

Special Provision

1 Special Provision within the VCE and VCAL

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) Special Provision policy aims to provide students in defined circumstances with the opportunity to participate in and complete their senior secondary level studies.

The underlying principle of the VCAA Special Provision policy is to ensure that the most appropriate, fair and reasonable arrangements and options are available for students to demonstrate their capabilities if their learning and assessment programs are affected by illness, impairment or personal circumstances. Special Provision should provide equivalent, alternative arrangements for students but not confer an advantage to any student over other students.

Although there is no limit on the period of time allowed for a student to achieve the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), the provisions available seek to help a student complete the requirements in a timeframe comparable to that of their peers.

Individual students may need special provisions in their learning program to achieve the learning outcomes, and in assessment to demonstrate their learning and achievement.

At the same time, students who have been granted Special Provision are not exempt from meeting the requirements for satisfactory completion of the VCE or VCAL, or from being assessed against the outcomes for a study. They are still required to demonstrate their achievement fairly in meeting the outcomes of the study design as well as completing School-based Assessments and VCE external assessments.

Similarly, the programs and assessment tasks designed for VCAL students should allow each student to successfully complete the learning program without compromising the expectations of each of the components of the program in accordance with course requirements.

Specific eligibility criteria apply to the granting of Special Provision for the VCE or VCAL.

1.1 Types of Special Provision

Special Provision is available to students completing the VCE or VCAL for classroom learning, School-based Assessment and VCE external assessments.

Specific eligibility requirements apply for each type of Special Provision.

For classroom learning and School-based Assessment, the school is primarily responsible for determining eligibility and the nature of the provisions granted. Schools are encouraged to consult the VCAA if they are unsure about appropriate arrangements. The school's policies and procedures should be clearly documented and communicated to students. It is strongly recommended that schools keep records of all decisions made for each student.

For VCE external assessments, which include all VCE examinations, the Extended Investigation Critical Thinking Test and oral presentation and the General Achievement Test (GAT), the VCAA is responsible for determining eligibility and for granting approval in the form of Special Examination Arrangements and the Derived Examination Score (DES).

1.2 Eligibility for Special Provision

Students may be eligible for Special Provision if, at any time, they are adversely affected in a significant way by:

- an acute or chronic illness (physical or psychological)
- factors relating to personal circumstance
- an impairment or disability, including learning disorders.

These circumstances do not include matters or situations of the student's own choosing, such as involvement in social or sporting activities or school events.

Prolonged absence from school or study is not in itself grounds for Special Provision; however, provisions are available to students experiencing severe hardship that may result in prolonged absence.

Students granted Special Provision must still complete all school work related to satisfactory completion of the outcomes of a VCE or VCAL unit. Students absent from school for prolonged periods must still comply with the school's authentication procedures to demonstrate that they have completed the work and that the work is their own.

Students who are eligible for integration funding may not necessarily meet the eligibility criteria for Special Provision in the VCE or VCAL.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Students who have been granted EAL status on the basis of unfamiliarity with the English language are not eligible for Special Provision on this basis alone, unless they qualify for EAL status because of a hearing impairment.

Intellectual disability

The principal has the discretion to approve the enrolment of students with an intellectual disability in the VCE and VCAL. The VCAA does not place restrictions on this discretion. The principal is responsible for advising students of the likelihood of successfully achieving the published unit outcomes and for deciding appropriate arrangements at the school level.

If a student will be unable to achieve success within the specified framework of the VCE or VCAL, it may be more appropriate for the student to undertake a parallel, individualised teaching and learning program rather than enrol in VCE or VCAL studies. This strategy allows the student to participate in class with their peers and continue social engagement, and is more likely to eventuate in a positive outcome. In this case the school would issue its own report on the student's individual achievement.

An integration support group within the school may advise the principal that formal enrolment in either a full or restricted VCE or VCAL program is the most appropriate action. In either case, the school decides the most appropriate program for the student.

The VCAA does not approve Special Examination Arrangements on the grounds of an intellectual disability.

1.3 Management of students requiring Special Provision

If a student requires Special Provision but is still deemed to be at risk of not being able to meet either the unit outcomes or satisfactory completion of the VCE or VCAL, the school should develop a management plan. One of the first steps in developing a management plan should be the establishment of a support group to help the students in undertaking the VCE or VCAL. Ideally, this support group should be established in the years prior to the commencement of VCE or VCAL. Similarly, if a student becomes chronically unwell during the course of their VCE or VCAL, a support group should be established.

The establishment of a support group also provides a focus for the administrative aspects of managing the student's program of study. In addition, a support group allows for a formal structure through which decisions are made and actions verified. Involvement with a support group presents teachers with an opportunity to become better informed about the medical or personal situations of students.

A support group may include the student, a parent of the student, teachers or others nominated as having responsibility for the student, and any aides of the student. If appropriate, the support group should seek the advice of specialist consultants. The principal must ensure that advice from the support group is considered and implemented if it is judged to be consistent with VCE or VCAL policy.

Choosing a program of studies

The school, through the support group, should provide advice to the student to help them choose a program of studies. Such advice should encourage the choice of interesting and challenging studies, taking into consideration the nature of the student's hardship and maximising their opportunity to learn. If a student with disabilities is intent upon undertaking a study in which, given the student's particular disability, it will be problematic for the student to demonstrate the unit outcomes, the restraints and difficulties of proceeding with the study need to be made clear to the student. The expected time for completion of the program should be taken into consideration. If it is anticipated that a student will need deadline extensions to complete work, students may be advised to enrol in fewer units in a given year.

Provision of facilities and technology

In developing the study program, schools should consider the role of technology in terms of how it could be used to enhance the learning process. For some students the use of technology is a requirement to effectively access education. Every effort should be made to ensure that facilities and technology are available to help students achieve the objectives or learning outcomes of a unit.

While the use of technology in learning strategies is encouraged, the use of new and emerging technologies should first be discussed with the VCAA, to avoid using technology that is not appropriate or suitable for use in a VCE external assessment as part of Special Examination Arrangements; if this is the case, the use of the technology for School-based Assessment may need to be reconsidered. The technology used for School-based Assessments should be consistent with what the student will be allowed to use in a VCE external assessment.

Assistance from aides

Students may require assistance from an aide in order to effectively engage in the process of learning. If this is required, other provisions, such as additional time to complete tasks, may be required. Assistance from aides may take the form of, for example, a reader, clarifier or scribe, depending on the nature of the student's circumstance. Generally, this provision is for students with long-term disabilities.

Note: A student's current aide is not eligible to be appointed as a reader, clarifier, scribe or supervisor in a VCE external assessment, unless in exceptional circumstances. Contact VCAA Special Provision for advice if necessary.

Deferral of VCE studies

Students completing a VCE study at Unit 3 and 4 level may be eligible for Compassionate Late Withdrawal if they are suffering major adverse circumstances and are unable to complete Unit 3.

Students who are unable to complete Unit 4 because of adverse circumstances should consider an application for Interrupted Studies.

2 Special Provision: Classroom learning and School-based Assessment

Schools may approve special provisions and arrangements for both classroom learning and School-based Assessments. The VCAA recognises that school personnel, because of their knowledge of individual students and their circumstances, can sensitively vary the school assessment programs to accommodate student circumstances.

Schools should consult the VCAA if they are unsure about appropriate arrangements. The VCAA recommends that schools approve arrangements for classroom learning and School-based Assessments that are consistent with the Special Examination Arrangements likely to be approved by the VCAA.

Students who are suffering long-term conditions and have not been granted arrangements by the school for classroom learning and School-based Assessments may not be eligible for similar Special Examination Arrangements for these long-term conditions.

The VCAA recommends that schools maintain records of their decisions.

2.1 Eligibility for Special Provision for classroom learning and School-based Assessment

Students are eligible for Special Provision for classroom learning and School-based Assessment if their ability to demonstrate achievement is adversely affected by:

- an acute or chronic illness
- a long-term impairment
- personal circumstances.

2.2 Strategies

Course completion

There are a number of ways in which schools can make alternative arrangements to assist students with their learning and to enable them to be assessed against the unit outcomes, including:

- rescheduling classroom activities and/or an assessment task
- allowing the student extra time to complete work or an assessment task
- setting a substitute task of the same type
- replacing a task with a different type
- using a planned task to assess more outcomes, or aspects of outcomes, than originally intended
- using technology, aides or other special arrangements to complete classroom learning and/or undertake assessment tasks
- deriving satisfactory completion of outcomes or a score from other assessments or work completed by the student (if the provisions already mentioned are not feasible or reasonable).

The decision made by the school needs to reflect the best interest of the student and should be based on the available medical or other professional advice.

Students who are granted an extension of time are required to complete the work and undertake the task in the same way as all other students.

Rescheduling classroom activities and/or an assessment task

Learning or tasks that have been missed through illness or other serious cause may be rescheduled. If a student has been absent for prolonged periods through illness or other serious cause, they should not be overloaded on their return to school with the classroom learning they have missed and/or both scheduled and rescheduled tasks. Careful consideration needs to be given to the management of the student's workload.

Allowing the student extra time to complete work or an assessment task

In some cases the school may decide to allow the student extra time to complete work. Additional time may be given immediately after the specific class, at the end of the school day, or during free time during the day, or the student may take work home to complete. If an assessment task is undertaken outside the usual class time, the student must sign the appropriate **VASS Authentication Record** form.

The conditions for which an extension of time may be approved should be consistent for all VCE and VCAL units within the school, and given in writing to students. Extensions of time must not exceed the deadlines for the reporting of results to the VCAA and can only occur within the same academic year.

When granting extra time to students for specific activities associated with classroom activities or an assessment task held under test conditions, it is important to keep in mind whether an application for Special Examination Arrangements has been approved for a student requesting additional time for one or more of their VCE external assessments.

If a school plans to submit an application for Special Examination Arrangements requesting additional time for a student with a long-term condition, it is important for the school to initially trial this arrangement during classroom activities. At the same time the VCAA strongly recommends schools contact VCAA Special Provision to discuss the student's history and the appropriateness of this type of provision before an application is submitted, preferably well before they commence their studies at senior secondary level.

Setting a substitute task of the same type

Another task of the same type can be set, for example, a test on the same topic but with different questions, or an essay on the same issue but with a different contention.

Replacing a task with a different type

Another task can be chosen from the options specified in a study design. If options are available, the assessment tasks must be of comparable scope and demand. If options are not available, schools may devise a task that is of comparable scope and demand, for example, a 1000-word essay may not be replaced with five multiple-choice questions.

Using a planned task to assess more outcomes, or aspects of outcomes, than originally intended

Schools may use a single task to allow a student to demonstrate the achievement of more than one of the learning outcomes for a study.

Using technology, aides or other special arrangements to complete classroom learning and/or undertake assessment tasks

Every effort should be made to ensure that facilities and technology are available to enable students to participate in classroom learning and access all assessment tasks in their study program.

Computers, specialist software, recording devices and other technology can be made available to help students to complete work. If word-processing software is used, a spellchecker may be activated as part of its operation. Other specialist equipment that is used in conjunction with computers is encouraged for students who are vision impaired. Audio equipment may also be used to supply assessment tasks to students who cannot access text (for example, students with vision impairment). If new technology has become available, and the school intends to apply for Special Examination Arrangements, the VCAA should

be contacted to ensure that such technology is considered appropriate and suitable for use in VCE external assessments.

Students with a physical disability or other impairment may receive assistance from an aide in both classroom learning and when completing a task in order to demonstrate achievement of a learning outcome. Such assistance may include an aide's recording or participating on behalf of the student in a laboratory or field activity or physical activities. Students may also use a scribe, a clarifier or other arrangements to complete work or tasks. If a school knows that a student requires Special Examination Arrangements, it should trial the same arrangements in classroom activities and School-based Assessments. Schools are encouraged to contact the VCAA if they are unsure about appropriate arrangements.

For classroom learning, a scribe who is familiar to the student can be used; however, for School-based Assessments, scribes may not be closely associated with the students, and students requiring scribes will need to be supervised separately. If such arrangements are made, the principal should ensure that the VCAA procedures for authentication have been implemented, and that the teacher is able to attest, to the best of their knowledge, that all unacknowledged work is the student's own.

Practical tasks for performing or for visual arts may not be undertaken by an aide.

Deriving satisfactory completion of outcomes from other assessments or work completed by the student

If an extension or substitute task is not feasible or reasonable, or if the task is difficult to duplicate, an outcome may be determined as satisfactory based on other work completed by the student. The outcome result may be determined at the time, or later in the period over which the unit is conducted, depending on the availability of work on which the determination is to be based.

It is important for schools to record how such results are determined. A student needs to have completed sufficient work to enable teachers to make a reliable and fair assessment. The final result given to the student takes into account the student's circumstances and their overall level of achievement relative to other students in the school.

Deriving scores from other assessments or work completed by the student

If an extension or substitute task is not feasible or reasonable, or if the task is difficult to duplicate, a score may be derived from other assessments undertaken, or work completed, by the student. The score may be determined at the time, or later in the period over which the graded assessment is conducted, depending on the availability or range of assessments on which the determination is to be based.

It is important for schools to record how scores are derived. A student needs to have completed sufficient work to enable teachers to make a reliable and fair assessment. The final score given to the student takes into account the student's circumstances and their overall level of achievement relative to other students in the school.

School-assessed Tasks, Music Style and Composition Externally-assessed Task, and Extended Investigation Externally-assessed Task written report

In some VCE studies, the completion of a folio, production item or research report is a requirement. Students who may be injured, ill or experiencing adverse personal circumstances during the period of time designated by the school for the completion of these types of tasks should be encouraged to complete the task.

The school could consider a range of options for the student:

- allowing an extension of time for the student to complete the task, but within the timeframe for the school to lodge the score by the relevant VCAA submission date. If the student is given an extension, but the work is still not complete by the due date, it should be assessed by the teacher as it is and that score sent to the VCAA
- contacting the VCAA (via a letter from the principal) for permission to allow the student an extension of time to complete the task that will enable a score to be submitted after the VCAA submission date. A VASS **Score Amendment Sheet** (SAS) must be lodged when the score becomes available
- allowing the student to complete the task in an agreed extended timeline for satisfactory completion purposes only, that is, if the student receives an S result for the VCE unit outcome but is awarded a score of NA (not assessed) for the task
- deriving a score for the task based on work completed and/or other assessments.

3 Special Examination Arrangements for VCE external assessments

Special Examination Arrangements may be approved to meet the needs of students who have disabilities, illnesses or other circumstances that would affect their ability to access a VCE external assessment.

Special Examination Arrangement applications are made to the VCAA through the student's school and must be endorsed by the principal. Such applications will be considered by the VCAA in accordance with its policies.

The VCAA recognises that some students with a disability, as defined in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwlth), or illness, may require Special Examination Arrangements to enable them to access the examination/test questions and communicate their responses in a timed external assessment.

In designing and approving Special Examination Arrangements, the VCAA is mindful of the need to balance the competing demands of providing students with the opportunity to perform at their optimum with the need to preserve the academic integrity of the assessment process.

The VCAA considers a large number of applications for Special Examination Arrangements every year. As it is the school that makes the application on behalf of students, and will ultimately administer their VCE external assessments, the VCAA's consultation with a student and/or their associate will usually take place through their school.

Schools must not permit any student to receive Special Examination Arrangements without prior approval from the VCAA. Failure to comply with these instructions may constitute a breach of the rules governing the conduct of VCE external assessments.

The VCAA considers each application for Special Examination Arrangements on the basis of the independent medical and/or educational assessments, any history of school-based Special Provisions and recommendations provided with the application, and the VCAA's own assessment.

The fact that a student has a disability and/or illness does not automatically entitle them to Special Examination Arrangements. The prime consideration is the impact of that disability and/or illness on the student's capacity to undertake their VCE external assessments and, if necessary, what reasonable adjustments can be made to enable the student to complete their VCE external assessments on the same basis as students who do not have a disability and/or illness.

The medical and educational assessments provide evidence as to the nature and extent of the disability/illness, but are regarded by the VCAA as neither conclusive nor binding, and the VCAA will consider the weight to be given to them from case to case. The VCAA then makes a decision based on the material provided.

The VCAA does not automatically adopt a medical or psychological provider's advice, or replicate the special arrangements that the school may have put in place for classroom learning and/or School-based Assessment. The VCAA considers each student's disability and/or illness and its effects on their ability to undertake an external assessment under the same conditions as students without that disability and/or illness.

The VCAA will consider the history of school-based Special Provision and arrangements for each student.

The VCAA considers all the evidence and recommendations presented within an application for each individual student.

In some cases this will mean that the student is provided with Special Examination Arrangements that are different to the arrangements the school was providing for School-based Assessment.

3.1 Eligibility for Special Examination Arrangements

Students are eligible for Special Examination Arrangements if it can be demonstrated that their capacity to access a VCE external assessment is impaired due to a:

- severe health impairment
- significant physical disability
- hearing impairment
- vision impairment
- specific learning disorder (previously referred to as learning disability)
- severe language disorder.

Applications for Special Examination Arrangements for each student must be made through appropriate school personnel, be endorsed by the principal and be supported by recent medical or other specialist reports. Details of the evidential requirements for each of the categories are listed in the current application form. The VCAA will only accept an application from a school on the current **Special Examination Arrangements** form.

If the student has a specific learning disorder, severe language disorder, hearing impairment, vision impairment or significant physical disability, schools should apply for Special Examination Arrangements early in the academic year that the student enrolls in their first VCE Unit 3–4 sequence; however, the VCAA strongly encourages schools to engage with the VCAA as early as possible, where necessary, to discuss any issues relating to appropriate provisions and evidence requirements associated with these categories.

Students who are approved for Special Examination Arrangements for any of these categories can generally expect that these arrangements will be replicated for any additional VCE Unit 3–4 sequences undertaken in subsequent years. However, schools should check that the previously submitted literacy and/or language tests were administered either in the year the student commenced the VCE or in the second half of the previous academic year.

The VCAA reserves the right to request additional and/or updated evidence when it is deemed necessary. Students with severe health impairment may be required to submit current medical evidence pertinent to each assessment period.

To enable an informed professional judgment, the VCAA will not process an application until all the relevant evidence has been supplied. If necessary, the VCAA will contact schools requesting additional information and may return applications that are incomplete.

In processing Special Examination Arrangement applications, the VCAA will establish an expert Special Examination Arrangements Advisory Panel comprised of educational psychologists, senior examination assessors and medical practitioners to assist VCAA staff with decisions. The VCAA reserves the right to seek additional information from any of the professionals named in an application.

In the case of declined applications relating to a specific learning disorder or severe language disorder, schools cannot submit new intelligence quotient (IQ), literacy or other educational assessments for the same student for the same impairment or disability within 24 months of a previous application.

If an application relating to a medical condition has been denied, a new application can only be submitted if there is a new diagnosis or evidence that an existing condition has deteriorated.

The VCAA recommends that special arrangements at the school level are consistent with those provided by the VCAA. Special arrangements approved by the school may not necessarily meet the eligibility criteria established by the VCAA for Special Examination Arrangements. The fact that a school has approved special arrangements for a student's classroom learning and/or School-based Assessments is not sufficient grounds for seeking such arrangements for VCE external assessments without the appropriate supporting evidence.

Schools should consult the VCAA if they are unsure about appropriate arrangements.

3.2 Managing Special Examination Arrangements

Students must:

- submit a timely request to their school's VCE coordinator
- provide appropriate documentation and evidence.

Schools must:

- determine whether a student's request for Special Examination Arrangements is appropriate and consistent with the eligibility requirements, and consult the VCAA if in doubt
- ensure the relevant tests and/or essays are administered, if required
- complete the **Special Examination Arrangements** application form and submit it to the VCAA by the closing date
- ensure that all information provided on the application form is accurate, and that no alterations have been made to the evidence supplied
- advise the student and the chief supervisor of any VCAA-approved arrangements
- ensure these decisions are printed by the VASS coordinator and distributed to the student, chief supervisor and VCE coordinator.

The VCAA will:

- make a decision for each of the external assessments on the application
- advise the school via VASS of the outcome of the application.

Any attempt by a student to falsely claim to an examination supervisor to have Special Examination Arrangements when these have not been approved by the VCAA constitutes a breach of examination rules and must be reported to the VCAA.

3.3 Types of Special Examination Arrangements

Special Examination Arrangements may take the form of:

- extra working time (extra reading and/or writing time, where approved, will be represented as 'extra working time' on the VASS Special Examination Arrangements Advice Slip) not exceeding 10 minutes per hour and to be used in addition to the 'scheduled writing time' of the VCE external assessment. In specific or exceptional circumstances, the VCAA may approve 'extra working time' in excess of 10 minutes per hour
- rest breaks not exceeding 10 minutes per hour of the 'total examination writing time' (the scheduled writing time plus any 'extra working time' approved for the VCE external assessment). In exceptional circumstances, the VCAA may approve 'unlimited rest breaks' to facilitate management of a significant medical or physical condition. Students may decide how to manage their allocation, and decide when and how long each break will be, with the supervisor noting the start and end times on the Special Examination Arrangements Rest Break Log Sheet. The rest break allocation displayed on the VASS Special Examination Arrangements Advice Slip should not be exceeded. Students must be offered the full allocation of writing time in addition to the time taken for rest breaks

- alternative format examination papers such as enlarged print, electronic text and Braille (students with vision impairment may be eligible to apply for an exemption from the GAT because Braille and some other alternative format papers are not available for that external assessment)
- permission to use technological aids such as a computer or Microlink assistive technology for a student with hearing impairment
- a reader and/or a scribe
- a clarifier, if the student has hearing impairment or severe language disorder
- an alternative examination venue, such as a separate room, a home or a hospital.

Applications for all these Special Examination Arrangements must meet the VCAA eligibility criteria. If approval has been granted for the use of a clarifier, reader, scribe and/or computer, students are required to sit their VCE external assessments in a separate room. The principal of the home school is responsible for appointing both a suitable independent person to act as a supervisor and a suitable independent person to act as a reader, scribe and/or clarifier.

The principal must only engage a person to be a supervisor, reader, scribe or clarifier when it is certain that the potential appointee meets the requirements of the Supervisor Relationships Statutory Declaration.

Any person who has worked with the student on previous occasions, other than during VCE external assessments, or who has been closely associated with the student as a teacher, a tutor, an integration aide or a visiting teacher or staff member in a deaf facility during the student's VCE studies is not permitted to act as a reader, scribe or clarifier. The appointed reader may work with the student during any practice examinations.

Any person appointed as a reader, scribe and/or clarifier must not have a close relationship or association with:

- any student undertaking a VCE Unit 3–4 sequence at the school at which they are employed
- a VCE teacher of any student in a VCE Unit 3–4 sequence
- a tutor, an integration aide, a visiting teacher or staff member in a deaf facility who has a close relationship with any student undertaking a VCE Unit 3–4 sequence at the school at which they are employed.

The school should ensure that a student approved for Special Examinations Arrangements has a copy of the VASS confirmation of Special Examination Arrangements when attending their VCE external assessments, either at their home school or at another location.

If a school has combined with another school for any VCE external assessments, the host school must be advised in advance of any approved Special Examination Arrangements.

If a school has combined with another school for any VCE external assessments and a student is approved for Special Examination Arrangements that will involve supervision in a separate room, it is advisable not to transfer the student to another location for their external assessments. These Special Examination Arrangements should be discussed in advance with VCAA Special Provision.

3.4 Instructions for supervision of Special Examination Arrangements

The following information should be read by the appropriate school personnel and persons appointed as Special Examination Arrangements supervisors, readers, scribes and clarifiers in conjunction with the current *VCE Examination Manual*.

It is the responsibility of the student's home school to appoint appropriate individuals to fill the roles of Special Examination Arrangements supervisor, reader, scribe or clarifier.

The information contained in these instructions must be conveyed to the student prior to the relevant assessment period and repeated immediately before the commencement of each external assessment. If, for any reason, the supervisor, reader, scribe or clarifier is concerned about any aspect of the general

conduct of the external assessment (such as a disruption to the room environment, or the condition of the student in cases of illness), VCAA Special Provision should be contacted immediately.

All supervisors, readers, scribes and clarifiers are required to complete the Supervisor Relationships Statutory Declaration found in the VCE Examination Document Register folder. This form must be retained at the school.

Queries should be directed to VCAA Special Provision on (03) 9225 2219 or 1800 205 455.

Total duration of examinations

Reading time is the scheduled reading time.

Writing time is the scheduled writing time of the external assessment plus any extra working time approved by the VCAA.

Rest breaks are in addition to all reading or writing time. Students:

- are not permitted to leave their table or leave the examination room during rest breaks, except in special circumstances as approved by the VCAA
- are not permitted to read or write or access the examination/test questions or their responses during a rest break; papers should be turned face down during a rest break
- may use their rest break to relax, rehearse previously learned coping strategies, focus their thoughts or reflect on their responses.

Separate examination room

If the use of a scribe, reader, clarifier or computer has been approved by the VCAA, a student must complete their external assessment in a separate room.

Separate supervision

A supervisor must be present where a student has been approved the use of:

- a separate room
- a scribe, reader or clarifier.

It is the responsibility of the student's home school to appoint appropriate individuals to fill the above roles. If separate supervision is required, and the examination is being conducted off-site, it is advisable for the home school to organise separate supervision at the home school.

Readers

The function of a reader is to read the examination paper and/or the student's responses as often as requested by the student. A person appointed as a reader should have:

- a facility for English and familiarity with the VCE study being examined
- patience and sensitivity to the student's special needs
- an understanding of the need to maintain confidentiality.

The appointed reader may work with the student in any practice examinations.

A supervisor, in addition to the reader, must be present in the examination room and monitor all interactions between the reader and the student.

Readers can:	Readers cannot:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read the examination/test questions and any incorporated stimulus or resource material as many times as the student asks them to • read the student's answers back to them • operate a calculator at the student's direction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist and/or interpret any question for the student • advise the student in any way, either by prompting or discussing the answers.

Scribes

The function of a scribe is to record, on the appropriate response material, the verbal responses and directions made by the student in the process of answering any question.

A person appointed as a scribe should have:

- a facility for English and familiarity with the VCE study being examined
- clear and legible handwriting
- patience and sensitivity to the student's special needs
- an understanding of the need to maintain confidentiality.

The appointed scribe may work with the student in any practice examinations. On behalf of the student the scribe will:

- complete all written details associated with the examination on the response materials, such as completion of the student number in figures, title of the study, the numbers of all questions and/or tasks answered and the number of answer books used
- record the student's responses, as dictated by the student
- re-read the student responses for editing purposes, if requested by the student.

These tasks are to be completed within the total approved writing time.

The supervisor, in addition to the scribe, must be present in the examination room and monitor all interactions between the scribe and the student.

Prior to the commencement of the external assessment, the student should advise the scribe how they propose to answer the examination/test questions. Fifteen minutes prior to the end of the examination the supervisor must make an announcement to both the student and the scribe informing them of the time remaining. At the conclusion of the external assessment the supervisor must inform both the student and the scribe that writing should cease.

Scribes can:	Scribes cannot:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask the student to repeat a word or sentence ask the student to spell difficult or obscure words punctuate and use capital letters without the specific direction of the student operate a calculator at the student's direction re-read a paragraph that has been written, to enable the student to regain their place in their work plot or draw graphs with the specific direction of the student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> interpret any question for the student advise the student in any way make comments on the student's work alter the student's work or write words that the student has not dictated rewrite a student's written work (i.e. a student cannot write out their examination answers and then have the scribe rewrite them) type for the student (unless specific VCAA approval has been granted) draw (if the student cannot draw, please contact Special Provision).
Students can:	Students cannot:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dictate their answers exactly as they wish them to be written down advise the scribe when to start a new paragraph, when to put something in brackets or quotation marks, and when to underline something regularly read over what the scribe has written. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask to have a question interpreted.

Note: Fifteen minutes before the end of the examination the supervisor must make an announcement to both the student and the scribe, informing them of the time remaining. At the conclusion of the examination the supervisor must inform both the student and the scribe that writing should cease.

Clarifiers

The function of a clarifier is to clarify words contained within examination/test questions. The appointed clarifier may work with the student during any practice examinations. Clarification can occur during reading and writing time but is restricted to the following.

For students with a severe language disorder, clarification includes:	For students with hearing impairment, clarification includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> definition of one or more words in a question; however, the clarifier must not define any words or terms that are 'study specific', i.e. words that are subject-related provision of alternative words to those words in the question that are likely to be unfamiliar to students with a severe language disorder. Again, the clarifier must not offer alternatives for 'study-specific' words or terms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> definition of one or more words in a question; however, the clarifier must not define any words or terms that are 'study specific', i.e. words that are subject-related provision of alternative words to those words in the question that are likely to be unfamiliar to students with a hearing impairment. Again, the clarifier must not offer alternatives for 'study-specific' words or terms breaking complex sentences down into more manageable parts.

The student and the clarifier are permitted to write the clarification on the examination question/task book. Discussion about answers, or prompting, must not occur.

Strict conditions apply for the use of a clarifier in any VCE external assessment. If a student is granted permission by the VCAA to use a clarifier, their school must ensure a copy of the clarifier instruction document (available on VASS) relevant to the impairment/disorder is given to the supervisor and the clarifier. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the instructions are followed.

The supervisor, in addition to the clarifier, must be present in the examination room and monitor all interactions between the clarifier and the student.

Use of computers

The following table outlines the responsibilities and actions required to be undertaken by schools, supervisors and students when the use of a computer has been approved.

The school must:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only allow a student the use of a computer if the VCAA has approved such provision for their external assessment • supply a standalone computer that has access to a word-processing package only • check that the computer and any other equipment to be used on the day of the external assessment are functioning properly • clearly label the memory device (this can be a USB stick or CD) with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – name of the external assessment – student number – centre number • supply one memory device per external assessment. Please ensure that no other information is contained on the memory device.
The supervisor must:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watch the computer screen at all times to check that the student is not accessing any other programs or documents • remind the student at the commencement of the external assessment that they must save their work at regular intervals • stop the external assessment if problems are experienced with the computer or other equipment. Seek appropriate assistance and then resume the external assessment, ensuring no time loss to the student. An Incident Report about the circumstances should be completed and returned to the VCAA with the student's response materials • print the final version of the student's responses (single-sided). Students must be present at the time of printing (this must be done when the assessment is completed. The VCAA will not print student work) • place the printed work inside the front cover of the response materials • if necessary, complete all written details on the front cover of the response materials • ensure that the memory device used and the response materials are returned inside the gold envelope • clearly label the memory device with the student number and external assessment.
Students:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • must use a standalone computer that has access to a word-processing package only • must not access any other programs, files or data. Any use of other programs, files or data constitutes a breach of VCAA rules and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary procedures • may access the spellchecker facility in the word-processing package • must save their work regularly during the external assessment • must include their VCAA student number at the beginning of every page • must include the number of each question or task answered at the beginning of every page, ensuring that it correlates with the examination question or task book • must be present to witness the printing of their work from the memory device (this must be done when the assessment is completed. The VCAA will not print student work).

Payment of Special Examination Arrangement supervisors, readers, scribes and clarifiers

The **Summary Claim Form – Special Examination Arrangements** will be made available on VASS prior to the commencement of each VCE assessment period. These forms should be completed and returned to the chief supervisor, who will forward them to the school office for payment.

3.5 Specific Learning Disorder (formerly referred to as Learning Disability)

The VCAA has adopted the following operational definition of a Specific Learning Disorder for the purposes of granting Special Examination Arrangements.

Specific learning disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder with a biological origin. It is manifested in persistent difficulties with learning and using academic skills including handwriting, reading (word recognition and/or comprehension), spelling, written expression and mathematics. Any affected areas are significantly below current grade expectations. A specific learning disorder is not attributable to intellectual disabilities, hearing or vision disorders, motor impairment, emotional disturbance or external factors such as environmental disadvantage, chronic absenteeism or lack of appropriate educational experience. Dyslexia is the most common type of specific learning disorder.

The VCAA has assessed and approved the following tests for determining eligibility for Special Examination Arrangements.

IQ tests (mandatory requirement)

An IQ assessment administered by a registered psychologist during the student's secondary school years is required. The VCAA will accept the following IQ tests:

- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) IV
- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) III or IV
- Stanford Binet IV or V.

The scores should include subtest scaled scores, verbal and performance scale scores, full-scale IQ scores and appropriate index scores. The **Special Examination Arrangements** application form contains a standard format for the reporting of IQ assessment details. A copy of the psychologist's report is also required.

Literacy assessments of reading (if applying for extra reading time or reader)

The VCAA has adopted the following criteria to determine the suitability of tests to measure reading ability. The test should be:

- a silent reading comprehension test (this reflects the silent reading conditions of an examination)
- a timed test
- published with Australian norms.

The VCAA must be able to access the test and its normative data.

The purpose of such a reading test is to establish whether a student's reading level is significantly below what is expected of an average Year 12 student. The following tests meet the above criteria and provide normative data that are suitable for determining whether a student's reading ability is at such a level.

The current prescribed reading test is Progressive Achievement Test in Reading (PAT-R) published by ACER. The VCAA will accept results from the following test:

- Comprehension Booklet 10 (fourth edition 2008).

Evidence of a student's reading comprehension skills must be based on a test administered either in the academic year the student commences the VCE or in the second half of the previous academic year.

A student with a reading disability may be approved extra working time (up to a maximum of 10 minutes per hour).

Extra working time approved by the VCAA is to be used in addition to the 'scheduled writing time' of the VCE external assessment.

A student with a severe reading disability may be allowed to use a reader.

Literacy assessments (if applying for extra writing time, computer or scribe)

Assessment of a student's level of written expression involves an assessment of several variables, including the following:

- thought and content
- structure and organisation
- expression and/or language
- handwriting
- productivity
- spelling
- punctuation.

The following evidence is required in support of applications for Special Examination Arrangements for a disorder of written expression:

- Two handwritten essays (if the application is for extra writing time, a scribe and/or a computer) administered at the school under test conditions.
- One typed essay (if the application is for the use of a computer) or one scribed essay (if the application is for the use of a scribe), which must be administered at the school under test conditions.

Essay One

The topic for this essay will be supplied by the VCAA and must be completed according to the following conditions:

- Strictly five minutes reading time and 30 minutes writing time are to be provided.
- No Special Arrangements are to be used for this essay.

Essay Two

This essay should be a copy of a handwritten English or Literature essay from an assessment that the student has recently completed (within six months) at school:

- It must have been for either a School-based Assessment or a school examination.
- It must have had a writing time of at least one hour duration.
- Special Arrangements are permitted for this essay.

The essay must have been marked with teacher comments, and the teacher's grading should be indicated.

The essay topic, the time taken for this essay, the date of the assessment and details of any approved Special Examination Arrangements used by the student should be recorded on the Essay Two Cover Sheet.

The essay must not be a short-answer response or have been written in another language. If the student is completing a Unit 3 and 4 study that does not involve extended responses or essays, the VCAA will accept an English examination or similar assessment from a unit completed in the second half of the previous academic year.

Typed essay

The topic for the typed essay will be supplied by the VCAA and must be completed according to the following conditions:

- Strictly five minutes' reading time and 30 minutes' typing time should be provided.
- Apart from the computer, no additional Special Examination Arrangements (for example, extra time) should be used for this essay.

Scribed essay

The topic for the scribed essay will be supplied by the VCAA and must be completed according to the following conditions:

- Strictly five minutes' reading time and 35 minutes' scribing time should be provided. Student and scribe should be supervised according to VCAA examination rules.
- Apart from the use of a scribe, no additional Special Examination Arrangements should be used for this essay.

The relevant section of the **Special Examination Arrangements** application form has further details of the specific requirements for essay completion and must be noted by the school.

Note that essays should be completed at school and supervised by school staff. The supervising teacher must remain with the student for the duration of the writing to observe the student's performance and ensure that the time restrictions are observed. All essays are to be completed under examination conditions (no assistance or prompting from the supervising teacher). The supervising teacher should complete all relevant information on the essay cover sheet.

Handwriting difficulties

Requests for Special Examination Arrangements for students experiencing major handwriting difficulties (which arise from long-term developmental, fine-motor coordination problems and not from a severe health impairment or significant physical disability or injury) must be supported by an IQ assessment conducted during the student's secondary school years and the appropriate essay evidence.

3.6 Severe language disorder

The following evidence is required to support an application for Special Examination Arrangements for a student with a severe language disorder:

- an IQ assessment, with at least the non-verbal/performance scale IQ within the average range or above
- a Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF) Edition 4 assessment administered either in the year the student commences the VCE or in the second half of the previous academic year.

If a student satisfies these eligibility requirements for a severe language disorder, the VCAA may approve the use of a clarifier. Requests for a clarifier must have the specific information requested on the **Special Examination Arrangements** application form.

3.7 Severe health impairment or significant physical disability

An application for Special Examination Arrangements based on either severe health impairment or a significant physical disability must be substantiated with evidence from an appropriate health professional who has treated the student for the condition or circumstances and is not related to them.

Professional evidence must be completed in the year pertinent to the assessment period, be signed and dated by the treating professional, and contain the following details:

- a diagnosis
- the date of diagnosis
- a brief history
- comments on the how the illness or condition would affect the student's day-to-day functioning in the classroom
- comments on the likely effect of the illness or condition on the student's capacity to complete VCE external assessments.

The VCAA reserves the right to request additional evidence if it is deemed necessary by VCAA staff.

A history of any special arrangements approved by the school over the period of the condition will also be required.

The following table outlines details of the possible Special Examination Arrangements available for a range of health issues. Note that in the following table:

- an application for the use of a separate room will only be considered where strongly supported by appropriate professional evidence
- If the application is for extra writing time, a scribe or the use of computer, students will be required to complete the required essays as outlined in 'Literacy assessments (if applying for extra writing time, a computer or a scribe)' in this section.

Documentation requirements for Special Examination Arrangements

Condition	Possible difficulties under test conditions	Possible arrangements	Minimum documentation
Anxiety disorders	Concentration difficulties, anxiety preventing performance in group situations	Rest breaks, permission to take medication, separate room	Current psychological history/report Comments from appropriate school personnel
Attention-deficit and disruptive behaviour disorders	Concentration and difficulty with impulse control	Rest breaks, permission to take medication, separate room	Current medical history/report Comments from appropriate school personnel
Autism spectrum disorder High-functioning autism Asperger syndrome	Concentration difficulties, anxiety	Rest breaks, separate room, permission to leave examination room under supervision	Current psychological history and/or report Comments from appropriate school personnel Learning disability evidence (if applicable)
Back injury/chronic pain	Pain and/or discomfort due to injury, problems with prolonged sitting	Rest breaks, permission to take medication, permission to stand and stretch	Current medical history and/or report Comments from appropriate school personnel
Chronic fatigue syndrome (for example, post-viral fatigue syndrome, myalgic encephalomyelitis, glandular fever)	Tiredness, inability to concentrate due to illness	Rest breaks, permission to take medication	Current medical specialist history and/or report Comments from appropriate school personnel
Crohn's disease	Pain and/or discomfort	Rest breaks, permission to leave room under supervision	Current medical history and/or report Comments from appropriate school personnel

Condition	Possible difficulties under test conditions	Possible arrangements	Minimum documentation
Diabetes	Need to check blood sugar levels	Permission to take food and/or drink into the examination, permission to take medication, permission to leave examination room under supervision	Current medical history and/or report
Epilepsy	May suffer from epileptic seizure during examinations	Permission to take medication, separate room	Current medical history and/or report Comments from appropriate school personnel
Hand/wrist/arm/shoulder injury	Difficulty writing due to pain or discomfort in the hand and/or arm, excessive fatigue in the hand	Rest breaks, extra writing time, a computer or a scribe	Current medical, physiotherapist and/or occupational therapist history and/or report Comments from appropriate school personnel
Head injuries (severe)	Mental processing difficulty or slowness	Rest breaks, permission to take medication	Current medical specialist history and/or report Psychological assessment Learning disability evidence (if applicable) Comments from appropriate school personnel
Obsessive compulsive disorder, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders	Concentration and impulse control difficulties	Rest breaks, separate room, extra writing time, permission to take medication	Current psychological history and/or report Comments from appropriate school personnel
Pregnancy or early infant care	In hospital for birth, breastfeeding	Rest breaks, feeding breaks, separate room, home or hospital supervision	Current medical report, including anticipated delivery date, if applicable
Significant physical disability	Paraplegia, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, etc.	Permission to stand and/or stretch, permission to take medication, separate room, extra reading time, extra writing time, computer, alternative examination paper	Current medical specialist history and/or report Comments from appropriate school personnel

3.8 Hearing impairment

The VCAA requires the following evidence to support an application for Special Examination Arrangements for a student with hearing impairment:

- a recent unaided audiogram and report from a qualified practitioner (for example, an ear, nose and throat specialist or audiologist) indicating a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss that is moderate, severe or profound

- a support statement with comments and recommendations from a specialist teacher, along with confirmation of the student's enrolment in either the Visiting Teacher Service or a hearing-impaired facility or school.

If this evidence is not available, the VCAA may contact the student's school to request other educational and testing information.

Students with a hearing impairment may be eligible for a clarifier to assist with their external assessments. A request for a clarifier for a student with a hearing impairment is unlikely to be approved if the student does not regularly utilise a clarifier or is not enrolled with the Visiting Teacher Service or a hearing-impaired facility or school.

It is the school's responsibility to plan appropriate seating arrangements in an external assessment so a student with a hearing impairment can clearly see the chief supervisor and follow any communications and messages during an external assessment. If specific technological devices, such as the Microlink assistive technology, are required, these should be requested in the application.

3.9 Vision impairment

The VCAA requires the following evidence to support an application for Special Examination Arrangements for a student with vision impairment:

- evidence of a moderate or severe vision impairment from either an ophthalmologist or the Educational Vision Assessment Clinic (EVAC)
- a supporting statement with comments and recommendations from a specialist teacher, along with confirmation of the student's enrolment with the Visiting Teacher Service.

If this evidence is not available, the VCAA may contact the student's school to request other educational and testing information.

If an alternative format examination paper is required (for example, enlarged print, Braille or an electronic examination), a specific request with details of font type, font sizes, format and any other recommendations from specialists should be clearly outlined for each external assessment in the application.

3.10 Sitting external assessments at home

Only in exceptional circumstances will the VCAA give approval for a student to sit an external assessment at home. Such circumstances would include cases of infectious disease or serious physical or psychological incapacity. All applications must be supported with an appropriate medical recommendation. Schools should contact VCAA Special Provision for advice prior to seeking this arrangement.

3.11 Emergency Special Examination Arrangements

Schools must submit an emergency application if a student experiences a sudden illness, accident or personal trauma immediately before or during the assessment period.

Medical evidence for emergency applications must contain:

- a diagnosis
- the date of diagnosis
- the date of onset
- an outline of symptoms and treatment
- comments on the likely effect of the illness or condition on the student's capacity to complete VCE external assessments
- any medical recommendations for particular Special Examination Arrangements.

As it does with all its Special Examination Arrangement decisions, the VCAA will apply consistent criteria when assessing emergency applications.

For situations that arise just prior to an assessment period, schools should use the **Emergency Special Examination Arrangements** application form. This form will be available as a VASS download two weeks prior to commencement of each assessment period for VCE external assessments.

If a student is ill on the day of, or during, an external assessment, the school should contact VCAA Special Provision to request and seek approval for immediate Emergency Special Examination Arrangements. Follow-up medical documentation must still be provided.

Schools that implement Emergency Special Examination Arrangements without applying for approval are in breach of the rules governing the conduct of VCE external assessments.

4 Derived Examination Scores (DES)

Students who are ill or affected by other personal circumstances at the time of a VCE external assessment and whose result is unlikely to be a fair or accurate indication of their learning or achievement in the study may apply for a DES. If their application is approved, a DES will be calculated by the VCAA.

The purpose of a DES is to ensure that a student's final result for an external assessment reflects as accurately as possible the level of achievement that would be expected based on the learning and achievement the student has demonstrated in the study over the academic year.

Students who experience the onset of an illness or the occurrence of an injury or personal trauma around an assessment period should discuss, with their VCE coordinator, a school application for Emergency Special Examination Arrangements, which may help them sit their VCE external assessments.

A DES should not be used to compensate for learning or achievement that has not been possible because of long-term illness or other ongoing conditions that have been present over the academic year. If an illness or personal circumstance has been so severe that a student has not been coping with the demands of the VCE, Compassionate Late Withdrawal or Interrupted Studies status should be considered.

A DES is not available for the GAT, Music Style and Composition Externally-assessed Task, or Extended Investigation Externally-assessed Task written report.

4.1 Eligibility for a DES

Students are only eligible for a DES for a VCE external assessment if they meet all of the following criteria:

- They have completed the course of study leading to the external assessment, and have a result for at least one other graded assessment in the same study.
- They experience the onset of an illness or the occurrence of an injury, personal trauma or serious intervening event in the period before or during a VCE external assessment that has either prevented them from attending the external assessment or affected their performance during the external assessment.
- They provide independent professional written evidence that demonstrates the illness, injury, personal trauma or serious intervening event has affected their performance in the external assessment or has prevented them from attending the external assessment.
- A 'personal trauma' may include, but is not limited to, the death or serious illness or an accident involving a family member, or family break-up.
- A 'serious intervening event' may include, but is not limited to, an accident on the way to or at an examination, attendance at a funeral of a family member or other person of close relationship, or the required attendance at a court proceeding.

Students cannot submit an application on the basis of:

- unfamiliarity with the English language
- teacher absence or other teacher-related difficulties

- long-term or chronic condition or illness
- matters that could have been avoided by the student, for example, misreading the examination timetable or instructions, or matters related to school discipline
- matters of the student's own choosing, such as involvement in social events, sporting or training activities, school events or volunteer work.

4.2 Evidence required for a DES application

The student must provide evidence that demonstrates one of the following:

- They were unable to perform on the external assessment at a level that accurately reflects their expected level of achievement in the study.
- They were prevented from sitting the examination at all.

Applications on the grounds of illness or injury must be substantiated with evidence from an independent health professional.

Applications on the grounds of personal trauma must be substantiated with evidence from one of the following:

- an independent health professional
- a social worker or member of the clergy.

Applications on the grounds of a serious intervening event must be substantiated with independent evidence from one of the following:

- an independent health professional
- a social worker or a member of the clergy
- a police officer, a solicitor or a funeral parlour operator.

In all circumstances, the person providing the evidence must have specific knowledge of the illness, injury, personal trauma or serious intervening event, must not be related to or have a close personal relationship with the student, and must have been professionally associated with the student's situation.

Evidence from school-based personnel must be supported by appropriate medical or professional evidence. The following conditions apply to each external assessment included in a DES application:

- If the student attended the external assessment, the person providing the evidence must have examined or treated the student or have been consulted by the student in a timely period before or after the external assessment. It is expected that a timely consultation would occur in the period from two days before the external assessment to one day after the external assessment.
- If the student did not attend the external assessment, the person providing the evidence must have examined or treated the student or have been consulted by the student in a timely period as close as possible to the day before the external assessment or on the same day as the external assessment. In the case of illness or injury, there must be a specific written recommendation from an independent health professional recommending non-attendance at the external assessment. In the case of a personal trauma or serious intervening event, there must be written evidence from an appropriate professional confirming the reason the student was unable to attend an external assessment.

4.3 How to make an application

Students who believe that they are eligible for a DES should first seek advice from their school. The primary responsibility for submitting an application that meets all eligibility criteria rests with the student. The VCAA will determine the student's eligibility for a DES from the supporting evidence supplied by the student.

What the student must do

The application form and the collection of supporting evidence is the responsibility of the student. The student must ensure that:

- they submit an application for each of the external assessments for which they are seeking a DES
- all required sections of the application are completed by them
- statements from the individuals providing the independent evidence are completed personally
- statements from other sources are completed as applicable
- the application is forwarded to the VCAA within seven days of the student's last external assessment in the relevant assessment period
- all the information provided is true and accurate
- they (or others known to them) have not completed or altered any information in the application
- their correct home address is registered with the school.

What the chief supervisor must do

The chief supervisor must complete Section B of the Individual Application.

What the independent health professional must do

Independent health professionals must complete Section C1 of the Individual Application. The evidence given by the independent health professional is of paramount importance, and must be current and applicable to each external assessment for which an application is being made. If a student does not attend an external assessment, there must be a definitive statement from an independent health professional recommending non-attendance at that external assessment. Refer to 'Evidence required for a DES application' for timeliness of consultations.

The independent health professional must provide contact details so that if the VCAA considers it necessary, it is able to seek additional information and/or evidence on the effect of the event or condition on the student's ability to perform.

What other appropriate professionals must do (if applicable)

Other appropriate professionals, such as social workers, clergy, police officers, solicitors or funeral parlour operators, must complete the appropriate section of the Individual Application.

They must also provide contact details so that if the VCAA considers it necessary, it is able to seek additional information and/or evidence on the effect of the event or condition on the student's ability to perform.

What the principal or principal's delegate must do

Specifically, the principal should:

- determine whether the application has merit
- determine whether it was the student's intention to undertake the external assessment
- provide any additional information relating to the authenticity of the application (for example, confirm attendance or illness, or relationship to a deceased friend or family member). Schools may include a copy of a student's attendance record or an indication of the number of days absent
- include their endorsement, or otherwise, based on available information for each external assessment for which a DES is being sought
- ensure that the student does not tamper with the application, or change material details
- ensure the VCE coordinator completes Section B of the Individual Application where necessary
- complete Section D of the Individual Application.

Submitting the application

Students should submit their application to their home school principal, who will consider the application and make a recommendation to the VCAA. If circumstances are of an exceptionally private and sensitive nature, students may apply directly to the VCAA. Students will still be required to provide evidence that meets the eligibility requirements. The VCAA reserves the right to contact the school when statements involving the school need to be verified.

Closing date for applications

The VCAA must receive an application no later than seven days after the student's last external assessment in the relevant assessment period. There are specific closing dates for each VCE external assessment. Students should refer to their individual Student Assessment Timetable, which provides their final dates for lodgement of applications for each VCE external assessment.

Only in the most exceptional circumstances will late applications be considered. No applications will be considered by the VCAA after final VCE results have been released.

Attendance at VCE external assessments

Students are advised to attend every external assessment if at all possible. Students should not miss an external assessment merely because they do not feel able to do their best. The DES is designed for students who have completed the course leading to the external assessment, but have performed below expectations or cannot attend due to adverse circumstances. The VCAA does not expect a student to attend an external assessment against specific written medical advice.

If a student is ill, but able to attend the external assessment, they should inform their VCE coordinator and/or chief supervisor of their condition as soon as possible before or during the external assessment.

Non-attendance at external assessments

If a student cannot attend an external assessment, it is imperative that they notify their principal or VCE coordinator immediately. A student who does not attend an external assessment, and whose application is not approved, will receive an NA for the external assessment.

4.4 Assessing the application

All applications will be assessed by a panel, based on the evidence presented and any additional information obtained by the VCAA. A decision will be determined for each of the external assessments included in the application. Students will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing, and their school will receive an email outlining the outcome of the student's application, which is also recorded on VASS.

For each approved application for a specific external assessment, the VCAA will:

- calculate a range of possible DES scores, which will be calculated statistically from the student's other assessments, including moderated School-based Assessments, GAT scores, other examination scores, if applicable, and indicative grades provided by the school
- record the DES as the final score if the highest possible DES score is greater than the achieved external assessment score
- use this final score to determine the grade for the external assessment
- use this final score to calculate the study score
- report the calculated study score on the student's Statement of Results
- report this study score to VTAC for the calculation of the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

For each application for a specific external assessment that is not approved, the VCAA will provide reasons the application was not successful.

If an application is not approved, the VCAA will allow the student the opportunity to submit a second application if the second application:

- provides additional evidence of the student's condition or circumstances relevant to the external assessment that materially adds to the evidence submitted with the original application
- is received at the VCAA no later than seven days from the date of the VCAA decision letter.

4.5 Group applications

The principal of the home school may apply for a DES for a group of students for a particular external assessment or all external assessments for the student population. This group may be all students enrolled in a particular study at the school, or a class group, or any other group in which each member has been affected by a particular event.

Group applications are usually related to an event that has had a substantial effect on a student group (for example, the death of a fellow student or a teacher). If the event has affected a particular external assessment, the effect will be considered as restricted to that external assessment. The events occurring around one external assessment cannot necessarily be considered to have an effect on a student, or students, for another external assessment. Group applications would also be appropriate if there is an exceptional circumstance that affects a school community, such as a natural disaster or pandemic.

A group application does not preclude a student from submitting an individual application for a DES for each specified external assessment.

If group applications are made, the principal must identify the level of effect on each student, that is, how the incident affected the group and/or specific individuals within the group. It is strongly recommended that the school principal contacts VCAA Special Provision for advice prior to submitting a group DES application.