

# VCAA Bulletin Supplement 1

## VCE Data Service

### The VCE Data Service will soon be one year old

#### What is the VCE Data Service?

The VCE Data Service (VCEDS) was developed in 2002, and some hundreds of teachers learned about it through professional development sessions held across Victoria in November last year. In late January 2003, the 2002 VCE results were loaded in the system, and since then, all schools have had access to a wide range of reports on their VCE performance. The 2003 results will be incorporated into the system from the end of January 2004, and another series of professional development sessions is being planned to ensure schools know the range of information that is available to them, and how it can be accessed. The VCEDS is accessed through the Victorian Administrative Software System (VASS), and each school has been assigned two authorised users.

#### What information does VCEDS provide?

The VCEDS provides online access on a confidential basis to your own school data, and enables you to generate reports on whole-school performance across all studies, in any one Key Learning Area (KLA), or in a single study. The reports can focus on study scores, on rates of satisfactory completion, or on study scores of 40 and over. In the case of study scores, you may wish to look at the actual scores obtained, or at scores adjusted to even out differences in your school cohort from year to year. You may compare your school's performance in any study, or overall, with all schools, with schools in your sector, or (in the case of schools in the government and catholic sectors), with your own 'Like School' group.

Schools are now able to design their own analyses by introducing comparisons unique to their school. For example, one school might like to see results broken down by campus, another by language background, and another by class groupings. Comparisons between the performance of males and females are, of course, routinely provided.

For each report, VCEDS provides users with a choice of a graph, a table, or both. These reports may be sent directly to the printer, or pasted into another application, such as a MS Word document. In this way, schools can use VCEDS to report publicly to parents, or confidentially to department heads or individual teachers. With the information provided through VCEDS, schools are able to examine all aspects of their students' achievements in a more detailed way than ever before, and to use the knowledge they gain to identify problems and build upon their strengths.

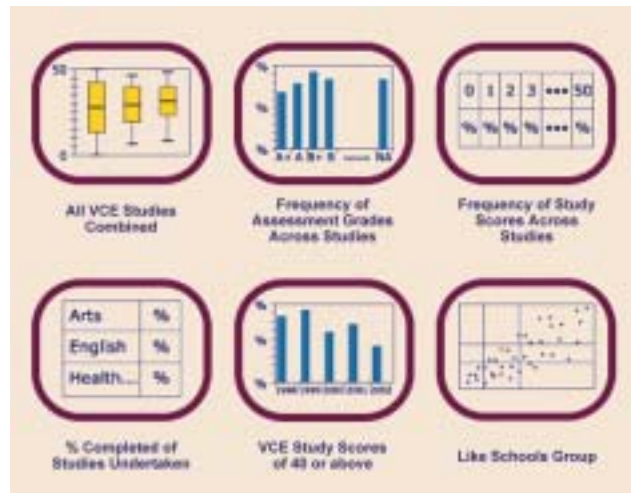


The VCEDS is designed to function within the framework of Victorian privacy legislation, and does not allow access to individual student data, which is provided separately to the school under the normal arrangements. The VCEDS provides summary reports to each school about the performance of its students in relation to all schools, schools within its sector, schools within its Like School grouping, and with the previous five years. This information is confidential to the school and cannot be accessed by other schools or other individuals.

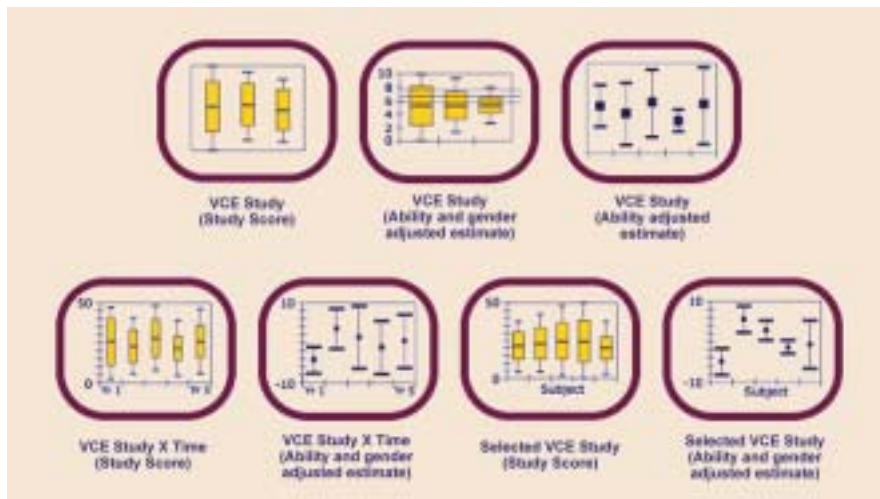
### How is the information obtained?

The VASS coordinator, or another authorised user in the school, enters VCEDS through an item on the VASS menu. On entry to the system, the user is presented with menus showing the types of report that can be produced. These include reports on overall performance across all studies, on studies grouped by KLA, or on single studies. The two menus that provide access to these reports are shown below.

#### Combined Study Reports



#### Individual Study Reports

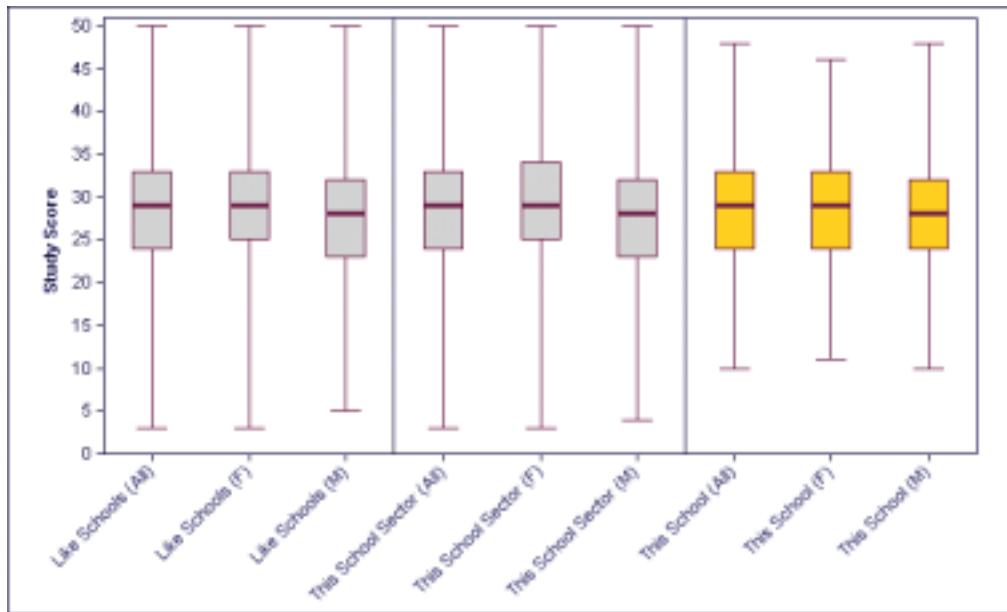


Through these two menus, the whole range of VCEDS reports can be accessed.

## Overall achievement

Schools may wish to assess their overall performance across all studies, and they may wish to see how it compares with schools in their sector or their Like School group. This option presents them with a chart, like this:

**All VCE Studies Combined  
2002 Test College**



and a table, like this:

**All VCE Studies Combined  
2002 Test College**

	No of Students	No of Studies	Min	25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	50 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile	Max
All Schools – All Students	262044	109	3	25	30	35	50
All Schools – Females	142462	108	3	26	31	35	50
All Schools – Males	119582	105	4	24	29	34	50
Like Schools within Sector – All Students	29380	79	3	24	28	33	50
Like Schools within Sector – Females	16380	73	3	25	29	33	50
Like Schools within Sector – Males	13000	72	5	23	28	32	50
This School – All Students	1518	19	10	24	29	33	48
This School – Females	882	19	11	24	29	33	46
This School – Males	636	19	10	24	28	32	48

All VCEDS charts are accompanied by tables presenting the data that were used to generate the chart. School staff wishing to paste VCEDS reports into publications such as Annual Reports can choose to include a chart, a table, or both. The user decides whether to set up complex comparisons, or to keep the information simple. Gender comparisons, for example, are often helpful, but they can sometimes complicate the picture. If you don't want them, don't click the button.

## Completion rates

Reports can show completion rates for every study, for selected studies or by KLA. The output from a selective request is shown below.

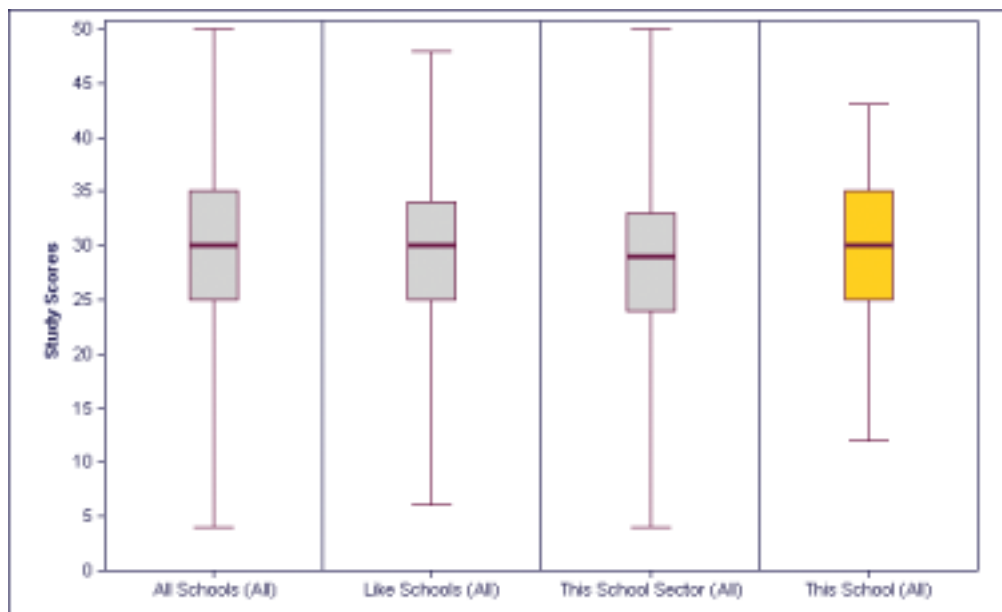
### Selected VCE Studies 2002 Test College

Code	Study	NA	Completed	Total	% Completed
<b>Science</b>					
BI03	Biology	0	94	94	100.0%
CH03	Chemistry	0	37	37	100.0%
PH03	Physics	0	38	38	100.0%
PY03	Psychology	0	89	89	100.0%
<b>Studies of Society and Environment</b>					
AC03	Accounting	0	39	39	100.0%
BM03	Business Management	1	99	100	99.0%
LS03	Legal Studies	0	66	66	100.0%
<b>The Arts</b>					
DR03	Drama	0	38	38	100.0%
SA03	Studio Arts	1	38	39	97.4%
VC03	Visual Communication and Design	0	46	46	100.0%

## Achievement in a single study

The distribution of a study scores in a single study can be shown in a chart such as the one below

### Business Management Study Scores 2002 Test College



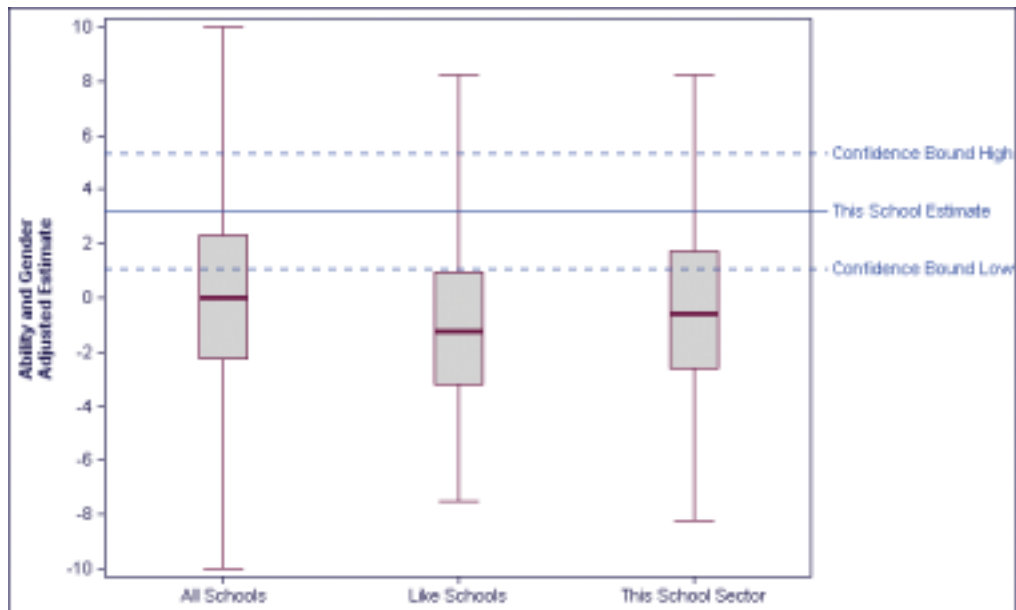
From this, school staff might note that the median level of study scores matches that of the state and slightly exceeds that of the Like School group. The proportion of very high achievers and very low achievers is not as high as it is in these reference groups. This would not be an unusual result.

## Adjustments for gender and ability

The school may still want to ask 'Is this good enough?' To help schools address this question, another series of reports is provided. In general, we would expect higher performance from a group of students if their general ability is high (as reflected in their high General Achievement Test (GAT) scores). We would also expect higher achievement from a group of students if they attend a school in which the general level of ability is high. And we have learned to expect higher average performance from a class that is predominantly female than from one that is predominantly male, even when all the indications are that they are equal in ability.

So VCEDS allows you to compare your school's performance in any study with Like Schools, or with schools in your sector *after* making adjustments for these factors. Consider the example below, which refers to the same students as that in the chart on the previous page.

### Business Management Ability and Gender Adjusted Estimates 2002 Test College



The solid blue line shows an estimate of the performance of Test College students in Business Management in 2002 compared to what might have been expected given their GAT performance, and the proportions of males and females studying Business Management. In this figure, zero on the vertical scale represents performance as expected, positive numbers represent performance higher than expected and negative numbers represent performance below expectation.

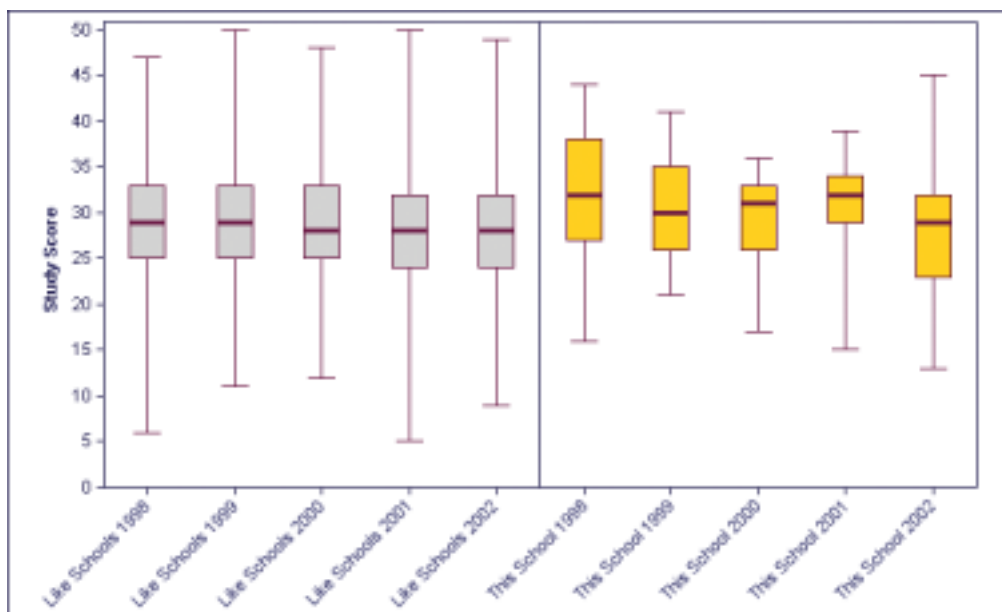
From this chart we learn that these students have achieved above expectations, and better, in general, than other students in their sector or their Like School group. The Business Management teachers in Test College have good reason to be pleased with their students' results, even though their study scores were very close to average.

After a year's experience, we have learned not to expect that this pattern will be the same across all studies offered in a school. Often some studies will gain results above expectations and others below expectations. There is much to be learned from this information, and schools eager to find out how and where they can improve their performance study it very carefully.

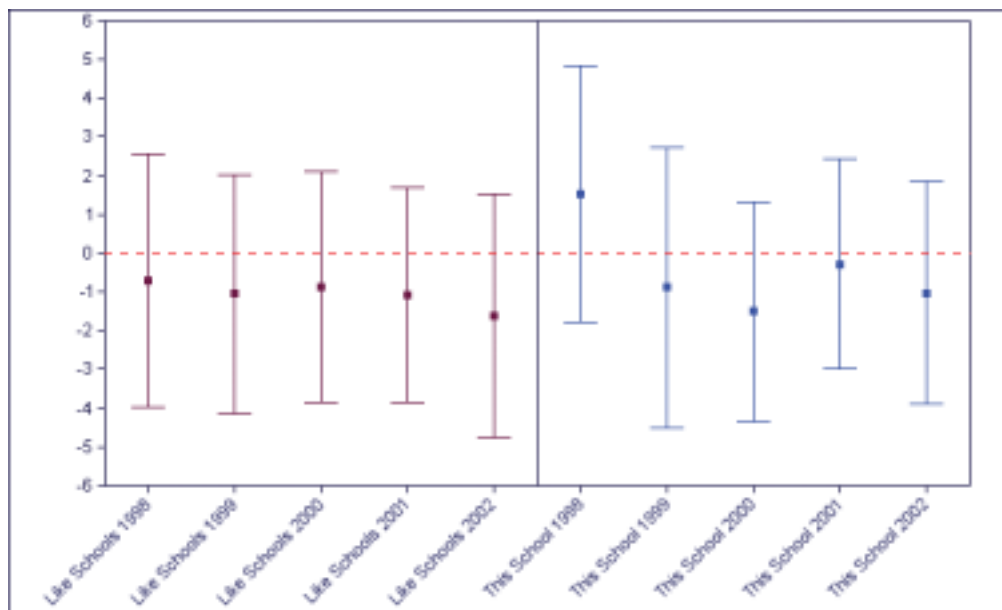
## Trend data

The VCEDS stores your school's VCE data for the past five years, so you can look back at the analyses described above for any of these years, including the current year. You may find that the most informative look is one that captures trends, as shown in the two charts below.

**Legal Studies Study Scores over time**  
**Test College**



**Legal Studies**  
**Ability and Gender Adjusted Estimates over time**  
**Test College**



From these two charts we see that performance in Legal Studies has remained close to expectations in each of the last five years, and that the small variations in average achievement that have occurred match almost exactly the variations in expected achievement. Can Legal Studies obtain better results in 2003? Maybe. But all the indications are that, unless some improvements are made, students will perform in Legal Studies in 2003 just as students have for the past five years – about average.

This analysis may reassure you by showing that changes in performance levels have come about as a result of changes in the cohort; they may unsettle you by showing you that something else is happening. Most importantly, they can help you to understand what is working for you and what is not.

The VCEDS provides schools with access to the most comprehensive information on VCE performance ever. Schools can choose which reports they want to use, and how simple or how complex they want those reports to be. Our hope at the VCAA is that this service will enable schools to identify with more confidence what they are doing right. We all need this feedback.

The VCAA needs feedback, too. The VCEDS is less than a year old, and for all our enthusiasm, it may still be slightly short of perfection. Feedback can help make the VCEDS better, so if you have ideas about how it can be improved or features that could be added, please email Glenn Rowley at [rowley.glenn.l@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:rowley.glenn.l@edumail.vic.gov.au)

VCEDS Manuals were sent to all schools in late 2002, and can be replaced by email if necessary. Alternatively the manual is available from the Help Menu once you are in VCEDS. For assistance in the interpretation of VCEDS reports, you can contact Glenn Rowley at the VCAA (phone (03) 9651 4306), or at the email address above. As always, Frank Lepore (phone (03) 9651 4438) will provide expert help should you have difficulty gaining access through VASS.



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