VCE Extended Investigation Authentication and undue assistance

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The completion of work required for an ‘S’ (satisfactory) and the Externally Assessed Task (the externally assessed written report and oral presentation) for VCE Extended Investigation is subject to the same requirements for authentication and integrity of school-based assessment as detailed in the [*VCE Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx), as for every other VCE study. The [*VCE Administration Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) is published annually and often updated and it is important for schools to comply with the current year’s version.

In addition, the VCE Extended Investigation study design requires schools to put in place authentication processes that are tailored to the unique features of this study, including the Externally Assessed Task (EAT) and the purpose of this document is to provide advice to support this.

Students enrolled in VCE Extended Investigation must sign a declaration when they submit the written report component of the EAT, that the work submitted was produced solely by them. The supervising teacher is also required to sign and confirm that to the best of their knowledge it is the student’s work. The *Student and teacher declaration form* can be found on the [study page for VCE Extended Investigation](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/extendedinvestigation/Pages/Index.aspx).

Teachers are required as part of the key knowledge and skills for Unit 3 Area of Study 1 to explicitly consider and address ethical issues relevant to the research question, including plagiarism. Plagiarism is a breach of [VCAA School-based Assessment authentication rules](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/sections/Pages/08ScoredAssessmentSchoolBasedAssessment.aspx#Authentication).

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another’s words and ideas, whether intended or unintended. Direct quotations or direct use of work in another form such as visual representations must be accurately cited through in-text and end-text referencing. Expressing another’s work in a student’s own words in the form of paraphrasing or summarising and/or changing the order of the clauses and/or words is an act of plagiarism unless the author of the original is accurately cited. People whose work that could be plagiarised includes but is not limited to producers of published or unpublished works, teachers, tutors, mentors, parents, other students and other sources.

Teachers are encouraged to explicitly teach strategies related to time management, referencing, note-taking and record keeping that will assist students in avoiding unintended plagiarism, and to monitor student understanding and application of these strategies over the course of the academic year. Any authentication issues detected should be addressed by the school throughout the year when they arise, and resolved if possible prior to completion of the EAT. Schools are encouraged to use web-based plagiarism detection software prior to completing the *Student and teacher declaration form* and submitting students’ written reports to the VCAA for external assessment.

If the school is not satisfied that the student’s work submitted for the VCE Extended Investigation Study was produced solely by the student they must:

* notify the school Principal
* contact [the VCAA](mailto:vcaa.vce.extended.investigation@education.vic.gov.au) prior to submitting the student’s written report to the VCAA for assessment
* conduct a school investigation overseen by the school Principal into the alleged breach of the VCAA’s School-based Assessment authentication rules (refer to the VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook) to inform the submission of a written report to the VCAA
* [submit a written investigation report to the VCAA](mailto:vcaa.vce.extended.investigation@education.vic.gov.au), along with the student’s written report. Please see below for what the school’s report must contain. On receipt of the school’s report, the VCAA may request further information.

The VCAA will advise the school about any necessary further action or outcome.

The school’s report to the VCAA must contain the following information:

* The student number and the student’s research question
* the identification of the forms of the breach as outlined in relevant parts of the Scored assessment section of the [*VCE Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx)
* an estimate of the percentage of the student written report that cannot be authenticated (that is, the degree of plagiarism, unacknowledged work, undue assistance)
* the identification of the sections in the report that cannot be authenticated
* an overview of the school’s investigation
* the provisional decision by the school as to the award of S or N for Outcome 1 in Unit 4
* record of interview with the student
* any further evidence that either substantiates, or contradicts the authentication allegation/s.

The VCAA undertakes authentication checks on all students’ written reports after submission by schools. If authentication issues (including plagiarism) are detected by the VCAA, a process will be undertaken to further investigate this.

Use of mentors

Students may have a mentor during their investigation. As independent research is a key focus of the study mentors, like teachers, must maintain a critical distance from the investigation. Through discussion with the student the mentor may assist the student to critically analyse and reflect on the research area they choose, the approach they take to develop an investigation and which of the strategies used in their chosen research area for communicating complex ideas might be appropriate for a non-specialist audience.

The Extended Investigation Journal must be used to record the involvement of the mentor in the development of the student’s investigation. Schools must ensure that the involvement of mentors in student investigations does not constitute undue assistance. Undue assistance is a breach of VCE rules (see [*VCE Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx)*).* Schools should have a process in place to brief mentors in their role, to monitor the involvement of mentors throughout the study, and to manage issues that might arise.

The role of the mentor is to:

* discuss with a student the current state of knowledge and research in the student’s area of interest
* discuss with the student what might be an appropriate research area for the timescale of the
* investigation (3 terms) and the student’s level of expertise and knowledge advise the student where to locate appropriate research material
* discuss any questions the student may have as they develop their research question discuss with the student any ethical issues associated with their investigation
* discuss with the student an appropriate methodology and methods for their investigation
* discuss with the student suitable strategies from the research area for communicating complex ideas to a non-specialist audience
* advise the student on the appropriate formatting, referencing and bibliographic conventions for their research area.

The role of the mentor is not to:

* direct a student to a particular research area write the student’s research question
* frame survey or interview questions for the student conduct research for the student
* engage the student to conduct research on their behalf provide original data
* analyse the student’s data
* write content for the student
* read and correct any work the student submits for assessment, including the written rationale and written research plan, the oral presentations or the final written report
* allow the student to engage in activities as part of their research for which they are not qualified,
* or which may place the student, or other students involved in the research, in danger.