Principles and procedures for the development and review of VCE studies



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Section 1: The VCE qualification and requirements for its award

1.1 Overview

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) is the body responsible, under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (the Act), for developing, evaluating and approving courses normally undertaken in, or designed to be undertaken in, the school years 11 and 12, and which are accredited by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is the senior secondary course accredited by the VRQA. The VCE is the qualification registered by the VRQA and published on the State Register.

The VRQA also accredits courses or studies approved by the VCAA that contribute to the award of the VCE. These studies must meet the requirements of section 4.4.2 of the Act and any other requirements established by the VRQA.

This document describes the principles and procedures for the development and review of VCE studies to ensure that the VCAA meets its statutory obligations for ensuring that the VCE:

* meets the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) requirement that a senior secondary qualification must qualify individuals with knowledge, skills and values for diverse pathways to further learning, work and effective participation in civic life
* satisfies the requirements for the accreditation of courses under the Act and associated guidelines established by the VRQA (see Appendix 1).

1.2 Requirements for award of the VCE

The minimum requirement for the award of the VCE is the satisfactory completion of 16 units, which must include:

* 3 units from the English group, including a Unit 3–4 sequence
* 3 Unit 3–4 sequences, which can include further sequences from the English group.

To receive the VCE Vocational Major (VM) or VCE Baccalaureate appellations, students must meet the minimum requirements for the award of the VCE and the specific course requirements for the appellation, as outlined in the [VCE Administrative Handbook](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-handbook/Pages/index.aspx?Redirect=1).

For all VCE studies except Structured Workplace Learning Recognition for Vocational Education and Training (VET), there are no prerequisites for entry into Units 1, 2 and 3 of a study. Units 3 and 4 of a study are designed to be taken as a sequence. Students in VCE studies (excluding the VCE VM studies) must undertake Unit 3 of a study before commencing Unit 4 of that study.

In some studies, students are advised to complete either or both Units 1 and 2 before attempting Unit 3, demonstrate equivalent experience or be willing to undertake some preparatory learning. The relevant advice is published in the study design for each study.

Most students will undertake a total of between 18 and 24 units in their VCE program, over 2 or more years.

Section 2: Principles for development and assessment of VCE studies

2.1 Study development principles

The following principles underpin the design, development and delivery of all VCE studies.

Optimise curriculum connections and pathways

VCE studies will have clear connections with, and build on, the knowledge, skills and understandings developed over the compulsory years of schooling, as reflected in the Victorian Curriculum F–10.

VCE studies support students in making the transition to further education, training or work.

Reflect democratic values and community standards

VCE studies will:

* be consistent with the principles and practices of Australian democracy (including the commitment to the rule of law), social values, community standards, government policies and legislation
* enable students to become active and informed members of the community
* equip young people with the skills, knowledge, values and capabilities to succeed in employment, and personal and civic life.

The curriculum is free from discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, political belief or activity, disability, cultural and linguistic background, socioeconomic background and geographic location. The curriculum will provide access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and learnings where relevant.

Balance challenge and expectation with the needs of the individual

VCE studies cater for students with a wide range of ability levels, providing appropriate levels of differentiation, setting high but reasonable expectations, and allowing students to develop and achieve their best as confident and creative individuals. Standards will be established by comparison to other like studies and to leading national and global jurisdictions.

Express and reflect enduring and dynamic aspects of a field or discipline

VCE studies will draw on valued disciplines and knowledge domains to assist students to develop contemporary understandings and skills. VCE studies will do this by:

* identifying specific knowledge, skills and understanding to be demonstrated by students
* drawing on contemporary contexts and examining future challenges
* requiring higher-order thinking, critical perspectives and analysis
* promoting investigation of the nature of inquiry associated with the disciplines underpinning the study.

Meet community expectations for high-quality curriculum and assessment

VCE studies will meet all relevant national and Victorian legislative and regulatory standards and requirements.

2.2 Study assessment principles

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning at the senior secondary level. Assessment:

* identifies opportunities for further learning
* describes student achievement
* articulates and maintains standards
* provides the basis for the award of the qualification.

In each VCE study, teachers and schools determine the assessment tasks to be used at Units 1 and 2. In Units 3 and 4, specified assessment tasks are set.

At the Units 3 and 4 level of a VCE study (excluding the VCE VM), school-assessed coursework (SAC), school-assessed tasks (SAT), externally assessed tasks (EAT), examinations and other external assessments provide assessment results that are used in the calculation of a student’s study score.

The key principles underpinning all VCE assessment practice ensure that assessment instruments enable judgements to be made about demonstration of the outcomes and, where appropriate, levels of achievement fairly, in a balanced way and without adverse effects on the curriculum.

Assessment should be acceptable to stakeholders – including students, schools, government and the community. The system for assessing the progress and achievement of students must be accessible, effective, equitable, reasonable and transparent.

VCE assessment should be valid and reasonable

The curriculum content to be assessed must be explicitly described to teachers in each study design and related VCAA documents. Assessment instruments should not assess learning that is outside the scope of a study design.

Each assessment instrument (for example, assignment, project, practical, oral, performance, portfolio, presentation or examination) should give students clear instructions. It should be administered under conditions (degree of supervision, access to resources, notice and duration) that are substantially the same for all students undertaking that assessment.

Authentication and school moderation of assessment and the processes of external review and statistical moderation are to ensure that assessment results are fair and comparable across the student cohort for that study.

VCE assessment should be equitable

Assessment instruments should neither privilege nor disadvantage certain groups of students or exclude others on the basis of race, gender, religion, political belief or activity, disability, cultural and linguistic background, socioeconomic background and geographic location.

Assessment instruments should be designed so that, under the same or similar conditions, they provide consistent information about student performance. This may be the case when, for example, alternatives are offered at the same time for assessment of an outcome (which could be based on a choice of context) or at a different time due to a student’s absence.

VCE assessment should be balanced

The set of assessment instruments used in a VCE study should be designed to provide a range of opportunities for a student to demonstrate in different contexts and modes the knowledge, skills, understanding and capacities set out in the curriculum. This assessment should also provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate different levels of achievement specified by suitable criteria, descriptors, rubrics or marking schemes.

Judgement about student level of achievement should be based on the results from a variety of practical and theoretical situations and contexts relevant to a study. Students may be required to respond in written, oral, performance, product, folio, multimedia or other suitable modes as applicable to the distinctive nature of a study or group of related studies.

VCE assessment should be efficient

The study design will set out the minimum number of assessments for teachers and assessors to make a robust judgement about each student’s progress and learning. Each assessment instrument must balance the demands of precision with those of efficiency. Assessment should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of students under fair and reasonable circumstances.

Section 3: Procedures for development and amendment of VCE studies

3.1 Overview

The development of a new VCE study or the amendment of an established VCE study takes place under the guidance and direction of the VCAA Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment Committee (SSCAC). The SSCAC endorses new or revised studies for Board approval and manages variation proposals.

The VCAA Board approves a VCE study for a set period and notifies the VRQA that the development of or revisions to the study design have been completed in accordance with the processes set out here, in this document, the VCAA *Principles and procedures for the development and review of VCE studies*. The VRQA is responsible for accrediting a VCE study for a period of up to a maximum of 5 years.

3.2 Developing a new VCE study

Proposals for new studies may arise from consideration of existing curriculum provision, a need identified by the VCAA, changes to policy or new policy initiatives, or external requests.

The VCAA Board will determine when a new study is to be developed and the process and schedule for development. The procedure for a major review will form the basis of the process for developing a new VCE study and will be endorsed by the VCAA Board.

Proposals for new studies will be evaluated on the basis of:

* consultation with key stakeholders and experts in the discipline
* demonstrated need to express new knowledge, new forms of knowledge or new perspectives within existing disciplines in ways that are not possible within existing studies
* ongoing demand and capacity to meet minimum enrolment requirements
* capacity to meet resourcing requirements for curriculum, teaching and external assessment.

3.3 Reviewing an established VCE study

Refer to Section 4: Procedures for review of VCE studies.

3.4 Standards and benchmarking

Units 1 and 2 of a VCE study are to be developed to a Year 11 standard. Units 3 and 4 of a VCE study are to be developed to a Year 12 standard.

To ensure that these standards are met, all VCE studies will be benchmarked against like curriculums and assessments in leading national and global jurisdictions, and against corresponding subjects in the International Baccalaureate. They will also be benchmarked within the same or against related VCE and VCE VET program disciplines. Comprehensive consultation will be undertaken with experts and practitioners in relevant disciplines.

Where appropriate, VCE studies will align with relevant learning areas and capabilities in the Victorian Curriculum F–10.

Benchmarking will involve comparisons with:

* at least 3 high-performing global jurisdictions
* any similar subject curriculum as set out in the International Baccalaureate
* at least 2 other Australian jurisdictions
* VCE studies and VCE VET programs within the same discipline or related discipline areas.

For each course, benchmarking will cover the rationale, aims, breadth and depth of course content, and assessment demands.

3.5 Overlap and duplication

There are close relationships between various VCE studies and VCE VET programs in many areas of the curriculum. However, the curriculum and assessment in VCE and VCE VET programs should be distinctive. Proposals must demonstrate that each VCE and/or VCE VET program is distinguished from all other VCE studies in terms of the outcomes to be achieved by students. Students must not be able to receive credit in more than one VCE study for achieving a particular outcome or submit work for assessment of an outcome in more than one VCE study or VCE VET program.

3.6 Resources

The VCAA will consider the resource implications of proposals for new VCE studies and changes to established VCE studies. This includes the requirements for specialist facilities, teacher qualifications and resources to deliver the curriculum and assessment, and the likelihood of timely availability of suitable resources and professional learning opportunities for teachers of the study.

Any need for specialist facilities, teacher qualifications and resources required to deliver the study will be identified in the VCE study design.

Issues related to teacher professional learning are examined throughout the review process, and appropriate support is incorporated into familiarisation and implementation planning.

3.7 Minimum enrolment

In general, a VCE study will not be developed or approved by the VCAA Board unless it can be demonstrated that it is likely to achieve an enrolment of at least one per cent of the VCE cohort or do so within the first 3 years of its initial implementation, and subsequently maintain or exceed this level of enrolment.

Exceptions to this may occur in cases where there is a clear rationale to establish or maintain a study based on government priorities, and policies exist to support particular groups or initiatives. This may involve the approval of small candidature studies in Languages or specific vocational programs.

For such exceptions to be approved, the capacity to meet the requirements outlined below needs to be demonstrated:

* the availability of resources required to deliver the study
* the availability of sufficient qualified people, with the required study-specific and assessment expertise, to undertake examination development and administer assessment procedures for the external assessment program for Units 3 and 4.

3.8 Role of evaluation

Curriculum and assessment evaluation is central to the development and renewal process for VCE studies. Evaluation commences with the systematic collection of data to inform decisions about whether to review, the extent of a review and what should be retained, modified, extended or removed in or from a VCE study. It involves drawing on the input of as many stakeholders and interested parties as possible from a variety of sources. The evaluation process is designed to maintain the highest-quality curriculum and assessment in VCE studies.

3.9 Role of consultation

Consultation makes an important contribution to the VCAA’s curriculum and assessment development and review processes. The consultation informing these processes must be broad, and consultation material must be freely available.

The development and review processes are designed to provide multiple opportunities for consultation with interested individuals and groups. The minimum expectations are that:

* Targeted or public consultation (for example, via focus groups, online surveys or consultation meetings) will inform the initial recommendation about the need for, or the extent of, the review of a study.
* A draft study design, summary of proposed changes and consultation questionnaire will be made available for public consultation on the VCAA website. Consultation will be open for at least 4 weeks.
* At least one independent reviewer will provide formal feedback about key aspects of the proposed draft study design. Independent reviewers are selected by the VCAA and may be from Victoria, interstate or overseas. The reviewer will be provided with standard reporting templates that direct them to comment on the adherence of the proposed study design to the curriculum principles, assessment principles and specified study design requirements, and the terms of reference for the review of the study. Reviewers also advise on the accuracy, clarity and coherence of study design content. Independent reviewer reports are provided to the SSCAC when the final proposal for the study design is considered for endorsement.

Consultation registers are established at the start of the development or review process to support broad participation at key points in the process.

Information about the annual review schedule and progress of individual study reviews is published regularly in the *VCAA Bulletin*. A study-specific review plan including terms of reference, consultation plan, schedule and contacts is available on the study webpage.

3.10 Variations to the procedures for the development and amendment of VCE studies

In exceptional circumstances, the VCAA Board may approve a variation to the procedures for the development and amendment of a VCE study outlined in Section 3 and Section 4 (the Procedures).

Proposals for variations will be evaluated on the basis of:

* a clear rationale, including a demonstrated need to vary the approved procedures
* the risks associated with varying the approved procedures and how these risks will be mitigated
* an outline of the proposed procedures, demonstrating how these procedures will ensure that the VCAA meets its statutory obligations and adheres to the principles included in Section 2. Any proposal for a variation must demonstrate that the VCE study will satisfy the requirements for accreditation of courses under the Act and associated guidelines established by the VRQA.

The Board may approve a variation of the Procedures (the Variation) if it is satisfied that:

1. there is a demonstrated need to vary the application of the Procedures
2. the Variation is for a specific purpose and is not an ongoing variation to the Procedures
3. risks arising from the Variation are identified, and can be mitigated to a level consistent with the Board’s tolerance for risk
4. the Variation does not affect the VCAA’s compliance with any relevant statutory obligation
5. the Variation can be shown to satisfy the requirements for accreditation of courses under the Act and associated guidelines established by the VRQA.

Section 4: Procedures for review of VCE studies

The VCAA manages procedures for the review and approval of established VCE studies to ensure that transparency of process, quality assurance and accountability requirements are met.

4.1 Monitoring

The VCAA monitors and evaluates the implementation of all VCE studies during their accreditation period. The publication of supplementary advice, and changes and updates to information contained in a study design and/or the *VCE Administrative Handbook* (published annually), may occur throughout the year. Information about these changes will be communicated to VCE providers in the *VCAA Bulletin*.

A VCE study review commences with a systematic review of information gathered during monitoring, which is the basis for a recommendation to the VCAA Board to undertake a minor review or a major review, or to extend the existing study for a specified period.

This involves:

* analysis of enrolment and completions data
* consideration of issues identified in the school-based assessment audit
* analysis of trends in external assessment results
* input from key stakeholders and representative groups, including consideration of student voice
* examination of the outcomes of practitioner surveys, focus groups or consultation meetings
* interaction with teachers and liaison with subject associations that contribute practitioner views
* consideration of emerging issues in the discipline area.

4.2 Minor review

A minor review will be conducted in cases where revision of some aspects of a study design is recommended. Typically, a minor review may involve:

* refinement and/or clarification of aspects of an area of study or outcome, including key knowledge and key skills
* reorganisation of knowledge and skills between units, areas of study or outcomes
* introduction of some new content as key knowledge and key skills
* removal of some content to manage workload issues identified in monitoring.

Planning

Planning typically involves:

* preparing the terms of reference, consultation plan and schedule for the review
* completing a report to identify and justify any duplication with an accredited course on the State Register (as appropriate)
* establishing a study writing panel.

Details of the review terms of reference, consultation, schedule and contacts are published as a VCE study review plan. The terms of reference for the review and appointment of study writing panel members are approved by the SSCAC.

See Appendix 2 for information about membership and sample terms of reference for the study writing panel.

Role and responsibilities of a study writing panel

A study writing panel is formed to consider materials prepared in the planning stage and other issues outlined in the terms of reference for the review. The panel makes recommendations about which aspects of the study design should be retained, modified or removed. It also considers the implications of any proposed changes for both school-based and external assessments, and advises on the resolution of any issues that arise. The study writing panel’s proposed directions, changes and identified issues are reported to the SSCAC.

Consultation

The study writing panel prepares a study design proposal for consultation (see 3.9 for information on consultation). After approval by the SSCAC, a consultation draft is released for public consultation via an online survey. One independent reviewer, who will be an experienced practitioner, provides formal feedback about key aspects of the proposed study design. The study writing panel responds to consultation and review by providing a final study design proposal.

The study writing panel will ensure that the proposal is consistent with the VCAA principles and procedures for the development and review of VCE studies and any interpretation of these by the VCAA or decisions that the VCAA may make in the process of review.

4.3 Major review

A major review is conducted when:

* redevelopment of the study design, or parts of the study design, is anticipated
* changes to the study are high risk
* such a review is consistent with stakeholder expectations.

A major review may involve consideration of:

* changes to the rationale for and focus of the study
* introduction of substantial new content and new skills arising from contemporary developments in the discipline, for example with respect to new knowledge, techniques or approaches
* substantial reorganisation of knowledge and skills between units, areas of study or outcomes as a result of monitoring and evaluation during the accreditation period
* the number, type and weighting of school-based and/or external assessments.

Planning

Planning is undertaken by the Curriculum Manager in consultation with the Manager VCE Curriculum. It involves:

* preparing the terms of reference, a consultation plan and a schedule for the review
* identifying and undertaking a benchmarking studies report and commissioning further research or position papers (as appropriate)
* completing a report to identify and justify any duplication with an accredited course on the State Register (as appropriate)
* establishing a study review panel and appointing writers.

The terms of reference and the appointment of study review panel members and writers are endorsed by the SSCAC. Details of the review scope, consultation and schedule are published as a VCE study review plan.

See Appendix 3 for details of the membership and sample terms of reference for the study review panel.

Development

The study review panel works with a writer contracted by the VCAA to prepare a study design proposal for consultation. The consultation draft is approved by the SSCAC prior to release for public consultation via an online survey (see 3.9 for information on consultation). Two independent reviewers – an academic and a practitioner – provide formal feedback about key aspects of the proposed study design. The study review panel responds to consultation and review by providing a final study design proposal. The final study design is submitted to the SSCAC for endorsement and VCAA Board approval.

The study review panel will ensure that the final proposal is consistent with the VCAA principles and procedures for development and review of VCE studies or decisions that the VCAA may make in the process of review.

4.4 Meetings

Study review panels and study writing panels will be chaired by an officer of the VCAA.

Panels will meet at a set time and place, according to a schedule established by mutual agreement, accommodating the interest of the majority of panel members, and as appropriate for the scope of the review being undertaken.

Apologies must be communicated to the Chair. Non-attendance of 2 consecutive meetings or of more than 2 meetings, without good reason, will be grounds for discontinuing membership in favour of a replacement who can attend regularly.

Technology may be available to facilitate attendance at meetings. Any anticipated needs should be discussed with the Chair.

Panels are expected to work on a general consensus model of consideration and decision-making. Where this is not possible, the panel will, through the Chair, note and refer significant issues or matters where there are clear and substantive differences in points of view to the Executive Director, Curriculum, for reporting to the SSCAC and receiving further advice or direction.

The VCAA will ensure that any proposal for the accreditation of a revised study meets the requirements set out in the VCAA *Principles and procedures for the development and review of VCE studies*; complies with the VRQA standards for the accreditation of senior secondary courses and the requirements for senior secondary subject or study accreditation; and has been approved by the VCAA Board.

4.5 Implementation

Following accreditation by the VRQA, the new or revised study design is released in the year prior to implementation. A familiarisation professional learning program to support implementation is delivered during this year.

Further resources and advice are developed and published to support implementation. These include:

* support materials (which incorporate the previously known Advice for teachers)
* performance descriptors for school-assessed coursework and school-assessed tasks
* administrative information for school-based assessment of school-assessed tasks
* external assessment specifications
* sample examination materials.

Based on the feedback received at familiarisation briefings, further advice such as FAQs, additional resources and specialists’ papers may be developed.

Appendix 1: Resources

* [The Australian Qualifications Framework](https://www.aqf.edu.au/download/405/aqf-second-edition/3/aqf-second-edition/pdf) (AQF) Jan 2013
* [VRQA Guidelines for the Registration of Awarding Bodies and the Accreditation of Senior Secondary and Foundation Secondary Courses](https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Documents/Senior_Secondary_Awarding_Body_Qualifications_Guidelines.docx)
* VRQA senior secondary or foundation secondary subject or study accreditation (available on request from the VRQA)

Appendix 2: Minor review study writing panel – membership and sample terms of reference

The VCAA will establish a study writing panel when undertaking a minor review.

The study writing panel oversees a minor review of the study and development of a revised study design, in accordance with the requirements outlined in the VCAA *Principles and procedures for the development and review of VCE studies*. The study writing panel will consider all matters in the terms of reference. The role of the study writing panel is advisory, and its proposed study design will be subject to endorsement by VCAA committees – the Senior Secondary Management Team (SSMT) and the SSCAC – and approval by the Board of the VCAA.

Membership of the study writing panel

The study writing panel will be chaired by a VCAA officer, usually the Curriculum Manager, and will include 2 to 3 other members. Writing team members will be selected for their high level of expertise and experience in the study or related disciplines, and their capacity to make a timely and effective contribution to the work.

Members are nominated by the Curriculum Manager and approved by the VCAA SSMT.

Role and responsibilities of the study writing panel

The VCAA will contract a study writing panel to produce the revised study design. The writer(s) will attend all meetings of the study writing panel and contribute advice and feedback to the panel in this capacity. A study writing panel is formed to consider materials prepared in the planning stage and other issues outlined in the terms of reference. The panel makes recommendations about which aspects of the study design should be retained, modified or removed. The panel considers the implications of any proposed changes for both school-based and external assessments, and proposes appropriate changes.

The writer(s) prepares a draft study design for consultation and a post-consultation version of the study design based on the deliberations of the study writing panel and any directions given by the VCAA.

Sample terms of reference

Study writing panels are required to consider the following in relation to the existing study, any study-specific issues identified prior to commencing the review and any proposed changes to that study:

* study-specific issues raised through monitoring and evaluation
* the extent to which current research and developments in the discipline are appropriately reflected in the study
* the coherence of the overall structure of the study and consistency with its aims
* the implications of any proposed changes for the assessment program
* in relation to the specific study, the appropriate use of information and communications technology (ICT) in school-based and external assessment
* in relation to the specific study, access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and learnings where relevant
* how the study enables broad participation and the achievement of excellence
* teacher and student workload
* sources of gender, cultural or socioeconomic bias
* any specialist facilities, teacher qualifications and resources required to deliver the study, including implications for the professional learning requirements for teachers
* VRQA senior secondary subject or study accreditation requirements.

For existing studies, a study writing panel is required to consider a range of data and advice including:

* enrolments and enrolment trends by unit and year level (including gender, sector and location)
* satisfactory completion rates by unit (including gender, sector and location)
* reports from the state reviewer, examination panel Chair and chief assessor
* feedback from stakeholders including teachers and students
* evidence of uptake of any optional components of the study
* data from the school-based assessment audit
* grade distributions for all graded assessments
* relevant data from the external assessment program.

The study writing panel’s findings, proposed changes and issues requiring further consideration are reported to the SSCAC.

The terms of reference will be incorporated into a VCE study review plan. This plan will be published on the relevant study page of the VCAA website, together with key dates or timeframes in the review schedule, relevant contacts and study-specific issues.

Appendix 3: Major review study review panel – membership and sample terms of reference

The VCAA will establish a study review panel when undertaking a major review.

The study review panel undertakes a review of the study and development of a revised study design in accordance with the requirements outlined in the VCAA *Principles and procedures for the development and review of VCE studies*. The study review panel will consider all matters in the terms of reference. The role of the study review panel is advisory, and its proposed study design will be subject to endorsement by VCAA committees (the SSMT and the SSCAC) and approval by the VCAA Board.

The study review panel may request that the VCAA provides additional data or information relevant to specific aspects of the review.

Membership of the study review panel

The study review panel will be chaired by a VCAA officer, usually the Curriculum Manager, and will consist of 8 to 12 members.

Teachers and other qualified individuals will be given an opportunity to submit an expression of interest in participating in a study review panel.

Study review panel members will be appointed by the VCAA in their individual capacity to make expert contributions to the work of the panel for its duration. Nominations are prepared by the Curriculum Manager and approved by the VCAA SSMT.

The study review panel will be balanced in its representation of gender, rural and regional areas, practitioners and sectors.

State reviewers, examination panel representatives and chief assessors are also nominated as members of the study review panel.

Representatives from Examinations, Assessment Operations and other areas within the VCAA will contribute expertise on relevant aspects of the review.

Members will agree to abide by the decisions of the VCAA and observe all conditions of appointment required by the VCAA, including conflict of interest and confidentiality.

Failure to attend 2 consecutive meetings or more than 2 meetings of the panel without good reason will be grounds for discontinuing membership.

The study review panel is expected to work on a general consensus model of consideration and decision-making. Where this is not possible, the panel will, through its Chair, note and refer significant issues and/or matters where there are clear and substantive differences in points of view to the Executive Director, Curriculum, for reporting to the SSCAC and receiving further advice or direction.

Expert study panels and reference groups

The VCAA may decide to convene an expert study panel to consider particular issues in relation to a study or group of related studies, for example the relationship between different studies within the same discipline. Expert study panels may be convened prior to, or work in conjunction with, study review panels, and are likely to have some overlapping membership. Where an expert study panel is convened prior to the establishment of a review panel, it may make recommendations through its Chair with respect to the establishment of a review panel, or otherwise, for each study.

Expert study panels are established under similar arrangements to study review panels.

The size and composition of an expert study panel will be determined in relation to the number of VCE studies involved, the nature and significance of the issues and considerations to be addressed, and the breadth or scope of its terms of reference.

Similarly, a reference group may be formed to advise on specific issues arising from a major review or to provide feedback on new initiatives under consideration in a major review process.

Study design writer

In the context of a major review, the VCAA will contract a writer to produce the revised study design. The study design writer is not a member of the study review panel; however, they will attend all meetings of the panel and may contribute advice and feedback to the panel in this capacity.

The study design writer prepares a draft study design for consultation and a post-consultation version of the study design based on the deliberations of the panel and any directions given by the VCAA.

Role and responsibilities of the study review panel

A study review panel is formed to consider materials prepared in the planning stage and other issues as outlined in the terms of reference. Decisions are made about which aspects of the study design should be retained, modified or removed. The panel considers the implications of any proposed changes for both school-based and external assessments, and proposes appropriate changes.

Sample terms of reference

Study review panels are required to consider the following in relation to the existing study, any study-specific issues identified prior to commencing the review and any proposed changes to that study:

* benchmarking against similar subject curriculum and assessments in other high-performing national and global jurisdictions
* coherence with other VCE studies within the same discipline and related disciplines
* the relationship between the Victorian Curriculum F–10 and the VCE study
* the relationship between the study and post-schooling pathways including employment and further education
* the extent to which current research and developments in the discipline are appropriately reflected in the study
* overlap or duplication within the study, and with other VCE studies or VCE VET programs
* the coherence of the overall structure of the study and consistency with its aims
* the appropriate relationship between the areas of study and outcomes, school-based assessment and external assessment
* the effectiveness of the assessment program in measuring student performance against the learning outcomes
* the implications of any proposed changes for the assessment program
* in relation to the specific study, the appropriate use of ICT in school-based and external assessment
* in relation to the specific study, access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and learnings where relevant
* the appropriateness of the weighting of school-based and external assessment
* how the study enables broad participation and the achievement of excellence
* teacher and student workload
* sources of gender, cultural or socioeconomic bias
* any specialist facilities, teacher qualifications and resources required to deliver the study, including implications for the professional learning requirements for teachers
* VRQA senior secondary subject or study accreditation requirements.

For existing studies, a study review panel is required to consider a range of data and advice including:

* enrolments and enrolment trends by unit and year level (including gender, sector and location)
* satisfactory completion rates by unit (including gender, sector and location)
* reports from the state reviewer, examination panel Chair and chief assessor
* feedback from stakeholders including teachers and students
* evidence of uptake of any optional components of the study
* data from the school-based assessment audit
* grade distributions for all graded assessments
* relevant data from the external assessment program.

The study review panel’s findings, proposed changes and issues requiring further consideration are reported to the SSCAC.

The terms of reference will be incorporated into a VCE study review plan. This plan will be published on the relevant study page of the VCAA website, together with key dates or timeframes in the review schedule, relevant contacts and study-specific issues.