



SELECTIONS FROM VCE SEASON OF EXCELLENCE

VCAA Bulletin Supplement 2

VCAA principles, guidelines and procedures for the review of VCAL units

Section 1 – The qualification

Preamble

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a senior secondary qualification. The VCAL aims to provide the skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable students to make informed choices regarding pathways to work and further education.

Personal development, the utilisation of students' particular interests and new pathways for senior secondary students in the context of applied learning are the underpinning principles of the VCAL.

The VCAL acknowledges this within:

- the development of knowledge and employability skills that help to prepare the individual for employment and for the participation in the broader context of family, community and lifelong learning
- the development of knowledge and skills that assist the individual to make informed vocational choices within specific industry sectors and/or to facilitate pathways to further learning.

Context

The VCAL was developed in response to the Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria 2000 (The Kirby Report). The Kirby Report indicated that a broader range of programs was required to meet the needs of some young people who are in the post-compulsory years. The report states that:

'Poor results at school are likely to discourage early schools leavers from continuing in some form of education and training' (page 58).

'Those who have difficulties with current arrangements will typically need different learning contexts' (page 10).

Many young people felt constrained by the current education system because their individual learning, personal development and transition needs could not be fully met by traditional approaches. As a result, many did not achieve their best results and others left school early, inadequately prepared for work and future learning.

In October 2000, the Victorian Government established a number of goals and targets, which aimed to increase the percentage of young people who complete Year 12 or its educational equivalent. The VCAL is one measure to help achieve these goals and targets. The certificate was accredited by the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) in July 2002. The VCAL is available for students in Years 11 and 12.



In 2003, the Victorian Government commenced the state-wide implementation of the VCAL to improve the pathways for young people from secondary school to work and/or further education and training.

VCAL provides a state-wide credential through which participating students can receive recognition for their achievements in programs that have traditionally not provided credit within a formal qualification. This can include recognition of learning that occurs in structured workplace learning placements, locally developed programs, community projects and youth development programs.

Section 2 – Requirements for the award of the VCAL

2.1 Minimum requirements

To be awarded a VCAL, students must successfully complete a learning program of 1000 nominal hours that is designed to comply with the following course requirements. The learning program must:

- be made up of 10 credits
- include curriculum components each of which can be justified against the purpose statement for one of the four VCAL curriculum strands
- contain components drawn from accredited curriculum such as:
 - VCAL units
 - VCE units
 - Vocational Education and Training (VET) accredited curriculum or Further Education (FE) accredited curriculum (one credit is awarded on successful completion of 100 nominal hours of accredited curriculum)
- include:
 - a minimum of two VCAL units
 - in the literacy/numeracy strand, components to the value of one credit for literacy and one credit for numeracy
 - in each of the remaining three strands, components to the value of at least one credit in each
 - include components to the value of six credits at the level of the VCAL award (implemented in 2006), of which one must be for literacy and one credit must be for a VCAL Personal Development Skills unit.

2.2 Certification

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), on behalf of the VQA will award the VCAL at the appropriate level to students who have successfully completed the VCAL course requirements. The certification process, including the issuing of certificates, will be managed by the VCAA.

The student will receive:

- a VCAL certificate
- a Statement of Results.

Successful completion will be certified in July or December in each enrolment year.

Additional Statements of Attainment or certificates will be provided (by the Registered Training Organisation) for successful completion of VET or FE studies. Students who enroll in VCAL certificate but do not complete it will receive a Statement of Results.

2.3 Program breadth

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning is accredited at three levels:

- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning – Foundation
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning – Intermediate
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning – Senior

Foundation	At Foundation level, knowledge and employability skills development is supported by a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills and preparatory learning and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCAL Foundation Units • VCE Units 1 and/or 2 • Vocational Education and Training units /Further Education Certificates level I.
Intermediate	At Intermediate level, knowledge and employability skills development leads to independent learning, confidence and a high level of transferable skills, and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCAL Intermediate Units • VCE Units 1 and/or 2 • Vocational Education and Training units /Further Education Certificates level I and/or II.
Senior	At Senior level, knowledge and employability skills development leads to a high level of interpersonal skills, independent action and achievement of tasks that require decision making and leadership, and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCAL Senior Units • VCE Units 3 and/or 4 • Vocational Education and Training units /Further Education Certificates level II and/or III.

2.4 Requirements for adult students/students returning to study

There are no formal entry requirements for VCAL. Students can enter at the appropriate level of VCAL to suit their learning needs, abilities and interests. Students can gain one or more VCAL qualification in their post compulsory education program depending on their abilities and learning goals.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is applicable to students who can demonstrate prior learning and experience relevant to the VCAL Personal Development Skills (PDS) and Work Related Skills (WRS) units. RPL is the acknowledgment of skills and knowledge obtained through any combination of formal and/or informal training, work experience or general life experiences. Decisions regarding RPL for VCAL PDS and WRS units are the responsibility of the enrolling VCAL provider.

2.5 Requirements for students with disabilities or impairments

There are no formal entry requirements for VCAL. Flexibility in assessment methods is important particularly for students with disabilities or impairments. A range of alternative assessment methods may be used for students with disabilities or impairments, including:

- sign responses for hearing impaired students
- voice synthesiser for students with a physical disability.

In some instances the time taken to respond to alternative modes may be considerably longer than through speech and it may be unrealistic to expect such learners to achieve the outcomes in the stated nominal hours. Students may need an extended period of time to complete the learning outcomes in these cases.

Further details can be found in the current years VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook and the VCAL Unit Assessment Planning Guide.

2.6 Themed VCAL

The Themed VCAL is for students seeking a range of experiences within a particular industry sector to inform choices for future pathways and to develop employability skills. A Themed VCAL will provide a learning program focus that is linked to priority areas in the labour market and/or to job opportunities. The program will assist students to choose future pathways such as apprenticeships, VET qualifications or employment.

The Themed VCAL learning program is not intended to develop occupational competence for a single job but rather to lead to informed choices for a broad range of occupations in the particular industry sector.

Students in a Themed VCAL must be enrolled in either the Intermediate or Senior level of VCAL with an additional industry theme specific appellation. This industry theme appellation will be included on the Victorian Assessment Software System (VASS) enrolment screens and on the student's certificate of completion.

2.7 Changes to the requirements for the award of the VCAL

The VQA is the regulatory authority with statutory responsibility for accreditation of the VCAL including the stipulated graduation requirements. In exercising related statutory functions with respect to overseeing and delivery of the curriculum and assessment procedures for the VCAL, the VCAA will notify and provide advice to the VQA on any matters pertaining to the qualification requirements for the award of the VCAL and seek VQA accreditation of any changes to the qualification requirements or the specifications for individual component units.

Section 3 – Delivery and assessment principles for VCAL units

3.1 Curriculum principles and standards

To ensure that the VCAL meets the VQA's accreditation guidelines and the Victorian community's expectations for set standards and high quality curriculum in the post compulsory years, the VCAA will ensure that the VCAL units are developed in accordance with the following principles, standards and guidelines.

In the articulation and pursuit of these principles, the VCAA acknowledges the range of post-compulsory options and pathways available to senior students in Victoria.

Maximising pathways:

- VCAL units must have clear and recognised connections with, and build on the compulsory years of schooling as reflected in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.
- VCAL units should be non-discriminatory in nature and be accessible to all students through clear connections to knowledge and skills normally available to all students in, or managed by, typical P-12 educational settings.
- VCAL units should be designed to be accessible to students in post-school settings, including TAFE and ACE providers.
- VCAL units must be consistent with the purpose statements for each strand.
- VCAL units must provide clear, recognised and valued pathways to the range of post-school destinations: further study, further training and work.

Promoting democratic and community values:

- VCAL units will be consistent with social values, community standards, government policies and legislation.
- VCAL units will be free from discrimination on the basis of race, gender, belief, ethnicity, age, sexual preference or physical activity, and reject such discrimination explicitly and implicitly.
- VCAL units will be consistent with, and aim to realise the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twentieth-Century <www.mceetya.edu.au/nationalgoals/> and the Key Competencies. They will provide opportunity for further development of fundamental underlying skills, such as literacy, numeracy and generic employability competencies/skills.

Adult learning and youth development

The delivery of VCAL is based on adult learning principles and youth development principles including:

- curriculum content negotiated to build on the student's interest, abilities and strengths
- curriculum content that focuses on practical 'hands-on' opportunities for learning
- curriculum content and delivery strategies that encourage personal development and growth and include opportunities to integrate learning across the learning program
- recognition of student achievement and contribution that is both formal and informal
- curriculum and delivery strategies that enable students to learn at their own pace
- curriculum and delivery strategies that enable students to learn in different ways according to different learning styles
- delivery and assessment that assist the individual in achieving positive educational outcomes
- curriculum that values and engages the contribution of young people
- curriculum that builds competence and resilience in individuals minimising risk factors and enhancing the promotion of protective behaviours of young people
- curriculum and delivery strategies that encourage civil and civic participation and promote active citizenship
- the development of partnership approaches to program planning and delivery that link young people with the broader community.

Student centred and flexible

The VCAL is underpinned by the following curriculum principles:

- student-centred approaches and decision making regarding program design, delivery and evaluation
- opportunities for experiential learning and skill development through activities that are structured and sequential in their learning outcomes
- program design that has high relevance to personal strengths and experiences and that is responsive to diverse needs
- program delivery that builds resilience, confidence and self-worth
- learning environments that strengthen connections with the community
- program design that allows students to enter and exit learning programs at each level to pursue a range of pathway options.

3.2 VCAL assessment principles and standards

The curriculum components in a VCAL learning program must be assessed in accordance with the requirements and guidelines outlined in the curriculum documents for the units and units of competence/modules delivered in the learning program.

Assessment principles for VCAL learning programs

Assessment within the VCAL should be based on the following principles:

- assessment tasks/activities should be designed to reflect the nature of outcomes/elements of competence of the unit
- assessment instruments that provide evidence of achievement across a range of outcomes/units should be used in VCAL programs
- assessment tasks/activities should be grounded in a relevant context and be sensitive to gender, culture, linguistic background, physical disability, socioeconomic status and geographical location
- students should have the opportunity to demonstrate achievement at their own level and pace
- assessment should be open ended and flexible to meet the specific needs of students
- assessment should be fair, valid, reliable and transparent for all students
- instructions for assessment tasks should be clear and explicit.

Quality assurance

The VCAL quality assurance (QA) process is managed by the VCAA and ensures that there is a common understanding among teachers regarding assessment judgments for the VCAL levels and the design of assessment tasks for the VCAL units.

Section 4 – VCAL strands and units

4.1 VCAL curriculum strands

VCAL learning programs must comprise four curriculum strands including compulsory studies in Literacy and Numeracy. The four strands are:

- Literacy and Numeracy Skills
- Work Related Skills
- Industry Specific Skills
- Personal Development Skills.

The units and modules selected in each curriculum strand must comprise already accredited provision such as VCE, VET, FE and VCAL units. The VET components can be units and modules drawn from VET in Schools, Training Packages and accredited VET course. Units and modules chosen by each provider will allow student pathway needs to be met and existing partnerships with Technical and Further Education (TAFE), Adult and Community Education (ACE) centres, employers and other organisations to be strengthened.

4.2 Structural requirements for VCAL units

Each VCAL unit will have the following structure:

- a Unit Purpose statement that will outline the focus or purpose of the unit and is consistent with the purpose statement for the unit
- a Content Summary statement that will outline the content that can be used to meet the learning outcomes
- typically between five and seven learning outcomes
- typically each learning outcome will be assessed against between three and five assessment criteria
- an Assessment Statement that includes the following:
 - when assessment can occur
 - advice on fair, valid, reliable and transparent assessment for all students
 - examples of evidence that can demonstrate that a student has achieved the learning outcomes.

Strand 1 – Literacy and Numeracy (LN)

Purpose statement for Literacy

The purpose of literacy curriculum selected for this strand is to enable the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes in literacy that allow progression to the main social contexts of family, employment, further learning and community.

Literacy skills corresponding with these social contexts include literacy for self expression, literacy for practical purposes, literacy for knowledge and literacy for public debate. Literacy includes reading, writing and oral communication skills.

Purpose statement for Numeracy

Numeracy is the ability to use mathematical skills in order to carry out purposes and functions within society related to designing, measuring, constructing, using graphical information, money, time, travel, and the underpinning skills and knowledge for further study in mathematics or related fields. Curriculum selected for numeracy in this strand should develop skills to emphasise the practical application and the use of mathematics at home, work and in the community.

This may include for example, the VCAL literacy skills and VCAL numeracy skills units, literacy units and numeracy modules from the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA), or VCE English and VCE Mathematics units.

Strand 2 – Industry Specific Skills (ISS)

Purpose statement for ISS

The purpose of the ISS strand is to enable the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes related to one or more vocational contexts in preparation for progression to further learning or employment. While specific vocational units can be curriculum components of this strand, it focuses on the orientation towards a number of vocational contexts in order for learners to make informed choices as to the primary options available to them through the VCE, VET, FE and employment.

In the VCAL Intermediate and Senior levels this strand must include accredited VET curriculum, units/modules from VET programs or VET in Schools. In the VCAL Foundation level, students can include selected VCE units.

Strand 3 – Work Related Skills (WRS)

Purpose statement of WRS

The purpose of the WRS strand is to develop employability skills, knowledge and attitudes valued within community and work environments as a preparation for employment. The development of employability skills within this strand provides learners with a capacity to consider and choose from a range of pathways.

Curriculum selected for this strand may include VCAL Work Related Skills units which incorporate part-time work, apprenticeships, traineeships, school-based apprenticeships, structured workplace learning placements. VET and/or Further Education units which may incorporate modules such as occupational health and safety or planning for employment. Appropriate VCE units may also be included in this strand.

Strand 4 – Personal Development Skills (PDS)

Purpose statement for PDS

The purpose of the PDS strand is to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes that lead towards:

- social responsibility
- building community
- civic responsibility, e.g. through volunteerism and working for the benefit of others
- improved self-confidence and self-esteem
- valuing civic participation in a democratic society.

The development of skills in this strand underpins the development of skills in the three other VCAL curriculum strands.

This may include VCAL Personal Development Skills units using local and community-based projects; youth development programs, including Advance; voluntary work and structured activities to help develop self-confidence, teamwork and other skills important for life, employment and active citizenship. Other curriculum can also be drawn from VCE units and FE modules.

Section 5 – Guidelines for the development, review, approval and accreditation of VCAL units

5.1 Resourcing the unit

The VCAA will consider the resource implications of proposals for each VCAL unit. This includes the requirements of VCAL providers for equipment, qualified staff and resources to deliver the curriculum and assessment for all students.

5.2 Period of accreditation

The VCAA will develop and approve units for accreditation by the VQA, after which the unit will be available for schools/providers to implement in the year following the review. Studies will be accredited for five years, with provision to make necessary changes during accreditation, to commence the review and redevelopment of the unit as soon as necessary, or extend the accreditation period. The VCAA will monitor the implementation of all VCAL units and advise the VQA when a review of a unit and associated processes need to be undertaken.

5.3 Information and communications technology

Specific reference to information and communications technology (ICT) skills for the work place, will be included in the terms of reference for the review of all VCAL units.

Section 6 – Procedures for the review and approval of VCAL units

6.1 Introduction

The VCAA will manage procedures for the review and development of VCAL units to ensure that transparency of process, quality assurance and accountability requirements are met.

The VCAA will notify the VQA, on an annual basis, of the proposed list of VCAL units for review and development, and accreditation or extension.

6.2 Review process

VCAL units will be reviewed by a VCAL Unit Writing Team. The VCAA will request endorsement from the VQA to proceed with the review of a VCAL unit. The review of all VCAL units will involve consultation with key stakeholders, and will be in accordance with quality assurance processes endorsed by the VQA of the VCAA.

6.3 Establishing a VCAL unit writing team

The unit writing team will consist of a representative from:

- the VQA
- the VCAA VCAL Team member
- the VCAL Regional Consultants
- practicing teachers (two representatives) drawn from school, VET or ACE sectors as appropriate
- the appropriate VCAA Key Learning Area (KLA) Manager.

For some of the VCAL units there may not be an appropriate VCAA KLA Manager. The decision to make this appointment to the VCAL unit writing team will be made after discussion between the Senior Secondary Curriculum Manager and the VCAL Project Manager.

Other members may also be appointed depending on their expertise in the unit and their capacity to make a contribution to the work of the writing team.

The VCAL unit writing team will review and prepare a draft copy of the VCAL unit for approval by the VCAA.

6.4 Terms of Reference

The VCAL unit writing team will be guided by Terms of Reference endorsed by the VCAA. The Terms of Reference will be published on the VCAA website and be available to all key stakeholders.

VCAL unit writing teams will be required to consider:

- the appropriateness of the Unit Purpose, Framework structure and content summary, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria statements for all VCAL units
- the use of ICT in the units and the opportunity to extend the use of ICT appropriate to the unit
- the relevance of the content
- enrolments and enrolment trends by unit, level, gender and geography
- the relationships between the unit/s and CGEA, VET and VCE units.

Unit specific issues may also be included for consideration.

The Terms of Reference will also identify key interest groups which must be consulted during the review.

6.5 Meeting procedures

The VCAL Unit Writing Team will be chaired by Officers of the VCAA or their nominees. The writing team is expected to strive to reach consensus decisions and where this is not possible to refer matters of contention to the General Manager, Curriculum Branch for reporting to the VCAA Post-compulsory Committee.

The writing team will meet at a set time and place established by mutual agreement and accommodating the majority interest of the writing team.

The writing team may request approval to commission work and will need to consider all matters in the Terms of Reference in the preparation of a proposal for approval.

6.6 Task definition

The writing team in the review of a proposal for approval will ensure that the proposal is in accordance with:

- the *VCAL Curriculum Planning Guides*
- the *Guidelines for the Development, Review and Approval of VCAL Units*, or
- any interpretation of these principles and guidelines by the VCAA, or
- any decision that the VCAA may make in the process of review.

The VCAA will provide each unit writing team with unit-specific terms of reference and a timeline.

The following checklist should be used in preparing the proposal:

- Does the unit comply with Sections 3/4 as described in the preamble to this document and does the unit support the distinctive VCAL applied learning approach?
- Is the proposal in accordance with the *VCAL Curriculum Planning Guide* and the *Guidelines for the Development, Review and Approval of VCAL Units*?
- Does the unit comply with the purpose statement of the strand to which it contributes credit?
- Is the VCAL unit underpinned by the curriculum principles outlined in the previous section of this document?
- Does the unit incorporate ICT where appropriate to enhance student learning?
- Does the unit incorporate appropriate key competencies and relevant employability skills?
- Can the unit be resourced by schools and providers and is there sufficient expertise available to administer the assessment program?
- Does the unit meet the following requirements:
 - consistent with the VCAL strand purpose statement
 - approximately 100 nominal hours for each unit
 - provides support material, e.g. examples of best practice and other resources?
- Does assessment in the VCAL unit enable:
 - an integrated or project approach to the development of assessment tasks that recognises learning that has occurred in the context of work and community?
 - assessment at times that are linked to authentic tasks and activities
 - more than one opportunity to demonstrate a learning outcome successfully, if appropriate?
 - successful completion of all learning outcomes through either the one integrated assessment task or spread over a number of different tasks?
 - assessment that does not disadvantage any student and that provides flexibility in the range of methodologies which cater for the needs of individual students?

6.7 Consultation

Consultation is an important part of the VCAL unit review process. The VCAA will seek to actively engage as many groups that have an interest in the unit as possible in the process of consultation.

A draft VCAL unit will be made available for consultation on the website and to all groups and individuals identified in the Terms of Reference. In addition:

- key interest groups will be invited to attend a consultation meeting to have input into the proposed VCAL unit
- after any changes are made as a result of the consultation meeting, the revised VCAL unit will be available on the VCAA website for further consultation by practicing teachers

6.9 Review Timeline

The following table outlines the review schedule for VCAL units.

VCAL Units	Year of Review
Personal Development Skills (all levels)	2005
Work Related Skills (all levels)	2006
Literacy Skills and Numeracy Skills (all levels)	2007



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