

Development of the *Australian Thesaurus of Education Descriptors*

First edition (1984)

In 1979, the Australian Education Database was developed with the computerisation of the production of the Australian Education Index. As there was no appropriate Australian thesaurus, terms from the Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors (Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), USA) were modified for Australian usage and used in conjunction with some additional terms for subject indexing.

In 1982, the Australian Council for Educational Research was commissioned by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) which was then known as the Australian Education Council (AEC), to develop a controlled vocabulary which would meet the terminological needs of the Australian education information systems. The project, directed by Margaret Findlay, was conducted in four phases during 1982 – 1984. It was decided to base the terms on those of the ERIC Thesaurus.

The first edition of the Australian Thesaurus of Education Descriptors was produced in 1984 by Geoffrey Lavender and Margaret Findlay. A rotated alphabetical index was compiled during 1985 and distributed as a separate publication.

Second edition (1996)

The second edition was born from the need for the Thesaurus to reflect trends and newly emerging areas of interest reflected in literature indexed for the Australian Education Index. Prepared by Elspeth Miller and Margaret Findlay, special emphasis was made to review and update the areas of language, educational technology, information, science and technology, labour market reform, restructuring of educational organisations, national, cultural and racial groups, and training.

Third edition (2003)

With the continuing and considerable changes in educational research and practice, particularly in the area of information and communications technology, this third edition was prepared by Anna Gifford. Throughout its development, staff of Cunningham Library assisted in the review and revision of new terms. This new edition contains 9884 vocabulary terms, of which 5454 are main entry descriptors; 4430 are non-preferred terms or Use references; and 169 are new main entry descriptors. These descriptors are listed in the section New and deleted terms.

Fourth edition (2013)

During 2012 Anna Gifford and Barbara Spiller undertook a full revision of the thesaurus, with assistance from Cunningham Library staff and subject expertise from Australian Council for Educational Research researchers.

Every term was assessed. 599 terms that had had little or no usage were deleted and 218 new terms were added.

The fourth edition comprises 10,295 terms, of which 5,188 are main entry descriptors and 5,107 non-preferred terms or USE references.

The editors also took the opportunity to improve the structure of the thesaurus, reducing the proportion of top terms from 10% to 2%.