



# Senior Secondary Schooling in Australia

## Overview of school education

School education in Australia is for 13 years and students commence school at around five years of age. The stages of school education are:

- primary school (Foundation Year to Year 6)
- secondary school (Years 7 to 10), and
- senior secondary school (Years 11 and 12).

In Australia, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for policy, funding and delivery of school education. Each state and territory has its own education department and agencies which are responsible for publicly-funded education. State and territory responsibilities for non-government schools include registration, inspection and supplementary funding. Each state and territory determines its policies on organisation of schooling, curriculum development and implementation within the context of the Australian Curriculum, course accreditation, student assessment and certification.

The Australian Government's role in school education is to provide funding, policy coordination and to undertake research and analysis of national education policies. The Australian Government, together with state and territory governments, works to progress and implement national policy priorities, such as supporting student achievement, improving teaching standards and school leadership, building more respect for the teaching profession and teacher workforce needs, as well as enhancing the national evidence base to inform policy development.

## Senior Secondary Education

Senior secondary education in Australia (Years 11 and 12) offers several types of courses which prepare students for tertiary study, employment, and adult life. The final school-leaving qualification is known generically as the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (Year 12 award), which is an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualification (but not allocated to an AQF level).

## Senior Secondary Certificates

The Senior Secondary Certificate of Education is a multi-purpose award that serves as both a school-leaving certificate, and as a qualification to access tertiary education in the higher education and vocational education and training (VET) sectors. Students study multiple courses, or subjects, that have substantial academic breadth and depth. Subjects that prepare students for admission to higher education are academically oriented, which equips school-leavers with the knowledge and skills for higher education study.

Different names are used for the senior secondary qualification in each Australian state and territory. The qualifications are awarded by the relevant state or territory senior secondary authority in the table below. There are also senior secondary awards outside the state and territory school systems, such as the International Baccalaureate described in the table below from the Australia Country Education Profile.

Regardless of name, all Australian Senior Secondary Certificates of Education awarded by state or territory government authorities are nationally recognised by the Australian Government and must meet national standards under the Australian Qualifications Framework. All Senior Secondary Certificates of Education, irrespective of the state or territory they were studied in, are accepted by Australian institutions and Tertiary Admissions Centres for access to undergraduate higher education.

| State or territory                 | Name of Senior Secondary Qualification                   | Awarding body with responsibility for senior secondary studies     | Website  |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Australian Capital Territory (ACT) | ACT Senior Secondary Certificate                         | ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies                              | <a href="http://www.bsss.act.edu.au">www.bsss.act.edu.au</a>   |
| New South Wales (NSW)              | Higher School Certificate                                | NSW Education Standards Authority                                  | <a href="http://www.educationstandards.nsw.edu.au">www.educationstandards.nsw.edu.au</a>   |
| Northern Territory                 | Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training | Northern Territory Board of Studies                                | <a href="http://education.nt.gov.au/committees,-regulators-and-advisory-groups/northern-territory-board-of-studies">education.nt.gov.au/committees,-regulators-and-advisory-groups/northern-territory-board-of-studies</a> |
| Queensland                         | Queensland Certificate of Education                      | Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority                     | <a href="http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au">www.qcaa.qld.edu.au</a>   |
| South Australia                    | South Australian Certificate of Education                | South Australian Certificate of Education Board of South Australia | <a href="http://www.sace.sa.edu.au">www.sace.sa.edu.au</a>   |
| Tasmania                           | Tasmanian Certificate of Education                       | Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification        | <a href="http://www.tasc.tas.gov.au">www.tasc.tas.gov.au</a>   |
| Victoria                           | Victorian Certificate of Education                       | Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority                      | <a href="http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au">www.vcaa.vic.edu.au</a>   |
| Western Australia                  | Western Australian Certificate of Education              | WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority                       | <a href="http://www.scsa.wa.edu.au">www.scsa.wa.edu.au</a>   |

Australian upper secondary qualifications may be delivered overseas through partner organisations, where the overseas partner has authorisation from the relevant state or territory government to deliver the qualification. Senior Secondary Certificates of Education delivered offshore are held to the same standards for curriculum, assessment, delivery and certification as those delivered in Australia, and must result in the student achieving the same learning outcomes as specified in the AQF. Therefore, all Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualifications delivered by an authorised provider are nationally recognised when delivered by an authorised provider, regardless of whether they were studied in Australia or offshore.

