Derived Examination Score (DES)

Students who are ill or affected by other personal circumstances at the time of a VCE external assessment and whose result is unlikely to be a fair or accurate indication of their learning or achievement in the study may apply for a DES. If their application is approved, a DES will be calculated by the VCAA.

The purpose of a DES is to ensure that a student’s final result for an external assessment reflects as accurately as possible the level of achievement that would be expected based on the learning and achievement the student has demonstrated in the study over the year.

Students who experience the onset of an illness or the occurrence of an injury or personal trauma around an assessment period should discuss, with their VCE coordinator, a school application for Emergency Special Examination Arrangements, which may help them sit their VCE external assessments.

A DES should not be used to compensate for learning or achievement that has not been possible because of long-term illness or other ongoing conditions that have been present over the year. If an illness or personal circumstance has been so severe that a student has not been coping with the demands of the VCE, **Compassionate Late Withdrawal** or **Interrupted Studies** status should be considered.

A DES is not available for the GAT, Music Style and Composition Externally-assessed Task or Extended Investigation Externally-assessed Task written report.

Eligibility for a DES

Students are only eligible for a DES for a VCE external assessment if they meet all of the following criteria:

* They have completed the course of study leading to the external assessment, and have a result for at least one other graded assessment in the same study.
* They experience the onset of an illness or the occurrence of an injury, personal trauma or serious intervening event in the period before or during a VCE external assessment, that has either prevented them from attending the external assessment or affected their performance during the external assessment.
* They provide independent professional written evidence that demonstrates the illness, injury, personal trauma or serious intervening event has affected their performance in the external assessment or has prevented them from attending the external assessment.

A ‘personal trauma’ may include, but is not limited to, the death or serious illness or an accident involving a family member, or family break-up.

A ‘serious intervening event’ may include, but is not limited to, an accident on the way to or at an examination, attendance at a funeral of a family member or other person of close relationship, or the required attendance at a court proceeding.

Students cannot submit an application on the basis of:

* unfamiliarity with the English language
* teacher absence or other teacher-related difficulties
* long-term or chronic condition or illness
* matters that could have been avoided by the student, for example misreading the examination timetable or instructions, or matters related to school discipline
* matters of the student’s own choosing, such as involvement in social events, sporting or training activities, school events or volunteer work.

Evidence required for a DES application

The student must provide evidence that demonstrates one of the following:

* They were unable to perform on the external assessment at a level that accurately reflects their expected level of achievement in the study.
* They were prevented from sitting the examination at all.

Applications on the grounds of illness or injury must be substantiated with evidence from an independent health professional.

Applications on the grounds of personal trauma must be substantiated with evidence from one of the following:

* an independent health professional
* a social worker or member of the clergy.

Applications on the grounds of a serious intervening event must be substantiated with independent evidence from one of the following:

* an independent health professional
* a social worker or a member of the clergy
* a police officer, a solicitor or a funeral parlour operator.

In all circumstances, the person providing the evidence must have specific knowledge of the illness, injury, personal trauma or serious intervening event, must not be related to or have a close personal relationship with the student; and must have been professionally associated with the student’s situation.

Evidence from school-based personnel must be supported by appropriate medical or professional evidence. The following conditions apply to each external assessment included in a DES application:

* If the student attended the external assessment, the person providing the evidence must have examined or treated the student or have been consulted by the student in a timely period before or after the external assessment. It is expected that a timely consultation would occur in the period from two days before the external assessment to one day after the external assessment.
* If the student did not attend the external assessment, the person providing the evidence must have examined or treated the student or have been consulted by the student in a timely period as close as possible to the day before the external assessment or on the same day as the external assessment. In the case of illness or injury, there must be a specific written recommendation from an independent health professional recommending non-attendance at the external assessment. In the case of a personal trauma or serious intervening event, there must be written evidence from an appropriate professional confirming the reason why the student was unable to attend an external assessment.

How to make an application

Students who believe that they are eligible for a DES should first seek advice from their school. The primary responsibility for submitting an application that meets all eligibility criteria rests with the student. The VCAA will determine the student’s eligibility for a DES from the supporting evidence supplied by the student.

What the student must do

The application form and the collection of supporting evidence is the responsibility of the student. The student must ensure that:

* they submit an application for each of the external assessments for which they are seeking a DES
* all required sections of the application are completed by them
* statements from the individuals providing the independent evidence are completed personally
* statements from other sources are completed as applicable
* the application is forwarded to the VCAA within seven days of the student’s last external assessment in the relevant assessment period
* all the information provided is true and accurate
* they (or others known to them) have not completed or altered any information in the application
* their correct home address is registered with the school.

What the chief supervisor must do

The chief supervisor must complete Section B of the Individual Application.

What the independent health professional must do

Independent health professionals must complete Section C1 of the Individual Application. The evidence given by the independent health professional is of paramount importance, and must be current and applicable to each external assessment for which an application is being made. If a student does not attend an external assessment, there must be a definitive statement from an independent health professional recommending non-attendance at that external assessment. Refer to ‘Evidence required for a DES application’ for timeliness of consultations.

The independent health professional must provide contact details so that if the VCAA considers it necessary, it is able to seek additional information and/or evidence on the effect of the event or condition on the student’s ability to perform.

What other appropriate professionals must do (if applicable)

Other appropriate professionals, such as social workers, clergy, police officers, solicitors or funeral parlour operators must complete the appropriate section of the Individual Application.

They must also provide contact details so that if the VCAA considers it necessary, it is able to seek additional information and/or evidence on the effect of the event or condition on the student’s ability to perform.

What the principal or principal’s delegate must do

Specifically, the principal should:

* determine whether the application has merit
* determine whether it was the student’s intention to undertake the external assessment
* provide any additional information relating to the authenticity of the application (for example, confirm attendance or illness, or relationship to a deceased friend or family member). Schools may include a copy of a student’s attendance record or an indication of the number of days absent
* include their endorsement, or otherwise, based on available information for each external assessment for which a DES is being sought
* ensure that the student does not tamper with the application, or change material details
* ensure the VCE coordinator completes Section B of the Individual Application where necessary
* complete Section D of the Individual Application.

Submitting the application

Students should submit their application to their home school principal, who will consider the application and make a recommendation to the VCAA. If circumstances are of an exceptionally private and sensitive nature, students may apply directly to the VCAA. Students will still be required to provide evidence that meets the eligibility requirements. The VCAA reserves the right to contact the school when statements involving the school need to be verified.

Closing date for applications

The VCAA must receive an application no later than seven days after the student’s last external assessment in the relevant assessment period. There are specific closing dates for each VCE external assessment. Students should refer to their individual Student Assessment Timetable, which provides their final dates for lodgement of applications for each VCE external assessment.

Only in the most exceptional circumstances will late applications be considered. No applications will be considered by the VCAA after final VCE results have been released.

Attendance at VCE external assessments

Students are advised to attend every external assessment if at all possible. Students should not miss an external assessment merely because they do not feel able to do their best. The DES is designed for students who have completed the course leading to the external assessment, but have performed below expectations or cannot attend due to adverse circumstances. The VCAA does not expect a student to attend an external assessment against specific written medical advice.

If a student is ill, but able to attend the external assessment, they should inform their VCE coordinator and/or chief supervisor of their condition as soon as possible before or during the external assessment.

Non-attendance at external assessments

If a student cannot attend an external assessment, it is imperative that they notify their principal or VCE coordinator immediately. A student who does not attend an external assessment, and whose application is not approved, will receive ‘NA’ for the external assessment.

Assessing the application

All applications will be assessed by a panel, based on the evidence presented and any additional information obtained by the VCAA. A decision will be determined for each of the external assessments included in the application. Students will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing, and their school will receive an email outlining the outcome of the student’s application, which is also recorded on VASS.

For each approved application for a specific external assessment, the VCAA will:

* calculate a range of possible DES scores, which will be calculated statistically from the student’s other assessments, including moderated School-based Assessments, GAT scores, other examination scores, if applicable, and indicative grades provided by the school
* record the DES as the final score if the highest possible DES score is greater than the achieved external assessment score
* use this final score to determine the grade for the external assessment
* use this final score to calculate the study score
* report the calculated study score on the student’s Statement of Results
* report this study score to VTAC for the calculation of the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR).

For each application for a specific external assessment that is not approved, the VCAA will provide reasons why the application was not successful.

If an application is not approved, the VCAA will allow the student the opportunity to submit a second application if it:

* provides additional evidence of the student’s condition or circumstances relevant to the external assessment that materially adds to the evidence submitted with the original application
* is received at the VCAA no later than seven days from the date of the VCAA decision letter.

Group applications

The principal of the home school may apply for a DES for a group of students for a particular external assessment or all external assessments for the student population. This group may be all students enrolled in a particular study at the school, or a class group, or any other group in which each member has been affected by a particular event.

Group applications are usually related to an event that has had a substantial effect on a student group (for example, the death of a fellow student or a teacher). If the event has affected a particular external assessment, the effect will be considered as restricted to that external assessment. The events occurring around one external assessment cannot necessarily be considered to have an effect on a student, or students, for another external assessment. Group applications would also be appropriate if there is an exceptional circumstance that affects a school community, such as a natural disaster or pandemic.

A group application does not preclude a student from submitting an individual application for a DES for each specified external assessment.

If group applications are made, the principal must identify the level of effect on each student, that is, how the incident affected the group and/or specific individuals within the group. It is strongly recommended that the school principal contacts VCAA Special Provision for advice prior to submitting a group DES application.

How is a DES calculated?

The calculation for the DES uses all other available scores for the student in the affected study and the indicative grade for any external assessments provided by the school and the GAT component scores. For each approved application for a specific external assessment, the VCAA will calculate a range of possible DES scores, which will be calculated statistically from the student’s other assessments, including:

* moderated School-based Assessments
* GAT component scores
* other external assessment scores if applicable
* indicative grades provided by the school.

The contribution made by the graded assessments, the indicative grade and the GAT component scores is determined by analysis of the comparison of this data with the final score for external assessment for all students who have not applied for a DES. For all external assessment this analysis indicates that the two graded assessment scores provide the greatest contribution to all the predictors.

If a student is eligible for a DES and the highest of the predictors is greater than the achieved external assessment score, the highest predictor is chosen as the final score for the student in the relevant external assessment.