

# Scored assessment: External assessment

Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) external assessments are any centrally set tasks assessed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), including written, oral, electronic/digital, aural and performance tasks conducted according to the requirements of accredited study designs and VCE VET programs.

## 1 VCE examinations

VCE examinations are set by VCAA-appointed panels. VCE examination specifications and sample material (by study) and an archive of past examinations and examination reports are available on the VCAA website.

Throughout this section the terms 'VCE examination' and 'VCE external assessments' refer to any VCE examination, the General Achievement Test (GAT) and the Extended Investigation Critical Thinking Test. The home school is the school responsible for the administration of all student data and course enrolments through the Victorian Assessment Software System (VASS), and responsible for ensuring that all their students have been allocated to an examination centre/room. A student can have only one home school at any given time.

### 1.1 Integrity of VCE written examinations and VCE examination administration

VCE providers with students enrolled in one or more VCE or scored VCE VET Unit 3–4 sequence must meet the VCAA requirements for the conduct and administration of the GAT and VCE examinations as outlined in the Agreement to Conduct and Administer VCE External Assessments.

Principals are required to complete and sign this agreement certifying they will comply with all VCAA requirements for conducting and administering VCE external assessments. Principals must ensure school personnel associated with the administration of VCE external assessments are aware of the VCAA's requirements.

Principals are reminded of the serious consequences that may result from non-compliance and that if a serious breach of this agreement occurs, a school's capacity to host VCE external assessments will be subject to review.

## 2 Eligibility to undertake VCE examinations

Students who sit VCE examinations must be living in Victoria and enrolled at a school or institution authorised by the VCAA as a VCE provider, except where one of the following special circumstances applies:

- the student is a bona fide resident of Victoria but is temporarily interstate or overseas
- the student has completed a substantial part of their course of study in Victoria and has moved temporarily or permanently interstate or overseas. These students must sit their examinations in the academic year of their departure from Victoria.

## 2.1 Eligibility to sit VCE external assessments outside Victoria

A student living interstate or overseas is eligible to sit VCE external assessments if:

- they are on an exchange program overseas
- they are a student on exchange in Australia and are returning home immediately before or during the examination period
- they are representing Australia for an official duty, for example, in a sporting, academic, military or cultural event
- they or their parent/guardian has been asked to work interstate or overseas.

Students must submit an **Application to sit VCE external assessments interstate or overseas** form to the VCAA.

Events such as family holidays, birthdays and weddings are not considered valid grounds for an application to sit VCE external assessments interstate or overseas.

## 3 Examination periods and timetable

The VCAA determines the timing of VCE examinations. Schools should issue each student with an individual Student Examination/Assessment Timetable after the release date for each examination period.

The dates for the [VCE examination periods](#) are published on the VCAA website.

The VCAA develops the VCE examination timetable using actual, finalised enrolments to address the following priorities:

- minimising the number of students required to sit more than two examinations on a given day
- minimising the number of clashes of two examinations in the same session
- avoiding scheduling another examination on the same day as English and English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- ensuring the VCAA has sufficient time to complete marking within the available timeframe.

The VCAA publishes the VCE examination timetable on the VCAA website after it has been approved by the VCAA Board.

The VCE examination timetable is also printed in the *VCE Exams Navigator*, which must be issued to students by their home school.

### 3.1 Students with three examinations timetabled on one day

Schools that have students with three examinations timetabled on any day during an examination period will be notified of the arrangements for these students by the VCAA.

The VCAA will permit students who have three examinations timetabled on one day to have an additional 10 minutes per hour for the final examination on that day. This may be taken as extra working time or as supervised rest breaks. Students are not obliged to utilise the extra time entitlement and are permitted to leave the examination prior to their revised finish time.

Students who complete three examinations in a single day are entitled to receive a Derived Examination Score (DES) for the third examination. These students will not be required to apply for a DES.

To be eligible for the DES, students must attend all three examinations on the day and attempt the questions on the paper to the best of their ability. The DES should be seen as a safety net, not a substitute examination score. Many students will, if they apply themselves diligently, exceed or equal their predicted DES in their third examination completed on that day. At the end of the year the VCAA will compare each student's actual examination score and their calculated DES and award the student the higher of the two.

Note: Students need to have completed the course of study leading to the examination and have a result for at least one other graded assessment in the same study to be eligible for the calculation of a DES.

## 3.2 Timetable clashes

If a student has two examinations timetabled for the same session, one of the examinations will be moved to another session on the same day. Principals may consult the student and, on behalf of the student, request which examination is to be moved to a different session.

Note: VCE Languages examinations, Music written examinations and VET Interactive Digital Media examinations cannot be moved to a different session.

## 3.3 Early starts

Principals can apply to the VCAA (with supporting evidence) for permission to begin examinations up to 30 minutes earlier than stated in the official timetable. Approval to begin examinations at the earlier times will be confirmed by the VCAA in writing to the principal. The principal must notify students and parents in writing of the new times.

## 3.4 Late arrivals

Each written examination commences with a reading period that is included in the times shown in the VCE examination timetable. Students must check the starting time of each examination and arrive before the commencement time, and must familiarise themselves with the rules about late admission to VCE examinations. If a student is late, the VCAA reserves the right to determine whether or not a student's response materials will be accepted.

The [rules for late admission to VCE examinations](#) are outlined on the VCAA website and are also published in the *VCE Examination Manual* and *VCE Exams Navigator*.

## 3.5 VCAA examination rules

Students are required to observe the VCAA rules for the conduct of VCE external assessments that are conducted by or on behalf of the VCAA, as well as the day-to-day rules of the institution hosting the external assessment. VCAA rules shall apply with appropriate and reasonable modifications to students who have disabilities or other impairments. The rules are available on the [VCAA website](#) and are included in the *VCE Examinations Manual* and relevant publications for students, such as the GAT brochure and *VCE Exams Navigator*.

## 3.6 Student identification requirements for VCE external assessments

Students must identify themselves by writing their VCAA student number on the response materials used for VCE written examinations. Student numbers are provided to students by the VCAA through their home school's access to VASS. Students undertaking the oral component of the VCE Languages examination will be required to identify themselves by stating, in English, their student number.

All students undertaking a performance or Languages oral examination or the Extended Investigation oral presentation will be required to provide personal identification at the registration point for their assessment. The personal identification must consist of a clear photograph of the student and their full name. Most existing student identification cards or personal documents (for example, a school ID card, a public transport ID card, a passport or a driver's licence) are sufficient.

Students completing a VCE written examination at a location other than their home school may also be required to provide personal identification prior to entering their examination.

### 3.7 Materials and equipment authorised for use in the GAT and VCE written examinations

Materials authorised by the VCAA for use in the GAT and VCE examinations are listed on the [VCAA website](#) and are included in the *VCE Examinations Manual*, the GAT brochure and *VCE Exams Navigator*.

## 4 Marking external assessments

Examinations will be subject to independent marking by assessors appointed by the VCAA. If necessary, there will be discrepancy marking by an additional assessor, who will assess the task without knowledge of the previous assessments.

### 4.1 Indicative grades and the anomalous grades check

Indicative grades for all VCE external assessments, apart from the Music Style and Composition Externally-assessed Tasks, must be submitted prior to the relevant examination period. The primary purpose of these indicative grades is in the quality assurance procedures for marking the external assessments. They assist in identifying possible anomalous marking of individual student responses. Indicative grades will also be used in the calculation of the DES.

The indicative grade is the school's prediction of a student's actual level of achievement on the examination. Indicative grades are a letter grade from A+ to E/UG (ungraded) or NA (not assessed); note that plus (+) can be used, but minus (–) is not available for input. Class teachers of the same study at the school should confer on the comparability of the indicative grades given to the individual students in their classes.

The rank order and level of spread of the indicative grades for the school cohort in the study are of prime importance. The indicative grades for the school cohort are moderated by the VCAA to ensure that they are statistically reliable. If they are not statistically reliable, they will not be used.

#### Strategies for arriving at an indicative grade

The VCAA has no preferred position on how a school arrives at a set of indicative grades except to advise that there should be coherence in the process. All teachers at the school should be provided with advice by the principal on the definition and purpose of the indicative grade, and a suitable means of arriving at a set of indicative grades for the school cohort.

Some strategies used by schools are:

- setting practice examinations, which must be held at a time that allows entry of the indicative grade on VASS by the due date
- ranking the students by performance in School-based Assessment and then applying an appropriate grade
- basing the grade on prior knowledge of the relative ability of the student in the study.

The VCAA recommends that schools use the indicative grades feedback report on VASS to assist with determining indicative grades. This report shows whether the school's indicative grades for the previous year were generally aligned with the final grades. The indicative grades feedback report is on VASS at: School Admin > School Statistics > Indicative Grades Feedback.

#### Anomalous grades check process

For all written examinations, VCE Languages examinations (both oral and written), performance-based Music examinations and the Extended Investigation Externally-assessed Task (written report and oral presentation), an anomalous grade check is undertaken prior to issuing final results. Indicative grades provided by the school, on the condition that they are statistically reliable, are used to identify students with anomalous scores. These students' scripts are identified and reconsidered by the relevant chief assessor's panel.

The scripts include those where the student's examination assessment is substantially different from that predicted from one of the following:

- the school's indicative grade
- the student's GAT component scores
- for studies with more than one external assessment, the other examination assessment in the study.

In each case, the differences must be statistically significant.

In the interests of the students, teachers should be as accurate as possible in their estimation of an indicative grade. If the teacher is accurate (that is, they allocate indicative grades with a similar order and spread to external assessment performance of their students), any possible anomalous marking will be detected, and the assessment referred to the chief assessor for checking. If the teacher allocates indicative grades that are different in order and spread to the external assessment performance of their students, some anomalous assessments may not be detected. If the teacher consistently under- or over-assesses indicative grades for all students, anomalous performance from the pattern given by the school can still be detected. Thus, within the constraints of the grade structure, a school need not be overly concerned about submitting indicative grades with exactly the correct level, but teachers should try to order and spread students' grades as accurately as possible.

Schools may run a report through VASS that lists those students whose scripts/recordings were forwarded to the chief assessor's panel for final determination. The principal may make a written request to the VCAA for confirmation that anomalous examination grades procedures have been correctly applied to a student's external assessments.

The anomalous grades check is not applied for Dance, Drama Solo and VCE VET Dance performance examination, Further Mathematics Examination 1, and Theatre Studies Stagecraft examinations.

## 5 Externally-assessed Tasks

The Externally-assessed Task, which is specific to Music Style and Composition and Extended Investigation, assesses a student's level of achievement in accordance with the study design and published assessment criteria. Externally-assessed Tasks are marked by assessors appointed by the VCAA.

For more detailed information about the Music Style and Composition Externally-assessed Task, refer to the [study page](#) on the VCAA website.

For more detailed information about the Extended Investigation Externally-assessed Task, refer to the [study page](#) on the VCAA website.

Teachers must ensure that there is a sufficient range of topics within their class to enable them to distinguish an individual student's work and therefore to assist in the authentication process.

Teachers must monitor and record each student's development of work, from planning and drafting through to completion, in the **Authentication Record for Externally-assessed Task** form. This requires regular sightings of the work by the teacher.

Observations of individual work done in class should be recorded. The teacher and student must sign each recorded observation. If the school is being reviewed, this sheet should be included with the work.

## 6 Student breach of VCAA rules for the conduct of VCE external assessments

Students are required to observe all rules for examinations conducted by or on behalf of the VCAA, as well as the day-to-day rules of the institution providing the venue for the examination. The [VCAA rules](#) are published on the VCAA website. The rules for the conduct of the GAT and VCE examinations are distributed to all VCE providers and students in both the GAT brochure and *VCE Exams Navigator* each year.

Principals and chief supervisors are responsible to the VCAA for the conduct of examinations. Any alleged breach of these examination rules and any alleged cheating, dishonesty or obtaining assessments by fraudulent, illegal or unfair means in relation to the GAT and VCE examinations should be reported to the VCAA. Serious cases may be referred to a VCAA Review Committee, which will conduct a hearing to consider the circumstances of the alleged breach and, if applicable, determine any appropriate penalty.

All supervisors of examinations are issued with directions for the administration of the examinations and are required to report all alleged breaches of rules to the VCAA.

### Identification of an alleged breach of VCAA rules

If an alleged breach of rules relating to the conduct of the GAT and VCE examinations is detected, the student must be permitted to complete the examination and any discussion considered necessary must be conducted when the examination has finished. The student must be informed that an incident report is being forwarded to the VCAA.

Examination supervisors must complete an incident report immediately after the examination, providing as much information as possible about any alleged breach, including any relevant circumstances leading up to it, and details of what occurred afterwards. It is important to include all matters associated with the incident, no matter how insignificant they may have appeared at the time.

### Initial investigation

Upon receipt of incident reports about incidents during examinations, the VCAA may conduct an investigation into:

- a suspected breach of VCAA rules
- an allegation that a student's assessment by the VCAA was obtained by fraudulent, illegal or unfair means.

In conducting an investigation, the VCAA may nominate a person on its behalf to interview any student enrolled in an accredited course.

A person nominated to interview a student must give no less than 24 hours' notice of the interview to the student, and this notice:

- need not be in writing
- may nominate a time and place for the interview
- must give particulars of the matter under investigation.

In addition to any other matter discussed at the interview, the student must be informed of possible further action by the VCAA and possible consequences to the student.

The person who conducts the interview must submit a written report of the interview to the Chief Executive Officer of the VCAA as soon as practicable after the interview.

### Decision to proceed to hearing or issue a written reprimand

The Chief Executive Officer of the VCAA may, after considering a report submitted, issue a written reprimand to the student or request that a Review Committee conduct a hearing into the matter under investigation.

## Review Committee

A Review Committee consists of three people who are either members of the VCAA Board or staff of the VCAA. The Chair of the Review Committee must be a member of the VCAA Board.

### Assessment may be withheld pending a decision

The VCAA may withhold the assessment of a student who is required to attend a hearing before a Review Committee until whichever of the following is later:

- the decision of the Review Committee and the expiry of the period of 14 days after the day on which the Review Committee gave its decision verbally at the hearing
- if the student applies to an Appeals Committee for review of the decision, notification to the VCAA by the Appeals Committee of its determination of the application.

### Notice of hearing

The Chief Executive Officer of the VCAA must give a student who is required to attend a hearing before a Review Committee:

- written notice of the hearing not less than seven working days before the hearing is due to commence
- copies of the information and documents the VCAA will refer to at the hearing, not less than five working days before the hearing is due to commence.

### Procedure of the Review Committee

At a hearing:

- subject to the Act, the procedure of a Review Committee is at its discretion
- the proceedings must be conducted with as little formality and technicality as the requirements of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) ('the Act'), and the proper consideration of the matter permit
- a Review Committee is not bound by rules of evidence but may inform itself in any way it thinks fit
- a Review Committee is bound by the rules of natural justice.

### Cross-examination of witnesses

The cross-examination of witnesses in a hearing before a Review Committee is at the discretion of the Review Committee. An exercise of this discretion must be consistent with the rules of natural justice.

### Legal representation for the student

A student may be represented by a legal practitioner at a hearing before a Review Committee.

### Person assisting the Review Committee

A Review Committee may be assisted by a person nominated by the VCAA. A person assisting a Review Committee under this section:

- is entitled to be present during the whole of the proceedings
- must ensure that all relevant information is put before the Review Committee, but must not act as prosecutor
- must advise the Review Committee on any matter on which it seeks to be advised, but must not adjudicate on the matter.

### **Decision of the Review Committee**

If a Review Committee is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that a student has contravened VCAA examination rules or obtained a VCAA assessment by fraudulent, illegal or unfair means, the Review Committee may do one of the following:

- reprimand the student
- amend or cancel the student's grade for the examination in which the contravention occurred
- amend or cancel the student's grade for the examination in which the contravention occurred, and also amend or cancel any or all of the student's assessments in the same study, including cancellation of satisfactory completion of the study
- amend or cancel the student's grades for examinations or other assessments in one or more other studies, including cancellation of satisfactory completion of a study
- cancel all the student's grades for examinations and other assessments conducted by the VCAA during the year in which the contravention occurred or the assessment was obtained, including cancellation of satisfactory completion of the course.

### **Notification of decision**

A Review Committee must give its decision:

- verbally at the hearing
- in writing to the student concerned no later than seven days after the hearing.

A Review Committee must set out in its written decision:

- the reasons for its decision
- the findings on material questions of fact that led to the decision.

A Review Committee must notify the VCAA without delay of its decision.

### **Review by an Appeals Committee**

A student affected by a decision of a Review Committee may apply for review of the decision by an Appeals Committee on one or both of the following grounds:

- the decision was unreasonable
- the penalty imposed was too harsh.

An application must be made by notice in writing to the Chief Executive Officer of the VCAA no later than 14 days after the day on which the Review Committee gave its decision verbally at the hearing. The Chief Executive Officer of the VCAA must refer an application to an Appeals Committee for determination.

A student may make a written submission to the Appeals Committee but is not entitled to be heard in support of the written submission or to appear before the Appeals Committee.

An Appeals Committee must review a decision made by a Review Committee having regard to all the documents before it, the written decision of the Review Committee, and any written submission made by the student.

In determining an application for review of a decision made by a Review Committee, an Appeals Committee may:

- affirm the decision under review
- vary the decision under review
- set aside the decision under review.

An Appeals Committee must notify the VCAA without delay of its determination of an application for review under this section.

**Appointment of an Appeals Committee**

An Appeals Committee consists of three members appointed by the Minister to determine applications for review. The Minister may appoint more than one Appeals Committee at any time.

A member of an Appeals Committee must not be a member of the VCAA, a member of a committee of the VCAA or an employee of the VCAA, and the members must have, between them, knowledge of the assessment programs of the VCAA, the Act and the field of secondary education.

**Notification of alteration of record of student assessment**

If a student's assessment is amended or cancelled, the VCAA:

- must give written notice to the student concerned
- may give written notice to any other person to whom a copy of the student's record has previously been provided that the record of assessment has been amended or cancelled, as the case requires.