



2005 VCE VET Community Services GA 2: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2005 examination was the last to assess students on the set of core and elective units of competence that has been examined since 2001. In 2005, 327 students sat this examination, down from 370 students in 2004.

The examination was designed to allow students to apply their understanding of the underpinning knowledge gained across the specified units of competence for this program. The paper emphasised some fundamental aspects of community work – social justice principles, duty of care, networking, and procedures required by legislation and/or policy – as well as ‘client’ focus in such areas as empowerment, privacy and confidentiality. The scenarios and electives allowed students to imagine that they were actually involved in the situation presented. In other areas, greater scope was given for students to identify a situation of their own choosing as the basis for their answer.

There were not as many high-scoring papers as there have been in previous years. Many students relied on using key terms or phrases, almost in bullet point fashion, to answer questions that required an expanded response (as indicated by the number of marks allocated). Absence of a developed understanding of key terms such as ‘empowerment’, ‘duty of care’, ‘privacy’ and ‘confidentiality’ was evident. There was also little evidence that students were aware of the ethical dimension associated with community work.

Students were required to complete only two of the three electives in Section C but, as in past years, some students attempted all three. In this situation, only the marks from the two best answered electives were used. As there is no advantage in completing all electives, students were expected to use their time to improve their answers rather than providing more hurried responses to all three electives. The majority of students chose Elective 1: ‘Advocate for clients’ and Elective 2: ‘Support group activities’. Proportionally more chose Elective 3: ‘Participate in policy development’ than in previous years.

As the community service industry requires workers who are not only competent and caring but who are also able to produce accurate and legible written reports in a timely manner, this area should be an important focus for students and teachers/trainers.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Short-answer questions

This section focused on some key terms, skills and underlying values. The questions were seeking to assess whether students had an understanding both basic and critical to the community services sector and community work.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	27	23	50	1.3

There were many acceptable answers to this question. Assessors were looking for indications that students understood that issues relating to safe work premises could cover a wide range of specific risks or hazards. ‘Hygiene’ was not considered an adequate response.

Some students were unable to distinguish between safe work **practices** and safe work **premises**.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	24	38	30	7	1.2

They use formal and informal relationships with individuals and organisations:

- to improve the range of options, resources and information available to them and their clients
- for referral.

This question, on the characteristics of a good networker, was intended to allow students to identify one of the key skills of a community worker. Few students were able to give a well-developed answer that identified the benefit to clients as the ultimate purpose of good networking.

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Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	6	18	40	34	3.0

3a.

Possible responses included:

- clients
- self
- fellow workers
- the public.

3b.

Answers needed to show an awareness and appreciation of a worker's responsibility to:

- take reasonable care to ensure that no harm comes to the people in their care/using their services
- do no harm
- protect the client
- cause no mischief
- do good where possible
- act conforming to their professional responsibilities
- act/help in times of need to the extent of their knowledge, qualifications and capabilities.

Just over one-third of students gained full marks for identifying who the 'recipients' of the duty of care might be and for explaining, in more than just basic terms, what duty of care is. 'Keeping people safe' was not considered a sufficient answer, and few students expressed an appreciation of the link to professional responsibilities or the boundaries set by one's knowledge, qualifications and capabilities.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	Average
%	29	71	0.7

personal information

Many students who did not gain the mark did not understand the difference between privacy and confidentiality.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	49	42	9	0.6

5a.

Expected responses included:

- *Aged Care Act 1997*
- *Children and Young Person's Act 1989*
- *Community Services Act 1970*
- *Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Disability Services Act 1991*
- *Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*
- *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*
- *Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Racial Hatred Act 1995*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984.*

The range of Acts that relate to work in community services is extensive. The correct title was required to receive the mark, the correct year was not. Almost half of the students were unable to name one act, which was surprising. Answers

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such as 'Discrimination Act' or the 'Child Protection Act' did not receive marks. Assessors only awarded marks for giving the full title of the Act.

5b.

Acceptable answers covered purposes for legislation such as:

- defines service standards
- ensures uniform standards
- protects rights
- tells workers what to do.

Few students received marks for this question, usually because they had attempted to describe the purpose of the Act they had named in the first part rather than describing the general purpose of legislation relating to work in community services.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	Average
%	11	89	0.9

Examples included:

- information is shared on a need-to-know basis only
- information is kept secure
- no gossip
- no reading of other files
- staff sign confidentiality agreements.

Given the premise that confidentiality relates to what has been learnt by the worker about the client's circumstances in the client-worker relationship, the maintenance of confidentiality can be expressed in various ways. The fact that most answers related to keeping information secure (for example, locking information in a secure place) suggested a narrow sense of the ethical dimensions of confidentiality across the cohort.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	Average
%	9	91	0.9

by a worker from an organisation to a client in need

This was the best answered question on the paper.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	13	48	1	35	2.5

Belief	Principal of social justice
People should be able to have a say about the things that affect them.	participation
People should receive the same treatment regardless of gender, race or religion.	equity
People should be able to find and use services.	access
These services are owed to all people regardless of status or merit.	rights

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	38	31	31	0.9

Principles of community development work include:

- help people work together
- empower people
- focus on groups, or help form groups
- improve quality of life
- generate solutions to common problems
- create a safe and sustainable environment

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- should be initiated and supported by community members
- a long-term endeavour
- well-planned
- inclusive and equitable
- holistic and integrated into the bigger picture
- organised by and with the community
- involves networking
- of benefit to the community.

Some students who received no marks for this question had continued the line of thinking generated by the previous question, and focused on principles of social justice rather than on specific community development principles.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	16	16	26	25	17	2.1

10a.

Any situation where the client in question could actually fill out the form was acceptable.

10b.

Students should have identified disempowerment in terms such as:

- takes away choice
- implies the client doesn't have ability
- diminishes self-esteem
- reinforces dependency and the sense of not being significant
- denies or lessens the process of empowerment
- gives the impression the worker is in a hurry – that the client is wasting their time
- is demeaning.

Students who received full marks did so because they provided clear and related answers in both parts. Where students received only two marks, it was generally because their explanation in part b. repeated what they had written for part a.

Section B – Scenario

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	21	55	24	1.0

Appropriate responses reflected an awareness of the following aspects:

- privacy (relating to what is collected): only collect personal information (that is, information that could identify the person being surveyed) that is essential to achieving the aims of the survey
- confidentiality (relating to how information is kept): need to be sure that information is not available (either by reading or hearing about it) to people who do not need to know; private information should be kept separate from the content that other people would see.

This question was not well answered. As indicated in Section A, Question 4, students continued to have difficulty differentiating between privacy and confidentiality. This is a potentially critical distinction, as privacy is covered by legislation, whereas confidentiality relates to the (generally unwritten) code of ethics that is part of professionalism.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	5	9	86	1.8

Possible answers included:

- parents – to get their views about the impact of the program on their children
- young students not attending the breakfast program – to find out why they do not attend
- teachers of the participants and other teachers – to get information about whether there is any perceivable difference for the students who attend
- volunteers – to find out their views about whether and how the program could be improved.

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The majority of students who attempted the question gained full marks for their nomination of potential survey participants. Few students nominated volunteers.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	10	44	46	1.4

Acceptable responses reflected aspects such as:

- they are the participants
- they can tell you their circumstances
- they come to the breakfast program for their own reasons, not because they have to.

Most students attempted this question, with almost half receiving full marks.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	2	13	18	65	3.4

This question was about networking. It allowed students to show their practical understanding of areas where assistance might be needed as well as an awareness of appropriate sources of such assistance. Some students were unable to distinguish between the assistance required and who would offer such assistance, and virtually repeated the same information in both aspects. Many students opted to give a school context for the issue and assistance, while others showed an awareness of networking opportunities by identifying community-based sources of support.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	3	25	72	1.7

Advantages of having the meeting include that it:

- provides information in a personal way about what is available
- helps parents and teachers get to know one another and learn from one another
- improves community awareness about what the school is trying to do
- may engage the parents and community members more in what the school is doing
- provides the opportunity to talk about other issues
- gives everyone an opportunity to provide input, thus giving a diversity of views
- lets children know that their parents are interested.

Most students did very well in this question; however, some simply repeated the purpose for the meeting that had been given in the scenario, that 'the whole school community should be made aware of the purpose and role of the special programs of the school'. No marks were awarded for such answers.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	10	28	62	1.5

Possible responses included:

- have speakers talk about the breakfast program in a variety of community languages
- provide a pamphlet or brochure in community languages
- show displays/photos/video of the breakfast program in action
- show a video of speakers who may not be confident of speaking in person
- distribute newsletters and minutes.

Answers that referred to the actual meeting or to pre- and post-meeting communication were accepted. Some answers were quite creative, such as focusing on the physical arrangement of people into small groups for more effective presentation and discussion.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	11	36	53	1.4

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Factors to take into account in a multicultural setting include:

- specific dietary needs and preferences
- specific customs relating to food, its preparation and how it is eaten
- religious practices and special times of the year.

This question was asking about what considerations different cultural backgrounds might require of the breakfast program. Assessors accepted that the provision of an interpreter is sometimes necessary in aiding integration when cultural differences exist.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	7	32	40	21	1.8

Possible strategies include:

- make sure that positive promotion of the program occurs within the school; for example, notices, announcements, sharing of achievements
- get teachers to talk positively about the program
- hold an actively-encouraged 'open day' when the breakfast program is open to all
- consult with the principal and student counsellor for strategies to address the negative behaviour of the students who are boasting about taking advantage of the program.

Some responses suggested taking action against the individuals who were labelling and victimising other students; while this would be a positive act to address the negative behaviour, it would not contribute to the promotion of a positive image for the program itself.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	9	54	37	1.3

The volunteer/student has a responsibility to pass the information on to someone with responsibility within the school (one mark). Just over a third of students received full marks for a better quality answer that extended this response with comments such as:

- 'I have a duty of care'
- 'I have a responsibility to do something rather than nothing'
- 'this comes under mandatory reporting, but I am not bound by it'
- 'if no action is taken at the school, I would take it elsewhere'.

Question 10

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	8	27	64	1.6

The responsibilities include:

- to observe Occupational Health and Safety requirements
- duty of care
- to insist on the right to a safe workplace
- to abide by the school's policies
- to observe ethical work practices
- to acknowledge and respect the rights of others.

Two-thirds of students were able to give two of the responsibilities of workers, whether paid or volunteer. Some students received no marks because they listed rights rather than responsibilities.

Question 11

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	19	40	41	1.2

Possible ways this may empower students is by:

- helping them to identify what makes a healthy breakfast
- encouraging them to want a better breakfast at home
- enabling them to suggest to the family the sort of breakfast they would like to have at home

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- helping them to learn to get their own breakfast at home before they leave for school
- helping them to gain independence
- encouraging them to exercise choice.

This question was intended to take students beyond the rhetoric of the word 'empowerment' by asking for practical examples. A significant percentage of students gave two examples; others were unable to differentiate sufficiently between their two responses or could manage only one.

Question 12

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	21	38	42	1.2

Types of community support agencies and the topics they may cover include:

- community health centre – nutrition and health
- local library – special programs run for children
- local sports clubs – special sporting groups for children of different ages.

This question was intended to verify the students' awareness of networking possibilities. As with the previous question, a significant number of students received no marks, often because they did not attempt an answer. Students who gained only one mark generally referred to only one agency or wrote about two different sorts of information that would be given without nominating the agency that would provide it. On the other hand, some students identified community support agencies by name, not just the type of agency, showing an awareness of the networks in their local area. An awareness of the difference between community and government agencies was evident in the relatively few references to government departments.

Question 13

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	9	37	52	2.4

Acceptable benefits included:

- gives an experience of empowerment
- gives them ownership
- helps them maintain interest and support
- encourages further participation and the possible suggestion of ideas
- develops leadership
- contributes to their sense of achievement and self-worth
- encourages them to come to school
- can increase their learning, knowledge and enthusiasm.

In contrast to Question 11, more students were able to identify the benefits of student involvement as the opportunity for empowerment, with 52 per cent of students providing three acceptable examples.

Question 14

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	8	10	16	23	20	22	3.0

14a.

Examples of people to be represented included:

- teachers
- participants in the breakfast program
- volunteer workers on the breakfast program
- parents
- other categories of people representative of the community.

14b.

Essential roles for a formal steering committee are considered to be:

- a lead role, called chair/chairman/chairperson/president, etc.
- an appointed person (secretary) to take the minutes or notes of the meetings.

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The students who gained one to three marks for Question 14 generally achieved one or two of them through correct responses in part a., with a third mark coming from part b. Question 14a. allowed students to consolidate information contained up to this point of the scenario. Question 14b. was surprisingly challenging. Some students responded with behaviours, for example 'brainstormer' or 'husher', which were drawn from a model of roles people play within generic groups, rather than identifying roles within formal committees. Such responses were more appropriate to Question 2 of Elective 2.

Question 15

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	19	8	10	20	43	2.6

Family structures included:

- nuclear family
- extended family
- sole parent family
- blended families
- parentless family
- same sex parents
- de facto family
- foster family
- a child without a family (homeless).

A surprising number of students did not attempt this question despite the wide range of possible answers. A noticeable number of students nominated ethnicity as a type of family structure.

Question 16

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	12	43	35	10	1.4

Possible responses included:

- for an appropriate 'client'-worker/volunteer relationship
- to promote empathy
- to promote understanding
- to help make all students feel that their situation is understood
- to be aware of offering referrals to students who require assistance
- to make sure that when anything is said to the group or sent home, it is not said or done in a way that makes any student feel excluded because of differences.

This question was not well answered. The majority of students gave brief answers that did not refer to the importance of this information for the running of the breakfast program.

Question 17

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	9	11	18	27	34	2.6

Appropriate skills include:

- allow the person to talk
- use questions as appropriate
- listen carefully (active listening; clarify where necessary)
- provide a safe environment
- help the student feel safe to talk, give reminders about confidentiality
- be empathetic
- do not be judgemental
- use appropriate body language
- provide options for the student (including referral).

This question asked students about counselling skills that could be appropriate to the situation in the scenario; however, not all students related their response to the scenario. Assessors accepted responses that spoke of using appropriate questions, but were looking for responses broader than 'asking open and closed questions'.



Section C – Electives

Sections B and C of the paper were linked through the continuation of aspects of the scenario in order to enable students to draw on and build on the scenario, rather than having to shift into thinking about other sets of unrelated circumstances. Of the three electives, Elective 2: ‘Support group activities’ was the best answered.

Elective 1 – Advocate for clients

Approximately 84 per cent of students completed this elective. The brief case study at the beginning of this elective was intended to provide a concrete situation on which students could develop their answers. Some students interpreted the ‘older girl’ in the scenario as being a third, previously unmentioned, member of the family, leading to answers that were much more complicated than necessary.

Questions 1–3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	2	4	9	16	16	15	13	12	10	4	4.8

Question 1

The most relevant steps would be to:

- ask her if she wants help/advocacy
- tell her the options
- provide information to help her make a decision.

Some students did not score well on this question because they had not properly read the information immediately preceding the question and so wrote about what would already have occurred. In general, students did not show a clear understanding of the advocacy process. Many said they would take control of the situation and listed the actions they would take on behalf of the girl being bullied and teased.

Question 2

For reasons such as:

- they don’t know their rights
- cultural or language difficulties
- their age
- their status in the school
- a feeling of powerlessness.

This was not a difficult question for students who could empathise with the program participants.

Question 3

Students were expected to provide an extended answer with comments that highlighted factors such as:

- the person is standing up for him/herself
- it strengthens self-worth
- people exercise their right to speak up for themselves and be heard, and develop their skills, knowledge and confidence
- it builds confidence, self-reliance and self-expression
- the person is independent, and can implement strategies independently
- it takes out the intermediary
- autonomy is strengthened
- it can be a more powerful form of advocacy.

This question was poorly answered, and many students’ answers were extremely brief. Simply repeating the question as an answer (that is, ‘self-advocacy is the most empowering form of advocacy because it is advocating for oneself’) was not acceptable.

Questions 4–5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	6	26	27	24	13	1	3.1

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Question 4

4a.

Possible reasons included:

- concern for social justice principles
- their rights are being infringed
- I am part of the school community
- concern for 'weaker' students
- bullying may impact on attendance at the program
- bullying may result in injury to participants
- this is a duty of care issue.

If only one reason was given, some explanation or elaboration was expected for full marks.

4b.

Anticipated answers included:

- tell the staff/principal
- go to the student council
- start a petition
- get the breakfast club steering committee to advocate.

Again, if only one reason was given, some explanation was needed; not many students took this next step.

Question 4 was intended to allow students to express the motivations for advocacy that may arise from observing an unjust or unfair situation, and then the possible options for advocacy. Most students gained some marks here; however, the more abstract reasons for concern – social justice, rights, duty of care, etc. – were rarely mentioned and the range of actions, while reflecting the anticipated answers, were seldom elaborated on sufficiently to warrant full marks.

Question 5

A variety of definitions were acceptable, such as:

- advocacy aimed at the systems within society, such as trying to get the government to change a law or situation
- using our voices to tell governments and other decision-makers about changes required to improve systems within society
- speaking out and trying to change a system that is unjust to some members of the community.

Very few students even attempted this question, indicating a low level of understanding of this concept. The bringing about of change was a critical component of any acceptable answer.

Elective 2 – Support group activities

Approximately 74 per cent of students completed this elective.

Questions 1–2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	11	9	12	21	18	16	13	3.3

Question 1

Acceptable characteristics included:

- has roles or positions
- has a formal membership
- has records in minutes or papers
- develops an agenda
- has accountability
- has status in relation to other groups and people.

Question 2

Possible behaviours could be either positive or negative and included:

- controlling
- passive
- uncertain

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- argumentative
- assertive
- inattentive
- excited
- respectful.

Given that the scenario stated that the meeting was the first as a formal group and that there was the contentious issue of the program being cut back to one day each week, a veritable smorgasbord of behaviours could be anticipated at the first meeting. Some of these might arise from the internal dynamics of group development and others from the response to the limitation of the program.

Questions 3–4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	7	5	8	9	12	15	13	13	10	9	4.9

Question 3

Aspects of effective communication that assist groups in conflict management could include:

- recognising and acknowledging the views of others
- listening
- non-emotional responses
- thinking/reflecting
- summarising issues
- suggesting alternatives
- focusing on the issue, not the person.

This question gave students the opportunity to consider strategies of effective communication in conflict management as broadly as possible, both in terms of preventing or avoiding conflict and in resolving conflict. Many students specified some aspects of communication but did not seem to understand that this question related communication to the management of conflict, and so their explanations (when attempted) did not relate to aspects of conflict management.

Question 4

The committee's options for decision-making included:

- voting
- consensus (including negotiation)
- secret ballot
- random choice
- autocratic decision.

Elective 3 – Participate in policy development

As in previous years, this elective was attempted by the least number of students (42 per cent).

Questions 1–2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	13	17	26	25	15	3.0

Question 1

Possible reasons for the ineffectiveness of the anti-bullying policy include:

- hasn't been implemented
- nobody knows about it
- nobody is overseeing it
- no consequences for not conforming
- poorly written.

Most students gained at least one mark for this question.

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Question 2

Possible answers included:

- legislation may change or be introduced
- a change in philosophy/approaches
- a change in the group or population
- a change in behaviour
- there may be a better way of dealing with or expressing the particular policy.

Some students did not notice that this question asked for reasons for embarking on policy reviews **in general**, other than the fact that the policy was not working – a reason already given in Question 1.

Questions 3–5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	18	14	18	12	10	8	6	2	2	0	3.3

Question 3

Roles of the committee in the process of policy review may include:

- make suggestions
- collect data
- collate data
- provide advice to the principal
- work on the draft
- make comment.

This question dealt with a key aspect of this elective – being aware of the opportunity for and the limitations of involvement in policy development. As responses were often truncated, few answers received full marks.

Question 4

The following facets were seen as springboards for more developed answers:

- because of the structure of responsibility within the school
- there are limits to the roles of other people
- they have the expertise
- they are the accountable group
- power (from the government) has been given to them.

Most students offered responses to this question; however, they were often quite limited and generally expressed as ‘they are in charge’ with insufficient elaboration to justify three marks.

Question 5

5a.

The relationship between legislation and policy can be expressed in ways such as:

- legislation states the law while policy interprets legislation/says how it will be implemented/puts it into practice
- policy turns legislation into a rule which guides actions.

5b.

In the context of policies, a procedure can be described as:

- steps for carrying out policies
- giving the sequence for turning policies into action
- showing the step or steps which must be taken in putting a policy’s directive into action.

Question 5 allowed students to take their understanding of policy development into a broader context and link it with either practice or procedures and with legislation. An applied example is the relationship between basic workplace safety procedures, the workplace Occupational Health and Safety policy, and the Occupational Health and Safety legislation. Few students were able to exhibit any clear understanding of this interconnection, though most were able to offer an explanation of a procedure.