21. **Schools should report on the development of personal and social competencies.**

To what extent do you agree? (Click relevant box)

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Comment explaining how it should be done

### **Support materials**

22. **What kind of materials would be most useful in supporting schools to assess student achievement against the standards and report to parents?**

Comment

### **Other comments**

23. **Any other comments.**