

VCAA Principles, guidelines and procedures for prescribed VCE text lists

1. Preamble

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) manages the procedures associated with the compilation of text lists for study in Units 3 and 4 of selected VCE Studies.

The VCAA will ensure the requirements of quality assurance, transparency of process, accountability, and the community's expectations and standards for senior secondary education are met.

The guidelines in this document are consistent with the *Principles and guidelines for the development and review of VCE studies*, 'Section 2 – Curriculum and assessment principles for VCE studies' (VCAA, 2013).

The procedures for compilation of text lists establish a common process for the constitution and operation of text advisory panels and for the establishment and use of timelines to ensure completion of lists and timely notification to VCE providers and other key stakeholders.

This document acknowledges the range of meanings attached to the term 'text' across VCE Studies and the differing roles, purposes, and uses for text lists within individual VCE Studies.

The Authority reserves the right to reject a particular text (or texts) recommended by the advisory panels for English/EAL, Literature, Drama and Theatre Studies and other VCE studies where there are prescribed lists. The final decision about compilation of selected text lists resides with the Board of the VCAA.

2. Principles underpinning VCAA selection of texts for VCE text lists

Text advice for a VCE study must be consistent with the *Principles and guidelines for the development and review of VCE studies*, 'Section 2 – Curriculum and assessment principles for VCE studies' (VCAA, 2013).

The recommendations from each VCE text advisory panel must be consistent with, and reflect, the VCE curriculum principles (2.2) and VCE assessment principles (2.3) as outlined in Section 2 of the *Principles and guidelines for the development and review of VCE studies*.

The following **VCE curriculum principles** should underpin text recommendations, as relevant to each specific study:

- optimise curriculum connections and pathways
- support and promote democratic and community values and the national interest
- balance challenge and expectation with the needs of the individual
- draw on traditional and contemporary examples, contexts and settings, problems and issues
- require higher order thinking, critical reflection, analysis and synthesis
- promote investigation of the beliefs, values and inquiry associated with the fields underpinning a study.

The following **VCE assessment principles** should underpin text recommendations. Assessment tasks should enable:

- the demonstration of the achievement of an outcome or set of outcomes
- judgment and reporting of a level of achievement on a task or collection of tasks for School-assessed Coursework or examinations.

Assessment will be valid, fair and reasonable, equitable, balanced and efficient.

3. Guidelines and procedures for text advisory panels

3.1. Guidelines for text advisory panels

The following guidelines apply to text advice for individual studies and are designed to ensure that the final text list is consistent with the *Principles and guidelines for the development and review of VCE studies*, 'Section 2 – Curriculum and assessment principles for VCE studies' (VCAA, 2013), and the community's expectations and standards for senior secondary education.

3.1.1. Enable the requirements of the study to be met

The purposes of prescribed texts in the VCE study are reflected in the VCE study design and the study specific guidelines. The prescribed texts enable the requirements of the study to be met.

3.1.2. Reflect excellence

In accordance with the role of text in the VCE study, the recommended texts must reflect excellence in the qualities particular to that study; for example in form, genre, style, translation, theme, as appropriate to the individual study.

3.1.3. Be of an appropriate level and standard

The texts recommended should allow teachers to build on and extend the knowledge and skills students acquired in the compulsory years, and to develop higher order thinking and skills. Texts should be comparable to national and international standards for senior secondary education and provide reasonable and manageable workloads for students.

3.1.4. Be accessible and widely available

Texts must provide the opportunity for all students, regardless of their circumstances, to demonstrate the highest level of performance in their learning and assessments. The recommended texts must enable the published assessment criteria to be met and provide access to the highest levels. The translations and editions selected must be widely available and affordable.

3.1.5. Be revised regularly

The text list will be revised regularly with the proportion to be renewed specified in the study specific guidelines. The duration of a text's inclusion on a list must enable the VCAA authentication and external assessment requirements to be met.

3.1.6. Provide choice

Within the requirements of the VCE study, the list as a whole should provide sufficient breadth to meet the needs of a wide range of students. Recommended texts should draw on traditional and contemporary examples where appropriate.

3.1.7. Enable study of texts by or about Australians, and reflect Australia's engagement with Asia where relevant

Within the requirements of the study, the list as a whole should enable the study of texts by or about Australians including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the study of texts that reflect Australia's engagement with Asia.

3.1.8. Meet authentication and duplication requirements

The VCAA specifications for VCE studies require that duplication of content and student learning does not occur. Students must not be able to receive credit for achieving a particular outcome or submit work for assessment in more than one VCE study. Recommended texts must not allow duplication of learning in another VCE study.

3.1.9. Meet community standards and expectations

Panels should ensure that all texts available for study are appropriate to the age and development of students undertaking senior secondary study, in a way that reflects community standards and expectations.

Texts that contain any of the following are likely to be unsuitable, regardless of literary or dramatic merit:

- sustained realistic depictions of violence or physical, psychological or sexual abuse
- sustained, gratuitous use of coarse language that cannot be justified by the context
- subject matter that appears to promote or normalise the abuse of alcohol, the use of illegal drugs, or other illegal behaviour.

In determining the appropriateness of texts that deal with controversial themes or subject matter panels should consider the following questions:

- Where coarse language is used in a text, whether by a narrator or through characterisation, is this justified as part of its authenticity or context, and is such language otherwise generally avoided?

- Where a text depicts mature social and sexual relationships, is this subject matter dealt with in a way that will enable affirming and constructive exploration of related issues during close study?
- Where a text contains subject matter representing personal or social violence, including bullying, domestic violence or family breakdown, is it framed in a way that can be constructively dealt with during close study?
- Where a text depicts historical or contemporary events including natural disaster, war, terrorism or other events that may have affected students or their families, will students and teachers be able to deal with its setting, characters or themes in an affirming way during close study?
- Where a text depicts acts of oppression, exploitation, discrimination on religious or other grounds, racism, sexism, or abuses of the human rights of particular groups, does the text allow for the exploration of a range of perspectives and will teachers be able to provide a range of material to support exploration of the issues?
- Where a text contains subject matter related to contentious political or historical issues, does the text invite exploration of alternative points of view and, if not, will teachers be able to ensure that other perspectives are incorporated during close study?

3.1.10. Be, on balance, affirming and inclusive

The text list as a whole, must represent affirming perspectives and be non-discriminatory and inclusive.

3.2. Procedures for text advisory panels

3.2.1. Establishing a text advisory panel

- Panels will consist of between five and 12 members (depending on the size of the study) and will meet regularly within a specified time period within a given year.
- Members may reapply for panel membership up to four consecutive times.
- The VCAA reserves the right to extend the membership period.
- Failure to attend two consecutive meetings of the panel without good reason will be grounds for discontinuing membership.
- Panel members will be appointed from schools, universities, the training sector and other sectors as appropriate. Panels should be balanced in their representation of gender, rural and regional locations.
- The curriculum manager will chair the panel and the chair of the examination setting panel and/or the chief assessor (or their representatives) will be automatically appointed to the panel.
- The chairperson and members of the text advisory panel must ensure that they are familiar with the details of the currently accredited study design, and in particular, with the role of text within it.
- Members will be chosen from those who apply through the VCAA Sessional Staff Management System (SSMS) and where appropriate, others may be invited to apply.

Selection of panel members will be undertaken using the following selection criteria:

- knowledge of the study design and the role of text within the study
- experience in teaching and assessing the study
- other relevant qualifications and experience
- willingness to perform the functions required until the completion of the advisory process
- willingness to agree to the terms of reference of the committee, including terms of confidentiality; in particular, panel members will acknowledge their unique position by asserting that they will not seek to personally profit as a result of the selection and future use of any particular text.

Individual members will be chosen according to the above criteria and having regard for the need for balanced representation.

The curriculum manager will short-list applicants in consultation with the VCE unit manager, or nominated representative. The curriculum manager will submit a final list of candidates for approval by VCAA senior management.

3.2.2. Meeting procedures

Text advisory panels will meet at the VCAA at times determined by the curriculum manager and agreed to by panel members.

The curriculum manager will chair and manage the text advisory panel, communicating by email including agendas and minutes or summaries of panel decisions.

To assist in deliberation the panel may request some formal evaluation of the success of established text lists and will seek to reach consensus about proposed confirmation, additions, or amendments. Where there is disagreement within the panel and consensus cannot be reached, that concern should be noted in writing by the panel chair.

The text advisory panel will produce a formal record of the final meeting in which the final list of prescribed texts is recommended for approval.

The proposed final text list will be referred to the Board of the VCAA or its delegates following endorsement by VCAA senior management.

The work of the text advisory panel will be completed so as to enable timely notification of prescribed texts to VCE providers.

3.2.3. Review and evaluation

Curriculum managers, with assistance from examination project managers and/or chief assessors, review the assessment data on an annual basis to evaluate student performance and the impact of text selection on student learning and outcomes. The data informs the work of each text advisory panel and the ongoing evaluation of the role of text in each VCE study and in improving student learning and outcomes.

3.2.4. Nomination and recommendation procedures

Details provided in Appendix 1.

4. Study specific criteria and guidelines

For those studies with a prescribed list associated with study of Units 3 and 4, study-specific criteria and guidelines are developed in accordance with the *Curriculum and Assessment Principles for VCE Studies*, at the time that the VCE study is reviewed. Study-specific criteria and guidelines for compiling a VCE text list accompany each approved text list and are published in the *VCAA Bulletin*, *VCE*, *VCAL* and *VET*. Each VCE study design specifies the range and number of texts required.

An example of study specific criteria and guidelines, as published annually with a VCE study text list, is provided in Appendix 2.

The guidelines and criteria published annually with the VCE English/EAL text list provide a proforma for other VCE study specific guidelines.

5. Text selection – advice to schools

The relevant VCE study design and the *VCAA Bulletin*, *VCE*, *VCAL* and *VET* provide advice to schools about text selection. Texts selected for study in Units 3 and 4 will be selected by schools from the prescribed lists published on the VCAA website. Each text list is accompanied by a note to schools regarding the selection of texts in line with the values and sensitivities of the school community.

Appendix 1

VCE English/EAL and VCE Literature text list nomination and recommendation procedures

The following guidelines apply to the nomination of texts by external stakeholders and the recommendation of texts by VCE English/EAL and VCE Literature text advisory panels.

Nominations of texts for study will be called for in the first half of Term 3 (dates to be determined each year) in the relevant editions of the *VCAA Bulletin*, *VCE*, *VCAL* and *VET*, but advance notice will be given to teachers and other relevant stakeholders in Term 2.

Stakeholders, including teachers and publishers, will have the opportunity to offer titles considered worthy for study in any text category in which there is a vacancy, such as: novels, collections of short stories, poetry/songs, plays, multimodal texts (including films), and non-fiction texts. Vacancies are created when a text is rotating off the text list.

Text nominations will be made against the published criteria using an online survey facility provided by the VCAA and overseen by the Curriculum Manager.

At the close of nominations, the Curriculum Manager will make the full list of nominated texts available to the text advisory panel.

Nominations from the public will not be accepted at any other time. However, the text advisory panel members are able to nominate texts at any time.

Throughout the year, appropriate texts will be reviewed and discussed by panel members against the criteria and in accordance with the *Principles and guidelines for the development and review of VCE studies*, 'Section 2 – Curriculum and assessment principles for VCE studies' (VCAA, 2013). Each panel member will have an opportunity to express his/her view on the text. Discussions and recommendations will be minuted.

For each text that the panel recommends to the VCAA Board for inclusion on the text list, a summary of comments against the criteria and guidelines will be submitted.

Appendix 2

Example of study specific criteria and guidelines, VCE English/EAL

Texts are selected in accordance with the following criteria and guidelines.

Criteria for text selection

Each text selected for the VCE English/EAL text lists will:

- have literary merit and be worthy of close study
- be an excellent example of form and genre
- sustain intensive study, raising interesting issues and providing challenging ideas
- be appropriate for both male and female students
- be appropriate for the age and development of students and, in that context, reflect current community standards and expectations.

The text list as a whole will:

- be suitable for a wide range of students, including second language students
- reflect the cultural diversity of the Victorian community
- include a balance of new and established works
- include texts that display affirming perspectives
- include texts by or about Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- reflect engagement with Asia.

Guidelines for text selection

The text list for VCE English and EAL must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The text list must contain a total of 36 texts:
 - 20 for List 1: Reading and creating texts
 - 16 for List 2: Reading and comparing texts (eight pairs).
- List 1 must represent a range of texts in the following approximate proportions:
 - eight novels
 - two collections of short stories
 - two collections of poetry or songs
 - three plays
 - three multimodal texts**
 - two non-fiction texts.

**Multimodal texts are defined as combining two or more communication modes, for example, print, image and spoken text, as in films or graphic novels.

- List 2 must include eight pairs that:
 - are connected by themes, issues and ideas
 - represent a range of texts, such as novels, short stories, poetry, plays, multimodal (including film) and non-fiction
 - include a range of combinations of texts, such as a novel and a film or a non-fiction text and a play.

For **VCE EAL students only**, one text in each pair will be nominated for achievement of Unit 3 Outcome 1: Reading and creating texts.

- The text list must also contain:
 - at least five texts for List 1 and four texts for List 2 by Australian authors
 - print and multimodal texts that are widely available
 - titles that are different from those on the VCE Literature text list.
- The text list must be reviewed annually, with approximately 25 per cent of the texts being changed. No text will appear for more than four consecutive years or fewer than two years. Note that List 2 will have no changes in the second year of implementation, that is, 2018. Pairs of texts on List 2 will be reviewed and rotations will begin in the third year of implementation, that is, 2019.
- Texts will be accompanied by full bibliographic details where necessary.