VCE First Languages –   
Frequently asked questions

1. What is the difference between a ‘spoken text’ and a ‘viewed text’?

Spoken texts include but are not limited to audio texts from radio, podcasts, or recordings of conversations or spoken interactions. Spoken texts are sound only: they do not include any visual elements. By hearing a range of spoken texts, students are given the opportunity to develop and consolidate listening skills.

Viewed texts provide information through a visual mode. These texts can also include some spoken or written information. As stated in the [study design for each First Language](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), ‘Viewed texts could include photographs, charts, drawings, paintings, films, menus, maps, posters, diagrams or advertisements.’ This list is not exhaustive.

A film is a viewed text. A film in the language, with subtitles, is also considered a viewed text.

2. How much time should teachers allocate for the completion of outcome tasks?

VCE study designs do not specify how much time should be allocated for School-Assessed Coursework (SAC) tasks. Teachers should use their professional judgment to determine an appropriate time frame that will suit their particular school setting. See the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx) on the VCE General Advice and Policy webpage. Assessment should be **reasonable** and designed for **efficiency**, and it should be possible for students to complete the task in the allocated time frame. When determining the amount of time to set, teachers should ensure that the assessment will not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances.

3. For oral SAC tasks, can students pair up for their assessments?

Each individual student should undertake each oral assessment (such as role-plays and interviews) with their teacher. This will ensure that assessment is **equitable**, as per the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx), and that under the same or similar conditions, SAC tasks provide consistent information about student performance. It will also ensure that student work can be authenticated effectively. More information about authentication can be found in the [*VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx).

4. When designing a SAC task that requires students to respond to written, viewed or spoken texts, what length stimulus texts should teachers select?

Study designs do not specify the length of stimulus texts to be used for SAC tasks. The length of texts selected will vary, depending on the type of text, their density and their level of complexity. Teachers should use their professional judgment to select suitable stimulus texts for their particular cohort of students. Teachers should bear in mind that the task should be **reasonable** and students should be able to complete the SAC task in the allocated time. At the same time, assessment should be **efficient**. Teachers should avoid setting tasks that are unnecessarily long and that may over-assess students. The SAC task should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances. For more information, see the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx).

5. When using a film or a story as a stimulus text for an assessment task, can students access it prior to the day of the SAC task?

To ensure that student work can be authenticated adequately and that the assessment is **valid**, teachers should ensure that students have not seen the SAC task prior to the day of the assessment. However, teachers may teach stimulus texts such as a film or a story in the lessons leading up to the SAC task, if showing the stimulus texts for the first time in class on the day of the SAC is impractical. In order to ensure that assessment is **equitable**, teachers should take care to give all students equal access to the stimulus texts. Teachers should also avoid setting tasks that are unnecessarily long and that will over-assess students. The SAC task should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances. For more information about assessment see the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx) and for more information about authentication see the [*VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx).

6. When giving students a SAC task, can teachers give them a choice of tasks?

In order to ensure that assessment is **equitable**, as per the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx), where teachers allow students to choose between a number of task options, they must ensure that the alternatives are of comparable scope and demand. As well as ensuring that issues related to parity have been considered, teachers must ensure that all task options assess the same theme, topic and subtopic that was taught to the students in class. It should be noted that it is not essential to provide a choice of task options. Teachers may choose to provide only one task.

7. How should teachers cover the prescribed writing styles?

As stated in the [study design for each First Language](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), students are expected to be familiar with and produce different styles of writing. Writing styles include: personal, imaginative, persuasive, informative and evaluative.

For information about these five writing styles, refer to the document ‘Main characteristics of different writing styles’ in the Resources section of the *Advice for teachers* webpages. The *Advice for teachers* can be accessed via the relevant [study page](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), under the heading ‘Support material’.

There is no expectation that teachers will cover all five styles of writing or teach all of the text types in any one outcome. These will be covered across all outcomes in Units 1–4. Some of the outcomes prescribe a particular style of writing, while others do not. For example, in Unit 3 Outcome 3, imaginative writing is prescribed for the outcome. There is no expectation that teachers would teach the remaining four writing styles in this outcome. In Unit 4 Outcome 2, the key knowledge and key skills include persuasive and evaluative writing for the outcome. Teachers must teach those two writing styles in this particular outcome. In the assessment task, teachers may choose to assess one or both of these writing styles. For advice about offering students a choice of task, see Question 6 in this document.

There are many outcomes where the writing style is not prescribed. Teachers will need to use these outcomes across Units 1–4 as opportunities to teach and assess the remaining writing styles.

8. How should teachers cover the prescribed themes and topics and suggested subtopics over the teaching and learning program for Units 1–4?

As stated in the [study design for each First Language](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), all the themes and topics are to be studied over the course of Units 1–4. In each unit, the learning program will include topics from more than one theme and at least one topic and subtopic for each area of study. The subtopic will provide the context for teaching, learning and assessment of achievement. The suggested subtopics provided in the study design are examples only. The order in which the themes and topics are studied is not prescribed; teachers may choose which themes and topics are studied for each unit.

The exception is in Unit 4 Areas of Study 2 and 3. For the Extended Study of Language and Culture, the study design states that the subtopic should be based on a subtopic related to language and culture, drawn from one of the prescribed topics of *Literature and the Arts*, *Stories from the past* or *Youth issues* under the theme ‘Tradition and change in Language-speaking communities’ listed in the table of prescribed themes and topics.

Consideration should be given to the appropriateness of topics and subtopics in terms of creating logically sequenced language skill development and for the depth of study required in each unit. It is not expected that all topics will require the same amount of study time and some may be more suited to Units 1 and 2 or to Units 3 and 4, depending on the learning program.

Units 1 and 2

9. In the study design, there are lists of tasks in Units 1 and 2.   
Do teachers have to use these?

VCE study designs do not prescribe tasks at Units 1 and 2 level. The [study design for each First Language](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx) provides lists of suitable tasks that teachers may select from; however, these are suggestions only. Only one task is to be used for each outcome. Teachers should use their professional judgment to determine the kind of task to set for their students that will assess the key knowledge and key skills for the outcome.

Units 3 and 4

10. How do teachers design a task for Unit 3 Outcome 1?

**Outcome:** Present and exchange information, opinions and experiences and respond to questions.

**Task:** A four- to five-minute evaluative oral presentation, focusing on points for and against an aspect related to texts studied, and a response to questions.

For this task, students will deliver an evaluative oral presentation of four to five minutes duration. In the presentation, they will focus on points for and against an aspect related to texts studied.

Straight after the presentation, the teacher must ask several follow-up questions in spoken language, and students will respond. In their responses, students should demonstrate a variety of ways to acknowledge the points of view of others and how to negotiate and present opposing evaluations. They should present their findings in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner and use relevant information to respond clearly to questions.

Teachers should use their professional judgment to develop several suitable follow-up questions. The follow-up questions will enable students to demonstrate the key knowledge and the key skills for the outcome.

Teachers should ensure that the overall task is **efficient**. To do this, they should determine the appropriate number of follow-up questions. Teachers should be mindful not to extend the task for an unnecessary length of time or to over-assess students. The SAC task should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances. For more information, see the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx).

11. How do teachers design a task for Unit 3 Outcome 2?

**Outcome:** Analyse and use information from spoken and viewed texts.

**Task:** Written responses to specific questions or instructions, analysing and using the information provided in the texts.

In Unit 3 Area of Study 2, students analyse and use information from spoken and viewed texts relating to a selected subtopic and write responses in language. The subtopic must relate to one of the prescribed themes and topics in the study design.

Teachers must select a spoken text and a viewed text that both relate to the selected subtopic. Teachers must then develop questions for students to respond to. Students will use the two texts as a stimulus, and then answer questions in writing, basing their answers on the texts.

Teachers must refer to the key knowledge and key skills for the outcome when developing the questions. The questions must enable students to demonstrate the key knowledge and the key skills. At stated in the [study design for each First Language](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), the stimulus texts will relate to one selected subtopic, so that students can ‘summarise and synthesise ideas and information from a range of sources’.

Teachers should ensure that the task includes an appropriate balance and range of question types. It may be appropriate to begin with lower order questions, such as ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions, and then increase complexity, including higher order command terms such as ‘explain’ or ‘discuss’ that require students to develop a more in-depth response.

Teachers should ensure that the task is **reasonable** and accessible and that students can complete the SAC task in the allocated time. The task should also allow the highest performing students to be able to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. At the same time, assessment should be **efficient**. Teachers should avoid setting tasks that will over-assess students. The SAC task should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances. For more information, see the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx).

12. How do teachers design a task for Unit 4 Outcome 1?

**Outcome:** Analyse and use information from written and viewed texts.

**Task:** Written responses to specific questions or instructions analysing and using information provided from the texts.

In Unit 4 Area of Study 1, students analyse and use information from written and viewed texts relating to a selected subtopic and write responses in language. The subtopic must relate to the prescribed themes and topics in the study design.

Teachers must select a written text and a viewed text that both relate to the selected subtopic. Teachers must then develop questions for students to respond to. Students will use the two texts as a stimulus and respond to specific questions or instructions in writing to develop their analytical skills.

Teachers must refer to the key knowledge and key skills for the outcome when developing the questions. The questions must enable students to demonstrate the key knowledge and the key skills. At stated in the [study design for each First Language](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), the stimulus texts will relate to one selected subtopic, so that students can ‘summarise and synthesise information from different texts’, ‘link, compare or sequence a range of ideas to formulate clear responses to questions or instructions’ and ‘analyse and concisely reorganise ideas and information from written and viewed texts’.

Teachers should ensure that the task includes an appropriate balance and range of question types. It may be appropriate to begin with lower order questions, such as ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions, and then increase complexity, including higher order command terms such as ‘explain’ or ‘discuss’ that require students to develop a more in-depth response.

Teachers should ensure that the task is **reasonable** and accessible and that students can complete the SAC task in the allocated time. The task should also allow the highest performing students to be able to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. At the same time, assessment should be **efficient**. Teachers should avoid setting tasks that will over-assess students. The SAC task should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances. For more information, see the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx).

Teachers may refer to the Sample Approaches to Developing an Assessment Task section of the *Advice for teachers* webpages for guidance about the design of this task. The *Advice for teachers* can be accessed via the relevant [study page](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), under the heading ‘Support material’.

13. In Unit 4, students undertake the Extended Study of Language and Culture. How do teachers select the subtopic for this?

The extended study is conducted over Unit 4 Areas of Study 2 and 3. When selecting a suitable subtopic for the extended study, teachers should note that the extended study requires students to respond critically to spoken, viewed and written texts which reflect aspects of language and culture. It should be based on a subtopic related to language and culture, drawn from one of the prescribed topics of *Literature and the Arts*, *Stories from the past* or *Youth issues* under the theme ‘Tradition and change in Language-speaking communities’ listed in the table of prescribed themes and topics and suggested subtopics in the study design.

One subtopic may be selected for the whole class or different subtopics may be selected for individuals or groups of students. The selected subtopic should be sufficiently broad to accommodate a range of interests and perspectives, so that each student can provide an individual response.

The extended study should include a study of the author’s/director’s/composer’s/artist’s intent, as well as the relationship between the context in which the text was produced, the text itself, the author and the audience.

Before selecting a subtopic, teachers should review the study design and pay close attention to the key knowledge and the key skills for Areas of Study 2 and 3, to ensure that the selected subtopic will give students the opportunity to develop the required knowledge and skills for these outcomes.

The selection of a suitable subtopic for the extended study should also take into account the assessment principles, in particular that assessment is [**equitable**](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx), as students must undertake assessment tasks that are comparable in scope and demand. For more information, see the [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx).

14. For the Extended Study of Language and Culture, what are the stimulus texts that students need to study?

In the extended study, students respond critically to texts which reflect aspects of language and culture. The texts should support the study of a selected subtopic related to language and culture, drawn from one of the prescribed topics of *Literature and the Arts*, *Stories from the past* or *Youth issues* under the theme ‘Tradition and change in Language-speaking communities’ listed in the table of prescribed themes and topics and suggested subtopics in the study design.

To enable students to explore their subtopic in sufficient depth it is suggested that at least three texts of adequate depth are selected. These should include a spoken text, a viewed text and a written text, for example, a poem or song, a film, and a short novel. The length of texts selected will vary, depending on the type of text, their density and their level of complexity.

As stated in the [study design for each First Language](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), the extended study should include a study of the author’s/director’s/composer’s/artist’s intent, as well as the relationship between the context in which the text was produced, the text itself, the author and the audience.

For information about the difference between a ‘spoken text’ and a ‘viewed text’, see Question 1 in this document.

15. For the Extended Study of Language and Culture, how should teachers determine appropriate stimulus texts?

Teachers should use their professional judgment to select at least three texts of adequate depth for the Extended Study of Language and Culture. These must include a spoken text, a viewed text and a written text.

Teachers should review stimulus texts for quality and appropriateness, to ensure that the study of the selected texts will provide opportunities for students to develop the key knowledge and the key skills for the outcome.

Teachers should select texts that offer sufficient information for a student to analyse the author’s/director’s/composer’s/artist’s intent, as well as the relationship between the context in which the text was produced, the text itself, the author and the audience.

If selecting a foreign text (translated into language), teachers should ensure that the text will provide adequate opportunity for students to explore content related to aspects of the target language and culture. Teachers are reminded that the subtopic must be drawn from one of the prescribed topics under the theme ‘Tradition and change in Language-speaking communities’.

If selecting multimedia texts, such as a viewed text drawn from social media, teachers should ensure that the quality of the language in the text supports appropriate skill development and that the content offers sufficient depth to provide students with the opportunity for analysis and to develop a critical response.

16. For Unit 4 Outcome 2, is it the expectation that students read/view/listen to new ‘unseen’ texts during the assessment task, or can the task be based on previously read/viewed/heard texts that were presented during the extended study?

**Outcome:** Respond critically to spoken, viewed and written texts which reflect aspects of language and culture through the extended study.

**Task:** A 500–600-character / 350–400-word / 1400–1600 ji / 1000–1200 cha persuasive or evaluative written response to the extended study.

In the Extended Study of Language and Culture, students will spend approximately 15 hours of scheduled class time exploring a subtopic. They will read, view and listen to at least three texts of adequate depth about the selected subtopic. Students will also study the author’s/director’s/composer’s/artist’s intent, as well as the relationship between the context in which the text was produced, the text itself, the author and the audience.

The outcome task will be a critical response to these texts, which will reflect aspects of language and culture through the extended study.

It is likely that the students may have read, seen and heard the stimulus texts prior to the SAC day. If a teacher was to teach a novel or a short story as the written text, it may take several lessons to teach. In the same vein, if the teacher used a film adaptation of a book as the viewed text, and students compared the two versions, as well as listening to a related spoken text, all of this may take several lessons to teach.

When the teacher delivers the SAC task, it is the task itself that needs to be unseen before the SAC day. Each school needs to prepare a unique question to give to the students on the SAC day, and it needs to be a question that the students have not seen before. This is to ensure that student work can be authenticated. The question should clearly define a specific context, purpose, style of writing, text type and audience, to provide appropriate direction for student responses.

If a teacher chooses to allow students to access notes or supporting materials on the SAC day, they should ensure that all students have equal access to these materials and that robust authentication measures are in place. For more information about authentication, see the [*VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx).