



Media Release

New syllabuses will boost Years 11 & 12 study of 'difficult' subjects

Revised syllabuses will encourage more students to study traditional core subjects in Years 11 and 12, rather than avoid them in favour of so-called 'easier' subjects, Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) said today.

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) has announced revised syllabuses for English, maths, science and history, following four years of development and consultation with key teaching and learning stakeholders.

CECNSW Executive Director Brian Croke said the new syllabuses will make English, maths, science and history more contemporary and therefore both more appealing and more accessible to students studying for their Higher School Certificate (HSC).

"New mathematics STEM pathways in Years 9 and 10, for example, will prepare more students for success in the study of calculus and statistics in Year 11 and 12 courses," Dr Croke said.

"These new syllabuses will allow students to study courses most appropriate to their ability. This will help ensure continued high participation rates particularly in physics, chemistry and maths at a time when more students are completing Year 12 than ever before."

Dr Croke said a 2014 University of Sydney study of participation in NSW HSC STEM subjects found a substantial decline between 2001 and 2013 in students who undertook at least one maths and one science subject.

"The proportion of students going on to study the HSC without any maths tripled from 3.2% to 9.7%, with a big drop in 2 unit maths (down from 16.8% of students to 11.4%)."

"We need to improve the way we teach these subjects to address those declines and maintain high participation rates, while ensuring rigour and confidence in the NSW curriculum."

Dr Croke said CECNSW supports the new syllabuses for Stage 6 (ie, Years 5 & 6) that were recently endorsed by NESA because they will ensure teaching and learning remains of a high standard and students will be well prepared for future work and study.

NSW has 130 Catholic secondary schools teaching more than 125,000 students.

Of the Catholic school students awarded the HSC in 2016, 87% were eligible for an ATAR (compared with the state average of 82%).

Media Contact: Jim Hanna | 0414 828 629 | jim.hanna@cecnsw.catholic.edu.au