VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies Units 3 and 4: 2018–2023

Frequently asked questions (Updated February 2023)

Unit 1

Do students need to do a first aid course?

No. The key knowledge in area of study 1 refers to requirements for safe participation in outdoor experiences. This could include planning for emergencies in outdoor environments, risk management procedures and skills necessary for safe participation in outdoor activities. Some basic first aid skills can be taught, but there is no requirement for students to undertake a formal first aid qualification.

Unit 2

When studying the impact of fire, what do I need to cover?

The study design specifies that students explore from a scientific understanding the effects of fire (both controlled burns and wildfire) on environments. This requires students to explore how the effects of controlled or fuel reduction burning are different to those of wild or bush fires.

Unit 3

What do I need to teach in the overview of environmental politics, including the environmental policies of the major political parties, in area of study 2? How do I ensure what I teach is current as policies can change?

Students need to understand the environmental policies of the major political parties. The major political parties include the Australian Labor Party, Australian Greens and Liberal Party of Australia. Each political party has information on their website about their current environmental policies. Accessing information about environmental policies online will assist in ensuring what is taught is current.

Students should understand the reasons for the formation of green political parties and the significance of international environmental agreements (the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris agreement).

Outdoor experiences

What are suitable outdoor experiences and outdoor environments for VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies? When should outdoor experiences occur?

Outdoor experiences can be varied and could include day and/or multi-day trips, recreational activities, guided activities, participation in community projects, conservation or restoration activities, school-based practical experiences and excursions. Information about types of outdoor experiences is included in the VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies study design on page 5.

The outdoor experiences selected should allow students to make connections to key knowledge and key skills within the study design. This includes allowing students to observe the interrelationships between humans and nature, for example the effects of nature on humans and the effects of humans on nature.

Outdoor environments should refer to an identifiable location (for example Surf Coast between Anglesea and Lorne, or Apollo Bay dune system, or Bendigo gold fields, or the Bogong high plains, or Wilsons Promontory, or Barmah forest/lakes) rather than reference to a very general area (for example south-west Victoria).

It is important that outdoor experiences occur before the scheduling of school-based assessment, as students will need to refer to outdoor experiences in their assessment tasks in order to demonstrate the Outcome.

How many outdoor experiences do students need to undertake per unit? Does there need to be a different outdoor experience for each area of study in order for students to complete the journal/report assessment task?

No, there does not need to be a different outdoor experience for each area of study. Schools can decide the number and length of outdoor experiences undertaken by students. Outdoor experiences can vary in length from short excursions to multi-day trips. The intention and expectation of the study design is that students are involved in a variety of practical outdoor experiences, and that they have the opportunity to reflect on, and write about, these experiences. What is important is that the outdoor experiences enable students to observe and collect data that can be linked to the outcome statement and key knowledge and key skills. While on a specific outdoor experience students may be required to collect data that could be used in the assessment of a future outcome. School-based assessment and the end-of-year examination require students to reflect on their outdoor experiences.

Assessment

What abbreviations are acceptable for use in assessment?

Students can use any scientific abbreviation or abbreviation that is stated within the Study Design or support materials (examples include but are not limited to VEAC and SoE).

If the answer to a question is a specific content term, then the term should be written out in full.

For other commonly used terms within the study, students are encouraged to write the term out in full the first time, abbreviate it in brackets and then refer to the abbreviation for the remainder of that question only. If students are going to refer to the concept again in a different question, they should write it out again in full the first time. Given the use of electronic marking in the end-of-year examination, students can no longer rely on the use of a self-created abbreviation across different exam questions, on different pages.

If in doubt, students are recommended to write the entire term and not use an abbreviation.

How do I structure the assessment task for a journal/report demonstrating links between theoretical content studied and practical experiences undertaken?

The [Advice for teachers](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/outdoor-and-environmentalstudies/advice-for-teachers/Pages/Index.aspx) provides a sample approach to developing an assessment task for the journal/report. It includes advice about collecting information and/or data, designing the task, authentication and marking the task. It also explains what it means to design a task to allow students to demonstrate the highest level of performance.

What happens if a student is absent from practical outdoor experiences? How can they complete the journal/report linking theoretical content and practical experiences?

To be able to demonstrate the outcome students must be able to reflect on specific outdoor experiences. The expectation for the journal/report and other school-based assessment is that students should be able to reflect on their outdoor experiences and link it to the key knowledge and key skills.

If a student is ill or injured, or due to personal circumstances is unable to complete the relevant practical outdoor experience the teacher should refer to their school’s special provision policy for the journal/report and/or other assessment tasks. The VCAA website also contains information about [special provision for classroom learning and school-based assessment](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/outdoor-and-environmentalstudies/Pages/Index.aspx).

For a student who qualifies for special provision for their school-based assessment, a teacher could use strategies such as:

* allowing the student to draw on previous practical outdoor experiences
* using an alternate practical outdoor experience and/or environment
* rescheduling the task
* setting a substitute task
* allowing the student to research the environment as a substitute to visiting the environment.