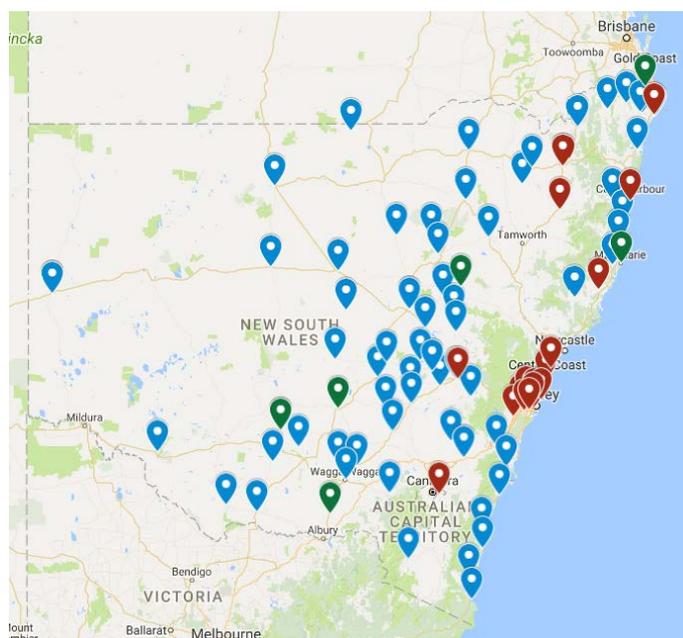


The Aurora Virtual Opportunity Class Pilot

Aurora College – igniting new ways of learning



- Aurora College, the state's first virtual secondary school, commenced classes in February 2015.
- Aurora provides a mix of online and residential school classes. Students connect with their teachers and classmates in timetabled lessons through a virtual learning environment, which comprises web conferencing software, a learning management system, and a range of cutting-edge online communication and collaboration tools. The school also has its own digital resource repository and one of the state's first fully digital school libraries.



- In 2018, Aurora College 'shares' students (blue and green markers) with 74 rural and remote schools.
- Aurora's teachers (green and red markers) are located in 26 locations across the state. They are based in their local school with a reduced load so they can also teach an Aurora class.
- Aurora's teachers are selected through an EOI process and on the basis of their subject expertise and their capacity to deliver engaging and innovative lessons in a virtual environment. All Aurora teachers and executive staff have completed the GERRIC mini-Certificate in Gifted Education course.

- Aurora's coordinating office is located at Mowbray Public School and is staffed with a Principal, Deputy Principal, Head Teacher Teaching and Learning, Head Teacher Secondary Studies, School Administrative Manager and a Learning Technologies Support Officer. As shown in the map above, all other staff are spread across NSW.

The Aurora Virtual Opportunity Class Pilot Project

- In 2017, a working group was established to investigate whether the approaches used by Aurora College could be used to establish a virtual opportunity class provision in areas of rural and remote NSW where there is not currently an opportunity class (OC) provision. The working group has broad stakeholder representation. Representatives of the NSW Primary Principals Association are key members of the Aurora Opportunity Class Pilot working group (the AOCP working group).
- The working group developed a rationale for a small-scale pilot for a virtual OC provision based on three hubs across rural and remote NSW, with schools or groups of schools applying to opt into the pilot. The pilot will commence in semester 2, 2018, for Year 5 students in those schools selected and will conclude at the end of the 2019 school year.

The Aurora Virtual Opportunity Class Pilot Project

The AOCPP working group developed a proposal to conduct a small-scale pilot of a virtual OC provision for Stage 3 gifted and talented students in rural and remote schools. The pilot will be complementary to and built on the success of the current OC provision in rural and remote areas of the state, and will allow the working group to develop a more comprehensive case to:

1. Test and verify the need for a virtual opportunity class provision in rural and remote areas of NSW,
2. Investigate options for and develop an operational model that recognises the needs of partner primary schools and Aurora as well as being complementary with current OC provision in rural and remote NSW
3. Develop an operational model and budget for this provision, and a communication strategy to engage all stakeholders.

Expressions of Interest for the Aurora Virtual Opportunity Class Pilot Project

About the Expression of Interest process

- Aurora is seeking Expressions of Interest from primary schools in rural and remote NSW to take part in a pilot of a virtual opportunity class provision. The pilot will establish three hubs in rural and remote NSW and will commence in Semester 2, 2018 and conclude at the end of the 2019 school year
- Interested schools and/or groups of schools wishing to be part of the pilot will complete the attached Expression of Interest by **Friday 8 June 2018**.
- Students in the schools selected to take part in the pilot will be selected based on a short portfolio, which will include Year 3 NAPLAN, school based data, a recommendation from their class teacher, endorsed by the school principal and information from the student about what they hope to gain from the virtual opportunity class experience.
- Teachers will be selected from existing Aurora staff, and from other schools, based on the recommendation of their principal. Teachers new to Aurora will have intensive professional learning and ongoing support. All costs associated with this professional learning, and teacher release ('back-filling') will be met by Aurora College.

What will students study? How will Aurora and the 'home' school work together?

As a gazetted school, Aurora must meet all policy and legislative requirements for government schools. Students in the virtual OC pilot need to be accommodated in their home school, with both schools working together to align their curriculum and lesson times with that of Aurora College. The pilot will use and build on Aurora's delivery via synchronous, face-to-face learning using Adobe Connect and delivered over 5 sessions each week, via 5 synchronous lessons per week (90 minute lessons on each of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and one 45-minute lesson on Friday), and:

1. Focus on STEM, draw on the mathematics and science syllabuses and use an inquiry based learning approach.
2. Commence with three pilot classes in areas where there are a sufficient number of suitable students, no overlap with existing OC provisions, primary principal support and engagement and where possible, existing links with Aurora College.
3. Include at least one pilot class in a remote location to better test the proposed model.
4. Have a class size of no more than 15 students (a total of 45 students annually in the OC pilot).
5. Test and refine over the life of the pilot, the learning design, pedagogies and operational aspects of the model used to ensure the final model is engaging for younger students than the Aurora cohort.