**Annelise Balsamo –** Hello and welcome to this presentation on VCE English Assessment Advice. My name's Annelise Balsamo. I'm the English Curriculum Manager at the VCAA, and I'm joined today by Helen Billett, who is the Chief Assessor for VCE English for 2024. The structure of this presentation, we're going to guide you through all the internal assessment across the VCE English Study Design, including some ideas to assist you in organising School-Assessed Coursework or SACs for each outcome. We'll also explore possible timelines for assessment. And with an eye to the wider context, we'll look at the role of internal assessment or SACs and the role of external assessment or the external examination in the VCE. We'll also comment on moderation and its role in assessment. And finally, look at advice for VCE English and the end of year examination

**Helen Billett** - By Unit 3 in reading and responding, students are understanding that the assessment focus is the ideas, the concerns, and tensions presented by the author, as well as considering the way that the author uses plot, character, structure, setting, and linguistic features to convey ideas. Students are also introduced to all the different types of essay topics in this unit, so the explicit teaching of how to read and understand what a topic is inviting them to do and to be able to do this independently and structure an essay in response is important.

In Unit 4, the challenge for students is to also consider the implications of the topic. In terms of word length, students are often constrained by a time limit. The student responses for this section of the course are worth a possible 40 marks, which equates to about 800 to 1,000 words, and usually an hour timeframe is appropriate for students, although some schools find it useful to allow designated planning time for students as they familiarise themselves with reading topics and planning responses.

**Annelise Balsamo –** The tasks mandated for Unit 3, Outcome 2: Creating Texts are two written texts in consideration of audience, purpose, and context, and one commentary reflecting on the writing processes a student engages with when developing a text. It is important to note that these tasks are each worth 20 marks. On the basis of that weighting, we would suggest that the length of student responses for each task should be about 500 words. In this outcome, we would encourage teachers and students not to equate quantity with quality, but rather to consider what is possible in a limited number of words, and we would strongly advise teachers to complete this assessment in two SACs.

In order to complete the assessment for Unit 3, Outcome 2: Creating Texts, we would advise the following. For the first SAC, combine two tasks, one of the written texts and the commentary reflecting on written processes to create one SAC. In this SAC, students would create a text and comment on that piece of writing. For both pieces of writing in this one SAC, the word count would be expected to be around 1,000 and would be worth 40 marks, so 20 for the written text and 20 for the reflective commentary. Students could complete this SAC in class under teacher supervision for authentication purposes. The conditions, however, could be selected to best suit the cohort. For example, teachers could choose that the SAC is completed as an open book or with students using their writing journals informing their text.

Teachers could provide a prompt for students to engage with, or the text could be student choice based on earlier classwork. If this SAC runs over more than one session, it is suggested that teachers gather up the student work between each session. For teachers familiar with the previous study design, the Creative SAC, that had been in Unit 3, Outcome 1, could serve as a useful model. In the previous study design, the SAC indicated that students develop a creative response and include a written explanation of the decisions made in the writing processes. In the current study design, the written text can be in a form or text type of the student's choosing, and the reflective commentary will provide explanations of the writing processes.

Additionally, this reflective commentary is now meaningfully rewarded with marks. For the second SAC, we would advise that students create the second written text this time with no attached commentary under supervised examination conditions. Teachers could model this SAC on the VCE English sample examination using a specified title and short stimulus text students must meaningfully incorporate into their text. This text should have a word length of about 500 words, and students should be given a time, 50 minutes or one period, to complete. Teachers could choose to include this SAC as part of a practise mid-year examination, which is school based. We would suggest in this instance that students use equal time for Unit 3, Outcome 2 SAC by teachers collecting their papers after a particular point in the examination, making it clear that students must do this part of the examination first.

**Helen Billett** - If we care to transfer our experience from the previous study design to the assessment of creating texts, we have two potential models for assessing this area of study. The first is the study design's previous creative response where the written explanation formed part of the rubric we gave to students in response to the SAC. It's completely possible to do that in this study design too. Some schools colour code the parts of the rubric to indicate the two tasks. If we look at the two tasks, the writing and the reflection, as essentially connected, this can be useful.

Or we could use the previous study design's model of the oral and the statement of intention. These were usually assessed concurrently on separate rubrics. Obviously in either model, it's the comment that we make to students where we celebrate what they've achieved and offer advice to guide their next steps that's crucial. These SACs, like all SACs, have a formative as well as a summative role. Whichever model the school uses, we do need to be mindful that three separate marks are entered into the VASS system for creating texts.

**Annelise Balsamo –** For this outcome, we would advise that teachers combine both texts, the print and the audio or audio visual texts, into one SAC. Asking students to analyse more than one text in one SAC is familiar to teachers from previous examinations. For example, the VCE English Examination 2019. Students were not asked to compare the texts, but were asked to analyse them individually. In this case, students can select the text they want to analyse first. They complete that analysis and then move into the second text and complete that analysis, and there is no requirement for comparison.

For ease of administration, teachers can choose to have the audio or audio visual text as a seen text with the transcript available for student annotation. The print text can be unseen and can form part of the authentication process. The point of view presentation required for this outcome can be delivered digitally. Students can record their presentations and submit them as an audio file or similar. They can also use group presentations like debates. Depending on the timeline used by the school for VCE English, the oral presentation can be completed at the end of Term 2 after Unit 3, Outcome 2: Creating Texts. Students can select a topic of their own choosing and interest. Providing a stable length, something under six minutes, will set a word length for students.

**Helen Billett** - In the previous study design, many schools had two assessment tasks set in Term 1: the Creative with its commentary and the Analytical Essay. The new study design offers the flexibility to use this same pattern of assessment. For example, it's possible to move Area of Study 2: Creating Texts into Term 1 and assess the two original texts and the reflection at that time, leaving just one reading and responding essay to be assessed in Term 2. Equally, it would be possible to complete one of the creating assessment tasks in Term 1, and then study and assess reading and responding, and come back to creating texts in Term 2 to finish that SAC. Schools have the capacity to set appropriate assessment dates for their context.

While SACs have a summative role and continual assessment rewards students for their progress through the year, the true value of SACs for students lie in their role as formative assessments. Formative assessment encourages student growth throughout the year. Consecutive SACs allow students the chance to build on their skills in reading and responding and in creating texts. These assessments allow us to witness and celebrate students' emerging skills. The feedback that teachers offer for all formative assessments throughout the year allows the connections to be established. This dialogue is essential for building student capacity, confidence, and control in their reading, writing, and oral work.

While students place huge value on their marks, a number doesn't help them understand what they can do and what their next steps are as they gain capacity and develop insight. We need to remember this vital role of internal assessment and acknowledge the formative role of SACs so that students can understand the connections between SACs and the summative assessment in the course or the exam. The power of internal assessment is to impact student growth. The formative nature of these SACs has implications on the way in which we approach setting them and assessing them.

**Annelise Balsamo –** Moderation is important in VCE, but it's not required to mirror the practise we see for external examinations. Double-blind marking is a model used for examinations for a specific purpose, and Helen will address this shortly, but has limited use for internal assessment. Moderation for internal assessment is best conducted through benchmarking among class teachers, and benchmarking can be done in a number of ways.

Two examples of benchmarking are: benchmarking done prior to class teachers assessing their own class or cohort. In this example, one or two teachers, depending on the size of the faculty, select examples of a high, a medium, and a low from their class and present them to their colleagues. These samples can form the basis of a professional discussion about the merits of the work and the way they can be assessed against performance descriptors. Teachers then use this knowledge to assess their own class.

The second way is, benchmarking can be done after teachers assess their classes. In this example, teachers mark their own class or cohort and then present samples of high, medium, and low to their colleagues. Adjustments to assessments can be made on the basis of this professional discussion. In either case, and indeed most cases, problematic papers can be discussed with a colleague or a marking partner and in a safe environment. As indicated on the previous slide, a key purpose for internal assessment is feedback to students. Class teachers are best placed to engage with their students to provide feedback. This does not mean, of course, that in some cases, assessing SACs can be outsourced, but we would suggest that this outsourcing should be limited.

**Helen Billett** - Here are a few reminders about the end of year examination. Section A will have the familiar range of essay questions. However, there will be no questions about single characters that we occasionally saw in the previous study design. While the question might ask about the experience of characters in the text, the focus of the question is always the ideas presented in the text.

Section B will invite students to respond to a specified title. The title in Section B will be as important as the topic in Section A. It would be useful for students to understand the connection between text and title in Section B, just as it's useful for students to understand the connection between topic and response in Section A. Students are also offered stimulus material to create a text and use an authorial voice to engage their readers as they explore meaningful ideas connected to their framework.

Section C will be one text, not the multiple texts we sometimes saw in the previous study design. It may be a written text or the transcript of a spoken text such as the Hapsey Happenings Podcast of 2022. There will be a graphic element to the text, and the analysis of that is part of the task, along with the analysis of language and argument. The only exclusively summative assessment in the course is the exam. Students receive numerical feedback only, and it's statistically moderated. This moderation takes into account both GAT and SAC data.

For those of you who love the maths, I've included a link that explains how this moderation is conducted and the safeguards that are built into it. This is done because schools cannot know trends in performance across the state. Therefore, the sound decisions that have been made ranking students at a school level are moderated by this statewide assessment. Because we have no way of knowing which scripts are likely to be problematic in the exam or for whatever reasons they might be problematic, we double-blind mark. This is true for every written examination in the state. We double-blind mark not because we don't trust the first marker. In fact, English has extraordinary levels of agreement. It's because we cannot predict which scripts may be problematic.

We blind mark because this system must be and must be perceived as being beyond corruption. Assessors submit their close associations with schools and students to ensure that this process has and is seen to have integrity. This is a very different circumstance to that within a school where teachers are expected to know their students to be able to teach them effectively. The exam is about summative assessment only. There is no formative element. Thus, the assessment practises are very different to those which we might conduct within a school.

**Annelise Balsamo –** For further supportive assessment and the VCE English Study Design, a new set of frequently asked questions are now published on the VCE English Study Design page under support materials planning, and the web link is here. We will provide more opportunities for support for and feedback from teachers through online forums and the possibility of face-to-face professional learnings in the coming year. For further advice and for any feedback, please always get in contact with the English Curriculum Manager at the VCAA, and you can use the details on this page.

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