



THE VCAL: AN INTRODUCTION

When and why did the VCAL start?

Students at senior secondary level have the choice of two certificates, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). The VCAL was developed in response to education and learning needs identified by the Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria (2000), also known as the Kirby Report. One of the findings of the Kirby Report highlighted poor senior secondary outcomes for many students.

The VCAL was accredited in 2002 and introduced into 22 selected Victorian secondary schools and TAFE Institutes and organisations. Today there are over 430 secondary schools, TAFE Institutes and Adult Community Education (ACE) organisations delivering VCAL to over 20,000 students.

What are the aims of VCAL?

The VCAL aims to provide students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to make informed choices about pathways to work and further education.

The principles underpinning the VCAL are:

- New accredited pathways for secondary students.
- Tailoring a program to suit students' interests.
- Personal development.
- Development of work related and industry specific skills.

These principles are within the context of applied learning.

In the VCAL these principles are shown through:

- The development of knowledge and employability skills that help prepare students for work and for participation in a broader society – family, community and lifelong learning.
- The development of knowledge and skills that assists students to make informed vocational choices and facilitate pathways to further learning and employment.

What are the qualifications?

The VCAL is accredited at three levels:

- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (Foundation).
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (Intermediate).
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (Senior).

The three qualification levels cater for a range of students with different abilities and interests. They also provide a progression of skills, knowledge and attitudinal development.

Foundation level

At this level the focus is on knowledge and employability skill development, supported by a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills and preparatory learning.

Intermediate level

At intermediate level, the focus is on knowledge and employability skills development that leads to independent learning, confidence and a higher level of transferable skills.

Senior level

At this level the focus is on knowledge and employability skills that leads to a high level of interpersonal skills, independent action and achievement of tasks that require decision making and leadership.

The demonstration of knowledge and skills which apply directly to the workplace or further training is also important.

What are the entry requirements?

There are no formal entry requirements for VCAL. Students can enter at the level of VCAL to suit their learning needs, abilities and interests. Decisions about which VCAL level a student should be placed in should take into account the student's literacy level, interests, goals and ability. The decision about entry level should also take into account the student's:

- strengths and interests
- preferred learning style
- vocational goals
- readiness for participation in structured workplace learning or formal vocational education
- teacher and peer support needs
- envisaged pathways
- leadership capabilities.

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How many hours in each Certificate?

The nominal duration of each qualification is 1,000 hours, although attendance and hours are not requirements of the VCAL qualifications. The emphasis is on the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes and satisfactory completion of learning outcomes.

In a school setting a student's VCAL program will generally be based on a full time load of 1,000 hours of independent (i.e. TAFE, structured workplace learning, school-based new apprenticeships) and classroom learning. Other education and training providers may vary the VCAL program according to the needs of the student and local employment opportunities.

How is the VCAL structured?

The VCAL has four curriculum areas, called strands. These strands are:

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

A student's VCAL learning program must include each strand.

What must students do to receive a VCAL qualification?

A student is awarded a Certificate when they gain credits for 10 units that fulfil the minimum requirements for a student's learning program. A credit is gained for successful completion of a unit of study. A unit of study can be:

- 1 VCAL unit
- 1 VCE unit
- 90 hours for VET modules/units of competence and/or Further Education (FE) modules.

Each unit of study must be justified against the purpose statement for one of the four VCAL curriculum strands.

Minimum requirements for a student's learning program

A student's VCAL learning program must include:

- a minimum of two VCAL units
- at least one literacy unit*
- at least one numeracy unit
- at least one unit from the Industry Specific Skills strand. At the intermediate and Senior levels this must include a unit of study from a VET qualification
- at least one unit from the Work Related Skills strand
- at least one unit from the Personal Development Skills strand
- at least six credits at the level or above, of which one must be literacy and one VCAL Personal Development Skills unit.

*If a student is enrolled in a VCAL literacy unit to fulfil the Literacy Skills strand requirement, the student must complete the VCAL Literacy – Reading and Writing unit at the certificate award level.

On the next page you can see examples of two VCAL learning programs, one at Foundation level and the second at Intermediate level.

What resources are needed for the VCAL?

Key resources for the VCAL are:

- *Curriculum Planning Guide: Personal Development Skills Strand*
- *Curriculum Planning Guide: Industry Specific Skills Strand and Work Related Skills Strand*
- *Curriculum Planning Guide: Literacy and Numeracy Skills Strand. Literacy Skills Units*
- *Curriculum Planning Guide: Literacy and Numeracy Skills Strand. Numeracy Skills Units*
- *VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*
- *VCAL Unit Assessment Planning Guide*
- *VCAL Coordinator's Resource Kit*
- *A variety of student, parent and employer promotional resources.*

These resources are available on the VCAA's website at www.vcaa.edu.au

There are a number of other resources to assist principals, teachers, coordinators and administrative staff that explain VCAL to parents and students. Check the VCAA (www.vcaa.edu.au) websites.

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Two examples of VCAL learning programs.

For further VCAL curriculum options refer to the *VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*.

Curriculum Type	Literacy & Numeracy Skills Strand	Industry Specific Skills Strand	Work Related Skills Strand	Personal Development Skills Strand
Level: Foundation				
VCAL Units			Work Related Skills Foundation Unit 1 – Work Related Skills Foundation Unit 2 (Including a structured workplace learning (SWL) placement)	Personal Development Skills Units 1 & 2 Foundation (i.e an integrated community based project undertaken over a year)
VCE Units		VCE Design and Technology Unit 1		
VCE VET programs				
VET Certificates or modules/units of competence		A selection from: - Certificate I in Hospitality - Certificate I in Vocational Studies - Certificate II in Horticulture		
Further Education Certificates or modules	Certificates in General Education for Adults - Reading and Writing I - Oral Communication I - Numeracy and Maths – Introductory		Certificate in Vocational Preparation	
Total credits	3	3	3	2
Total Award Level credits	3	3	3	2

Level: Intermediate

VCAL units	Literacy Skills Intermediate Reading and Writing and Oral Communication Numeracy Skills, Intermediate		Work Related Skills Unit 1 Intermediate – Work Related Skills Unit 2, Intermediate (SWL)	Personal Development Skills Intermediate Units 1 & 2
VCE units			Industry and Enterprise Units 1 and 2	
VCE VET programs		Selection from: - Certificate II in Hospitality - Certificate II in Music Industry Skills - Certificate II in Business		
VET Certificates or modules/units of competence				
Further Education Certificates or modules				
Total credits	3	3	4	2
Total Award Level credits	3	3	4	2