

# VCAA Special Provision 2003

This liftout provides further details regarding Derived Examination Scores for VCE students in 2003 and information on VTAC provisions for students who are affected by chronic circumstances in their final year of VCE study.

## Introduction

The role of the VCAA is to conduct assessments of students' achievements in order to determine the most accurate measures of those achievements. The VCAA's Special Provision policy recognises that individual students may need special provisions in how their assessments are conducted and determined in order to demonstrate their learning and achievement. The Derived Examination Score (DES) is one of those provisions.

The DES is calculated statistically from the student's other assessments in the study, their GAT scores and Indicative Grades. If the DES is higher than the student's actual examination score, the student receives the DES as the final examination score.

This liftout has been prepared following the processing of applications for Derived Examination Scores for the June examinations by the VCAA and in conjunction with VTAC.

It has been written to assist students and school staff to make the best possible use of the VCAA's special provisions to accurately measure a student's achievement.

For further information on the VCAA's Special Provision policy, please refer to the *Special Provisions in Curriculum and Assessment Policy 2003* that was distributed to schools early in the year, available as a VASS download and on the VCAA website [www.vcaa.vic.edu.au](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au)

## VCAA Derived Examination Scores 2003

The DES is intended for the student who is ill or affected by other personal circumstances at the time of an examination and whose examination result is unlikely to be a fair or accurate indication of their learning or achievement in the study.

The purpose of a DES is to ensure that a student's final result on an examination reflects as accurately as possible the level of achievement that would be expected based on the learning and achievement he/she has demonstrated in his/her study over the year/semester.

The DES is not intended 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 year.

Students cannot receive a DES for long-term or chronic illness or circumstances. For these conditions students must ascertain whether they meet eligibility criteria under institutional special entry schemes and/or the VTAC Chronic Circumstances Application. Further information about the Chronic Circumstances Application form 2004 will be available later this year.

## Eligibility for a Derived Examination Score

Students are eligible for a DES if they can demonstrate that illness, personal trauma or other circumstances occurring immediately before or during the examination period has affected their performance on an examination or has prevented them from attending an examination.

'Immediately before' applies to the two-week period prior to a performance, oral or October LOTE written examination or the first written examination in the June or November examination period. This is the period in which the student must demonstrate, with evidence, that he/she has been adversely affected by the illness or personal circumstances. Depending on the nature of the illness/circumstances, consideration will be given to situations occurring or arising prior to this period, but where the effect on the student is still demonstrably evident at the time of the examination.

The key to eligibility for a DES is that the student must demonstrate that at the time of the examination, or in the period just prior to it, he/she experienced circumstances that:

- would prevent the student performing on the examination at a level that accurately reflects his/her real achievement in the study
- or
- prevented the student from sitting the examination at all.

This must be substantiated with evidence from an independent professional (for example, doctor, social worker, police officer or solicitor). The professional must have specific knowledge of the student's circumstances, must not be related to the student and must have been professionally associated with the student's situation. Other evidence from the Chief Supervisor, appropriate school-based personnel and the Principal must also be provided.

Conditions over a longer period that have affected a student's capacity to study and therefore to achieve in the study do not constitute grounds for being granted a DES. However, a flare up or acute/active phase of a chronic condition that occurs in the period before or during the examinations may be grounds for approving a DES application.

Students cannot apply on the basis of:

- absence from school or study for prolonged periods
- unfamiliarity with the English language
- long-term loss of examination preparation time
- teacher absence or other teacher related difficulties
- conditions that have been present for the entire year.

- matters that could have been avoided, e.g. misreading the examination timetable or examination instructions, situations or matters of the student's own choosing such as involvement in social events, sporting or training activities.
- the same grounds for which the student has received special examination arrangements, unless additional difficulties are evident during the examination.

In applying these rules to individual cases, a common sense approach that is fair, reasonable and consistent for all students is needed. Decisions will be guided by the following factors:

#### **When the illness or event occurred and its immediacy to the examination/s in question**

The two week period prior to the examination period takes account of the fact that a student's study for examinations may be hindered or prevented; however, the fact that the illness or event occurred within the two weeks before an examination is not sufficient grounds for a DES on its own.

If a student has had two or more weeks recovery time before the examination, it is reasonable to expect that this should be sufficient for most students to make up lost ground and that they are well enough to sit the examination.

Illnesses and other circumstances that occur late in Term 3 or early in Term 4 may increase pressure on students during the final weeks of the year. These may require special examination arrangements such as access to medication, rest breaks or additional time. Such arrangements would ordinarily neutralise the impact of the circumstances and therefore the student would be ineligible for a DES.

#### **The duration of the illness or personal circumstances**

The length of time that the student has been affected must be stated.

#### **The impact on the student's examination performance**

To what extent is the student's examination performance likely to be lower than what could be expected from the student's level of achievement during the year?

The evidence given by the independent professional is of paramount importance.

It must be current and applicable to each examination for which an application is being made.

Medical and other independent professional reports must contain:

- the date of onset and duration of the condition including dates of all consultations for the condition.
- a factual account of the symptoms the student is suffering at the time of the consultation
- the effect that these symptoms have had on the student's ability to perform on that examination
- the effect that these symptoms will have on the student's ability to prepare for or complete a subsequent examination. If it is not clear that the student will be

impaired for a future examination in the following days then further medical or other independent evidence will be required for that particular examination.

A key factor in determining eligibility for a DES is the time interval between the medical or professional consultation and the examination in question. For many illnesses or situations, it is unlikely that a student's symptoms and the effects of these symptoms could reasonably be predicted for an examination that is several days before or after the consultation. If the medical or professional report does not contain sufficient and conclusive evidence of the effect of the symptoms *at the time of the examination*, the VCAA will not approve the application for a DES.

Students should be advised to obtain a medical or professional report as close as possible to the date of the examination. This is especially important if the student does not sit the examination, or if the onset of the condition is two or more weeks prior to the examination.

For example, a medical or professional report based on one consultation for a brief illness will not necessarily be sufficient evidence of adverse impact on an examination sat by the student a week or more later.

#### **Attendance at Examinations**

Students should be advised to attend examinations if at all possible; however, they should not do so against medical advice. They should not miss an examination merely because they do not feel able to do their best.

A student who does not attend an examination and whose application for DES is not approved will receive NA for the examination.

The following case studies are used to illustrate how the eligibility rules apply in specific circumstances. Unless otherwise stated, assume that the student's application is supported with appropriate independent professional evidence.

### **Case Studies**

#### **CASE 1**

A student suffers a 24-hour viral infection causing acute gastroenteritis the day before his examination on Monday. The student has recovered by Monday and sits his examination. His next examination is on Thursday.

#### **Comment**

The student is eligible for a DES for his examination on Monday on the grounds that the physical effect of the illness affected his examination performance and preparation. He would not be eligible for his Thursday examination as it is deemed that he has sufficient time to make up lost ground caused by the illness. If his next examination had been on the Tuesday or Wednesday, the doctor would need to certify how the student's symptoms would affect his performance on that examination.

## **CASE 2**

A student is ill and confined to bed for the three days prior to her examination and on the day of her examination. She sits her next examination two days later and her doctor describes her symptoms and certifies that they have affected her performance on the examination.

### ***Comment***

The student is eligible for a DES for both examinations.

## **CASE 3**

A student becomes ill at the start of the two-week period before his written examinations commence. The doctor states that the student's illness hindered his examination study for three days.

### ***Comment***

Not eligible for a DES. Although the student was ill during the two-week period prior to his examinations, it was of short duration and there was sufficient time for the student to make up any lost ground.

## **CASE 4**

A student becomes ill with glandular fever four weeks prior to the start of her November examinations. Her examinations are spread across the three weeks of the written examinations. Her doctor states that her symptoms will affect her examination study and her performance on all examinations. The doctor's report is dated four weeks before the examinations started.

### ***Comment***

In the absence of more specific information from the doctor, the student is ineligible for a DES on the grounds that the doctor's examination and report occurred more than two weeks before her first examination and is providing advice in relation to examinations that are more than a month and up to seven weeks after the consultation. In order to be considered eligible, the student would need a further report from her doctor at the time of her first examination and the doctor would need to describe her symptoms at that time and their effect on her examinations.

## **CASE 5**

The parent of a student is diagnosed with a terminal condition in August and deteriorates rapidly from August to the start of the written examination period in late October. Periods of hospitalisation occur and the student has to accept major emotional and domestic responsibility for his three younger brothers and sisters as well as look after his mother.

### ***Comment***

The rapid deterioration and periods of hospitalisation would be supported by medical reports and school reports on the impact on the student and would place the impact of some or all of the incidents on the student's performance in the two-week period before the examinations. In this situation the student would be eligible for a DES.

## **CASE 6**

A student is diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome at the end of Year 11. The condition causes impaired concentration due to fatigue and lower endurance for writing and completion of extended tasks. The condition has gradually improved over the year, although a relapse occurred midway through the year.

### ***Comment***

The student is not eligible for a DES for the end-of-year examinations on the grounds that the condition has been present for the entire year. There has been no demonstrated additional impact on the examinations – the effect of the symptoms on the examinations is no different from the effects throughout the year.

The student would be eligible for special examination arrangements such as additional time and rest breaks to counteract fatigue, impaired concentration and lower endurance.

If the student had any June examinations at the time the midyear relapse occurred, he/she would be eligible for a DES for those examinations if supported by appropriate medical evidence.

## **CASE 7**

A student is absent for an examination in order to attend his grandfather's funeral. The funeral notice from the newspaper is submitted as the supporting evidence and is confirmed by the school.

### ***Comment***

The student is eligible for a DES for that examination. Additional professional evidence on the effect of the bereavement on the student would be necessary if he wished to apply for any other examinations.

## **CASE 8**

A Year 11 student is killed in a car accident in the week before the November written examinations. His older sister is in Year 12. A number of students are very distressed as a result of the death.

### ***Comment***

The student's sister is eligible for a DES for all of her November examinations. The school should make a Group Application for the other students who are affected. Individual students who are more affected than others should also make an individual application.

## **CASE 9**

A student is involved in a car accident on his way to his first examination on Monday; he has a second examination on Monday afternoon and further examinations on Tuesday and Thursday. The student is badly shaken with minor injuries (seat belt bruising), arrives 40 minutes late for the first examination and after consultation with VCE Coordinator decides to sit the examination. The student is

still shaken and in physical discomfort for the afternoon session but sits his second examination.

**Comment**

The student is eligible for Derived Examination Scores for both Monday examinations. Further professional evidence on the effects of the accident would be required for consideration of eligibility for the Tuesday and Thursday examinations. For the first examination, the student must also complete a Statutory Declaration, stating they have not seen or had any access to the examination prior to sitting their examination.

**CASE 10**

A student is unwell but attends her examination. During the examination she spends 15 minutes in the toilet, as verified by the Supervisor. She submits a report from her doctor that confirms she was ill at the time of the examination.

**Comment**

The student is given an extra 15 minutes to complete her examination to compensate for the time spent in the toilet and is eligible for a DES.

**CASE 11**

A student's sister died suddenly and unexpectedly at the beginning of the examination period last year. The student has not had cause to have Special Provision granted over the current year but as the examinations are drawing closer, she is experiencing periods of anxiety and distress. The student has been prescribed medication to alleviate the symptoms of anxiety/distress in the week before the examinations. The day of the English examination is the anniversary of the sister's death. The student is finding it difficult to compose herself for the examination and requires extra time and separate supervision.

**Comment**

The student is eligible to apply for the DES even though the event precipitating the symptoms occurred in the previous year. The student is able to demonstrate that she is suffering the severe symptoms at the time of her examination and the steps taken to alleviate the condition have not been entirely successful.

**CASE 12**

A student claims he was unwell with migraines and nausea 14 days prior to their examination and was still feeling unwell during the examination. He submits a report from his doctor dated 12 days prior to the examination which states that the student had gastroenteritis over the last two days and this 'may impact on the student's performance in the examination'.

**Comment**

The student DES application will not be approved, as the medical evidence of the effect of the illness is not conclusive ('may impact'). If the student submitted an appeal that provided further medical evidence that the illness had adversely affected his preparation for and performance on the examination, the appeal would be upheld and his DES application would then be approved.

**VTAC procedures for Chronic Circumstances 2004**

If, while studying Year 12 this year, a student's studies have been affected by chronic circumstances of disadvantage and these circumstances have impaired his/her performance in external examinations, students may apply to have this information brought to the attention of selection officers.

The Chronic Circumstances Application form will be available for students to complete for this purpose. The information provided by the student on the form will need to be certified by the school Principal.

VTAC will refer the student's information to institutions where the student has not already received a derived examination score/s from VCAA on account of the particular circumstances of disadvantage.

Institutions will take account of the information supplied in accordance with their individual admissions policies. These policies will be published on the VTAC website later in the year.

Further information about eligibility criteria and application procedures will be published on the VTAC website in late October.

For further advice on Derived Examination Scores, contact the Project Manager, Special Provision, VCAA on (03) 9811 6238 or [byrt.christine.e@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:byrt.christine.e@edumail.vic.gov.au)



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