VCE English and English as an Additional Language (EAL)   
Study Design 2023–2027

Frequently asked questions

How can teachers create boundaries for students engaging with writing and writing processes in Unit 3, Area of Study 2?

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that a duty of care is exercised in relation to the health and safety of all students undertaking the study. This duty of care extends to activities involving the development of ideas for writing and the monitoring of student-generated written drafts in relation to the topics and issues explored.

Ideas and topics selected by students as subject matter and themes for their written texts should be appropriate for their age and level of development, and reflect current community standards and expectations. Teachers should be aware of the sensitive issues that might arise in relation to the themes or subject matter included in individual texts.

The following strategies may assist teachers when supporting students as they create and craft their own texts for VCE English and EAL.

* Familiarise yourself with the student’s choice of subject matter, paying particular attention to any issues relating to personal, cultural, school and community standards that may arise.
* Identify any issues that may require additional resourcing, such as different perspectives on controversial historical, social, cultural or political themes.
* Consider the values your school upholds and represents, and the ways the student’s writing reflects these values.
* Discuss aspects that may be challenging for students with the school leadership and colleagues at your school.

The Victorian Department of Education provides information about student wellbeing and duty of care, including:

* [Mental health and wellbeing toolkit](https://www.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-toolkit)
* [DE Duty of Care policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/duty-of-care/policy)

The Catholic education sector provides information about [student wellbeing and safety](https://www.macs.vic.edu.au/Our-Schools/Child-Safety.aspx) for Catholic schools.

How might teachers organise Unit 3, Area of Study 2, school-assessed coursework (SAC)?

It is important to note the marks allocated for the tasks for Unit 3, Area of Study 2. Each assessment task is weighted 20 marks, so the assessment should be shorter than any task weighted 40 marks in other areas of study.

Students should write about 500 to 600 words per task in Unit 3, Area of Study 2.

Teachers can conduct the SACs in a number of ways. Examples of conditions of SACs include:

* A combining of two tasks (one written text and the commentary reflecting on writing processes) to create one SAC. Students create and then comment on their written text. The expected word count for this model of combined SAC would be about 1000 words. The whole SAC would be worth 40 marks (combining the two allocated marks)\*. EAL students can be assessed through a similarly structured SAC, writing annotations on their completed text. The whole EAL SAC would be worth 30 marks (again, combining the two allocated marks)\*.

Authentication can be managed by conducting the SAC in class under teacher supervision. If the task is conducted over multiple classes, teachers are advised to collect student work between classes.

[Performance descriptor documents](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/english-and-eal/Pages/Assessment.aspx) can assist teachers to construct feedback.

* A short, examination-style task where students are given unseen material (potentially modelled on the examination) and asked to construct a written text over one class (or in an hour). The word count for this SAC would be around 500 words. This written text would not have any commentary or annotations attached to it. This SAC would be worth 20 marks.

Schools that are pressed for time in a busy term may schedule the examination-style SAC as part of a mid-year practice exam (if relevant/appropriate) and thus give students the opportunity to experience an exam-style task under ‘exam conditions’.

Please note: Teachers can draw on their experience of the previous study design, where students were required to provide commentary on the writing processes associated with developing a creative response in Unit 3, Area of Study 1.

\*When entering student marks into VASS, teachers will need to enter three marks for this area of study.

How can teachers prepare students for Unit 3, Area of Study 2 SAC?

In the teaching and learning cycle of Unit 3, Area of Study 2, teachers engage with the mentor texts from the VCAA VCE English and EAL Text List of the relevant year and other mentor texts they think would be useful for their cohort, working with the students to understand the ways the writers have developed their writing to create effective, cohesive texts for purpose. Students can develop their own short pieces that experiment with the features and structures they observe and explore through the mentor texts. They can keep a writing journal (hard copy or digital) and store these short pieces together as they build their skills towards assessment.

Teachers can comment on student coursework through teaching and learning and use student work to illustrate effective and cohesive writing to the whole cohort. They can employ peer feedback and support through small mentor groups. The SACs themselves are an opportunity for teachers to provide clear and directive feedback to students.

Once a student has begun the formal SAC, teachers can provide very limited advice and should not provide any written feedback until the SAC is completed.

Please note: Each of these tasks is worth 20 marks. It is important to consider this weighting in the larger cycle of assessment. Shorter pieces rather than longer pieces are valued in this area of study. Students can extend their writing for examination purposes when revising but are not required to write lengthy pieces for internal assessment. We recommend a word limit of 500 to 600 words per task.

What is the advice on drafting?

Drafting is part of the writing process and can be used to build students’ writing. Teachers can provide feedback and assistance on drafts in line with the advice on drafting in the VCE Administrative Handbook (summarised below).

Acceptable levels of assistance include:

* incorporating ideas or material derived from other sources (for example, by reading, viewing or note-taking), but transformed by the student and used in a new context
* prompting and general advice from another person or source, which lead to refinements and/or self-correction.

Unacceptable levels of assistance include:

* using or copying another person’s work, including their teacher’s work or other resources, without acknowledgement
* using or copying sample answers provided by their teacher or another person
* using corrections or improvements made or dictated by another person, including their teacher.

Please note: Teachers are not required to formally sight drafts or record students’ completion of drafts unless it is a requirement of the VCE study design and/or for authentication purposes. Drafting can remain a part of a teaching and learning strategy, and students may do preliminary drafting for SACs; however, students and teachers must ensure that they follow the [VCAA authentication rules](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-handbook/sections/Pages/08ScoredAssessmentSchoolBasedAssessment.aspx#Authentication) regarding acceptable levels of assistance in relation to providing feedback on the draft, in order to maintain the integrity of the SAC and ensure the authenticity of student work.

Student writing should be assessed in terms of its success as a cohesive and effective text within a context, for a particular audience and purpose. All student writing should be constructed within a context, for an audience and a purpose, and the ways in which these elements can shape a text should be part of the teaching and learning.

How should commentaries or annotations be used in Unit 3, Area of   
Study 2?

English students create a commentary on one of their written texts, and the processes they have employed when creating their texts, in both Unit 1 and Unit 3. Teachers can consider how they might scaffold this commentary by providing support for students to explore annotating mentor texts and then opportunities to apply those skills to their own texts.

Similar scaffolding for EAL students will provide modelling about the ways they can annotate their own written texts.

Examples of annotations can be found at [LitLinks](https://www.actlitlinks.com.au/resources/).

English teachers should note that the mark allocation for all the SAC assessment tasks for Unit 3, Outcome 2 is identical. See also the examples of ways to assess in Unit 3, Area of Study 2 on page 2 of this document.

What is the advice on moderation?

Moderation is an important part of the assessment process. Teachers should consider the task and the performance descriptors before making time to discuss examples of student responses that represent ‘High’, ‘Medium’ and ‘Low’ across the cohort. They can then use that knowledge to assess their own class. Any student response that presents an issue for a teacher can be taken back to the group (or to a marking partner) for discussion, and for a final judgement.

Teachers can also assess their own class first and then share examples of ‘High’, ‘Medium’ and ‘Low’ responses with their colleagues to calibrate their judgement.

It is vital that SACs be marked with consistency and fairness to determine student scores. It is also vital that the role of SACs as formative assessment is utilised, and thus that SACs, while contributing to study scores, also provide students with feedback and next steps in their writing.

Please note: A double-blind moderation process across all tasks is not required. Schools could conduct such a process on one SAC in a calendar year if they wish, but it is not recommended as the only moderation process in a school.

What kinds of writing forms can students produce in Unit 3, Area of   
Study 2?

Teachers and schools are invited to explore creativity and writing as processes rather than as products. In senior secondary English and EAL, there is emphasis on the application of knowledge and understanding of purpose, context and audience. The generic conventions learned in F–10 can be applied but will likely be transformed to meet what is required in the context of the writing. Students can explore challenging generic conventions and combine them into hybrid forms, and in doing so become skilled and empowered writers and communicators.

It is acknowledged that there will be many cohorts of English and EAL students who will continue to benefit from the explicit knowledge and application of generic writing forms and structures to support the creation of their own texts. Teachers are therefore encouraged to develop a teaching and learning program that is tailored to meet the specific needs of their cohort, and provides the appropriate scaffolding to support writing development. However, the focus of the program must be on the consideration of purpose, context and audience, and not solely on generic text types.

What role do mentor texts play in supporting students to develop their ideas?

Mentor texts are sustained print texts that can clearly model effective and cohesive writing. They are typically shorter forms of writing – for example, essays, short stories, speeches, episodes of podcasts (transcripts), short biographical or memoir writing pieces and poetry.

Mentor texts should be aligned in some way with the idea selected for the area of study. However, the mentor texts are not necessarily the primary sources of student engagement with the idea. The key connection between the mentor texts and student learning is through reading and revisiting the mechanics of the writing, such as how the text is structured, what language features are evident, how these language features contribute to the effectiveness of the writing, or how the vocabulary has been used. Students and teachers investigate how the text is successfully engaging an audience, and effectively conveying ideas or communicating a message.

Do students need to formally reference mentor texts in their writing, commentary or annotations?

The mentor texts provide examples of cohesive and effective writing and are studied for the use of vocabulary, text structures, language features and conventions. Mentor texts also provide ideas that will connect with the central idea set for study, but that is not their primary function or role in teaching and learning. As such, students are not required to refer to any mentor text directly in their writing. Indeed, such a demand could impact a student’s capacity to meet the assessment criteria. The individual writing developed by students, however, should be built on the vocabulary, text structures, language features and conventions that mentor texts have explored, experimented with, and applied.

The reflective commentary and annotations about the writing processes may include specific reference to the mentor texts. This, however, will depend on the way students incorporate specific writing strategies into their own work, and will not always be relevant or required.

What kinds of texts should be selected for the audio or audio visual task for EAL students in Unit 3, Area of Study 1?

Unit 3, Area of Study 1 for EAL students is substantially different from English because it comprises a listening/viewing component for assessment, but knowledge and skills grounded in this outcome could also be of benefit to English students as a learning activity. If they are teaching a combined class of English and EAL learners, teachers could easily embed the teaching of the listening/viewing component into their classroom pedagogy, but only assess the EAL students on the knowledge and skills.

In Unit 3, Area of Study 1, EAL students are required to listen to and discuss ideas, concerns and values presented in a text, informed by selected vocabulary, text structures and language features and how they make meaning. This involves the comprehension of an audio/audio visual text focused on historical, cultural and/or social values in the set text, and responding through short-answer responses and note-form summaries.

The focus of this outcome is to acknowledge that listening and speaking is the way that language is first acquired and to support the development of fluent listening skills in English language learners. The selection of material for the listening component of the outcome may be drawn from audio or audio visual texts that relate in any way to the historical, cultural and/or social values in the text selected for study. The purpose of the text is to help build the field for students and to develop their understanding about its broader context.

Examples of suitable texts may include:

* interview with the author/creator of the set text
* vlog or podcast by the author of the set text
* video clip that contains a summary and analysis of key parts of the text
* online lecture about the set text
* podcast about the set text
* online audio review with a focus on the context of the set text
* teacher-created text with a focus on the set text.

The development of the teaching and learning program for this outcome requires the inclusion of explicit teaching of some comprehension strategies to support engagement with audio or audio visual texts. Assessment tasks should be designed to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the historical context, and the social and cultural values in the set text.

Can teachers develop texts for students to analyse, based on the selected issue, for Unit 4, Area of Study 2?

The texts must be based on an issue that has appeared in the media since 1 September of the previous year.

Once the issue has been selected, teachers can:

* select texts from published media (print newspapers, digital newspapers, social media, television, podcasts)
* modify any text to best support their context and cohort (including editing for length and for content)
* develop texts, based on the selected issue, for students to analyse.

Teachers are advised to work with their students to select an issue of relevance to the cohort. There are some issues that may be sensitive to study in specific settings, so teachers need to ensure that the issue selected is appropriate for the student demographic of the school.

How might teachers organise the SAC for Unit 4, Area of Study 2?

As in the previous study design, one SAC can incorporate two texts for analysis. There is no comparison component in the study design, so students analyse each text individually, one after the other.

Only one of the texts needs to be unseen (although teachers can choose for both texts to be unseen). The audio/audio visual text can be shown to the cohort prior to the SAC and a transcript for their annotations of the text can be provided. An unseen print text will offer authentication across the cohort.

Consideration needs to be given to the length of the SAC texts. Short texts allow students the opportunity to include language and visual analysis as well as argument analysis. Giving students longer texts to analyse can imply that tracking the argument is the most valued part of the task, which may mislead students. Careful consideration therefore needs to be given to how much students can be expected to produce in the designated SAC time and to modify the texts accordingly.

Please note: The above suggestion to modify longer texts is also relevant here.

How can teachers access transcripts for the audio and/or audio visual texts?

Many websites that publish audio and audio visual texts (podcasts, recordings of radio programs, interviews, opinion pieces, lectures) provide downloadable transcripts that can be converted into Word documents (or similar) and provided to students either in hard copy or soft copy.

A list of websites that include transcripts, along with advice on how to access them, is provided below:

* YouTube
* Enable ‘closed captioning’ (CC) on the video (in the bar at the bottom of the video).
* Click on ‘More’ in the description that sits underneath the video.
* Click on ‘show transcript’.
* Copy the transcript and paste into a Word document or similar.
* ABC
* Many ABC programs include transcripts.
* Useful programs for this area of study include ‘Four Corners’, ‘Foreign Correspondent’, ‘7.30’ and ‘Q and A’.
* Click on the program and the transcript will appear below it.
* Copy and paste the section to be used.
* Note that the text is often in white – once copied and pasted, select all text again and change the font colour to black.
* TED Talks
* Select video.
* ‘Read transcript’ button will be on the right below the video.
* Copy and paste the section to be used.
* SBS
* Click on the story.
* The transcript will appear underneath the audio or the audiovisual text.
* Copy and paste the section to be used.

Transcripts will provide students with a hard copy of the audio or audio visual text. Students can use the transcript to provide direct quotations from the text, and to refine their analysis of the text.

What advice can you provide on authenticating student work in the age of generative AI?

Ethical scholarship means that students are supported in the production of work that is honest, reliable and credible. This means that they are clear with their reader or audience about what work is their own, and that they acknowledge when other sources are used. Ethical scholarship requires that students understand and honour the following:

* Honesty – students indicate clearly the work that is their own and the work that is someone else’s.
* Transparency – when quoting from the research of another author/expert, students must do so accurately and cite each source used.
* Action – producing work for teacher assessment and feedback allows students to communicate their learning in their own words and is both a right and a responsibility.

Each student deserves to be acknowledged and credited for their work. However, no student should be acknowledged or credited for work that is not their own (plagiarism), including the work of peers and teachers. This applies to both individual and group tasks.

Plagiarism is using other person’s work or words without any acknowledgement of that source.

The Department of Education provides [additional information about generative AI and academic integrity](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/generative-artificial-intelligence/guidance/promoting-academic-integrity).