VCE Extended Investigation   
2019–2024

Frequently asked questions (FAQs) for prospective providers

What kind of research do students typically undertake?

A sound research question reflects what will sustain student curiosity over an extended period and is academically rigorous. The VCE Extended Investigation study design (page 20) includes criteria to assist in framing an effective research question. Many students construct a research question that draws on one discipline alone such as sociology or a science, while others draw on more than one discipline, for example combining literature and biology; or mathematics and health. Many students identify an area of interest through engaging with current events, their interests outside school or a topic encountered through the school curriculum.

Research methodologies similarly vary. Many students use a mixed methodology while others focus on one methodology, for example systematic literature review. The VCE Extended Investigation is part of the VCE Season of Excellence (Top Talks) and student topics featured can be found at [vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/events-and-awards/season-of-excellence/Pages/TopTalks.aspx](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/events-and-awards/season-of-excellence/Pages/TopTalks.aspx)

Can students study a related VCE study?

Students can undertake a related study but must not submit the same piece of work for assessment in more than one study, for example an extract of their extended investigation cannot be submitted as a SAC or a SAC cannot be included within an extended investigation. This is monitored at the school level as part of authentication. Please refer to the ‘Rules for authentication of School-based Assessment’ in the VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook.

What kind of background does a VCE Extended Investigation typically teacher have?

The VCE Extended Investigation curriculum covers knowledge and skills associated with undertaking academic research, including critical thinking. Some VCE Extended Investigation teachers have undertaken research, for example through a Masters. Some, such as teacher librarians, have been trained to teach research, while other teachers have graduate level teaching qualifications, and all are able to deliver the VCE Extended Investigation successfully. Some teachers supplement their own expertise by drawing on academics or school colleagues, for example regarding research methodologies for disciplines different to the teacher’s background.

Must students have a mentor?

No. A decision to work with a mentor should be made according to individual circumstances. The school should have policies in place to induct a mentor into their role and to manage any authentication breaches should they occur.

How can a school support students’ independent study?

Supervision of students involves instruction of the class together with guiding the independent study of individual students. Teachers support individual students in a range of ways as required, for example to: help access a relevant expert; ensuring that students are able to access a database of relevant literature; or discussing strategies for refining a proposed research question.

What are the kinds of challenges that students typically encounter?

Students may encounter one or more challenges and some of these could be identified and analysed as part of the project management aspect of the study, for example through a risk assessment and planned actions. Students often encounter an issue that leads to refinement of the research question and it is common for refinement to occur even after submission of the question to the VCAA.

One source of challenge is associated with research methodology, for example achieving a desired sample size, interviewees withdrawing or a problem associated with an experiment. Mentors, if being used, might also be less available than anticipated.

As part of the teaching and learning of the Extended Investigation, students are taught that academic research can involve challenges and discussing them and associated actions can be a component of their investigation without detracting from it.

There are a range of other challenges and the Externally Assessed Task Reports ([vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Extended-Investigation.aspx](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/past-examinations/Pages/Extended-Investigation.aspx)) provide insight into how students can manage some of these.