VCE Australian History (2016–2021)

School-assessed Coursework report

This report is provided for the first year of implementation of this study and is based on the coursework audit and VCAA statistical data.

Unit 3

General comments

This is the first School-assessed Coursework audit undertaken with the reaccredited *VCE History: Australian History Study Design 2016–2021*. Over the year students are required to complete a total of four tasks adhering to the requirements of the School-assessed Coursework (SAC), two for Unit 3 and two for Unit 4.

The audit revealed that generally the majority of schools had attempted to adjust their courses and subsequently their SAC tasks to reflect the changes in the current study design. Some schools, however (due to the timing of Stage 1 of the audit in Term 1), had not fully deciphered the specifics surrounding Outcome 2 SAC 2. The reason behind this would have included the timing of the sample examination provided by VCAA, which many schools were hoping to see to model their SAC tasks on. This anomaly will not be factor for SAC development and planning after 2016. It was positive to see schools trying to match skills between outcomes and the individual examination sections. Students should be clearly informed at the beginning of the year of the timelines and the conditions under which the assessment tasks are to be conducted.

On the whole the audit revealed that most teachers were utilising both the key knowledge and key skills in developing their courses and SACs. More specifically, it was interesting to note a number of schools combining task types for their individual SACs for Unit 3 Outcome 2; for example, an analysis of primary sources that leads into an essay, or an historical inquiry that leads into an essay.

It is a requirement that one each of the four assessment tasks be completed over Units 3 and 4. All schools in the audit adhered to this requirement. Teachers must take note of this when planning their course and SACs for the year.

Specific information

Unit 3 coursework

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the nature of change in the Port Phillip District/Victoria in the period 1834–1860.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Task type options

Each of the following four assessment tasks must be completed over Units 3 and 4:

* a historical inquiry
* an analysis of primary sources
* an analysis of historical interpretations
* an essay.

Teachers may choose the order of the assessment tasks.

Assessment

For SAC 1 most teachers adapted their task from the previous year/s. This was appropriate as the sample examination had not been released to teachers at this stage, and the key knowledge for Outcome 1 suggested that an analysis of primary sources would still work well.

It was pleasing that most tasks submitted in the audit were clear and met the requirements of the new study design. When adapting an old task to a new study design teachers need to ensure that they use correct wording, dates, key knowledge and key skills.

For each SAC task students should be given clear and accurate statements of:

* the outcome being assessed
* the task type
* the requirements and conditions of the task
* authentication processes – if relevant
* contribution of the task to the final outcome score.

With Australian History there should be no confusion about the mark allocation, with 50 assigned to each Outcome 1 and 2 making a total of 100 for Unit 3 making up 25 per cent of a student’s total score.

A few schools in the audit chose to give two smaller SACs of the same style (analysis of primary sources), with the allocation of marks for each of the SACS worth 25 adding to a total of 50.

Within the audit sample most teachers had chosen to complete an analysis of primary sources with a series of short answer questions accompanying them. Similarly, within the audit sample most teachers allocated an A4 cheat sheet (as they did for the first SAC) while the time for completion of the task varied between 60 and 100 minutes and in some cases the task was revisited over a number of lessons (in this instance authentication needed to be provided with more detail for the audit process).

The audit revealed that most teachers were utilising the words and phrases of the key knowledge and key skills for Outcome 1. It is essential that all SAC 1 is generated from this wording and that teachers replicate the words in their assessment.

Most teachers in the audit referred to having provided assessment criteria consistent with the VCAA assessment descriptors. These can be seen in the VCAA publication *VCE History: Australian History 2016–2021 Advice for teachers*. It is useful to note that these descriptors are published as a guide, and individual teachers may modify these descriptors (as long as students have access and knowledge of the criteria prior to the task) – some teachers in the audit suggested they used modified descriptors. With short-answer style questions the total score should add up to 50; however, a marking criteria needs to also be provided with the assessment task.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the visions and actions that shaped the new nation from 1890 to 1920, and the changes and continuities to these visions that resulted from participation in World War I.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Task type options

Each of the following four assessment tasks must be completed over Units 3 and 4:

* a historical inquiry
* an analysis of primary sources
* an analysis of historical interpretations
* an essay.

Teachers may choose the order of the assessment tasks.

Assessment

The audit revealed that most teachers were utilising the words and phrases of the key knowledge and key skills for Outcome 2. It is essential that all SAC 2 is generated from here and teachers replicate the words in their assessment.

The audit was completed by most teachers prior to the sample examination being released by the VCAA. This resulted in some schools not initially submitting a detailed SAC 2 task. Additionally, some schools had suggested they were going to include an essay for SAC 2 without fully developing or explaining what this would entail. Other teachers had utilised the words of the key knowledge and developed essay questions, which would see students drawing from the stimulus of primary source materials that had been examined and investigated in their study leading up to the SAC.

Many teachers in the audit had chosen to complete the historical inquiry as part of their SAC 2 – the outcome being an essay. In some of the samples it was unclear how teachers were managing students’ authentication of their research leading up to writing the essay. Teachers need to be aware of the authentication requirements set out in the latest VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook. Any work set over an extended period of time should include a process of authentication of student work.

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

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| **Outcomes** | **Marks allocated\*** | **Assessment tasks** |
| **Outcome 1**  Analyse the nature of change in the Port Phillip District/Victoria in the period 1834–1860. | 50 | Each of the following four assessment tasks must be completed over Units 3 and 4:   * a historical inquiry * an analysis of primary sources * an analysis of historical interpretations * an essay.   Teachers may choose the order of the assessment tasks. |
| **Outcome 2**  Analyse the visions and actions that shaped the new nation from 1890 to 1920, and the changes and continuities to these visions that resulted from participation in World War One. | 50 |
| **Total marks** | **100** |  |

Unit 4 coursework

General comments

In many ways Unit 4 had undergone the least change in the new study design, with many teachers and schools having taught at least one of the two topics offered in Unit 3, and one of the five topics offered in Unit 4. Therefore in the sample audited there appeared to be more confidence in the presentation of SAC tasks and mark schemes, showing that most schools had understood how their previous knowledge met the requirements of the new study design. With a few exceptions, most schools had designed and presented tasks that provided students with an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of both key knowledge and skills. In more than half of the schools audited teachers were utilising, and/or adapting commercially developed tasks.

It is difficult in the first year of a new study design to draw conclusive outcomes about why various schools chose particular task types for Unit 4 Outcomes 1 and 2. If teachers had planned Unit 3 at the start of the year, and then Unit 4 midyear, it may follow that some teachers had chosen what they felt were the most suitable tasks for Unit 3 Outcomes 1 and 2 and therefore had two options left over, which they were required to adapt. In nearly all cases teachers used moderated VCAA performance descriptors/marking schemes, suggesting they are focusing on assessing key skills for SACs, which is the preferred requirement.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the social, economic and political consequences of a crisis on the nation. Teachers can choose to study either the Great Depression or World War II.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Task type options

Each of the following four assessment tasks must be completed over Units 3 and 4:

* a historical inquiry
* an analysis of primary sources
* an analysis of historical interpretations
* an essay.

Teachers may choose the order of the assessment tasks (but may not repeat a task already done in Unit 3).

Assessment

For SAC 1 most teachers adapted their task from the previous year/s. This was appropriate for those teachers who had previously taught one of the topics and been able to adapt previously created tasks, for example an analysis of historical interpretations (appeared to be the most popular) to the new key knowledge for Outcome 1 suggesting that teachers’ seemed more confident with the material they were creating for Unit 4. In the schools sampled about half had chosen one of either the Great Depression or World War II.

Most tasks submitted in the audit were clear and met the requirements of the new study design. When adapting an old task to a new study design teachers need to ensure that they use correct wording, dates, key knowledge and key skills.

For each SAC task students should be given clear and accurate statements of:

* the outcome being assessed
* the task type
* the requirements and conditions of the task
* authentication processes – if relevant
* contribution of the task to the final outcome score.

With Australian History there should be no confusion about the mark allocation, with 50 assigned to each Outcome 1 and 2 making a total of 100 for Unit 4 making up 25 % of a student’s total score.

Within the audit sample most teachers had chosen to complete an analysis of historical interpretations that were completed in allocated class time. Some teachers used more than one lesson, collecting the task at the end of each sitting (sometimes up to three sittings). Similarly within the audit sample most teachers allocated an A4 cheat sheet, so students could utilise and apply the historians’ perspectives without having to memorise them. Other versions of the task involved the teachers supplying a range of historians’ interpretations of the event/s, for the students to analyse and utilise in a written response. As mentioned earlier, the time for completion of the task varied between 60 and 120 minutes and in some cases the task was revisited over a number of lessons (in this instance, for some schools, authentication needed to be provided with more detail for the audit process).

The audit revealed that most teachers were utilising the words and phrases of the key knowledge and key skills for Outcome 1. It is essential that all SAC 1 is generated from this wording and that teachers replicate it into their assessment.

Most teachers referred to having provided assessment criteria consistent with the VCAA assessment descriptors. These can be seen in the VCAA publication *VCE History: Australian History 2016–2021 Advice for teachers*. These descriptors are published as a guide, and individual teachers may modify them (provided students have access and knowledge of the criteria prior to the task). Some teachers suggested they used modified descriptors. With short-answer style questions, or a SAC with two parts the total score should always add up to 50; however, a marking criteria needs to also be provided with (each part and all) the assessment task.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse and evaluate two key social, economic and political changes in late 20th-century Australia. Teachers can choose to investigate two of the following areas: Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War, Aboriginal land rights, Equality for women, New patterns of immigration or a global economy (as outlined on pages 57 and 58 of the study design).

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Task type options

Each of the following four assessment tasks must be completed over Units 3 and 4:

* a historical inquiry
* an analysis of primary sources
* an analysis of historical interpretations
* an essay.

Teachers may choose the order of the assessment tasks (but may not repeat a task already done in Unit 3).

Assessment

Of the schools sampled in the audit for Unit 4, there was an even spread between tasks chosen for Outcome 2. As it was the first year of a new study design specific patterns are yet to emerge, and a more conclusive choice of task may be clearer in 2017. It was positive that all teachers were confident about one of their chosen topics, the most popular in this sample being Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War.

The strengths of the SACs were those which were adapted and developed from previous SACs and met the requirements of the new study design equally for two chosen topics. Unfortunately, about half of the samples had focused on the teachers’ strength topic, for example Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War and not applied the same to the other chosen topic.

The audit revealed that most teachers were utilising the words and phrases of the key knowledge and key skills for Outcome 2. It is essential that all SAC 2 is generated from this wording and that teachers replicate the words into their assessment, while also focusing equal weight to the two chosen topic areas.

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 4 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

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| **Outcomes** | **Marks allocated\*** | **Assessment tasks** |
| **Outcome 1**  Analyse the social, economic and political consequences of a crisis on the nation. | 50 | Each of the following four assessment tasks must be completed over Units 3 and 4:   * a historical inquiry * an analysis of primary sources * an analysis of historical interpretations * an essay.   Teachers may choose the order of the assessment tasks. |
| **Outcome 2**  Analyse and evaluate two key social, economic and political changes in late twentieth century Australia. | 50 |
| **Total marks** | **100** |  |