VCE Second Languages
Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

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. These texts do not include the support of visual elements. By hearing a range of spoken texts, students are given the opportunity to develop and consolidate listening skills.

Viewed texts provide cultural or linguistic information through a visual mode. These texts can also include some spoken or written information. As stated in the [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), ‘viewed texts may include photographs, pictures, posters, films or film clips, captioned illustrations or maps related to the subtopic.’

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

2. What is a ‘cultural product or practice’?

As stated in the [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), cultural products or practices can be drawn from a diverse range of texts, activities and creations. These may include the following: stories, poems, plays, novels, songs, films, photographs, artworks, architecture, technology, food, clothing, sports and festivals. This list is not exhaustive. Teachers may identify other examples of cultural products or practices within the prescribed themes and topics that would be engaging for students and suitable for the study.

3. 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 SAC tasks. Teachers should use their professional judgement to determine an appropriate time frame that will suit their particular school setting. Please see the [Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx), which can be found via the VCE General Advice and Policy page. Assessment should be [reasonable](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx) and it should be designed for [efficiency](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx), and it should be possible for students to be able 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.

4. 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](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).

5. 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. Teachers should use their professional judgement to select suitable stimulus texts for their particular cohort of students. Teachers should bear in mind that the task should be [reasonable](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx), and that students should be able to 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](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx). Teachers should avoid setting tasks that are unnecessarily long and that will over assess students, and this means that the SAC task should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances.

6. 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](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) adequately, and that the assessment is [valid](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx), 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 them in an ‘unseen’ way on the day of the SAC is impractical. In order to ensure that assessment is [equitable](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx), 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, and this means that the SAC task should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances.

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

In order to ensure that assessment is [equitable](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, all task options must 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. Teacher may choose to provide only one task.

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](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. The order in which they are studied is not prescribed; teachers may choose which themes and topics are studied for each unit. 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 subtopics provided in the Study Design are suggestions only.

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.

The study design states that in Unit 4, Area of Study 1 and Area of Study 2 may focus on the same subtopic. Area of Study 3 should cover a different subtopic to the subtopic/s chosen for Areas of Study 1 and 2.

Units 1 and 2

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

VCE study designs do not prescribe tasks at Units 1 and 2 level. The [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx) provides a list 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 judgement to determine the kind of task to set for their students that will assess the key knowledge and key skills for the outcome.

10. How do teachers design a task for Unit 1 Outcome 2 Interpretive communication?

**Outcome:** *Interpret information from two texts on the same subtopic presented in the language, and respond in writing in the language and in English.*

Teachers must design one task that requires students to respond to some questions that require responses in the language, and some questions that require responses in English. The [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx) states that for this outcome, students ‘summarise content and … combine information from the texts’ and ‘link ideas and information from the two selected texts’. Therefore, teachers should design questions that require students to combine or link information from the two stimulus texts.

Units 3 and 4

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

**Outcome:** *Interpret information from texts and write responses in language.*

**Task:** *Responses to specific questions or instructions using information extracted from written, spoken and viewed texts on the selected subtopic.*

Teachers must design a task that requires students to identify and interpret ideas from three or more stimulus texts. The texts must include a combination of written, spoken and viewed texts.

At stated in the [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), the stimulus texts must be on the same selected subtopic, so that students can ‘…connect and compare ideas and identify different points of view or perspectives in each of the texts’, and ‘link ideas and information from the 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’, 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 will use their professional judgement to design a task that enables students to demonstrate the key knowledge and the key skills for the outcome. Teachers should ensure that the task is [reasonable](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx) 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](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/Pages/VCEPoliciesandGuidelines.aspx). Teachers should avoid setting tasks that will over assess students, and this means that the SAC task should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances.

Teachers may refer to the Unit 3 Sample approaches to developing an assessment task in the *Advice for teachers* 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’.

12. In Unit 4 Outcome 1, students research and investigate a cultural product or practice. How do teachers select the subtopic for this area of study?

**Outcome:** *Share information, ideas and opinions in a spoken exchange in Language.*

**Task:** *A three- to four-minute interview providing information and responding to questions about a cultural product or practice.*

In Unit 4 Outcome 1, students research and investigate a cultural product or practice that relates to a selected subtopic. In this outcome, students develop knowledge and skills to share observations and consider how the product or practice may reflect a specific cultural perspective or behaviour. Students use knowledge of the subtopic to explain differences and similarities between cultural contexts, such as the present and the past or between the language-speaking communities in different locations around the world.

The selection of a suitable subtopic for this outcome should 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.

As stated in the [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx), in each area of study, the subtopic will provide the context for the learning program and for the assessment of student achievement of the key knowledge and the key skills. 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 for a student to be able to respond to the requirements of the task for this outcome.

13. For Unit 4 Outcome 1, must students use a visual stimulus in their interview?

**Outcome:** *Share information, ideas and opinions in a spoken exchange in Language.*

**Task:** *A three- to four-minute interview providing information and responding to questions about a cultural product or practice.*

Although the interview focuses on a selected cultural product or practice, there is no requirement for a visual or physical representation of that product or practice to be brought into the assessment. However, teachers may allow students to bring support materials such as a visual stimulus to support their interview, bearing in mind that students are to be assessed only on the key knowledge and the skills published in the study design, and not aspects related to the visual stimulus.

14. How do teachers design a task for Unit 4 Outcome 2 Interpretive communication?

**Outcome*:*** *Analyse information from written, spoken and viewed texts for use in a written response in Language.*

**Task:** *An approximately 250-word / 650 cha (Korean) / 250 character (Chinese SL) / 300 character (Chinese SLA) / 450 ji (Japanese SL) written response for a specific audience and purpose, incorporating information from three or more texts.*

For Unit 4 Outcome 2, teachers must design one task that requires students to analyse and extract information from the stimulus texts. The task must require students to provide an extended response. Teachers are required to provide three or more texts which must include a combination of written, spoken and viewed texts. The stimulus texts must be on the same selected subtopic, so that students are able to identify and analyse key ideas and make comparisons between the details, ideas and points of view expressed in each of the texts.

15. How should teachers prepare students for Section 2 of the oral exam?

The [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/languages.aspx) does not specify an outcome or area of study that relates to Section 2 of the Oral examination. As stated in the [examination specifications](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Languages-index.aspx) for VCE Second Languages, in Section 2 of the oral examination, the student will speak about a subtopic that they studied in class and to bring supporting visual material. This subtopic must be related to either the prescribed theme ‘The Language Speaking Communities’, or the prescribed theme, ‘The World Around Us’. For more information, teachers should refer to the [videos](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/RevisedSecondLanguageOralExaminationVideos.aspx) about the VCE Second Languages Oral Examinations. These videos are also available on the VCAA website on the study page for each language.