VCE Literature (Units 3 and 4: 2023–2027)

School-based assessment report

This report is provided for the first year of implementation of this study and is based on the School-Based Assessment Audit and VCAA statistical data.

All official communications regarding the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Literature Study Design 2023–2027 are provided in the [*VCAA Bulletin*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx)*.* It is recommended that teachers subscribe to the [*VCAA Bulletin*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx) to receive updated information regarding the study. Schools are required to alert teachers to information in [*VCAA Bulletins*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx), especially concerning assessment schedules. Important administrative dates and assessment schedules are published on the School administration page of the [VCAA Website](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/HomePage.aspx).

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the application of the VCE Literature Study Design 2023–2027 across the schools audited demonstrates that the majority of teaching programs and assessments are engaging and challenging for students while meeting the criteria required.

The texts selected from the 2023 VCE Literature text list were varied and included a broad range of contemporary and classic texts. The responses indicated that the majority of schools are providing students with robust courses while meeting the mandated text type criteria in the selection of texts for study. However, it is concerning that some schools are using non-prescribed texts in their coursework. While non-prescribed texts may enhance context or provide depth to a concern, schools should refrain from teaching texts that are not examinable to avoid the potential for any student confusion.

Another area of concern was the number of texts taught by some schools. While students ‘may be formally assessed’ on 4 texts, it is important for schools to ensure that 5 texts must ‘feature in teaching and learning programs’. Some of the audited schools made token reference to the fifth text or could be judged to have not meaningfully studied the text. It is open to schools to engage in the fifth text as they deem appropriate, however, any text should be presented to students in a manner and timeframe that enables them to engage with, and develop an interpretation of, that text.

The audit questionnaire for both Units 3 and 4 Literature suggested that some schools are condensing areas of study that they perhaps deem not an examinable task. In particular, it was noted that Unit 3 Outcome 1 (Adaptations and transformations) and Unit 4 Outcome 1 (Creative response) were taught in a reduced timeframe compared to the other outcomes. Schools are reminded that outcomes should be presented to students with appropriate rigor to allow them to develop an individual interpretation of a text and demonstrate the key knowledge and skills.

Most outcomes in the VCE Literature Study Design 2023–2027 include assessment tasks concerned with the close reading of texts to allow for students develop the skills of reading, interpreting and responding to the language in a text. Close reading tasks are also a requirement of the VCE Literature examination. Schools should ensure that appropriate time is given to each outcome and assessment task to allow students to develop the important skill of engaging in the language of text through a close reading/passage analysis response.

The audit responses revealed that it is common practice for schools to begin teaching Year 12 subjects at the end of the previous year. This is an accepted practice across most subjects; however, schools must ensure that the timeframe for teaching Year 12 subjects in Year 11 is appropriate and that no assessment is conducted prior to the commencement of Year 12.

Generally, it was encouraging that the assessment tasks presented by most schools were well organised, provided clear instructions to students, and presented task conditions (including time allocated), the appropriate outcome, key skills and knowledge, rubric and marks allocated. This information is important because it provides the students with a clear understanding of the task conditions and requirements, the knowledge and skills they need to demonstrate and the levels of achievement they will be assessed against. It is concerning that some schools provided students with assessment tasks with ambiguous instructions, no task conditions or without a rubric or appropriate marking guide. Schools are encouraged to ensure that all students understand the assessment task, conditions for assessment and marking criteria to allow for them to present relevant and appropriate responses.

The VCE Literature Study Design 2023–2027 has made some changes to the number and types of assessment tasks. The majority of schools presented students with the appropriate number of tasks as required. A small number of respondent schools included more assessment tasks by breaking some tasks into different parts. For example, a few schools used 2 assessment tasks in Unit 4 Outcome 2. This practice mirrored the assessment of the previous study design. Schools should ensure that the number of assessment tasks used is consistent with those outlined in the study design to avoid over-assessing students.

Most of the respondents to the audit questionnaire had very well organised and clear procedures for authentication of student assessment. However, it was concerning that a small number of schools with multiple classes conducted assessment tasks that created the potential for authentication breaches, including using the same task across classes at different times.

Most schools required students to complete all assessment tasks under timed, supervised conditions to ensure equity and fairness. However, an area for concern was the small number of schools allowing students to complete portions of an assessment task unsupervised. This was particularly true for the creative response in Unit 4 Outcome 1.

For schools seeking advice on developing authentication processes, the VCE Administrative Handbook provides information and examples.

Schools are reminded that any potential for an authentication breach must be avoided through appropriate assessment procedures and supervision.

Schools should note that the new VCE Literature Study Design 2023–2027 still includes the requirement for one assessment task in either Unit 3 or 4 to include the ‘language modes of speaking and listening’. It was pleasing that many respondent schools included an oral presentation as an assessment task in either Unit 3 or 4. However, schools must be aware that some of the assessment tasks must be written responses as required in the criteria presented in the study design. Any task that has no written requirement can be presented as an oral presentation. A small number of schools in the audit included multiple oral presentations as assessment tasks across different outcomes. Schools need to ensure that students are assessed with a range of assessment task types.

The majority of respondent schools indicated that students are assessed using the VCAA performance descriptors or criteria. A small number of schools modified the VCAA performance descriptors and very few developed their own. However, schools should note that all of the VCAA performance descriptors include a criterion for the compulsory speaking and listening component of the school assessed work outlined in the study design. If schools are not assessing an oral component in an assessment task, the speaking and listening criteria should be deleted and only included when an oral task is being assessed.

It was encouraging that nearly all schools developed assessment tasks individually or with colleagues. Very few schools used commercially produced tasks. It was also encouraging that the majority schools engaged in moderating student assessment tasks with colleagues at either the same school or at other schools. This practice ensures equity of student assessment and achievement.

The audit questionnaires evidenced the great level of collegiality within the VCE Literature teaching community, which included references to Victorian Association of Teachers of English (VATE) membership or other networks to help develop activities and assessment tasks. This robust community ensures that teachers can feel supported, especially if they are new to teaching VCE Literature (a number of respondents were first-time teachers) or if they are the only VCE Literature teacher in a school.

It was also encouraging that a number of respondent schools referenced the General assessment advice and the sample approaches to assessment on the Literature page of the VCAA website as a reference for developing coursework and assessment tasks. Schools are encouraged to reference this page to aid them in developing an appropriate course for their students.

Overall, the schools audited responded that the audit process was a positive experience that enabled them to reflect on and consider the study design, teaching approaches and assessment practices.

While most respondents to the audit questionnaires provided adequate detail in their responses and documentation, some schools were contacted to submit more information to ensure that the VCAA requirements were being met. Schools are strongly encouraged to provide appropriate detail in their responses to all questions to ensure the initial process satisfies the audit panel but also alleviates the potential stress caused by a request for more information.

Specific information

Unit 3

Area of Study 1: Adaptations and transformations

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to analyse aspects of a text, drawing on close analysis of textual detail, and then discuss the extent to which meaning changes when that text is adapted to a different form.

Assessment tasks

1. A written interpretation of a text, supported by close textual analysis, using a key passage.
2. An analysis of how textual form influences meaning.

Students may:

* compare a dramatised version of a scene or scenes from a text with the original text.
* compare a print text with the text’s adaptation into another form.

Task conditions

* The suggested length of written responses is approximately 800–1000 words.
* The suggested length of oral responses is approximately 6–8 minutes (only assessment task 2).

Area of Study 2: Developing interpretations

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to develop interpretations of a set text informed by the ideas, views and values of the set text and a supplementary reading.

Assessment tasks

Part A: An initial interpretation of the text’s views and values within its historical, social and cultural context.

Part B: A written response that compares/interweaves and analyses an initial interpretation with a subsequent interpretation, using a key moment from the text.

Task conditions

* The suggested length for Part A is approximately 600–800 words.
* The suggested length for Part B is approximately 800–1000 words.
* The suggested length of oral responses is approximately 4–6 minutes (only Part A).

GENERAL COMMENTS

The responses for Unit 3 indicate that most schools have developed appropriate coursework and assessment tasks to encompass the changes in the new study design. For both areas of study in Unit 3, the spirit of the study design is to allow students to develop individual interpretations through engaging closely with the context and language of the text before presenting a more holistic analysis or interpretation based on an adaptation or supplementary reading.

In Unit 3 Outcome 1, schools were required to present students with two separate tasks assessed using separate rubrics. The audit responses showed that schools conducted these tasks separately over a number of weeks. No school conducted these tasks at the same time or within close proximity.

It is also clear that schools understand the requirements of both assessment tasks. The first assessment task requires students to be presented with a passage from the text chosen for study and to complete a written close analysis to form an initial interpretation. This task cannot be completed as an oral response. The conditions for this task were varied. Some schools indicated the passages that would be provided to students before the assessment task and others required students to write on an unseen passage. Either approach is acceptable as long as it is consistent within the cohort and students are assessed according to the key knowledge and skills and the rubric. Generally, schools who provided students with passages prior to the assessment shortened the time allocation, while those with unseen passages gave the students additional time.

The second task in Outcome 1, the Adaptations and transformation response, is familiar to schools and this was evident in the responses and documentation presented in the audit. Most schools required students to present a written response to this task, however, it was pleasing to note that the speaking and listening tasks used by some schools were robust and challenging. The adaptations chosen by schools were appropriate and would allow students to consider the complex variations in ideas and meaning when a text is transformed or adapted.

The approaches to the task for Unit 3 Outcome 2 were varied. This task is made up of Parts A and B and must be assessed as a whole using one rubric. Through the documentation provided, schools clearly understood the nature of this task, with some teachers choosing to use 2 separate tasks spaced apart, while others combined the tasks into one. These approaches comply with the sample approaches in the General assessment advice on the VCAA website. A number of schools used Part A of this task as a speaking and listening assessment. This is acceptable but schools should note that Part B of this task must be written.

Many schools used Part A to mirror Section A Question 1 of the end-of-year examination by using a passage and a broad topic that allowed students to explore the language of the text but also consider how the text endorses, challenges and/or marginalises the ideas, views and values presented. It is pleasing that schools are using and engaging with the language of the study design in the preparation and delivery of assessment tasks, as evidenced by the documentation provided for Part A.

Generally, the selection of supplementary readings used by schools for Part B were relevant to the task and provided students with ample opportunity to discuss interpretations that challenge, enrich and/or contest their own ideas. Schools used scholarly articles as suggested in the study design and there was no evidence of schools using simple opinion pieces. This demonstrates that schools know and understand the nature of the task as stipulated in the study design.

The audit responses demonstrated a variety of approaches to this task, including providing students with supplementary reading or providing an unseen supplementary reading in the assessment. Schools who provided an unseen supplementary reading consistently provided the students with more time. There were also schools who provided 2 or 3 supplementary readings and allowed students to choose the most relevant to their interpretation. This is acceptable as long as the supplementary readings chosen are similar in their complexity and scope to allow for a student response.

Specific information

Unit 4

Area of Study 1: Creative responses to texts

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to respond creatively to a text and comment critically on both the original text and the creative response.

Assessment tasks

1. A creative response to a text

Students may:

* submit an original piece of writing, presented in a manner consistent with the style and context of the original text.
* recreate or rework an aspect of the text, such as adding to the text, recasting a part of the text in another setting or form, or presenting an episode in the text from another point of view.
1. A close analysis of a key passage from the original text, which includes reflections on connections between the creative response and the original text.

Task conditions

* The suggested length for assessment task 1 is approximately 1000–1200 words.
* The suggested length for assessment task 2 is approximately 600–800 words.
* The suggested length of oral responses is approximately 4–6 minutes (only assessment task 2).

Area of Study 2: Close analysis of texts

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to analyse literary forms, features and language to present a coherent view of a whole text.

Assessment tasks

1. A close analysis of a text, supported by an examination of textual details, based on a selection of passages.

Task conditions

* The suggested length of written responses is approximately 800–1000 words.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The new VCE Literature Study Design 2023–2027 changed the number and type of assessment tasks for Unit 4.

The responses to the audit questionnaire demonstrated that schools were familiar with the key knowledge, skills and assessment tasks across both areas of study.

The Outcome 1 creative response was generally managed well by schools. The approaches varied but many schools completed both assessment tasks, including the creative response, under timed conditions. These schools allocated a number of lessons for students to complete their creative response and did not allow students to complete any of the tasks outside of class time. This approach enabled a clear and consistent approach to the authentication of student work. Some schools allowed students to complete the creative response both in and outside of class time with stringent teacher monitoring. This approach needs strict teacher interaction with students and their work to ensure that authentication breaches do not occur.

The introduction of a passage analysis in the reflective commentary task was generally managed well by the respondent schools. Many schools used this task as a speaking and listening task and schools consistently required students to nominate a passage from the text and analyse the passage in a response, drawing out connections to their creative response. A few schools provided students with a passage (or a selection of passages to choose from) as a stimulus for their creative response and then required students to discuss the passage in their reflective commentary.

A small number of schools treated the passage analysis as a separate task. As a consequence, students completed 3 responses in this area of study. There are a number of issues arising from this practice, including whether the passage is used in the reflective commentary as required and the danger of over-assessing students. It is recommended that this area of study be completed as 2 assessment tasks as stipulated in the study design and in the General assessment advice on the VCAA website. This will ensure that the criteria for the outcome and the assessment are met.

Outcome 2 was very familiar with schools and generally all coursework and assessment tasks were well-developed and refined. A small number of schools presented students with 2 assessment tasks mirroring the assessment in the previous study design. This practice could over-assess students and cause unnecessary stress. Schools are advised to ensure that the number of assessment tasks provided to students does not exceed the number outlined in the current study design.