**Annelise Balsamo –** Hello and welcome to this on-demand video exploring general advice to approach assessment in the new VCE English and EAL Study Design. My name's Annelise Balsamo and I'm the English curriculum manager at the VCAA. Your presenter today is Helen Billett. She's a highly experienced English teacher. She'll be exploring assessment in line with VCAA guidelines, but through the prism of her own perspective and practise, including ideas around developing rubrics. Please note that this is advice only and these videos have been produced to support and value teacher practise and agency. I'll now hand over to Helen.

**Helen Billet –** Assessment conducted during a student's VCE experience should align with the VCAA principles that assessment is valid, reasonable, equitable, balanced, and efficient. This recording is designed to explain how these principles can be used to create assessment in Units 1 to 4 English that works both formatively and summatively. There are two other recordings in this series, one on each of the two areas of study covered in Unit 1 English. These provide practical examples of rubrics and an explanation of the rubric creation process in action. This, in consideration with the setting of appropriate tasks, will enable teachers to envisage ways in which student work can be assessed. The level of achievement reported to the VCAA by schools at Unit 1 and 2 is S or N.

However, it may be useful for schools to develop internal mechanisms to determine students' progress to provide students and parents with information about that progress. Assessments in Unit 1 and 2 is designed in conjunction with the study design, but implemented by schools. It should be noted that achieving an S is not determined by passing a single outcome. Achieving an S is a professional judgement made by a teacher about student performance in the completion of that area of study and may be based on formative as well as summative assessments completed. The VCAA provide rubrics that can be used in Units 3 and 4 to assess SACs. Schools are not obligated to use these and they are welcome to use the same process as that outlined here for Unit 1 rubrics to create rubrics for Units 2, 3, and 4. The English Study Design recognises that students undertaking Unit 1 have very different cognitive, social, and organisational capacities than a Unit 4 student.

Thus, it would be inappropriate to use the same assessment rubric in Unit 1 as in Unit 4 or even to use a watered down version of that rubric. It's also impractical as the English Study Design requires different skills and content to be taught at different units as it works progressively to build skills students need to successfully complete Unit 4. Many of us have been influenced by the writing of Wiggins and McTighe, such as backward by design and understanding by design, and hence we seek to establish how students will be assessed before we begin planning teaching activities. This is both understandable and desirable. This recording seeks to outline the process of creating appropriate rubrics for the assessment in VCE English. In English, we use global assessment practises to assess outcomes, SACs, and exams. We do this because we recognise that the skills we teach are connected. Students need to communicate complex ideas, and to do this, they need to understand complex ideas and the ways in which ideas are connected. But to communicate their understanding, they need to be able to sequence ideas strategically and present them with precise and expressive language. Global assessment requires teachers to make complex judgments about interrelated skills that the student is demonstrating.

These professional judgements require the teacher to be both precise and dextrous. For example, it's easier to convey simple ideas than it is to convey more complex ones, and hence a student is undertaking a more challenging task when attempting to express more complex ideas. English teachers make informed judgments about the complexity of the ideas presented by students and use these judgments to temper and guide their related decisions about the ways in which the student has structured their communication and the complexity and effectiveness of the ways in which they've used language to communicate them. Students' capacities rarely develop in exact parallel. Expressive capacities can be developed in advance of receptive ones and vice versa, and this is before we overlay the student's capacity to be creative and innovative in their communications. Fortunately, despite its complexity, English teachers are adept at making these sophisticated and interrelated judgements.

The language used in a rubric needs to be consistent with the language of the study design and it must be useful for reporting a level of achievement and able to convey an understanding to the student of how to progress further. Thus, the rubric performs both a summative and formative role. As well, the rubric must focus on what students can achieve and thus rubrics are phrased in positive language in order to be respectful of all student work and these rubrics need to be manageable. This means that the most important aspects of the task are considered. Students should not be overwhelmed by a daunting amount of feedback, and equally, teachers shouldn't be burdened by providing information that's not useful for student learning. Therefore, teachers need to select and synthesise the key knowledge and the key skills in order to present useful feedback to students. Not every aspect of the key knowledge and the key skills are measured via the outcomes. Teachers need to determine what key skills are appropriate to assess to measure student performance in an outcome. The VCAA suggests that rubrics contain between four and six rows of information and they suggest that between four and six different expected performance descriptors are used.

Traditionally in English, we have used five expected performance descriptors and between four and six levels of achievement. It follows that any work that's set is considered very carefully in relation to the rubric to ensure that the task that's set is compatible with the assessment tool. If necessary, the rubric, with close regard to the key knowledge and key skills, should be adapted if the task does not align closely with the rubric. The rubric, as the assessment tool, is the part of the process that's flexible. The task assessed should align with the requirements of the study design. Rubrics need to be published to students in a timely way so that the student understands how their work will be assessed and thus maximise their chance of succeeding in the task. It's important to recognise, too, that these are not static documents. Rubrics can and should be adjusted as cohort's abilities change, as teacher understanding of the study design evolves, and as evidence reveals weakness in the rubric's capacity to enable fair and consistent judgements to be made.

Always it should be remembered that achieving the key knowledge and key skills is the primary consideration. Should a student demonstrate these in a way that the rubric doesn't recognise, it's a limitation of the rubric and not the student and therefore a fair and equitable way of judging the student's work needs to be devised. We want to avoid teaching to the rubric and encourage students to respond to the study design in creative and innovative ways. Rubrics should work for us and not the other way around. Teaching to the rubric instead of teaching the key knowledge and key skills found in the study design reduces learning to formulas and does not promote deep engagement with the teaching and learning about how ideas are best communicated. Rubrics are useful, but we need to remember rubrics are the assessment tool and not the assessment rules.

**Annelise Balsamo –** I'd like to thank Helen for her insights and for her presentation. If you'd like to contact the VCAA for more information or advice, you can contact me, Annelise Balsamo. All my details are on this slide, and you can either ring or email me. Thank you for your time.

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