

EDUCATION SERVICES AUSTRALIA

Educational value standard for digital resources

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1.0 Introduction

Many factors combine to make a digital educational resource of high quality, amongst which are metadata; interoperability; intellectual property; technical capability; accessibility; and its educational value. This standard deals with the last characteristic.

Educational value is defined as a resource's capacity to successfully promote learning and development by students, teachers or school leaders within the Australian school context.

Digital curriculum resources vary greatly in their types and levels of complexity, interactivity and granularity. This standard is intended to be useful across the range of levels and types of resources, including: interactive student learning and assessment resources; modules of professional learning for teachers and school leaders; lesson plans, units of work and vignettes of good practice for teachers; text, audio and image files with associated metadata for students and/or teachers; resources held by cultural and scientific institutions and licensed for use by Australian students and teachers; and tools for students, teachers or school leaders to use in their learning and development.

Equally variable are the contexts in which digital curriculum resources are used and the purposes they serve. Resources with high educational value can be used in ways that compromise their value and it is sometimes true that resources relatively low in value can be used in ways that expand their educational value.

This standard concentrates on the intrinsic educational value of digital curriculum resources and draws on exemplary practice in the planning, design and development of such resources.

The standard is founded on three principles that are presented in section 2 of the document. They are followed in section 3 by sets of criteria for assessing educational value that have been developed from the principles.

1.1 Purpose

The *Educational value standard* establishes some benchmarks for evaluating the intrinsic value of digital resources developed for professional and student audiences in Australian schools.

It is primarily intended to guide the practice of those who develop or procure digital curriculum resources for use within the Australian school context. It is not intended to guide the decisions students, teachers or school leaders make when they select resources for use, although it may be of value for that purpose.

2.0 Principles

This standard is underpinned by three principles:

1. focus
2. integrity
3. alignment.

By their very nature, these principles are interconnected, interdependent and overlapping.

2.1 Focus

Educationally valuable digital resources focus on the learning needs of their intended audience

This principle recognises that the users, be they students, teachers, school leaders or a combination of these groups, are central to the concept of educational value.

It acknowledges the range of contexts in which learning and development take place and the diversity of student, teacher and school leader populations and their needs. It helps ensure that users have access to educationally valuable resources that are inclusive of users' age, socioeconomic status, race, culture, disability, gender or geographic location.

The principle is founded on a recognition that no two individuals learn and develop in the same way. Even across and within the same profile group, individuals vary greatly in the ways they communicate, relate, think, behave, experience, feel, act, reflect, create, engage and remember.

Digital educational resources achieve focus on the learning needs of their intended audience when they are:

- contextual – they have purpose and meaning for the intended audience and fit into a learning approach based on the audience's prior understandings and likely future development
- inclusive – when their language and other features (where applicable) are inclusive of the intended audience.

2.2 Integrity

Educationally valuable digital resources have integrity

This principle acknowledges that the integrity of the resource is a critical component of its educational value.

Integrity is achieved when the content of the resource has veracity. For example, if a text resource claims to be a timeline of Australian history, it achieves integrity only when the events selected and chronicled are currently accepted to be significant in Australian history and are accurately dated, described and placed in the right order.

Integrity is also achieved when the resource is authentic. For example, a resource claiming to help teachers reach the proficient career stage achieves integrity only when it describes and reflects standards at the proficient level in professional knowledge, practice and engagement.

Integrity is achieved when the source of a digital resource and/or of its content is reputable, current and accurate.

2.3 Alignment

Educationally valuable digital resources are aligned to the curriculum, pedagogical standards or professional standards

This principle recognises that alignment is vital to ensure that digital educational resources successfully promote the learning and development by students, teachers or school leaders that is required within the Australian school context.

It recognises that even if a resource achieves educational value in relation to focus and integrity, it is unlikely to be used unless it also achieves alignment.

3.0 Criteria

The criteria that follow have been developed from the principles on the preceding pages. They represent points on a continuum. The first criterion or criteria in each set (marked in bold) represents the minimum standard a resource should achieve for it to be considered educationally valuable. Other criteria are also listed but these are intended to apply only to resources with high levels of interactivity and complexity.

3.1 Focus

A resource demonstrates focus on the needs of its intended audience when it:

- reflects their stage of development within the content of the resource or its descriptive metadata
- is able to be used within an evidence-based learning approach that is appealing to and inclusive of its intended users.

At the end of the continuum where a resource has a high level of interactivity and complexity, such as certain learning objects or online professional learning modules, it also demonstrates focus when its learning design:

- is intuitive (that is, the intended audience knows what to do and how to do it)
- enables the audience to interact with, organise, represent, interpret, manage and reflect upon the process of learning and the information flow by
 - making choices and decisions
 - inquiring, investigating and problem solving
 - eliciting and receiving relevant, timely and informative feedback
 - interpreting, developing and presenting meaningful and useful products
 - applying knowledge, skills and/or understandings in a range of contexts
 - creating and thinking creatively
- makes explicit and consolidates the process of learning and development by

- structuring informational content in order to scaffold learning and development
- enabling users to engage at varying levels of complexity
- catering for differences in learning styles
- reflecting an awareness of the varying educational environments in which the resource may be used
- providing opportunities to revisit learning in multiple ways
- facilitating assessment of how learning and development are progressing.
- contextualises learning and development by
 - establishing connections with prior and likely future learning
 - making explicit to the user the connections between the resource content and the learning intention
 - supporting communication, activity and collaborative action, both online and offline
 - allowing the input of data collected offline to directly affect the responses, behaviour and product of the resource
 - using situations that the user recognises as authentic or typical of the genre, where appropriate
- is informed by concepts of universal design for learning
- utilises the capacity of multimedia to support user acquisition of standard Australian English and/or professional vocabulary
- provides specific language support for users whose first language is not English
- requires time and effort that are reasonable.

Where the resource is a tool, it demonstrates focus on its intended users when the users of the tool have the ability to interact with/modify the tool's processes of content assemblage, generation, conversion and publishing.

3.2 Integrity

A resource demonstrates integrity when:

- it actually is what it says it is and does what it says it will
- the information it provides is able to be verified
- it comes from a reputable source
- any hypotheses, theories, perspectives and points of view it presents are identified as such
- the reasons for presenting any contestable or biased issues, images or text are made clear.

At the end of the continuum where the resource has a high level of interactivity and complexity, it also demonstrates integrity when its learning design:

- accurately represents the ways of knowing and conceptualising within a domain or discipline
- uses the language and symbols of the discipline or domain and its ways of representation, and supports users in developing and using them

- supports users' deepening of knowledge and understanding within the discipline or domain
- assists the user with identifying and differentiating between different points of view and perspectives presented.

3.3 Alignment

A resource intended for student use is aligned when it fits either the Australian Curriculum or, if an Australian Curriculum has not yet been developed, the educational jurisdiction's curriculum.

A resource intended for teacher use is aligned when it fits the curriculum, the National Professional Standards for Teachers or the pedagogical/adult learning frameworks endorsed by the educational jurisdiction, as appropriate.

At the end of the continuum where the resource has a high level of interactivity and complexity, it also demonstrates alignment when:

- the purpose, process and intended outcomes of the required learning or development are explicit
- the medium is exploited to maximise the opportunities for the audience to achieve the required learning outcomes
- content is constructed in manageable and meaningful concept chunks to facilitate the required learning.

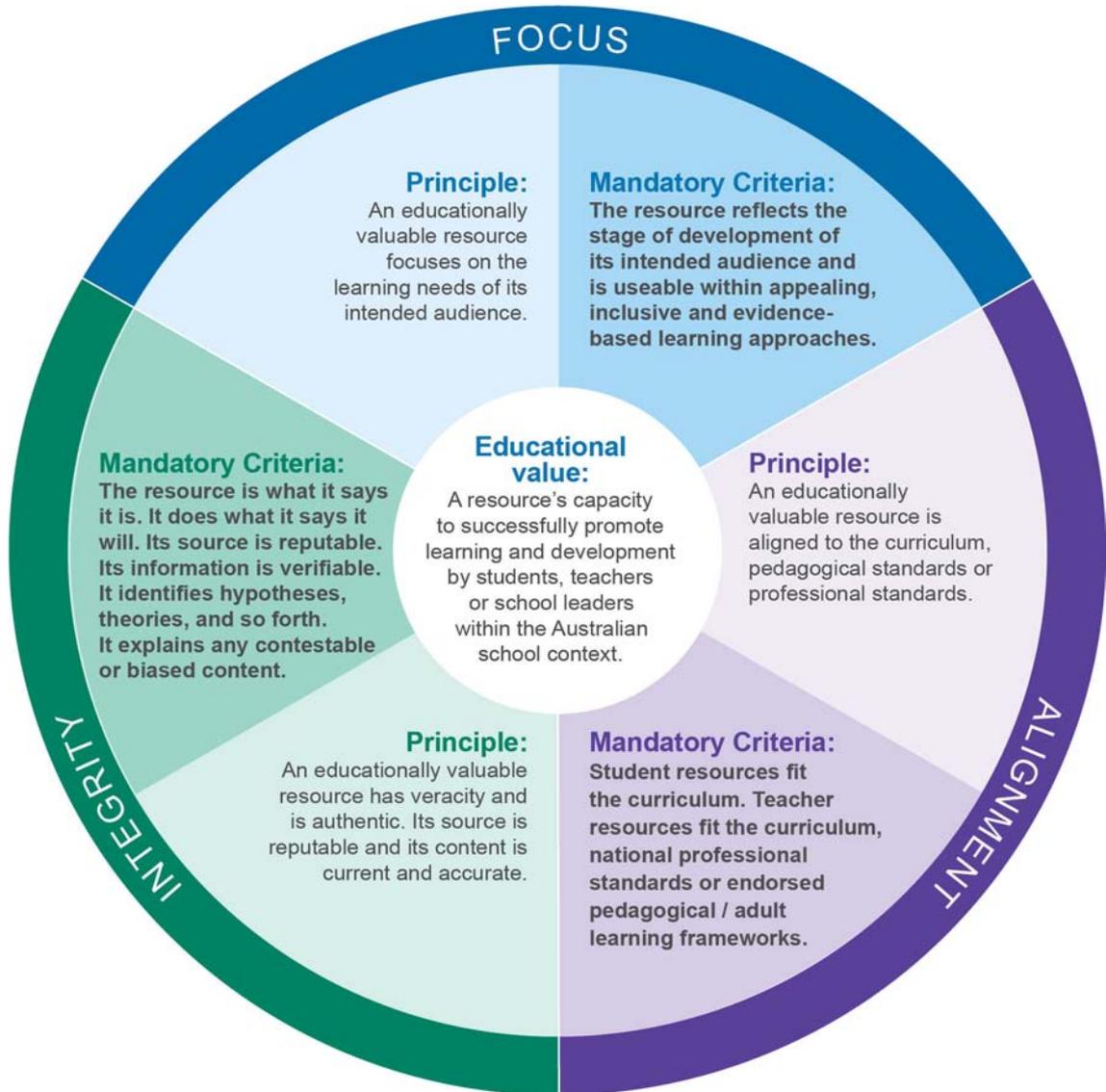


Figure 1 Graphic description of the Educational value standard