

Administrative information: Schools and providers

Schools (government and non-government) and other organisations that wish to offer the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and/or Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) must be approved by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) and registered as a senior secondary education provider with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA; www.vrqa.vic.gov.au).

Single study provider registration

A school or organisation wishing to provide only a single VCE study or an accredited part of a VCAL program (such as the Personal Development Skills Strand or Literacy and Numeracy Skills Strand) must be approved by the VCAA and registered as a senior secondary single course provider with the VRQA. Enquiries about registration should be directed to the VRQA Quality Assurance Schools Unit on (03) 9032 1546.

Allocation of a VASS identity

Once registration has been approved, the VCAA oversees the allocation of each provider's identity in the Victorian Assessment Software System (VASS; www.vass.vic.edu.au) and contacts the school or organisation to provide training if required.

1 Schools providing the VCE or VCAL

Schools offering the VCE or VCAL can be viewed on VASS.

School/provider name changes and school closures

Schools that change their name must advise the VCAA's Student Records and Results Unit in writing and provide proof that the relevant registration body has endorsed the name change. Schools that no longer offer the VCE or VCAL should also notify the Student Records and Results Unit at the VCAA in writing.

School/provider address, telephone and coordinator changes

It is the responsibility of schools to ensure that their address, telephone number, fax number and the details of their principal and coordinators are correct and confirmed, using VASS. The VCAA's VASS Operations team must be contacted to change the school email address.

Recognition as a VCAL provider

A VCAL provider may be either a registered school or a registered training organisation (RTO). All VCAL providers must meet the VRQA registration requirements for a senior secondary provider.

2 Registered training organisations

RTOs are responsible for the delivery, assessment and certification of VET and FE qualifications. An RTO may be a tertiary and further education (TAFE) institute, a group training company, an industry training centre, an enterprise or a school.

School–RTO partnerships

A school may enter into a partnership with an RTO for the delivery of VET to VCE or VCAL students. An agreement between a school and an RTO may enable a school to deliver components of the VET and FE qualification or a whole qualification. Schools may contract an RTO to deliver the whole qualification. Costs are incurred for each of these options. Advice on eligibility for funding is available from the relevant sector authority: Department of Education and Training (DET), Independent Schools Victoria and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. Schools should confirm that the RTO with whom they enter an agreement has the scope of registration to deliver the VET programs that are offered.

Schools as RTOs

Schools may apply to the VRQA to become an RTO for the delivery of specified qualifications. A school recognised as an RTO is responsible for delivery, assessment, certification and quality assurance. The school is also responsible for providing enrolment and results data to the training sector. Schools as RTOs may contract other providers for the delivery of training and assessment, but the school remains responsible for quality assurance and the validation of assessments.

All RTOs must comply with either the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* or the *2016 VRQA Guidelines for VET Providers*.

3 School/provider obligations to the VCAA

Principals of schools, and other VCE and VCAL providers, are the formal authorities for many important procedural and managerial requirements in the VCE and VCAL. These requirements are summarised in this section, although they appear in their specific contexts throughout this handbook.

Each year schools indicate to the VCAA, through student enrolments, the detailed programs they will offer. The principal undertakes to ensure that students are provided with access to adequate facilities and resources to complete any VCE or VCAL study they are offered.

3.1 Communication from the VCAA to school staff

The VCAA uses email, Notices to Schools, the *VCAA Bulletin* (through direct teacher subscription) and its website for official communication with schools. Procedures must be in place so that official emails and all correspondence are promptly forwarded to the appropriate school staff (for example, VCE and VCAL coordinators and VASS administrators). Teachers and VASS administrators must be kept informed of VCAA administrative and assessment requirements, including official notification of changes to VCE and VCAL procedures. Teachers must have access to copies of:

- relevant accredited VCE study designs
- relevant VCE Advice for Teachers and Assessment Handbooks
- assessment criteria sheets and assessment advice for VCE School-assessed Tasks
- VCAL curriculum planning guides
- relevant VCE VET program booklets, extracts or summaries
- current units of competency
- VCE VET Assessment Guide
- *VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*
- *VCAA Bulletin*
- Notices to Schools.

3.2 Endorsement from the principal

The signature of the principal, or a delegate of the principal, is required on some documents to certify that the information they contain is accurate and complete. These documents relate to:

- amendments to results
- confirmation of grades
- credits
- Derived Examination Scores (DES)
- International Baccalaureate (IB) students
- Interrupted Studies status
- late entry of data on VASS
- Second Language status
- Special Examination Arrangements.

Other documentation requiring their verification includes the Agreement to Conduct and Administer VCE External Assessments; identification lists of full-fee-paying overseas students; forms for GAT and VCE written examination centres; the appointment of supervisors and delivery of all examination materials; partnership agreements; and endorsed lists of VCAL-eligible students at midyear.

3.3 VASS

All VCE and VCAL providers are required to have access to VASS. The VCAA is notified by the registering authorities of schools eligible to offer VCE and VCAL. Schools can apply for a user ID and password by contacting VASS Operations, which will issue one upon approval.

The term 'school' refers to both VCE and VCAL providers, and schools registering Year 10 students without programs, as part of DET's On Track project.

VASS is a database through which schools maintain student details, assessment information and school details. It is imperative that the accuracy, privacy and security of VASS data are maintained at all times.

RTOs that are not senior-secondary qualification providers need to apply for read-only access to VASS, and are limited to viewing only the details of students to whom they offer training. RTOs should contact VASS Operations to initiate access.

Schools are responsible for respecting and protecting the confidentiality of students' personal and academic details. VASS system security is designed so schools can only view the details of students if the school is their 'home school', or they are being assessed in at least one unit by the school.

VASS users

There are a number of school-based VASS-user types that allow each school to control and maintain the security of their student data. The VASS administrator has system control for their school and is responsible for setting up other school-based users.

The VASS administrator uses their high-level access to administer the VCE, VCE VET and VCAL for the school, including setting up the school's program, enrolling students, entering results and producing reports. While schools may have one or more VASS administrators, and they are appointed at the discretion of the principal, the VCAA recommends that each school should have no more than four VASS administrators. Schools may have many VASS users, for example, every VCE and VCAL teacher could be given VASS teacher (restricted) status to enter their own results.

3.4 Data security and VASS

VASS has a three-layer security system. Users have a username, password and passcode to access the authentication grid.

Schools must contact VASS Operations to set up new VASS administrators or modify existing VASS administrators; however, VASS administrators can set up other VASS users. All users should change their own password on a regular basis. Other VASS user groups include Clerical (CL) and School Statistics and Results Group (SSRG).

VASS administrators should refer to the [VASS New Users Guide](#) for comprehensive details on using VASS. If VASS administrators experience problems, including password and login issues, they should contact VASS Operations.

3.5 Submission of data

Enrolment, unit completion and assessment data must be entered in accordance with the administrative requirements of the VCAA and must meet critical dates. There are penalties for late data entry.

The first enrolment deadline of each academic year is critical because it is used:

- to develop each year's VCE examination timetable
- to plan the General Achievement Test (GAT) and VCE external assessments
- to identify schools for the School-based Assessment Audit.

Schools can modify Unit 3 and 4 enrolments up until the final enrolment deadline (see [Important Administrative Dates](#) for details). Student transfers must be processed according to VCAA requirements.

Home schools

The home school is the student's main school. A student can have only one home school at a time, and each home school is responsible for ensuring its students' programs of enrolments are correct. This is achieved by printing and checking the **Student Full Details Report** from VASS.

Only a student's home school may enter or amend their personal details. A student may be enrolled in a unit or units on VASS, either by the home school or the assessing school.

The home school that is not the assessing school can enrol a student in a unit if the assessing school has indicated on VASS that it is offering the unit. If the home school is to enrol the student, the assessing school must complete the **Assessing School Enrolment Notification** form for that student and send it to the student's home school. The correct VCAA school code for the assessing school for each unit must be entered on VASS.

The home school may view a student's enrolments and results in all studies in all years. The assessing school may only view a student's details, enrolments and results for units in which the student is enrolled at that school. The home school is responsible for ensuring that all their students have been allocated an examination centre.

For VET and VCAL enrolments, the home school is always the assessing school, but the RTO code must be entered (if appropriate) against the enrolment. Regardless of delivery arrangements, the home school remains responsible for all enrolments and results data entry for VET and VCAL.

Assessing schools

The assessing school is the school responsible for providing the assessment for one or more units, and is responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the School-based Assessment Audit. A student may have one or more assessing schools. The assessing school is usually, but not always, the home school.

In order to ensure security of student data, an assessing school that is not the home school must have a student number and home school code before a student's details can be viewed for the first time. The assessing school may then enrol the student in units that it offers.

Timelines and summary of data requirements

Schools must adhere to published dates for entry of enrolments and results on VASS. Some dates are important for both school administration and the VCAA. Others are cut-off dates and the VASS system will not allow data entry after these dates. Due dates and warnings on the VASS website home page are designed to prompt VASS users to meet scheduled dates. School administrators should also refer to [Important Administrative Dates](#), which are published on the VCAA website.

There are four types of data required from schools:

- school programs – providers must identify the units comprising their school's VCE and VCAL program prior to enrolling students in their programs
- student registrations – these can be entered at any time but must be completed prior to the end-of-academic-year results processing
- student program enrolments – refer to the Important Administrative Dates for details. Changes to student enrolments after the due dates require approval from the VCAA. Late fees will be charged, except for late withdrawals approved on compassionate grounds. Schools cannot change the enrolment status of students who are in VCE Unit 3–4 sequences and scored VCE VET Unit 3–4 sequences and indicate that they no longer wish to continue with a unit after the relevant closing date for withdrawal
- student result data – there are several dates by which schools must provide data.

Schools should set dates for students to complete School-based Assessment that take into account the way these dates affect the workload of students and teachers.

The list of completion dates can be entered on VASS. The dates should be distributed to students and accompanied by the rules for ensuring the dates are complied with. If students do not submit their work by the specified date, the school may accept the work and assess it in the normal manner, or refuse to accept it and award an NA, in accordance with school policy. Students should only be awarded 0 if a task was submitted and did not meet any of the specified criteria for that task. VCAA submission dates cannot be varied.

Extensions of time to enter enrolment or results data

If a school does not meet deadlines for entry of enrolment or results data due to unforeseen circumstances, permission may be sought from the Student Records and Results Unit for an extension of access to VASS for a short period of time beyond the published submission date. This service can only be made available to schools if the VCAA administrative processes are not compromised. An extension of time is not possible for the specific results deadline.

Special circumstances beyond the control of the school will be taken into account; otherwise, the school will be charged a fee for this service (see the [Summary schedule of fees and charges](#) on the VCAA website).

3.6 Accuracy of personal and enrolment data

The accuracy of personal and enrolment data is a school's obligation to its students. Data may be entered into the VASS database manually or by data import.

Student data imports

Importing students' personal details and program data is possible from other applications, including CASES21 for government schools. For advice on file formats, consult the VASS help screens and the VASS Import Document, which is available as a download through VASS.

Student number errors

If a student has either two student numbers in the current year of enrolment or multiple numbers across various years, schools should notify the Student Records and Results Unit immediately so these issues can be resolved.

If a student has not been enrolled prior to sitting an examination, the GAT or submission of School-based Assessment scores, schools are advised to register the student on VASS through the entry of the student's personal details so the student is assigned a student number. This will allow the student to use that number for their examination or other assessments.

Schools are advised that they should then fax the **Student Full Details Report** and the **Late Enrolment Amendment** form (both on VASS), and any related School-based Assessment, to the Student Records and Results Unit so the student can be enrolled in their required subjects. Late fees for enrolment changes after published deadlines will apply.

Reporting the death of a student

Schools must communicate the death of a student or former student to the VCAA by sending a letter signed by the principal to the Manager, Student Records and Results Unit. The student's record will be amended on the VCAA database accordingly. If the VCAA is not informed of the death of a student, the student's data will be included in VCAA senior-secondary data collections, which may result in the student's family experiencing further distress.

Student enrolment data

The **Student Full Details Report** on VASS is the key report for checking students' personal details and enrolments. As part of the school's audit procedures, this report must be printed and given to students for checking and signing at the beginning of the academic year, and always when changes have been made to either a student's personal details or enrolment details.

VASS-generated class lists should also be produced and handed to class teachers at the beginning of each unit. Class teachers should confirm the list against the students they are teaching. When a student's enrolment changes, the relevant class lists should be produced and given to the class teachers for signing to confirm acknowledgement of the changes. These audit procedures are essential for ensuring the accuracy of student's personal and enrolment data.

3.7 Accuracy of results data

The accuracy of results data is a school's obligation to its students. Data may be entered into the VASS database manually or by data import.

Unit results for VCE, VCE VET and VCAL

Schools report students' results as follows:

- VCE unit results are reported as S (satisfactory), N (not satisfactory) or J (discontinued a study without formal withdrawal).
- VCE VET/FE unit of competency results are reported as S (satisfactory) or N (not yet completed).
- VCAL unit results are reported as S (satisfactory) or N (not yet completed).
- VET/FE results entered as N (not yet complete) will appear on the Students Full Details Report from VASS but are not printed on the official documentation by the VCAA.

All VCE and VCAL unit results are due at the VCAA on a specific date; however, the VCAA recommends schools enter unit results as they are received, to reduce the amount of data entry required closer to the deadline.

Scores for School-based Assessment (Units 3 and 4)

Scores may be entered continually until the relevant date. If a student withdraws early in the academic year, the school is advised to keep a paper record of any scores achieved by the student in that study. In the event that the student re-enrols in that sequence, these scores may then be re-entered.

Schools are advised that best practice supports the checking of all results before entry. Here is an example:

- VASS administrators distribute class lists to teachers for entry of School-based Assessment scores.
- Teachers return completed lists to the VASS administrator for data entry.
- Class lists that include the entered School-based Assessment score are distributed to teachers for checking.
- All teachers check the results, make any changes and return signed class lists to the VASS administrator.
- Any required changes are made and class lists are distributed to the teacher for final sign-off before collection.

Scores for Externally-assessed Tasks

Scores may be entered on VASS until the date advised in the [Important Administrative Dates](#). After this date VASS will not allow schools to enter scores for the Externally-assessed Task. If a student has withdrawn after the official VCAA closing date, the school should enter 'NA' where appropriate. Blank scores are not permitted. Any scores not entered by the due dates will incur late fees.

Missing results and scores

VASS can be used to produce input, summary and missing result reports for all types of results. Schools must check these reports to ensure that all students' results are entered. Failure to do so may lead to unit results not being awarded, a study score not being calculated for the student, or certificates not being awarded.

If results for a whole class are not available for entry by the scheduled submission date, the Manager, Student Records and Results Unit at the VCAA, should be contacted for advice.

3.8 Data amendments and late fees

Procedure for amending enrolments after the due date

After the final date for enrolments in each cycle, data will be locked. Any errors that have occurred in entering VCE and VCAL unit data must be submitted to the Manager, Student Records and Results Unit, as soon as they are detected. Schools are reminded that enrolment changes will not be accepted if students have indicated their intention to withdraw from the unit after a closing date or if the student has left school without formally exiting.

The acceptance of an application for amendment is at the discretion of the VCAA. Applications for amendments must be submitted on the appropriate form, available on VASS.

1. The relevant enrolment amendment forms for VCE and VCAL are available as VASS downloads.

All requests for changes to VCE VET and VET/FE units of competency should be made on the **Application for late VET enrolment amendments** form, available on VASS. If the results submission date has also passed, the result for the new enrolment must be included on the form.

2. If the request is made after the VCAA cut-off dates, the request must include:
 - a letter from the school principal explaining the reason for the error
 - evidence supporting the enrolment change, such as copies of a class attendance sheet, and evidence of the student's intention to withdraw.
3. The application for amendment must be accompanied by the appropriate fee (see the [Summary schedule of fees and charges](#) on the VCAA website). No GST is payable on late fees.

After the deadline for withdrawing from a Unit 4 study, the VCAA will only withdraw a student from Unit 4 of a study if the student indicated their intention to withdraw prior to the cut-off date. If a student wishes to withdraw from a Unit 4 study after the deadline, they must be able to prove that their intention was to do so before the deadline. Unit enrolments will not be withdrawn if the notification by the student was after the cut-off date or if the student has formally exited from the VCE or VCAL.

Procedure for amending results for School-based Assessment or Externally-assessed Tasks after the due date

After the final date for submitting results, student results for that assessment period will be locked. Any errors that have occurred in entering the results must be submitted to the Manager, Student Records and Results Unit, as soon as they are detected. The acceptance of an application for amendment is at the discretion of the VCAA.

1. The relevant results amendment forms are available on VASS. All requests for scores for the VCE should be made on the Score Amendment Sheet (SAS) generated through VASS.
2. If the request is made after the final results have been released and the amendment will change the course result or a VCE study score, the request must include:
 - a letter from the principal explaining the reason for the error
 - evidence supporting the new result, such as copies of a class attendance sheet and/or teacher's mark book.
3. The application for amendment must be accompanied by the appropriate fee (see the [Summary schedule of fees and charges](#) on the VCAA website). No GST is payable on late fees.

4 School/provider obligations to students

Schools should:

- advise students in writing of the VCAA's rules and school responsibilities
- ensure that subject matter the students investigate through self-directed research is consistent with community standards, appropriate for study by school students, and does not place students at risk of contravening Victorian and Australian law
- ensure that teachers use the accredited VCAA curriculum and assessment documents as the source of content for the teaching and learning programs
- provide comprehensive course advice to students, including the consequences of receiving an N or a J result for a unit
- provide a process for students to check their personal details stored on the VCAA database on an annual basis
- keep students' personal details secure from unauthorised access
- ensure that there are established procedures for School-based Assessments and that these procedures are applied consistently
- allow for student appeal on adverse school decisions
- ensure that students understand and have access to Special Provision for VCE studies
- issue examination timetables to students.

4.1 Provision of accredited curriculum and assessments

Teachers must provide learning experiences and assessment opportunities that are in accordance with the currently accredited VCE study designs, or the VCAL curriculum planning guides.

VCE advice

Students undertaking VCE units should be advised of the following in writing:

- that initial school assessments for Units 3 and 4 may change following statistical moderation of School-based Assessment
- the procedures for requesting an extension of time for submitting a School-based Assessment.

Placing students in the VCAL

The initial placement of a student in a VCAL learning program requires a decision by the VCAL provider about the appropriate award level. Once students are placed in the appropriate level they can progress at their own pace. If a student is placed at an inappropriate level, they can be re-enrolled in the appropriate level within VASS, in accordance with the schedule of dates provided by the VCAA.

4.2 Checking the accuracy of student data

Students' personal details

Students must submit a **Student Personal Details** form that includes their intended program for the year. The information on this form should be entered on VASS.

Each student's personal details (particularly their birth date), consent permissions, subject enrolment details and eligibility for the VCE and VCAL must be periodically checked and signed by them and their teachers, using the **Student Full Details Report** from VASS. Students should be provided with a new **Student Full Details Report** to sign at the end of each enrolment cycle to ensure any requested changes have been made. Students should also be advised that the address on their **Student Full Details Report** is the one their Year 12 results will be mailed to at the end of the academic year. Students must be enrolled on VASS using their legally registered name as per Births, Deaths & Marriages.

Transgender students

Schools that have students who are in the process of gender reassignment should contact Student Records and Results Unit for further advice in relation to recording student details on VASS and the reporting of their results.

All full-fee-paying overseas students must be correctly identified

The onus is on VASS users to ensure that students' personal details are entered accurately on VASS. It is essential to include the correct date of birth. Without this, the system cannot accurately or efficiently match a student's academic history with their current enrolments. A student's date of birth should never be invented or guessed, because it cannot be changed later.

Students' addresses

Only the preferred postal address for a student is stored on VASS. It is mandatory to enter an address line, suburb, state and postcode.

If a student's address is not known, schools should enter the school address as the student's address. The postal address is used by the VCAA when mailing final results.

To ensure the successful delivery of final results, the VCAA undertakes (in conjunction with Australia Post) to validate the addresses of all students enrolled in at least one Unit 3–4 sequence and all students who are claiming past results. If an addressing error is detected, schools will receive, prior to results processing, an email that lists the affected students. Schools should contact students to amend address information if necessary.

Changes to students' personal details

Results will be printed using the student's name as entered on VASS. The results for students with enrolments in any VCE Unit 3–4 sequence will be mailed to the student addresses as entered on VASS. The [Important Administrative Dates](#) has deadlines for amending this information. The VCAA cannot accept changes of address after this date because results processing will have already commenced. Students who have applied for tertiary studies through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) must notify VTAC directly of late changes to personal details occurring after the deadline.

Matching students with previous results

Matching of student details is done on the basis of name, date of birth and gender. Slight differences in spelling, an inaccurate birth date or a change of name may mean that a student who has attended more than one school might be assigned multiple student numbers, each having only part of the student's academic record.

As the matching process will occur as soon as a student is registered, it is essential that the system be able to match a student's academic history with their current details. If a match is found on the database for a particular student, the student is allocated their previous student number, and their previous results and enrolments for the current year are combined to make up a complete academic history for the student. Therefore, the personal details entered for the student must be accurate. Schools should not estimate dates of birth to enrol students. If details are not correct, these matches cannot occur and the student will have two student numbers, each part of their academic history. This may lead to the student not being awarded the certificate in which they are enrolled.

4.3 Security of student data

All VCE, VCAL and VET data on VASS must remain secure and the privacy of students' personal and academic details must be protected.

4.4 Security of student numbers and personal identification numbers (PINs)

The student number is a key identifier that allows the VCAA to securely maintain student result data and to identify the student for an examination. Student PINs (these are different to student numbers) are allocated to students for the purpose of obtaining their end-of-year results.

Students should have full confidence that the enrolment and result record maintained by the VCAA is accurate, complete and confidential. The confidentiality of a student record should be restricted to the student, administrative staff at their home school and assessing school, VCAA staff who have a specific role in the maintenance of that data, and VTAC for the purpose of calculating the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). Any other access requires the written consent of the student.

Each student should be given a printed copy of their **Student Full Details Report** so they are aware of their student number. Lists of student numbers and names should not be printed and published or displayed on school noticeboards or otherwise made available to members of the school community. Students should be advised that they should keep their PIN in a secure place to avoid unauthorised access to their results via the results service at the end of the year.

4.5 Integrity of School-based Assessments

At the beginning of the academic year, schools must provide students with clear written details of both the VCAA rules and the school's rules and procedures.

Principals are responsible for the administration of the VCAA's rules and instructions in their school. They must ensure that teachers are using only the currently accredited study designs.

To ensure the integrity of School-based Assessment in all VCE units, schools should:

- develop a document that clearly states the school's expectations in relation to the development and delivery of School-based Assessment and the steps teachers must take to ensure the security of the content
- keep assessment tasks, including tasks in development, out of the reach, view and access of students until they are delivered
- where possible, avoid storing assessment tasks on open school networks and unsecured media such as USB sticks, and sending assessment tasks by unsecured means such as emails
- have students sign a declaration that they will abide by their school's policies and rules relating to the appropriate use of the internet
- when delivering the same School-based Assessment across several different discrete classes, minimise the time lag between classes
- avoid recycling of tasks from one academic year to another to ensure that students are unable to use other student work from previous academic years.

For all units in the VCE, schools must specify the work that a student must do to achieve an S for a unit and the conditions under which the work is to be done. The school must inform each student in writing of the following:

- all work they need to complete to achieve an S for the unit
- all work they need to complete for school-based assessment
- class attendance requirements
- how to submit work
- timelines and deadlines for completing work
- procedures for obtaining an extension of time
- internal school appeal procedures.

Decisions about satisfactory completion of a unit are solely the responsibility of the school. Results for each unit must be based on a judgment of satisfactory or non-satisfactory achievement of outcomes.

School procedures for satisfactory completion and delay of satisfactory completion decisions for the VCE and VCAL must be established and applied consistently across studies and units.

The teacher is responsible for judging satisfactory completion of a unit. By reporting satisfactory completion, the teacher is certifying that the student has achieved the set of outcomes for the unit according to the rules set out by the VCAA and the school.

Schools should refer to the Scored assessment: School-based Assessment section for more information.

Each VCE unit result must be determined on the basis of evidence of achievement of outcomes completed during the academic year in which the student is enrolled. The VCAA recognises that some schools will begin teaching programs in the academic year prior to enrolment. These programs are generally one to three weeks in length and for Units 3 and 4 must not include formal School-based Assessment.

4.6 Administration of Special Provision

Procedures must be established to identify students who may require Special Provision, to ensure consistent and fair decisions are made about appropriate assistance for students. Application procedures for Special Provision must be given in writing to all students and the school must retain the necessary documentation used to support decisions.

Students should apply to their school for Special Provision for classroom learning and School-based Assessment. Schools are responsible for making an application to the VCAA, on behalf of a student, for Special Examination Arrangements for VCE external assessments. Students should submit a **Derived Examination Score** application form to their school for consideration. The school will then forward the application to the VCAA.

If a student's application for Special Provision for classroom learning and School-based Assessment is rejected, either in full or in part, the student should be advised in writing of the reasons for the decision within 14 days. The student has the right of appeal to the school within 14 days of receiving the decision. See the Special Provision section for details.

5 When schools fail to meet their obligations to students

In exceptional cases, the VCAA may consider an application by a principal that students have been disadvantaged because of a teacher's failure to teach a prescribed text or their failure to teach and/or assess a significant part of the accredited VCE study design or VCAL unit (teacher error). The VCAA will not investigate matters concerning teacher qualifications and/or quality of teaching staff. Only an application by the principal will be considered.

1. The principal must write to the Senior Investigator, Legal Services Unit, VCAA, to apply on behalf of students who may have been disadvantaged by a teacher error and provide an outline of the alleged error.
2. An investigation into the matter will be undertaken by the VCAA. This may include interviewing all parties involved.
3. The VCAA may determine that there is no teacher error or that the school must provide an additional opportunity for each student to complete assessment, or may determine that each student should be treated as having obtained in the examination or other form of assessment a standard or result determined by the VCAA, or any other recommendation appropriate to the matter.

The VCAA will not enter into a dispute between a student and their school as to whether an error occurred. The process applies only to cases in which the principal believes an error may have been made that may have disadvantaged students in terms of their VCE or VCAL results.

The application must be lodged at the VCAA no later than the last day of the academic year in which the teacher error is believed to have occurred. There is no provision for late applications.

6 Partnerships

The VCAA recommends that schools with fewer than five enrolments in any VCE Unit 3–4 study (note that English and EAL are separate studies) form a partnership with another school or with a community-based organisation to enhance the curriculum provision or assessment arrangements for students. These are formal arrangements:

- VCE small-group partnerships for statistical moderation of School-based Assessment
- VCAL partnerships for the extension of learning programs and resources.

6.1 Forming and documenting a partnership

Once schools have formed partnerships, the details must be entered on VASS and need to be approved by each school in the partnership.

The **VCAA Partnership Agreement** form is available on VASS. Schools must first exchange partnership agreements, and then enter the partnership details directly onto VASS. Each school is required to keep their own copy of the partnership agreement, and each copy must be signed by the principal of each school. The agreement is to be retained at the school, and should not be forwarded to the VCAA; however, the VCAA may request it for audit purposes.

6.2 Managing small-group partnerships for statistical moderation of School-based Assessment

Best practice

The VCAA expects that participating teachers will follow best practice when conducting partnerships:

- School principals should be informed of the initial formation of the partnership, the ongoing maintenance of the partnership, and the resulting moderation of School-based Assessment scores.
- Teachers in the partnership should make contact as early in the school year as possible and keep written records of meetings, telephone calls, emails and any other relevant interaction.
- School principals should be kept informed of any conflict that may arise and the measures taken to resolve any issues.
- There should be an initial meeting that covers the requirements of the study design for each of the chosen assessment tasks and the assessment criteria, and for coursework.
- Teachers are required to agree on the procedures for ensuring comparability of assessment tasks and the schedule and marking schemes of any tasks to be done in common.
- Teachers should be clear and consistent about the application of the mandated criteria and descriptors for the School-assessed Task.
- Each school should mark the assessment tasks of its own students and select student tasks for moderation.
- Each school should enter the scores for its own students on VASS.
- Each school should send a copy of the VASS printout of the scores for all School-based Assessment tasks to its partner schools to verify that scores have been entered correctly.

Refer to the Scored assessment: School-based Assessment section for information on producing a combined set of comparable School-based Assessment scores.

Reporting scores to the VCAA

Each school enters the scores for its own students on VASS, and sends a copy of the VASS printout of the assessments for all School-based Assessment tasks to the partner school to verify that the scores have been entered correctly. If a **Score Amendment Sheet** (SAS) is subsequently filed with the VCAA, it must be signed and dated by the principal of each school in the partnership.

Each partnership school must keep copies of the following documents at the school:

- a single list of the moderated scores for all students in the partnership (from all schools involved)
- a copy of the partner school's VASS printout of the assessments for all School-assessed Coursework tasks (to verify that the scores have been entered correctly)
- a **VCAA Partnership Agreement** form signed by the school principal.

Once partnership details are entered on VASS, schools must check that each school in the partnership has checked ('ticked') the approval button. Partnerships cannot be considered 'valid' by the VCAA unless all

schools in the partnership group have 'approved' their involvement; in addition, the statistical moderation process cannot run for those partnerships where one or more schools has the status 'unapproved'. Partnerships cannot be entered directly onto VASS after the closing date.

Schools can search for potential partner schools through VASS.

Exemption from partnership requirement

Exemption from the requirement to form partnerships may be granted following written application to the VCAA outlining why the formation of a partnership is impossible or undesirable in a particular circumstance. The exemption request letter must be endorsed by the school principal. Exemption requests can be accepted up until the submission of student results in any given academic year.

Exemption requests will be processed within 10 working days. The outcome of each request will appear in the status column on the VCE Partnerships screen on VASS. If an exemption request is unsuccessful, the principal will be notified in writing.

Schools with moderation groups that comprise fewer than five students at the time of moderation should retain all student work contributing to School-based Assessments and make this work available to the VCAA if requested.

Assistance for schools participating in small-group moderation

The VCAA provides a wide range of resources to support schools and teachers engaged in small-group partnerships, including, but not limited to, access to professional development and exemplars of best practice.

When to dissolve a partnership

If a teacher in a partnership is not satisfied that the partnership is working satisfactorily, it is in the best interests of the students concerned that the teacher dissolves the partnership. Unsatisfactory partnerships can result when:

- regular and sufficient communication is not maintained
- teachers do not agree, or a compromise cannot be reached, on the standard of set tasks and assessment, the outcomes of moderation, and/or the level and spread of student scores
- a teacher feels pressured to agree to assessments they believe do not best reflect the students' ability.

How to dissolve a partnership

If a partnership is not working satisfactorily and teachers have tried to reach a resolution, the partnership can be dissolved before student results are entered. Requests for dissolution of a partnership must be submitted in writing and endorsed by the principal of each school involved. These requests are to be addressed to the Manager, Student Records and Results Unit, and must list the reason or reasons for the request. The VCAA will then remove the partnership from the database and award an exemption if necessary (that is, for the school with fewer than five enrolments). Alternatively, the 'small school' can form a partnership with another school.

7 Maintenance of school records

Schools must establish procedures to keep records and documentation of decisions relating to:

- unit completion and graded assessments (and initial School-based Assessments if appropriate)
- student appeals and resulting decisions
- applications and decisions relating to Second Language and English as an Additional Language (EAL) eligibility
- agreements to work in partnership with other providers in determining initial School-based Assessments

- applications for extensions of time, with supporting documentation
- applications for, and approvals of, Special Provision, with supporting documentation
- student absences, and whether or not these are approved
- any interviews with a student and any resulting decisions.

Schools should advise students that they need to retain work completed for assessment until the end of the academic year in which the work was undertaken. Schools may wish to supervise the storage of student work for this purpose, but it is not required.

Work assessed as N, or which may be, for other reasons, the subject of dispute at a later date, should be retained at the school. Such work may be retained in original or photocopied form.

7.1 Retention of VCE School-based Assessments

The decision about whether or not to return School-based Assessments to students rests with the school. The VCAA will not usually request to see copies of student work.

However, as part of the School-based Assessment Audit program, the VCAA may request that a school submits copies of specific School-based Assessment completed by students. The VCAA will either nominate specific student work or ask the school to choose student work.

Schools will be advised about the VCE studies that will form part of the School-based Assessment Audit program. Notification of Unit 3 studies for audit will be sent at the start of the academic year and notification of Unit 4 studies for audit will be sent midway through the academic year.

7.2 Privacy

The *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) (PDP Act) sets legal standards for the way the Victorian public sector collects and handles the 'personal information' of individuals. Victorian government schools must comply with the PDP Act. The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cwth) may apply to the collection and handling of personal information about individuals by non-government schools, who should seek their own advice in this regard.

Laws relating to the privacy of personal information affects access to, use, disclosure and storage of student information.

7.3 Access to student data

Subject to advice about the application of privacy laws referred to previously, as a general rule, no information should be provided to parents by the school about a student without the student's written authority. However, section 1.2.1(f), section 5.10.1(2) and Item 9 of Schedule 5 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, and regulation 51 and Item 3 of Schedule 2 of the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007* requires schools registered with the VRQA to ensure that parents of a student have access to accurate information about the student's achievement and performance. This information must include at least two written reports relating to the student's performance. Schools should seek their own advice from DET or the relevant sectoral agency about fulfilling their obligations to provide information to parents.

Students should be allowed to access their VCE or VCAL records during the course of their study and, at the discretion of the principal, after completion of the course.

7.4 Security and storage

Students' personal information should be stored in accordance with the requirements of applicable privacy legislation. Confidential and/or sensitive student VCE and VCAL records held by the school should be

kept under secure conditions, accessible only to persons authorised by the principal. Minimum secure conditions consist of a locked filing cabinet or cupboard within a locked storeroom.

School copies of results should be held separately from collections of student work. Duplicate master records should also be stored separately. Computer databases should be kept in such a way that records are not accessible to students or unauthorised persons. Schools should seek their own advice in relation to compliance with laws and good practice for the storage of students' personal, confidential and sensitive information.

7.5 Freedom of Information requests

Students at government schools may be able to request access to school documents by making a Freedom of Information (FOI) request under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* ('FOI Act'). Requests for access to government school records should be sent to the Manager, Freedom of Information and Privacy, DET, or emailed to: foi@edumail.vic.gov.au. Further advice about FOI requests and DET should be directed to that office.

The VCAA holds records related to students' personal details, enrolment and assessment. FOI requests for access to documents held by the VCAA should be sent to the Freedom of Information Officer, Legal Services Unit, VCAA, 2 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, 3000, or emailed to vcaa.foi@edumail.vic.gov.au. No school should privately process such applications. Further information about FOI and the VCAA is available on the VCAA website.

7.6 Maintenance and disposal of records

Advice for government schools/providers

Government schools are obliged to keep school records and dispose of such records in accordance with the relevant record disposal authority (RDA) guidelines, which are established by the Keeper of Public Records under the *Public Records Act 1973* (<http://prov.vic.gov.au>). RDA guidelines describe the major categories of records kept by schools and specify the minimum period for which they should be retained.

The relevant government school RDA guidelines are:

- PROS01/01 General Retention and Disposal Authority for School Records
- PROS10/09 Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Education and Early Childhood Development Functions
- PROS08/10 Curriculum and Assessment Functions Records RDA.

Advice for non-government schools/providers

Non-government schools may be guided by the retention periods specified for government school records, or they may wish to use the 'Records Retention Schedule for non-Government Schools' produced by the Australian Society of Archivists (www.archivists.org.au). Alternatively, they may have their own internal records authority for school records, and may wish to seek their own advice about record-keeping.