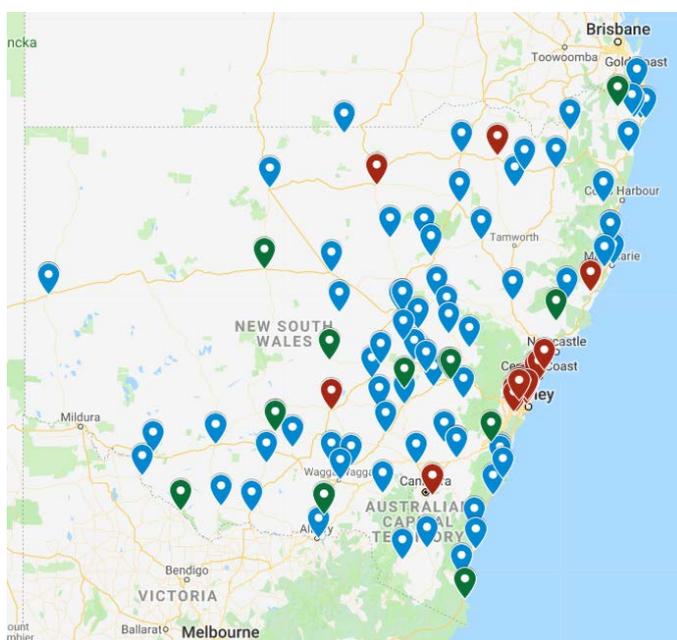


# Aurora Opportunity Class Pilot

## Fact sheet



- Aurora College, the state's first virtual 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 operates one of the state's first fully digital school libraries.



- In 2019, Aurora College 'shares' students (blue and green markers) with more than 100 rural and remote schools.
- Aurora's teachers (green and red markers) are located in 31 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, Assistant Principal Stage 3, 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 Opportunity Class Pilot

- 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 AOCP working group developed a proposal to conduct a small-scale pilot of a virtual OC provision for Stage 3 high potential and gifted students in rural and remote schools. The pilot is complementary to and builds upon 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.
- Phase 1 of the pilot commenced in Semester 2 2018 and will conclude at the end of the 2019 school year. **Phase 2 of the program will commence in Semester 2 2019 for current Year 5 students and will conclude at the end of the 2020 school year.**

## How will students be selected for Phase 2 of the Aurora Opportunity Class Pilot?

- Interested government primary schools in rural and remote NSW will submit an expression of interest to become a potential partner school by close of business on Friday 10 May 2019. (Further information about this part of the process will be provided to principals via email and a SchoolBiz notice in Week 1 of Term 2, 2019.)
- A selection panel will assess each expression of interest and will provide outcome advice to all schools by Wednesday 15 May 2019.
- Successful schools will be invited to nominate potential students for the pilot program.
- The final choice of students will be based on a short portfolio, which will include Year 3 NAPLAN data, school based data, parent checklist, a recommendation from the class teacher (endorsed by the school principal) and information from the student about what they hope to gain from the virtual opportunity class experience.
- A selection panel (comprising the Aurora College Principal and Assistant Principal Stage 3, Manager High Performing Students Unit and PPA representative) will assess each student's application and will provide outcome advice to all families and schools by Week 9 in Term 2.

## 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 AOCP 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 of face-to-face learning using Adobe Connect and a range of communication and collaboration platforms. The pilot will be delivered through 5 synchronous lessons per week (90 minute lessons on each of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and one 45-minute afternoon session either on a Tuesday or Wednesday).
- Students will be supported in their home school by an Aurora College Coordinator, funded by Aurora College.
- The pilot will:
  1. Focus on STEM, delivering the Mathematics and Science and Technology syllabuses and will use an inquiry based learning approach
  2. Not overlap with existing OC provisions
  3. Have a class size of no more than 15 students (a total of 45 students annually in the OC pilot)
  4. Test and refine over the life of the pilot, the learning design, pedagogies and operational aspects of the model, to ensure the final model is engaging for Stage 3 students.