VCE English Language
2016–2020

Written examination – End of year

Examination specifications

Overall conditions

The examination will be sat at a time and date to be set annually by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). VCAA examination rules will apply. Details of these rules are published annually in the VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook.

There will be 15 minutes reading time and 2 hours writing time.

The examination will be marked by a panel appointed by the VCAA.

The examination will contribute 50 per cent to the study score.

Content

The VCE English Language Study Design 2016–2020 is the document for the development of the examination. All outcomes in Units 3 and 4 will be examined.

All of the key knowledge and skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4 are examinable.

Format

The examination will be in the form of a question and answer book.

The examination will consist of three sections.

Section A will consist of short-answer questions based on one or more formal or informal spoken or written texts and will be worth a total of 15 marks. All questions in Section A will be compulsory.

Section B will consist of an analytical commentary on the language in one or more texts and will be worth a total of 30 marks. There will be one compulsory task in Section B.

Section C will consist of essay questions supported by stimulus material and will be worth a total of 30 marks. Students will choose one out of two or three essay questions in Section C.

The total marks for the examination will be 75.

The examination will contain a detachable insert with material for Section A and Section B from sources such as literature, advertising, bureaucracy, the media, emails, electronic chat rooms, scripted and spontaneous dialogues, conversations, interviews and television or radio commentary.
Criteria

Examination responses will be assessed on the extent to which they demonstrate the ability to:

• use metalanguage to describe and analyse structures, features and functions of language in a range of contexts
• explain and analyse linguistic features of written and spoken English in a range of registers
• understand and analyse relationships between language and identities in society
• identify and analyse differing attitudes to varieties of Australian English
• draw on contemporary discussions and debates about language
• write clearly organised responses with controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task.

Approved materials and equipment

Pens, pencils, highlighters, erasers, sharpeners and rulers

Relevant references

The following publications should be referred to in relation to the VCE English Language examination:

• VCE English Language Study Design 2016–2020
• VCE English Language – Advice for teachers 2016–2020 (includes assessment advice)
• Assessment criteria and expected qualities
• VCAA Bulletin

Advice

During the 2016–2020 accreditation period for VCE English Language, examinations will be prepared according to the examination specifications above. Each examination will conform to these specifications and will test a representative sample of the key knowledge and skills from all outcomes in Units 3 and 4.

The following sample questions provide an indication of the types of questions and texts teachers and students can expect until the current accreditation period is over.

Sample questions are provided for Section A, Section B and Section C. Four sample texts are provided.

The VCAA does not publish answers for sample questions.
Sample questions

SECTION A – Short-answer questions
The questions below are examples of the types of questions that might be set for Section A. These sample sets of questions are not intended to equal 15 marks for each sample text. The sample texts are located at the end of the sample questions.

If Text 1 were the text set for Section A, the questions could include the following:

Question 1 (4 marks)
How does the use of adjectives and adjectival phrases support the purpose of this text in lines 1–25? Provide examples.

Question 2 (4 marks)
Explain how the situational context of this text has an impact on the language used.

Question 3 (6 marks)
Discuss the register of the text, noting features of Standard and non-Standard varieties that contribute to the relative formality of the language.

If Text 2 were the text set for Section A, the questions could include the following:

Question 1 (4 marks)
Discuss four different stylistic techniques used to emphasise the relentless heat of summer between lines 1 and 9.

Question 2 (3 marks)
Explain how substitution and antonymy are used to create cohesion between lines 22 and 28.

Question 3 (4 marks)
Discuss the role of colloquial language in establishing the writer’s identity. Provide two examples to illustrate your answer.

Question 4 (4 marks)
How does Text 2 rely on inference to create coherence? Provide at least two examples to illustrate your answer.

Question 5 (6 marks)
Comment on the writer’s use of three syntactic features between lines 1 and 15.

Question 6 (4 marks)
Discuss the effect of the writer’s use of figurative language in the text.
If Text 3 were the text set for Section A, the questions could include the following:

**Question 1** (4 marks)
Discuss the conversational strategies used in lines 1–5 and in lines 97–101.

**Question 2** (4 marks)
Comment on the discourse function of two different prosodic features between lines 6 and 18.

**Question 3** (5 marks)
How does the topic management between lines 19 and 33 reflect the relationship between C and A? Discuss, using linguistic evidence.

**Question 4** (6 marks)
Compare the syntactic features of the interaction in lines 41–54 with the syntactic features of the interaction in lines 55–59.

If Text 4 were the text set for Section A, the questions could include the following:

**Question 1** (2 marks)
Provide two examples of the speaker’s use of uniquely Australian noun phrases in the text.

**Question 2** (2 marks)
How does the use of semantic patterning support the function of this text? Provide one example to illustrate your response.

**Question 3** (3 marks)
How is repetition used to create cohesion in the text? Provide two examples.

**Question 4** (4 marks)
Discuss the degree of formality achieved in this text. Use evidence from two or more subsystems to support your response.

**Question 5** (5 marks)
Does this speech achieve its purpose? Discuss, using linguistic evidence to support your analysis.
SECTION B – Analytical commentary

Any of the sample texts provided (Text 1, Text 2, Text 3, Text 4) could be set for Section B. The task for Section B will be as follows:

Write an analytical commentary on the language features of Text*.
In your response, you should comment on the:
• contextual factors affecting/surrounding the text
• social purpose and register of the text
• stylistic and discourse features of the text.

Refer to at least two subsystems in your analysis.

SECTION C – Essay

Sample question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimulus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. ‘Nothing unites a country more than its common language because from a language comes a history and a culture.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Linguists suggest that some people deliberately choose a low-status accent as a way of invoking prestige, although this is less common among women than men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. ‘The Australian-born children of migrants from Europe, Asia and the Pacific Islands are asserting their respective cultural blends each time they open their mouths, leading to dozens of different ethnic dialects such as “wogspeak”, that much-parodied blend of Australian and various Mediterranean accents.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Your use of language sends out lots of little messages, not just about your level of education and where you come from, but about how you would like to be perceived.’

Discuss with reference to at least two subsystems of language.
Sample question 2

Stimulus

a. [While Josephine Mandarano (22 years old)] ‘values emoticons and acronyms for adding tone and context … she thinks netspeak is encouraging bad habits. “Rarely do I receive an email from friends that is grammatically correct and abbreviations such as ‘dere’ (there) and ‘dis n dat’ (this and that) make me cringe … I’m a bit of a word nerd. It frustrates me when folk say, ‘Who cares? It’s only an email.’”’

Katie Cincotta, ‘Broken English’, The Age, 18 September 2008

b. ‘Clearly Standard English is perceived to be intrinsically superior to other varieties. Yet examples are easy to find where nonstandard dialects appear to do things better.’

Kate Burridge, ‘Proper English: Rhetoric or Reality?’, English Language Journal, 2004, pp. 8–19

c.

The question to ask is: ‘Why not use Standard English all the time?’
Sample texts

These texts illustrate the scope of texts that might be set for analysis in Section A and Section B of the examination. There is no standard convention of spoken text transcription. Students should always refer to the key provided in order to interpret transcripts.

Sample text 1

The following text comes from a blog called ‘Crowded House’ on The Age website. It is written by share-house newcomer Joel Meares and it describes his experiences of sharing a house with other people (lines 1–25). Readers of the blog were invited to respond and discuss their own share-house experiences. This text also shows a sample of those responses (lines 29–44).

1. **Got the message? The passive-aggressive art of ‘talking’ to your housemates.**
2. Communication in a share house means doing everything to avoid a proper conversation.
3. Got a grievance? Don’t raise it at dinner or take someone aside for a chat. That kind of thing is best left to talking about your housemates. Let it niggle for a while, passive-aggressively hint at your displeasure with a few slammed doors, a sarcastic note on the fridge or by doing someone else’s chores (loudly), then wait for the message to sink in or the housemate to move out. That’s the principle behind most of the share house communiqués I’ve seen and it can lead to some very interesting methods of getting the message across.
4. ‘Tenantese’ – that bizarre form of communication native to the share house – is a system borne of necessity and out of frustration, an answer to the question: how do you let your housemate/s know you’re two VBs away from relocating their bedroom to the kerb without actually saying it?
5. In a workplace or a family, squabbling parties often sit down and chat it out. It’s right and rational but not the way of the sharer. Passive-aggressive and cunning enough to be completely denied, the share house response is symbolic and usually delayed: a Post-it note on a housemate’s door two days later or a meal prepared for everyone, except the bastard who forgot to feed the fish. If the Italian language is defined by rolling Rs and swinging arms and Australian known for the added ‘o’, tenantese might be the language of silence, death stares and underlying tensions.
6. I’m sure there are share houses that have regular meetings where somebody puts on the kettle, the Assorted Creams are opened and everyone says what’s on their minds this week. I just haven’t lived in or visited them. Instead of this Big Brother style house meeting, I more often see minor grievances resolved through a passion play of passive-increasingly-aggressive gestures that build to ‘the big one’: a half-hour outburst of tears and accusations that usually ends in someone dodging a cask of goon.

26. **Posted by Joel Meares**
27. **16 July 2008 8:04 AM**

28. **COMMENTS POSTED ON THE BLOG**
29. We have a whiteboard in our kitchen. Very grown up of us? hmm . . . maybe not. It’s only used when someone has something not so nice to say. When we are all getting along, the whiteboard is inconspicuous but as soon as there’s a problem – bam! The whiteboard is staring you in the face when you walk in the room with red texta and underlined words. It’s actually quite amusing, that is, when ‘the whiteboard’s’ attacking someone else.
34. Posted by: heyhay on 16 July 2008 3:09 PM
35. hmmm. well i just tried to do the grown up thing and have a, what i was hoping to be,
36. friendly chat about how often her boyf is staying over and that he made the kitchen a real
37. mess over the weekend. wish i’d just slammed doors and been sarcastic – a show down is
38. expected tonight – thank god the local is only 15 m away!

40. once shared a house with 3 girls . . . gold I assumed! not. I didnt last long – the post-it notes?
41. This extreme fussy pedantic house drove me mad. Im clean – reasonable tidy . . . but to have a
42. magazine left in the lounge create a note? Last straw and moved in with 2 guys . . . heaven! Sure
43. it got messy – really bad, but then we’d all just clean it . . . down with female housemates!!

44. Posted by: nixon on 24 July 2008 8:40 AM
Sample text 2
This text is a memoir by John Harms, a journalist, who reflects on his childhood summers in the Darling Downs, Queensland. It was published in *The Age* in January 2008.

**Nothing like a good sweltering**

1. It’s hot. It’s bloody hot. But I reckon when I was a kid every Darling Downs summer was this hot. Easy.
2. All my summer memories are of heat. The local pool, our back yard, the veranda.
3. We kids barefoot and as brown as pennies. If we ever had shoes on, it was to play some official game. Cricket daily. Golf occasionally. Tennis often.
4. Dunlop Volleys and socks coagulated together by a cocktail of sweat and ant-bed tennis court dust. Matches fought out in sweltering conditions, monumental struggles against the Leahy kid from the Commercial Hotel. If you had to play on the asphalt court your Volleys left their tread mark in the doughy surface. It was hot.
5. In my memory it’s always holidays. And it’s always the first day of a Test match.
6. Waking up every morning with a body so rested and full of energy you were ready to go all day. The sky a perfect blue and the ABC newsreader full of information.
7. Gulpes Milo. Already too hot for toast and Vegemite. And as you pedalled out the front gate, all you could hear was your mum’s voice screaming: “Have you kids brushed your teeth?”
8. Down to the pool, where the supervisor was scooping out the Christmas beetles.
9. He wore his weathered skin loosely, like a trendy sports jacket. Ours was dolphin-svelte. And we swam with effervescent joy. Like Flipper himself. A lot of time spent doing bombs off the big board. Movements of Olympian grace, choreographed to make the biggest splash possible. You were so skinny your technique had to be perfect to get marks on the corner light pole.
10. Then leaning on the rail of the big board watching the grade nine girls down on the grass putting coconut oil all over themselves. They were so old. But not as old as the tough who was climbing the steps. He had left school a couple of years ago to become a boner at the abattoir. Tough all right. He didn’t speak and you didn’t dare look him in the eye. He was a giant to us, his huge tummy hanging over his stubbies. We giggled behind our little hands as he walked past, his bum-crack the source of great amusement.
11. Time for the cricket. Straight on the treadlies and back home with just minutes to spare. Little voices excitedly preparing for the first delivery, as a big voice yelled from some mother’s room, where mothers did mothers’ stuff: “I hope you kids have got towels down on those lounge chairs.”
12. As the day grew even hotter we squirmed in our chairs. Lemon barley water with ice.
14. And fruit. Nectarines and rockmelon. And watermelon for later on. And a run through the sprinkler to cool off before the start of the next session.

Sample text 3
Catherine and Anita are at a local writers’ festival. Catherine is working at a book stall and is selling Anita the books that Anita has selected.

The following symbols are used in the transcript:

- <A A> fast-paced utterance
- <L L> slow-paced utterance
- <P P> soft voice
- <F F> loud voice
- (.) short pause
- (…) longer pause
- - truncated word
- , continuing intonation
- [ ] overlapping speech
- . final intonation
- ? questioning intonation
- / rising pitch
- \ falling pitch
- ^ primary accent
- @@@ laughter
- = lengthening of breath
- ^ intake of breath
- ^ overlapping speech
- ^ lengthening of breath
- ^ continuing intonation
- ^ overlapping speech
- ^ lengthening of breath
- ^ continuing intonation

1. C: <A Are you waiting to be served? A> (…)
2. A: <P Yep, just [the --] P>
3. C: [H-how] did you want to ^pay for ^those?
4. A: On my ^card/
5. C: <A Yep/, sure\ A> (. ) ^o=kay/ (.)
6. C: Background sounds of scanner beeping, recording price of books selected.
7. A: I had three hours from Geelong, just arriv[ed]
8. C: [<H H>]
9. C: ^You’re ^joking/ [^Oh]
10. A: [The] ^traffic, I’ve ^never seen [it] like this.
11. C: [Yeah],
12. C: It’s=, I’ve hea=rd, it’s ^shocking.
13. A: [Yeah]
14. C: [Yeah]
15. C: And, <A we’ve had a lot of people coming in late,
16. C: I think, well, obviously -- A>,
17. A: Yeah
18. C: Coz the traffic (. ) <L ^three ^hou=rs L>.
19. A: ^Yes= coz the (. ) I didn’t come over the Westgate, I did a --,
20. C: Went arou=nd?
21. A: I sort of went ‘rou[nd] the other way,
22. C: [Yeah]
23. A: But it was still --,
24. C: Yep
25. A: Everyone was [doing that too],
26. C: [Well everyone’s] doing that too @@@@,
27. C: <A aren’t [they] A>?
28. A: [and] everyone’s going slow and, and --
29. C: Yeah [well]
30. A: [Yeah]
31. C: It’s, it’s, I mean it’s really pouring so= (...)  
32. C: Well, you’re here [now]  
33. A: [which] is good.  
34. C: [^Yes]  
35. A: [So] I just said well’, <A [I’m] going to be late A>,  
36. C: [Well]  
37. A: And I’ll just have to miss the first session.  
38. C: Yeah=, look, I think a lot of people,  
39. C: I mean (. ) [it’s just] (. ) unusually (. ) ^wet/ (...)  
40. A: [Yeah]  
41. C: Were you here yesterday? (. ) Or is it [just] --  
42. A: [Yes], yes, yeah  
43. C: And how did you find yesterday?  
44. A: Well, I got here in the two hours I expected it would take.  
45. C: [Yeah]  
46. A: [Yeah], yeah,  
47. C: Yep\  
48. A: And actually, I thought ^ooh, this is a breeze,  
49. A: <A I thought I’d come along Barkly Street and A>,  
50. C: [Yeah]  
51. A: [Barkly] Street was deserted and at [forty ks]  
52. C: [^Oh/ ^right/]  
53. A: You’re actually going faster than [most cars] going [over the West]gate and--  
54. C: [Yeah, yeah,] [that’s true, yeah]  
55. C: <F It’s $146.50 for ^that/ F>  
56. A: <P Thank you P>  
57. C: [On/]  
58. A: [On] credit\. Thank [you]/  
59. C: [Credit/], okay\  
   Background sounds of EFTPOS machine processing the sale.  
60. C: Yeah, sorry, you were saying (. ) It was (. ) a good run/  
61. A: Yeah/  
62. C: Yeah\  
63. A: I thought ^ooh, I’m going to do that again today @@@@,  
64. C: ^Yes=  
65. A: <F Did you put that on ^savings, did you? F>  
66. C: Ah ^no, it’s on, um, credit.  
67. C: You can put a PIN in or you can sign, <A whatever [you] -- A>  
68. A: [I’ll] sign [please]/  
69. C: [You’ll] sign/  
70. A: Yeah  
71. C: Yep/  
72. A: Yep\  
73. C: There’s a pen there [for you]  
74. A: <P [I’m not ready to --] ^sorry P>
75. C: That’s alright/, that’s ^fine^.
76. A: <P I know I should get technology P> 
77. C: Well/, it’s normally your (,),
78. C: It’s normally the same PIN (,) as your, um (,) savings [so],
79. A: [Oh] okay/
80. C: So when I (,) well, that’s what mine is [anyway].
81. A: [Right]
82. C: I just put in the same PIN that I use at the ATM and --
83. A: Oh okay/
84. C: If I did EFTPOS, I’d put in the same PIN [so=]
85. A: [Yeah]
86. C: Yeah, [um],
87. A: <P [Oh well\] P>. I’ll sign ^this?
88. C: <A Sign that ^one A>.
89. C: Yes (,) I mean check with your ^bank but (,) often that’s what it is.
90. A: Oh, okay/
91. C: And I just [did it] (...) 
92. A: <P [I haven’t got around to --]P>
93. C: I just tried it one day.
94. A: Yeah/
95. C: Actually, I’ll, I’ll staple that for you ^here.
96. A: Thank-you.
97. C: <F That’s ^everything.
98. C: That’s your ^invoice/ Enjoy the ^day/ F>
99. C: Thanks so much.
100. A: Thanks Catherine
101. C: It’s a ^pleasure.
Sample text 4
This is a prepared speech given by a 17-year-old secondary school student (S) in a public-speaking competition in 2003.

The following symbols are used in the transcript:

( ) short pause  ( ) especially slow in relation to surrounding speech
( .. ) medium pause  : prolongation of sound to the left
( ... ) long pause  / marked rising intonation

Word stress through pitch/amplitude  \ marked falling intonation

WORD especially loud in relation to surrounding speech  (H) audible inhalation

>word< especially fast in relation to surrounding speech

1. S: Why should /we (.) buy (.) Australian\ (..)
2. >We are in the /middle\ of Australia’s /worst\ drought ever/
3. Our country has not recovered\ from horrendous/ bush fires\
4. And the Australian dollar\ is worth (.) sixty (.) five (.) US cents\ (..)
5. That’s like/ (..) buying a cup of coffee/ (H)
6. And getting (.) little more\ than half\ (.) the cup\ (…)
7. However/ (.) Australia/ is (.) fa:t (..) from being defeated\
8. >And there is< a /way\ (…)
9. for our farmers\ (.) our land\ (.) and our economy/ 
10. To get back on their feet\ (.)
11. and /receive\ (.) a full cup\ (.) of coffee/(…)
12. We can begin\ (.) by replacing Aeroplane Jelly\ (..)
13. with Dick Smith’s:::/ Helicopter Jelly\ 
14. And/ >Mr Sheen window cleaner/< with Big Kev 
15. That’s right\ (.)
16. I’M EXCITED/ 
17. >Because if< we/ buy/ Australian\ 
18. Our farmers\ (.) our land/ (.) and our economy/ 
19. Will\ (.) be resurrected\ (…)
20. (H) Wherever/ possible\ (.) we all/ have a duty\ to buy\ Australian\ 
21. >And the reason< why\ (..)
22. For our own\ (.) sake\ 
23. >Because if we< don’t\ (.)
24. we are only/ short-changing\ ourself/
25. In <every (.) possible (.) way/> 
26. So as well/ as Australians\ (.) supporting/ Australian businesses\ 
27. We should\ (.) be acknowledging industries\ (.)
28. that are exporting/ overseas\ 
29. And giving\ (.) the (.) whole (.) world/ (.) the opportunity of choice\ 
30. The choice\ (.) to buy\ (.) Australian\(…)
31. Let’s begin\ (.) by thinking/ (.)
32. about the clothes/ (.) on our\ (.) very/ (.) own\ (.) back\ 
33. What does/ (.) the clothing on our backs\ have in common/ 
34. >They have all been< (.) hung out to dry/(.) <on the Hills/ Hoist>
35. This remarkable Australian invention has taken the world by storm.
36. Who in the world could dry their clothes on anything but a Hills Hoist?
37. I myself can only think of one person.
38. And I’m ashamed to say that person is my very own mother.
39. What an unpatriotic Australian she is.
40. But that is another story for another day.
41. Moving on to a much brighter note.
42. Another wonderful Australian contribution to the world.
43. Is the discovery of penicillin.
44. And if it was not for one Australian Howard Florey.
45. Who was influential in the discovery of penicillin.
46. Then fifty million people around the world would be dead.
47. Fifty million people would be dead.
48. That’s well and truly over twice Australia’s population.
49. And even today.
50. The whole world continues to benefit from.
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140. The whole world continues to benefit from.
80. What would /I rather\n
81. Sixty-five cents worth and (..) >half a cup<<

82. Or buy (..) Australian (..) and receive a full cup

83. If you buy Australian (..)

84. You are (..) in the long term

85. Giving:::/ our farmers\ (.) and industry (.)) a helping hand/

86. And in the short term

87. We are getting:::\ a (.) full (..) cup (.) of coffee(/)

88. And that’s what you need\ (.) right now/ (.)

89. to sit back (..) and reflect/ upon

90. Upon this wonderful country of ours\n
91. The choice\ (…) is easy\n
92. Buy (.) Australian\