VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

2004   VCE VET Community Services GA 2: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

As in previous years, the 2004 examination was designed to allow students to apply their understanding of the underpinning knowledge gained across the specified units of competence for this program. The scenario and elective questions enabled students to draw together the various threads of their learning and appreciate the practical applications by imagining that they were actually involved in the situation presented.

In 2004, 797 students sat this examination, a similar number to 2003. There was a significant drop in the number who chose the elective 'Participate in policy development' – 246 in 2004 compared to 369 in 2003.

The emphasis in this paper, as in previous examinations, was on aspects of the unit of competence 'Implement a community development strategy'. In recognition of its weighting in the course, 36 of the total 100 marks were allocated to questions related to the underpinning knowledge for this area. Questions focusing on 'Operate under a casework framework' accounted for another 19 marks.

Some topics and questions were key areas in previous examinations and were revisited in 2004. In response to Question 5, 'What is duty of care?', 11% of students either did not attempt an answer or were incorrect. In Question 7, 20% of the students were not aware that 'the ability to apply social justice principles' is the most relevant capability for all workers in community services.

Some questions allowed for a range of responses – from the very concrete and obvious through to those that indicated an appreciation of the wider scope of community work. An example was Question 12 of Section B – many students identified Job Network and sporting clubs as specifically empowering, while fewer nominated volunteer organisations. In Section B, Question 5, stress and OH&S issues were popular answers.

Students received no marks if they did not attempt the question or if their answer was not appropriate. In reviewing the whole paper, the zero mark percentage may also be an indication of students' capabilities in dealing with particular types of questions. For example, the very low percentage of zero scores (less than three percent) in Section B, Questions 14a and b when compared with the almost 18% who gained no marks for Section B, Question 11 may indicate the preference (and perhaps capability) of a number of students to respond to more 'concrete' questions. Question 4 of Elective 1 was very well answered, noticeably so in papers where the student otherwise did not achieve maximum marks.

A related facet was the challenge presented by questions that asked students to identify **and** explain. The major example was Question 15 of Section B (worth six marks), where 23% of students received no marks; the answer relied on the student's ability to review the scenario analytically and give a crafted response. In general, questions asking for an explanation highlighted the difficulty a number of students had in putting their thoughts into a sentence. However, Section B, Question 15 gave room for a quality response and 18% of students received four or more marks for their answer.

Electives
Students were asked to complete two of the three elective sections. The majority chose 'Advocate for clients' and 'Support group activities'. However, the least chosen elective, 'Participate in policy development', was well answered compared to previous years, with a better spread of higher marks.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Short answer
Question 1

Marks	0	1	Average
%	60	41	0.4

This question challenged students, many of whom gave 'writing a letter' as their response. Assessors took a broad view when marking responses, and looked for an awareness of the more formal processes involved in gaining government funding, such as:

- lodging a submission or tender (or even a formal letter of application)
- responding to government program guidelines
- providing evidence of research or collection of information
- exhibiting an awareness of the purpose of the project and the capacity to put funding to good purpose
- entering into funding agreements.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	22	39	39	**1.2**

Many students were able to identify two of the following characteristics:
- not-for-profit
- community management
- dependence on volunteers
- mixed funding sources
- the people have time to listen
- small, friendly, accessible, approachable, less bureaucratic
- other statements that identified values expressed in community organisations.

In addition to the characteristics listed, the tenor of student answers also suggested that community organisations 'don't think of you as a number'.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	18	30	52	**1.4**

Over half of the students correctly identified that 'values' and 'aims' would most likely be included in a community organisation's mission statement.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	Average
%	61	39	**0.4**

While community workers are not bound by legally mandated reporting of alleged child abuse but can voluntarily report alleged situations, assessors were seeking evidence of students' awareness of the existence of legislation, expressed in terms such as:
- Child Abuse Act/Children and Young Persons Act/legislation
- child protection
- mandatory reporting.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	12	50	38	**1.3**

As 'duty of care' is a fundamental principle in community services, an awareness of its meaning was sought directly this year. More than half of the students were able to give a basic answer, with 38% giving a quality response. The assessors were looking for answers that showed an awareness and appreciation of a worker's responsibility to:
- do no harm (to anybody, including co-workers)
- always act professionally
- take reasonable care to ensure that no harm comes to the people in their care/using their services
- cause no mischief
- do good where possible
- act appropriately according to one's professional responsibilities
- act in times of need to the extent of one's qualifications and capabilities
- take reasonable care of oneself.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	Average
%	20	80	**0.8**

Given that Occupational Health and Safety is a major concern within the sector, this question sought to test students' awareness of the limits and range of responsibility. Most students correctly identified that the responsibility sits with all those nominated – 'the management committee', 'the manager', 'employees', 'employer and employees' and 'volunteers'.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	Average
%	20	80	**0.8**

It was encouraging that most students nominated 'the ability to apply social justice principles' as the most relevant for all community services workers.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	17	17	28	38	**1.9**

Here the capacity to respond was varied, with one-third of the students able to give both a good explanation and illustration. The 28% who gained only two marks generally failed to give an adequate example of networking.

Appropriate responses included:
- making contact with and connecting with various parts of the community
- involving the wider community rather than doing it all oneself
- linking up with and making use of all possible resources and workers
- can be informal
- relies on and/or builds on goodwill (a quality answer).

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	33	11	28	13	15	**1.7**

Fifteen per cent of students gave excellent responses to this question, whereas one-third received no marks. Assessors were looking for characteristics of decision-making processes, such as:
- democratic
- participatory
- open to voting
- involve consultation with the community, community management or representational management
- give feedback to the community
- have social justice aims
- are of benefit to the community
- are open to evaluation for possible improvement.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	8	32	42	18	**1.7**

The response rate to this question was the best of this section of the examination. The 18% of students who gained full marks provided extended answers that went beyond an explanation of the meaning of a genogram or family tree. Their answers elaborated on the contribution such information could make to casework, reflecting something of the following:
- enables identification of the reasons for or factors in problems, and possible areas of support
- gives the caseworker and the client insight into the background, culture and environment of the family.

Section B – Scenario

In this section of the paper, three questions (10, 11 and 15) proved challenging for a lot of students. Conversely, Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13 and 14 were well answered, with the greater proportion of students receiving marks at the higher end of the scale.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	7	30	61	**2.5**

This question was very well answered. Strategies that were thought to be appropriate included:
- conduct a survey
- visit existing youth groups
- go to where the young people gather and ask them
- talk to parents and teachers
- talk to youth workers
- talk to others who work with young people in the areas of health, employment and welfare
- read any existing reports on the issues.

The more direct strategies were the most popular answers. There was little evidence of responses that indicated an awareness of the benefits of either networking with workers in other sectors of the community or of drawing on research (for example, checking the local newspaper for past stories and articles).

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	5	29	26	38	**2.9**

Set within the broader context of the general areas of cleaning, security, physical work environment and safety, this question required students to identify two specific OH&S issues and explain why they were issues. Some students gave only issues, or only one issue and explanation, and therefore received a low mark. Even where students gained full marks, few expressed an appreciation of the breadth and depth of OH&S issues. Hygiene and the safe use of equipment such as ladders were popular issues.

The range of possible issues included:
- hygiene – toilets and shopfront must be clean; rubbish emptied; chemicals handled and stored properly
- personal safety of workers and young people at night – anyone could come into the shopfront; it is important for workers to carry a mobile phone, and to have a phone in the shopfront that young people could use in an emergency
- personal safety – there could be people who are angry and even potentially violent
- safety in the use of equipment
- fire safety – an evacuation plan, fire extinguishers and smoke alarms are needed
- smoking of cigarettes
- security – theft of equipment
- physical work environment – ergonomic chairs and desks and appropriate lighting lessen the possibility of physical problems
- stress or overwork – staff would be unable to function appropriately.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	Average
%	12	88	**0.9**

The high proportion of students who answered this question correctly were alert either to the privacy requirement or the security aspect. Few, if any, referred to gender being an issue. Anticipated responses were:
- for safety when a worker is interviewing a person of the opposite gender
- to protect both the interviewer and the interviewee
- to allow people to see if the room is occupied rather than interrupting an interview.

Questions 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	5	11	29	33	20	**3.5**

Most students provided at least some response about the importance of time management; however, a significant proportion were unable to identify three other components of teamwork. Assessors expected responses about time management to cover aspects such as:
- co-workers depend on each other to complete something within a timeframe
- could waste time waiting

- leads to more efficiency
- team members need to be coordinated in sharing tasks and achieving common goals
- team members need to know where other members are at any given time.

In relation to other components of effective teamwork, the extensive range of possibilities included:
- using people's skills and strengths
- being clear about roles
- negotiating
- developing trust
- being reliable, responsible and accountable
- setting clear goals and plans
- being able to deal with conflict; conflict resolution processes
- providing feedback.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	2	23	76	**1.8**

While most students did very well in this question, the range of responses was limited to only a few of the following possibilities:
- more money is needed to pay for the overtime
- could mean the worker is too tired to do the job properly
- could be a time-in-lieu arrangement and the worker shouldn't build up too much
- could be an OH&S issue
- manager may need to know if the job is manageable within the time allocated
- perhaps the worker is getting too involved
- maybe the worker is not coping
- perhaps there isn't enough teamwork.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	10	37	52	**1.5**

The possible responses included the following:
- the number of participants
- identification of the benefit to the community
- show that it would bring additional government money into the community
- letters of support from other agencies
- information on the Centrelink requirements
- a funding proposal
- a cost-benefit analysis
- a draft budget
- where other resources could come from
- an appropriate design showing the changes.

The range of answers to this question was limited, although the number of participants and the benefit to the community (often expressed as 'keeping them off the streets') were popular. These fulfilled the requirements of the question but may have reflected limited exposure to aspects of community work such as networking and making submissions.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	15	7	29	22	27	**2.4**

This was an extension of the previous question. Fifteen per cent of students received no marks, generally because they did not attempt an answer. It is possible that these students were also among the 18% who received no marks for Questions 8a and 8b on networking in Section A of the examination. Students who did not include an explanation received only one mark for each example. Possible examples of networking were:
- **Centrelink workers** – because they need to approve this as a valid activity
- **other employment support agencies** – because the young people may be clients of theirs

- **government funding body** – to ensure that accurate information is obtained on how to set up the program, and to develop an ongoing relationship
- **other youth workers** – because they share a common target group, and can offer support, ideas, resources etc.
- **general community members**, maybe even retired tradespeople – can offer support, expertise, mentoring; some would support the proposal for their own advantage
- **shopkeepers and businesses** – they will benefit from the centre because it will take pressure off limited public space
- **secondary college** – to show the value of the centre to the school community
- **parents** – for their explicit support.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	10	25	35	30	**1.9**

Generally, students gave elaborate descriptions of the skills in their own words. Acceptable responses were those that expressed the following in some way:
- active listening
- developing trust and rapport
- paraphrasing
- showing empathy
- being non-judgemental
- being open-minded
- asking open questions
- asking probing questions
- using reflective listening skills.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	7	14	34	46	**2.2**

Judging from the responses to this question, it seemed that some students considered privacy and confidentiality to be interchangeable terms and so nominated the 'Confidentiality' Act instead of the Privacy Act as the answer to Question 9a. In regards to note taking, the legislation requires that:
- they are accurate and impartial
- the client knows why they are being taken and what they will contain
- they are kept secure afterwards
- they do not violate confidentiality
- they are non-judgemental and respectful
- they should be available for the client to read, if requested
- the client must give permission for disclosure.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	16	33	32	14	**2.3**

In general, parts i. and iv. were more satisfactorily answered than ii. and iii. Assessors were looking for responsibilities such as the following:
- **the young person** – duty of care, ensure her safety, inform about the option of reporting, refer as appropriate
- **your co-worker –** advise only those details that are essential for the co-worker to know
- **your job role in the organisation –** report it to the manager, work within own limitations, uphold the duty of care, ensure appropriate documentation, act professionally, refer to the manager with permission
- **legislation –** must be aware of what the relevant legislation requires (for example, in relation to reporting and privacy).

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	16	29	31	23	**1.6**

With three marks allocated to this question, a developed answer was expected in order to gain full marks. Responses could focus on the effect of a lack of information or the positive impact of access to information.

- A lack of information disempowers people by reducing their choices. If people cannot make informed decisions, they may make ineffective decisions.
- A lack of information reinforces dependence.
- Information gives people the power to change and improve their lives. For example, to overcome discrimination or oppression; to know how to get their rights in a given situation; to pursue opportunities; to access services and resources.
- Information can relate to all areas of a person's life: legal, health, recreational, housing, education, political, etc. Information in these areas is important for quality of life, dignity and basic human rights.
- When people have information they can take action for themselves rather than being dependent on others – it helps them to be self-determining.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	7	32	33	22	**2.6**

Quality answers presented outcomes such as confidence, maturity, improved concept of self, enhanced decision-making capacity, skills development, and development of leadership. Acceptable responses included:
- **education** – offers opportunities to improve job/career prospects; gives people knowledge and confidence
- **volunteer organisations** – involvement gives people skills that can be used more broadly; gives people confidence and self value; creates networks of support; helps people feel like they belong to the community; may provide a pathway to paid work
- **Centrelink** – information on Centrelink helps people to access their entitlements for income support or allowances, which improves their financial situation
- **Job Network agency** – gives help with career choices, finding a job, interview techniques and resume preparation, leading to or resulting in independence
- **health** – could give advice or treatment to help people get off drugs; provide suggestions on improving well-being
- **sporting group** – an outlet to make new friends and develop skills.

Question 13

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	8	32	60	**1.5**

The brevity of some answers meant that approximately one-third of the students received only one mark. Possible examples of the display of respect and nonjudgement include:
- acknowledge his situation
- use firm but non-threatening body language
- treat him with respect and dignity
- talk to him privately
- use reflective listening
- maintain your own sense of calm and control (using self-awareness)
- do not becoming aggressive or authoritarian
- use appropriate eye-contact (not too direct)
- explain the need for the referral to another agency
- facilitate contact with the other agency.

Question 14

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	3	18	35	42	**3.1**

14a
Both parts of this question were very accessible, and few students received less than half of the available marks.
Possible sources included:
- state government
- Commonwealth Government
- local council
- philanthropic trusts
- business sponsorship
- community donations

- fundraising
- parents
- participant fees.

14b
Possible reasons why sources of funding would be interested included:
- they are interested in young people
- it is related to their core business
- they have responsibilities to young people
- to keep them off the streets – tidying the town
- it would improve their image
- they want to be seen as caring citizens
- they want to support the development of the community.

Question 15

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	23	14	26	17	12	5	2	**2.0**

As the final question in the scenario section, this was intended to allow students to see the 'whole' after being focused on the 'parts' through the previous 14 questions. Some students (particularly those who scored one or two marks) had difficulty with the distinction between 'the way I set up the Shopfront Centre' and 'the way I have worked with the group'. Assessors were seeking responses such as:

15i.
- I recognised that a particular group within the community had special needs
- I consulted with the young people as to what they wanted to use the centre for, which encouraged their participation
- I drew on other people in the community
- I found a contribution from the community as well as resourcing the group (for example, by networking to find the low-cost source of accommodation).

15ii.
- setting up an ongoing group encourages participation, involves young people in decision-making and helps build their skills and confidence
- it also creates a support network for them
- facilitating access to information helps people to take action for themselves rather than being dependent on others – it helps them to be self-determining
- trying to involve the broader community in many ways (by more networking) encourages the community to take some ownership of the program
- finding funding to create jobs for young people helps empower young people with opportunities, skills, etc.
- it shows bottom up development
- it builds community capacity.

Section C – Electives
Again in this year's paper the scenario section and the electives were linked to enable students to draw on and build on the scenario, rather than having to shift into thinking about another set of unrelated circumstances.

Elective 1 – Advocate for clients
The brief case study at the beginning of this elective was intended to assist students by providing a more concrete situation for the development of their answers. 752 students attempted this elective. While Question 1 was well answered, fewer students could provide a full answer to Question 2, and Question 3 proved even more difficult.

Questions 1–3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	6	8	17	12	15	15	15	11	**3.8**

Question 1
Relevant responses included:
- he is in a difficult situation at school
- he needs to know how to speak to his teachers, or have someone speak to them on his behalf
- some people see him as an 'outsider'
- identification of his real needs may take some time in a supportive environment
- because of his age he may not understand his rights, know what to do, or how to speak for himself – he needs someone to act on his behalf
- he may be homeless and require advocacy regarding accommodation.

Question 2
In assessing the answer on 'types of advocacy', the assessors accepted terminology such as:
- self-advocacy
- supported self-advocacy
- advocacy by a worker (including 'client advocacy', 'case advocacy', advocacy for an individual)
- class/group advocacy
- systemic advocacy
- family advocacy
- 'peer' advocacy.

Question 3
Advocacy by the worker was considered to be the most appropriate. In the explanation, the assessors were looking for comments that highlighted factors such as:
- the age of client
- the status of client
- the lack of confidence of the client
- anxiety
- potential intimidation.

Questions 4–5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	10	6	6	10	12	23	19	11	4	**4.3**

Question 4
The appropriate sequence was:
- 1 – develop rapport with the client
- 2 – identify the needs and rights of the client
- 3 – explore options for action
- 4 – identify the preferred option
- 5 – contact and negotiate with relevant agencies
- 6 – follow up progress and outcomes.

Assessors allowed marks for a partial sequence even if the numbers in the student's answer did not correspond with those in the full, correct sequence.

Question 5
Students seemed to have some difficulty in providing three principles which would guide their advocacy. Examples of the principles were:
- always represent the boy/person/client's views, not your own
- treat the client with respect and dignity
- don't be judgemental
- help your client to identify their own solutions
- make sure you know what your client wants.

Elective 2 – Support group activities

Questions 1–2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	7	12	13	22	20	13	7	5	**3.3**

Question 1

The most appropriate option for action was 'provide an opportunity for the whole group to discuss the issues'.

Question 2

Despite the fact that this set of questions was prefaced with an explanation of the terms used, approximately half of the students did not gain any marks. This was possibly because they did not read or realise the significance of the preamble to Question 2.

2a

The negative or positive influence that personal dynamics may have within a group could be related to:
- personal respect versus dominance in members and leaders
- language barriers or cultural differences
- personalities (including introverted, extroverted, negative, etc.)
- positive leadership.

2b

In relation to structures and processes within a group, the assessors were looking for examples arising from situations such as:
- a lack of consultation
- biased or autocratic leadership
- problems with meeting times and/or processes
- different workloads.

2c

In relation to the purpose and goals within groups, the following causes of conflict were seen as possibilities:
- goals not being set by the group
- different ideas about the aims of the group
- different ideas on how to achieve the aims of the group
- disagreement on the client group or projects
- hidden agendas.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	34	13	23	30	**1.5**

3a

'Democratic' was the preferred answer for the appropriate leadership style; however, answers other than 'autocratic' were also accepted.

3b

The response to this question was marked according to the strength of the reasons for the student's stated choice in part a. In relation to the choice of a 'democratic' leadership style, reasons included:
- lets everyone participate
- provides ownership of group decisions
- is empowering
- assists resolution of conflict
- is in keeping with the principles of community development.

Question 4–5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	14	15	24	17	15	15	**2.5**

Question 4

This question proved difficult for students. Expected reasons were:

- no Constitution
- no set goal or purpose
- no formal membership
- no formal meetings with agenda and minutes
- no set roles, such as chairperson or secretary
- no formal decision-making process.

Question 5
Answers were expected to reflect some of the following:
- the need has been satisfied/achieved its purpose
- the group has fallen apart because of disagreements or a lack of new members as older ones leave
- the lack of a clear purpose
- power struggles which split the group
- a lack of support
- does not or cannot provide what the community wants.

Elective 3 – Participate in policy development
As in previous years, this elective was attempted by the least number of students (246) but, as mentioned in the introduction to this report, it was better answered than previously.

Questions 1–3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	9	5	11	14	13	14	11	10	10	5	**4.3**

Question 1
The steps in policy development appropriate to the level of the worker were:
- identify a problem
- advise management
- comment on the draft policy
- implement the new policy.

Question 2
Possible policy areas included:
- Occupational Health and Safety
- confidentiality
- access
- volunteers
- membership
- funding
- staffing
- staffing conditions
- wages and employment conditions
- use of equipment
- conflict resolution, grievance procedures
- behaviour at work (for example, discrimination)
- protocols for operation, services etc.
- smoking
- medical issues.

Question 3
Possible external sources of information included:
- government legislation
- other community groups
- the main organisation I work for
- the local council
- the Internet

- unions
- the WorkCover authority (WorkSafe).

Questions 4–5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	23	8	14	12	22	15	8	**2.7**

Question 4

Among possible strategies to include the volunteers in the consultation process were:
- make copies available where volunteers can read it
- provide translations
- use visuals (posters, videos, etc.)
- use interpreters
- have a discussion
- use meetings (with groups or one-on-one).

Question 5

Circumstances that require a policy review and possible change included:
- change in legislation
- when gaps have been identified
- changes in the organisation
- a situation which had not arisen before
- a new manager
- a change of site.

'New circumstances' was not seen as an adequate answer.