VCE Literature 2016–2022

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 are provided in the *VCAA Bulletin*. It is recommended that teachers subscribe to the *VCAA Bulletin* to receive updated information regarding the study. Schools are required to alert teachers to information in VCAA Bulletins, especially concerning assessment schedules. Important Administrative Dates and assessment schedules are published on the School administration page of the VCAA website.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the work provided by Literature teachers in schools undergoing an audit showed that the majority of VCE Units 3–4 Literature programs are in line with the robust nature of the course; they are generally challenging and interesting.

Texts selected from the 2017 VCE Literature text list, now with only examinable texts, were varied and provided a range of choices for students. It was rare for schools to not fulfil the text selection requirements. There was, however, notable skewing amongst audit questionnaire respondents to older, ‘classic’ texts which have been on the text list either for more than two years, or on previous iterations of the list. Of concern was that a number of schools audited set six texts, in addition to the adaptation, for study in the year; which is too demanding on both students and teachers.

The audit questionnaire for both Unit 3 and Unit 4 Literature demonstrated that the majority of students are assessed according to the VCAA descriptors or criteria. Very few schools used a modified version of the VCAA descriptors, and it was extremely rare for schools to use other assessment criteria, developed either by the school or by a commercial organisation. The respondents also indicated that they were using the marking descriptors as a way to establish a global grade for the assessed piece, thus operating in line with VCAA policy as outlined in the Advice for Teachers. This suggests that teachers are both confident with the marking descriptors provided by the VCAA and that they assess their students’ work equitably.

In terms of SAC timetabling, many respondents ‘completed’ Unit 3 very early, which was concerning. This suggested a misunderstanding of the way in which Unit 3 tasks provide foundational knowledge for Unit 4, and how the material covered in Unit 3 could be used to support emphasis on Literary Perspectives in Unit 4 of the reaccredited study design. Schools that recognised the strong relationship between Unit 3 Area of Study 2, *Views, Values and Contexts* and Area of Study 3, *Considering Alternative Viewpoints* of the previous study design, and the current Unit 4 Area of Study 1, *Literary Perspectives*, were able to more smoothly adapt previous tasks, understandings and pedagogical practice to the requirements of the new study design.

It was encouraging that very few schools used commercially produced tasks for School-assessed Coursework. The majority of respondents worked with colleagues in their own school or region to develop robust and varied tasks for students. A wide range of sources were used to support development of this task, including subject association, commercial and VCAA publications. Many schools worked with other schools and/or with teachers within the school’s English faculty to support moderation practices. As many schools only offer one Literature class at Units 3–4, this practice is encouraged and demonstrates teachers’ commitment to excellence and fairness in their assessment of student work.

The majority of schools audited made use of VCAA reports such as examination, statistical moderation, and School-assessed Coursework reports where available. Many respondents mentioned the benefits of being a member of the Victorian Association of Teachers of English (VATE) networks, including online forums, and being able to share activities, texts, ideas and assessment tasks. This is of particular importance for teachers who are the sole teacher of Literature in their school. Being able to connect with the wider VCE Literature teaching community also assisted teachers with the important process of cross-marking and moderating their students’ work.

Some schools audited described the experience as invaluable, allowing for reflection and evaluation of teaching practices and suitability of their school’s coursework and assessment tasks.

Schools audited were encouraged to provide as much detail as required to clearly and succinctly answer each question and demonstrate that their Unit 3 and 4 programs meet VCAA requirements. Further evidence was sometimes requested because not enough information was initially provided to clearly demonstrate this. The most common concern with regard to subject-specific practices was related to authentication for Unit 3 Outcome 2, an outcome which is commonly constructed or completed out of class, at least in part. Respondents were also often unclear about the provision of feedback on student draft work as well as the school’s policy with regard to allowing students to redeem an ‘S’ for outcomes. In both cases, the lack of clarity suggested possible contravention of the rules as outlined in the *VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*.

Specific information

Unit 3: Form and transformation

Outcome 1

*On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the extent to which meaning changes when a text is adapted to a different form.*

Assessment tasks

An analysis of how the form of a text 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
* compare the performance of either a substantial individual text or group of texts with the original text.

**Task conditions**

For the achievement of Outcome 1:

* the suggested length of written responses is approximately 800–1000 words
* the suggested length of oral responses is approximately 4–6 minutes.

Outcome 2

*On completion of this unit the student should be able to respond creatively to a text and comment on the connections between the text and the response.*

**Assessment tasks**

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
* re-create 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.

AND

Students must submit: A reﬂective commentary establishing connections with the original text.

**Task Conditions**

For the achievement of Outcome 2:

* the suggested length of written responses is approximately 1000–1500 words
* the suggested length of oral responses is approximately 6–8 minutes.

Responses to the Unit 3 audit questionnaire demonstrated teachers’ clear familiarity with the tasks for Outcomes 1 and 2. This was not surprising as these tasks draw significantly on the skills and knowledge teachers and students were already employing in the previous course, and the tasks themselves are only slightly altered.

Many respondents chose to have their students present the Reflective Commentary for Outcome 2 in oral form. Very few schools opted to have the creative piece presented orally, or to have all or part of Outcome 1 as the oral SAC. It is possible that this is the case in this first year of implementation of the study design, as it seems the most logical split of tasks, particularly because of the effort going into the reconstruction of teaching and pedagogy for Unit 4 Outcome 1. There was confusion expressed by some respondents as to the suggested length of the newly introduced oral task. It is worth noting that the “suggested length” of the oral component, as outlined in the Task Conditions for each Unit 3 Outcome in the study design, is the equivalent to the written piece. Consequently, if the assessment piece for the outcome is purely in oral form, then the 4–6 minutes (Outcome 1) or 6–8 minutes (Outcome 2) constitutes the entire SAC. A commensurate amount of time for student preparation should be allocated whether students complete their SAC in oral or written form. It is also possible that only part of the SAC will be completed in oral form. The flexibility built into the study design was intended to aid teachers as it provides the capacity to use assessment as appropriate for their own student cohort.

Some schools are choosing to complete the Unit 3 outcomes in reverse order. While it is possible to change the order of the outcomes to meet the requirements of a cohort, as the study design has been designed to build students’ knowledge, there are many significant advantages to student learning to be found in developing the key skills and knowledge in the order they are presented.

Most respondents to the Unit 3 audit questionnaire stated that they had created new tasks for the SACs administered this year. If any commercially produced tasks are used, these are used partially. The SACs were almost all co-constructed by multiple staff. Where there was only one Unit 3 class, staff who taught Literature at Unit 1 or who had previously taught the subject worked with the current Unit 3 Literature teacher to construct appropriate tasks. Literature teachers also frequently worked in consultation with other Literature teachers who did not work in their home school. The sharing of expertise and knowledge between teachers, both new to the study and those who are highly experienced, is a real strength.

The change of emphasis in the *VCE Literature Study Design 2016–2022* invites some reappraisal of how the Unit 3 Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 tasks are taught. In the key skills and knowledge for both outcomes, it is implied that teachers start teaching literary perspectives. This is an opportunity for teachers to introduce these complex and difficult concepts to students in a non-threatening way. Any adaptation of a text will invite consideration of the perspective of the author/director/playwright – of both the original and the adapted text. Further, after showing students how adaptations can be created in Outcome 1, inviting students to create their own adaptation in Outcome 2, also involves discussion of the perspectives the students bring to the creation of this adaptation. Thus, through this teaching in these Outcomes, it is hoped that students will be well prepared to address the rigor of Unit 4.

Unit 4: Interpreting texts

Outcome 1

*On completion of this unit students should be able to produce an interpretation of a text using different literary perspectives to inform their view.*

Assessment tasks

Students will produce a written interpretation of a text using two different perspectives to inform their response.

Task conditions

For the achievement of Outcome 1:

* the suggested length of written responses is approximately 800–1200 words.

Outcome 2

*On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse features of texts and develop and justify interpretations of texts.*

Assessment tasks

Students will analyse features of texts and develop and justify interpretations of texts. This will be achieved through the completion of two tasks:

Task 1

A written interpretation of a text, supported by close textual analysis.

AND

Task 2

A written interpretation of a different text from Task 1, supported by close textual analysis.

Students may:

* select and discuss the role and signiﬁcance of particular sections of a text in interpreting the text as a whole
* analyse how certain literary features contribute to an interpretation of a text
* analyse the linkages, parallels and contrasts between different passages from a text.

**Task conditions**

For the achievement of Outcome 2:

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

Responses to the Unit 4 audit questionnaire clearly showed that most schools provided students with appropriate, rigorous and interesting tasks for Outcome 1. This gave students the capacity to explore ideas in some depth. Many schools chose to allow considerable time for students to complete the assessed component of the Outcome in class; given the demands of this task, such extended time seemed a reasonable way to support students as they grappled with the complex ideas involved. As this is a new task, there was sharing of expertise and consideration between teachers, within and external to the audited school, and through literature teacher networks. This is, of course, to be commended as such shared practice builds both teacher knowledge and can help maintain the high standard of work already undertaken by teachers of Literature.

Responses to the Unit 4 audit questionnaire also demonstrated teachers’ clear familiarity with the nature of the tasks for Outcome 2. On rare occasions, the audited schools did not indicate that they were completing two tasks, each on a different text, for this Outcome. However, as this task is largely unchanged from the previous study design, there seemed little concern about the requirements of the task itself.

It was not clear that all teachers recognised the close and interrelated nature of the two Outcomes, which caused some anxiety. That is that Area of Study 1: Literary Perspectives is, in part, a more explicit acknowledgement of what occurred in Close Analysis, both in the previous and current iteration of the study design. ‘Close Analysis’ also requires the use of a perspective when constructing an interpretation. It is hoped that this may become more apparent at the conclusion of this first year of implementation.