2023 VCE written examinations: Frequently asked questions

Where do I find the structure of the examinations, including total marks?

Examination specifications for each examination can be found on the [examinations webpages for each subject](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Index.aspx). These specifications provide information about the examinable content, the format of the examination, the number of sections, the types of questions within each section of the examination, the marks per section and the overall number of marks on the examination. The examination specifications also contain other information such as the materials and equipment that you can bring into the examination and relevant resources.

What can I bring into an examination room?

You can bring any of the approved materials that are permitted into all examinations including pens, pencils, highlighters, erasers, sharpeners and rulers. Specified examinations may allow you to bring in other approved materials and equipment such as dictionaries, calculators, coloured pencils and so on. These materials are listed in the examination specifications, on pages 7 and 8 of the *VCE Exams Navigator 2023* and can also be found on the [Authorised Materials and Equipment](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/materials/Pages/index.aspx) webpage. Note that correction fluid/tape and additional blank paper are not permitted to be brought into any examination.

Apart from stationery items and approved materials and equipment, you are permitted to bring into the examination room one bottle of still water in a clear plastic bottle (up to 1500mL) with all labels removed. Please read through the *VCE Exams Navigator 2023* for further details on what you can bring into the examination room.

Can I write during reading time?

No, during reading time in the examination, you must not use a calculator or mark the examination paper in in any way. You may refer to a dictionary or bound reference during reading time if these materials are permitted in the examination.

Can I complete the questions on the examination in any order?

Yes, you can complete the questions in any order. You do not need to complete the examination questions sequentially. However, please ensure that you check that you have answered all questions. It is recommended that you discuss the strategy that you wish to use for completing the examination with your teacher prior to the examination.

Can I write my answers in pencil?

It is recommended that you write your responses using blue or black pen. This is to ensure clarity and legibility of responses, especially for those examinations that are scanned and delivered to assessors through the computer-based marking system. While not recommended, pencils may be used provided that they are a dark lead (for example, 2B pencil); however, when writing, please ensure that you do not smudge your responses.

If your examination contains multiple-choice questions, then the multiple-choice answer sheet must be completed in pencil (HB or 2B). An optical scanner that detects pencil marks scans these sheets. Make sure that only one option is shaded for each multiple-choice question. If you change your mind about an answer to a multiple-choice question, please ensure that you fully erase your unintended answer.

The use of pencil (HB or 2B) is also recommended for some parts of specific examinations, such as completing calculations, records and reports in Accounting and for musical notation in written music examinations.

Please note that erasable pens are not recommended for use in any examination.

Why do some examination papers have black stripes on the inside margin of each page?

Some examinations are scanned and delivered to assessors electronically. The black stripe in the inside margin of each page is not scanned by the scanners. It is therefore shaded black so that you cannot write in it.

Can I continue my written answer beyond the lines provided in the examination? What if I run out of space?

The lines that are provided for you to write your response, together with the number of marks, provide some guidance as to how much to write. However, there are large variations in the size and style of student handwriting, so the lines provided are a guide only. If you use all of the lines, and there is some blank space after the answer lines, you can continue to write your answer there. However, do not write outside the black outlined border of the paper (if there is a border).

Some examinations, particularly those with extended response answers, contain additional, lined pages at the end of the examination book. You can continue to write your answer(s) on those lines. Please ensure that you clearly indicate that your response is continued at the back of the book and then clearly state the question number you are answering when you continue your response on the additional lined pages at the back of the examination book.

If you still require more space for your response, please ask the examination supervisor for another examination book, and continue your answer(s) in that second book.

Can I bring a dictionary into the examination?

The use of dictionaries is permitted in only a small number of examinations (English, EAL and Languages written examinations). The dictionaries will be checked by somebody from your school as you enter the examination room to ensure that there is no highlighting, annotation or tabs that are not part of the original publication. You can consult your dictionary during reading time. Electronic dictionaries or translators are not permitted in any examination. Please see the *VCE Exams Navigator 2023* for further information.

Can I use abbreviations in my answers to examination questions?

It is recommended that you use only well-known and accepted abbreviations for your subject (for example, ABS, WHO, RBA, VCAT, GST, OHS, PPE) in your response, and that you write these out in full, with the abbreviation in brackets, the first time that you use them in each response. If the abbreviation is used in the examination question, then you may use it in your response. You should not use abbreviations that you have made up.

Who marks my examination responses?

A team of assessors appointed by the VCAA will mark the examinations. Assessors have appropriate and relevant expertise and experience in the subject they are assessing. Most assessors are practising teachers. Assessors are trained by the VCAA, where the leading assessor team and VCAA staff discuss possible and acceptable answers, the marking scheme to be used, and undertake training using actual student scripts. There is continual monitoring of assessor’s marking performance throughout the marking process, to ensure the consistent application of the exam marking scheme.

All student responses are double-marked. This means that they are marked independently by two different assessors; neither knows the mark that the other assessor has given the student response. If the marks awarded by the two assessors differ by more than a pre-determined amount set by the VCAA, an independent third assessor will mark the response(s), so that a consensus can be reached.

What is an external assessment report?

External assessment reports provide information about the way students have performed in written, oral and performance examinations and Externally-assessed Tasks. They may include general comments and advice about the examination, areas of student strengths and areas for student improvement. In addition, there is information provided on each question, which may include statistics, possible answers and answers provided by students, common student errors and student performance. The external assessment reports are written by the Chief Assessor for each written, oral and performance examination and are published on the VCAA website in the year following the examination.

Please note that if the external assessment report includes sample answer or an indication of what answers may have included, unless stated otherwise, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.