VCE Food Studies (Units 3 and 4: 2023–2027)

School-based Assessment report

This report is provided for the first year of implementation of VCE Food Studies Study Design (2023–2027) and is based on the School-based Assessment Audit and VCAA statistical data.

All official communications regarding the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Food Studies Study Design (2023–2027) are provided in the [*VCAA Bulletin*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx) and [Notices to Schools](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/schooladministration/notices/Pages/index.aspx). It is recommended that teachers subscribe to the [*VCAA Bulletin*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx) to receive updated information regarding the study. Schools are required to alert teachers to information in the *[VCAA Bulletin](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx)* and Notices to Schools, especially concerning assessment schedules. Important administrative dates and assessment schedules are published on the School administration page of the [VCAA website](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/HomePage.aspx).

General comments

This is the first School-based Assessment Audit undertaken with the newly accredited [VCE Food Studies Study Design 2023–2027](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/foodstudies/Pages/Index.aspx). Updates to the Frequently Asked Questions were made this year based on findings from the School-based Assessment Audit in order to clarify confusion relating to teaching and learning and assessment for VCE Food Studies.

Results from the School-based Assessment Audit indicated that the majority of the respondents for Stage 1 of the School-based Assessment Questionnaire used commercially produced tasks. Many schools indicated that these tasks had been assessed against the key knowledge and key skills for the intended outcome statement. However, it became evident that these tasks did not align with the assessment principles, or the assessment task types for VCE Food Studies. Additionally, these tasks fell outside the scope of the VCE Food Studies study design. Even in cases where schools demonstrated modifications to the task for authentication purposes, many of these tasks were deemed non-compliant due to the original commercially produced task being non-compliant.

It was also noted that a significant number of schools provided evidence of assessment tasks that did not align with the changes to the revised 2023–2027 VCE Food Studies Study Design. The main area of concern related to the assessment of 'a range of practical activities and records of two practical activities' for Unit 3 Areas of Study 1 and 2, and Unit 4 Area of Study 1. Most schools provided evidence indicating that these tasks had not been designed to reflect the assessment of the key knowledge and key skills relevant to the outcome statements for the assessment task type related to practical activities. This meant that the assessment was undertaken outside of the scope of the study design because it included assessment criteria such as personal hygiene, time management, demonstration of technical skills, and presentation of the completed product. The study design, as outlined on pages 9–12, emphasises the integration of cross-study specifications into teaching and learning programs, with a focus on 'Applied practical activities'. Specifically, it highlights ‘Practical activities’ and ‘Safety and hygiene’ as part of these cross-study specifications. Personal hygiene can be integrated into applied practical activities in VCE Food Studies to support student demonstration of content, but hygiene is not assessed as key knowledge or key skills according to the study design. This is clearly explained in the Frequently Asked Questions.

Most schools provided evidence of a range of practical activities. However, along with these practical activities, many schools also submitted records for two practical activities that were completed as part of the teaching program, but allocated marks for assessment. Schools need to read the Study Design to ensure students are reflecting on practical activities and records of practical activities for this assessment task type. Additionally, there were schools that provided evidence of rubrics informed by performance descriptors which used criteria from the previous VCE Food Studies Study Design.

Following the completion of the online audit questionnaire for Unit 4, few schools progressed from stages 3 to 4 in the audit process. The effective use of feedback obtained through the Unit 3 questionnaire, and clarification about the feedback with the Curriculum Manager regarding assessment design, demonstrated the effectiveness of the Stage 1 School-based Assessment Audit.

Specific information

School-assessed Coursework

Unit 3: Food in daily life

Outcome 1

Explain the processes of eating and digesting food, and the utilisation of macronutrients, and justify the science behind the development of the Australian Dietary Guidelines and apply principles of nutrition in practical activities to examine specific dietary needs.

This outcome is assessed using two types of tasks, collectively contributing to 50 marks out of 100 marks allocated to School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3.

**Task type options**

The first assessment task is:

* a reflection on three practical activities and two records of practical activities related to nutritious foods to examine specific dietary needs.

This first task type requires that students complete a range of practical activities and records of two practical activities related to nutritious foods to examine specific dietary needs. The scope of practical activities is detailed in the study design on page 12. The School-based Assessment Audit questionnaire indicated that schools were drawing upon a range of practical activities with the common types being nutritional/dietary analysis, scientific experiments cooking, creating, and responding to design briefs and sensory analysis including taste testing.

Most schools provided a suitable variety of types of practical activities aligned with the outcomes and unit. However, only a few assessment tasks required students to reflect on the practical activities and records to demonstrate their understanding of the key knowledge and key skills, as stated in the assessment task type.

According to page 12 of the VCE Food Studies Study Design,it is important that a variety of assessment tasks are provided to students including records of practical activities to enable students to meet the outcome; that the task provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate the outcome at the highest level; and, that the workload of students be taken into account by efficiently designing the assessment. Differentiation between learning activities and assessment may provide further clarity for teachers here when designing programs.

Some of the records of practical activities provided as evidence did not align with the assessment of content from the VCE Food Studies Study Design. For instance, production plans and mapping ingredients from a recipe to the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating template are inappropriate, as elaborated upon in the Frequently Asked Questions.

The second assessment task requires any one or a combination of the following task types:

* an annotated visual report
* an oral presentation: face-to-face or recorded as a video or podcast
* a practical demonstration: face-to-face or recorded as a video or podcast
* a short written report: data analysis, media analysis, research inquiry or case study analysis.

Some schools did not use the list of assessment task types to design their assessment tasks. In some cases, schools repeated the first assessment task type related to a range of practical activities and records of two practical activities, while other schools did not identify a task from the list of assessment task types.

However, many assessment tasks labelled as short written reports, such as 'media analysis' or 'data analysis', required students to answer some questions related to a media article or data, while the rest were standalone structured questions unrelated to the article or data. Consequently, these tasks did not align with the specified assessment task type and were primarily structured questions. Since structured questions are not considered as appropriate task types on page 24 of the study design, these tasks are deemed non-compliant.

Outcome 2

Analyse factors affecting food behaviours of individuals through examining the relationships between food access, values, beliefs, and choices, and demonstrate practical skills to evaluate factors affecting planning and preparing healthy meals for children and families.

This outcome is assessed using two types of tasks, collectively contributing to 50 marks out of 100 marks allocated to School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3.

**Task type options**

The first assessment task is:

* a reflection on three practical activities and two records of practical activities related to healthy meals for children and families to evaluate factors influencing food choices.

This task requires that students reflect on a range of practical activities related to healthy meals for children and families to evaluate factors influencing food choices. There was a variety of types of practical activities, with the most common being creating and responding to design briefs, dietary analysis, and cooking. Similarly with Outcome 1, interpretation of the VCE Food Studies Study Design relating to the assessment of a range of practical activities and records of two practical activities meant that evidence provided by schools for this task was not compliant.

The second assessment task requires any one or a combination of the following task types:

* an annotated visual report
* an oral presentation: face-to-face or recorded as a video or podcast
* a practical demonstration: face-to-face or recorded as a video or podcast
* a short written report: data analysis, media analysis, research inquiry or case study analysis.

There was a wide range of task types provided as evidence with the ‘Short written report: case study’ being the most common. Similarly to Outcome 1, the evidence indicated that some questions within the assessment task were related to the case study, while the remaining questions were structured questions. Further efforts are needed by schools to ensure that the task types accurately reflect those identified in the study design.

Timing and assessment

Schools largely indicated that the assessment of Outcome 1 occurred throughout Term 1 and Outcome 2 occurred throughout Term 2.

In cases where multiple teachers were teaching VCE Food Studies, schools indicated that tasks were either conducted simultaneously by all teachers or at different times on the same day. Schools demonstrated measures taken to minimise authentication risks and indicated consistent cross-marking and moderation practices by the VCE Food Studies team, both internally and externally. Many schools provided evidence that cross-marking and moderation are integral components of their school-wide approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

Most schools provided evidence of using VCAA performance descriptors for assessing tasks. However, some schools used non-compliant performance descriptors from the previous study design or performance descriptions not tailored to suit the specific task. Additionally, some schools developed their own performance descriptors. Compliance issues arose when using commercially produced marking guides with commercial tasks that were outside the scope of the study design.

The student satisfactorily completes the unit when the teacher judges that all outcomes have been achieved in the work the student has produced and according to the VCAA and school rules. Setting a percentage requirement, as indicated by some schools, for students to achieve to satisfy an outcome is not consistent with these guidelines.

Across Unit 3 there was very little evidence of the use of digital technologies in the design of assessment tasks. Schools predominantly used tasks where students were required to undertake the task in test conditions and handwritten responses were recorded.

Specific information

School-assessed Coursework

Unit 4: Food issues, challenges and futures

Outcome 1

Analyse food information by applying principles of evidence-based research and healthy eating recommendations to evaluate a selected food trend, fad or diet, and claims on food packaging and advertisements, and undertake practical activities that meet the healthy eating recommendations of the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

This outcome is assessed using three types of tasks, collectively contributing 40 marks out of 100 marks allocated to the School-assessed Coursework for Unit 4.

**Task type options**

The first assessment task is:

* a reflection on three practical activities and two records of practical activities related to healthy food choices based on the recommendations of the Australian Dietary Guidelines

This task requires that students reflect on a range of practical activities and records of two practical activities related to healthy food choices based on the recommendations of the Australian Dietary Guidelines. The scope of practical activities is detailed in the study design on page 12. Again, there was a variety of types of practical activities that were being used for the assessment of Outcome 1 that enabled students to demonstrate their understanding of the key knowledge and key skills.

The second assessment task requires any one or a combination of the following types:

* an annotated visual report
* an oral presentation: face-to-face or recorded as a video or podcast
* a practical demonstration: face-to-face or recorded as a video or podcast
* a short written report: data analysis, media analysis, research inquiry or case study analysis.

A ‘short written report: case study analysis was the most common option selected according to evidence collected in the audit questionnaire. Many schools provided evidence of the case study being an analysis of a teacher-selected fad diet. The assessment task type required students to draw upon the chosen fad diet for some questions, with the remaining being that of structured questions. Further efforts are needed by schools to ensure that the task types accurately reflect those identified in the study design.

Outcome 2

Critique issues affecting food systems in terms of ethics, sustainability, and food sovereignty, and through practical activities propose future solutions that reflect sociocultural, sustainable, and ethical food values and goals.

This outcome is assessed using one type of task, collectively contributing 60 marks out of 100 marks allocated to School-assessed Coursework for Unit 4.

**Task type options**

For this outcome, students are required to undertake one assessment task:

* a research inquiry report that includes a selected food-related topic based on three practical activities, explanation of concerns related to ethics, sustainability and/or food sovereignty, analysis of work being done to solve problems and support solutions, and a conclusion outlining major findings and suggested set of practical guidelines for food consumers.

The written report often included a clear research methodology framework for students. Some schools provided evidence of using the Unit 4 sample approach to developing an assessment task found in the support materials on the VCAA VCE Food Studies Study page. However, some schools directly used the sample research questions without modifications. This practice poses an authentication risk since these research questions are publicly available.

Most schools created assessment tasks where students developed their own research inquiry question relating to an ethical, sustainability or food sovereignty topic. Evidence provided indicated that around half of the schools were able to appropriately incorporate a range of practical activities students could reflect upon, according to the requirements of the assessment task. However, some schools did not reference the reflection of a range of practical activities.

Many schools used performance descriptors from the previous study design, and in some cases, outcome statements or assessment criteria did not align with the revised assessment requirements for this outcome. This was particularly evident in assessment tasks created without reference to food sovereignty, a significant aspect in the current VCE Food Studies study design.

The use of digital technologies in completing the task was minimal, except for possible research purposes. Overall, students predominantly completed the task in class under teacher supervision and test conditions. In cases where students conducted research over an extended period, potentially without teacher supervision, some schools mentioned using the VCAA authentication record form for School-based Assessment to authenticate student work. However, the reference to this form was inconsistent across schools.

Timing and assessment

Most schools indicated that Outcome 1 assessment tasks for Unit 4 were conducted towards the end of Term 2 and the beginning of Term 3, while Outcome 2 assessment tasks were undertaken in the last or second last week of Term 3. However, concerns arose regarding the timing of the Outcome 2 assessment task, with many schools indicating that it was administered concurrently with students still developing an understanding of the key knowledge and skills for the outcome. It is crucial for students to have the opportunity to develop their understanding before being assessed. Evidence from schools suggested a lack of engagement with the 2023–2027 VCE Food Studies Study Design in Unit 4, with many schools relying on assessment tasks and performance descriptors designed for the previous study design, particularly for Outcome 2. For some schools, this resulted in over-assessment of the outcome and assessments that fell outside the scope of the study design.

The majority of schools were able to demonstrate clear understanding of processes relating to school policy and to VCAA requirements, including the provision of timely feedback to students, monitoring of student work and maintaining documentation.