Findings report

VCE Vocational Major and Victorian Pathways Certificate Curriculum and Assessment   
Audit 2023

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Level 7, 2 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

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Background

Purpose of the audit

The VCAA introduced the VCE Vocational Major (VM) and Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) Curriculum and Assessment Audit in 2023 in response to the recommendations of the *Review into vocational and applied learning pathways in senior secondary schooling* (the Firth Review). The Review emphasised the importance of strengthened quality assurance processes in applied learning programs. It noted ‘a consistent and rigorous quality assurance framework for all provider types will lift standards’ and ‘support consistency of delivery’ (p. 78). On this basis, the Firth Review recommended that ‘the VCAA should provide additional support to deliver vocational and applied learning pathways in the form of centralised and enhanced quality assurance processes’ (Recommendation 4).

Like the VCE School-based Assessment Audit (SBAA) and the Scored VCE VET School-Assessed Coursework Audit, the VCE VM and VPC Audit is conducted annually. It has been designed to ensure providers deliver VCE VM and VPC studies in accordance with established standards and requirements as set out in the:

* [VCE Administrative Handbook](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-handbook/Pages/index.aspx)
* [VPC Administrative Handbook](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vpc-handbook/Pages/index.aspx)
* [VCE Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/VCEassessmentprinciples.docx)
* [VPC Assessment Principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/VictorianPathwaysCertificate/VPCAssessmentPrinciples.docx).

In this respect, the audit plays an important role in supporting providers to give students every opportunity to achieve their best in their VCE VM or VPC studies.

Process

A supportive approach

The VCE VM and VPC Curriculum and Assessment Audit 2023 was designed to be supportive, taking into account the pressures on providers during the first year of implementation. All providers were delivering the VCE VM and VPC for the first time in 2023. Many were new to applied learning, while those that had previously delivered the VCAL had needed to adapt quickly to the new curriculum. The VCAA also considered factors such as lingering impacts of COVID-19, widespread teacher shortages and the volume and scale of reforms stemming from the recommendations of the Firth Review.

In light of these considerations, the audit was explicitly designed to avoid being unduly onerous. Audited providers were advised to submit only existing evidence of curriculum, assessment and policy material and have received support to address any areas in which opportunities for improvement were identified. The VCAA supported audited providers throughout the audit via an audit helpdesk and measures including a webinar, in which audited providers were invited to pose questions to a live a panel.

Scope

Unlike the VCE School-based Assessment Audit and VCE VET School Assessed Coursework Audit, the VCE VM and VPC Audit considered Units 1 and 2 as well as Units 3 and 4 for the following reasons:

* The VCE School-based Assessment Audit and VCE VET School Assessed Coursework Audit are designed explicitly to quality assure internally assessed graded assessments. These are conducted in Units 3 and 4 only and contribute to a student’s study score for that study. By contrast, the scope of the VCE VM and VPC Audit was considerably broader in 2023: It examined:
* providers’ curriculum planning and assessment for Units 1–4 in each VCE VM and VPC study, except in Units 3 and 4 of VPC Numeracy and Personal Development Skills, which were not implemented in 2023
* the suitability of provider policy concerning matters such as the determination of satisfactory completion and authentication of student work.
* This enabled the VCAA to measure the quality of delivery in the first year of the VCE VM and VPC’s implementation.
* VCE VM studies are not scored, making it unnecessary to restrict the audit to Units 3 and 4 only.
* VPC studies are all benchmarked at the same level. It was therefore just as important to audit Units 1 and 2 as it was Units 3 and 4 of these studies.

Submission

Audited providers were asked to complete an online questionnaire that comprised written responses to a series of questions and the submission of documentary evidence.

Components audited in 2023 included:

* curriculum and assessment plan for the audited study
* two assessment tasks
* documentation addressing policies and procedures for determining satisfactory completion and authentication practices.

Providers were also asked to demonstrate their compliance with:

* administrative roles and responsibilities
* eligibility requirements for the award of the VCE VM or VPC
* special provision requirements.

Assessment

Audit submissions were reviewed by state reviewers who determined whether an audit submission met the VCAA standards and requirements using standardised audit assessment measures. Each state reviewer assessment was then thoroughly vetted by a VCAA representative to ensure it had been completed to standard and included constructive and practical recommendations.

Post-audit

Following the audit, each provider:

* received an audit outcome report outlining positive aspects of their submission and areas requiring further attention
* was offered the opportunity to schedule a discussion with a VCAA representative to discuss their audit outcome report.

Audited providers were given the opportunity to provide detailed feedback regarding their experience of the 2023 VCE VM and VPC Audit through a post-audit survey. Key survey findings include that:

* more than 80% of audited providers agreed or strongly agreed that the Audit Outcome Report was a fair assessment of their implementation of the audited study
* 75% of audited providers agreed that the Audit Outcome Report provided them with helpful feedback and advice to improve their applied learning program/s
* 80% of audited providers agreed that they received the required support from the VCAA to complete the audit.

Feedback received through this survey has been used to inform the VCE VM and VPC Curriculum and Assessment Audit 2024.

Provider selections

In 2023, 176 providers were selected to participate in the VCE VM and VPC Audit, representing approximately ten percent of the total number of providers for each of the VCE VM and VPC studies.

Selected providers were audited for Units 1 and 2 or Units 3 and 4 of one VCE VM or VPC study.

The 176 selected providers included:

* 107 providers that were audited for Units 1 and 2 or Units 3 and 4 of a VCE VM study
* 69 providers that were audited for Units 1 and 2 or Units 3 and 4 of a VPC study.

Provider selections were largely random with a proportionate representation of each sector and geographic location across both metropolitan and regional Victoria. However, 34 providers offering an applied learning program for the first time in 2023 were automatically selected. Of these, 31 were audited for a VCE VM study and three were audited for a VPC study.

2023 Audit Findings

Common areas of good practice

More than 85% of audited providers met VCAA expectations with less than 10% identified as requiring VCAA support with program delivery.

The majority of providers:

* developed curriculum and assessment plans that included a range of learning activities and multiple opportunities for students to achieve the required outcome/s or learning goal/s
* incorporated teaching and learning strategies, tasks and activities into their planning documentation based on the Pillars of Applied Learning
* developed assessment tasks in accordance with the Pillars of Applied Learning and the VCE or VPC Assessment Principles
* incorporated VCAA advice in the relevant administrative handbooks, VCE VM study designs and VPC curriculum designs.

Common areas for improvement

Audit findings identified a number of common opportunities to improve providers’ delivery of the VCE VM and VPC. These findings will be used to inform planning for professional learning opportunities to address common issues regarding providers’ development and delivery of VCE VM and VPC studies.

The following table details areas identified for further attention and advice.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Findings | VCAA Support |
| Some submissions showed that the [Pillars of Applied Learning](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/VPC/VPCCurriculumDesigns/VPCWRS/Pages/AppliedLearning.aspx) (POAL) need to be made more evident or have not been sufficiently addressed in the planning documentation and/or assessment tasks. | As the Pillars of Applied Learning are still a new concept, the VCAA will continue to provide advice and support to emphasise their importance.  The VCAA will continue to provide professional learning, both face-to-face and online, which will include the POAL and how they can be used.  Providers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the VCAA’s current suite of resources regarding approaches to applied learning – see ‘Support resources’ below. |
| In some submissions, key knowledge and skills could be made clearer in the learning and assessment tasks of the curriculum and assessment planning documentation. In some cases, they did not align with the relevant outcome/s or learning goal/s. | Throughout 2024, the VCAA will provide targeted support to address incorporating the key knowledge and skills into curriculum and assessment planning. For more information visit [VCE VM and VPC Professional Learning](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/VCAAProfessionalLearning/ProfessionalLearningPrograms/VCEVMandVPCProfessionalLearning/Pages/Index.aspx).  The VCAA 2023 webinar, *Assessment practices that promote success in the VCE VM and VPC,* addressed the alignment of key knowledge and skills or applications to a VCE VM outcome or VPC learning goal. To access this webinar and other useful resources, visit [Past Professional Learning Materials](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/VCAAProfessionalLearning/ProfessionalLearningPrograms/VCEVMandVPCProfessionalLearning/Pages/PastProfessionalLearningMaterials.aspx). |
| Some providers used commercially produced or publicly available resources but did not adapt them to suit the context of the school/provider and student needs and interests. | Commercially produced or publicly available resources may require adaptation to ensure they align with:   * the context of the provider and its setting/s * the needs and interests of the student cohort.   Before using them, providers are advised to evaluate commercially produced or publicly available resources thoroughly and consider adjustments to enhance their suitability for the specific context and students.  Questions to ask when evaluating a commercially produced or publicly available resource for suitability may include:   * Does the resource have meaning and purpose for our students? * Is the resource/task appropriate for our students? * Does the resource/task need modification to align with the relevant and current study / curriculum design and to ensure adherence to the VCAA standards and requirements? * Does the resource/task align with the intended outcome/s or learning goal/s? * Does the resource/task align to the POAL? * Is the language used suitable for our students? * If it is an assessment task, does it include a suitable assessment tool? If not, can we create one to capture the requirements and expectations of the task? |
| In some submissions, assessment criteria were not included or did not adequately outline the requirements for successful achievement of outcomes or learning goals. | The VCAA has provided guidance to support teachers to develop an assessment guide or rubric to enable them to make decisions about the evidence of student learning. Please refer to advice contained within the [VCE VM study designs](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Pages/VCEVMStudyDesigns.aspx) and the [VPC curriculum designs](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/VPC/VPCCurriculumDesigns/Pages/Index.aspx). |
| In some cases, timelines and/or timeframes were not evident in the curriculum and assessment planning documentation or assessment tasks. | The VCAA’s standards and requirements for school-assessed course work require schools/providers to specify the work that a student must do to achieve an ‘S’ and the conditions under which the work is to be done. Students must be clearly informed of these requirements in writing before the commencement of a Unit. One of these requirements is providing timelines and deadlines for completing work.  For further information about the VCAA’s standards and requirements for school-assessed course work, refer to:   * the [*VCE Administrative Handbook 2024*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) (pp. 33, 42 and 85) * the [*VPC Administrative Handbook 2024*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vpc-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) (pp. 13 and 20). |
| Some Numeracy audit submissions indicated that Numeracy is not being consistently delivered as designed. For example, the problem-solving cycle and/or the mathematics toolkit were not always adequately evident in the learning and assessment activities. | The VCAA will continue to provide professional learning about and support with the delivery of all VCE VM and VPC curriculum, including Numeracy. |
| Some submissions did not include policies for satisfactory completion of a unit and authentication of student work. Some of the policies that were submitted were not updated to reflect aspects specific to the VCE VM and/or VPC. | Policies and procedures are important as these set the expectations and accountabilities for all members of the provider community including staff, students and parents/carers.  Policies and procedures should be clear and explicit and clearly communicated and accessible to all members of the provider community. This can be through the provider’s handbook and/or the provider’s website.  Where policies regarding satisfactory completion of a unit and authentication of student work are already in place, providers must ensure they are updated to include the VCE VM and VPC.  Policy advice is available in the VCE and VPC administrative handbooks:  VCE VM – see [*VCE Administrative Handbook 2024*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-handbook/Pages/index.aspx):   * Satisfactory Completion of a Unit – refer to page 81 * Authentication of student work – refer to page 84   VPC – see [*VPC Administrative Handbook 2024*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vpc-handbook/Pages/index.aspx):   * Satisfactory Completion of a Unit – refer to page 35 * Authentication of student work – refer to page 37 * For advice and templates relating to policy development: * Government schools may refer to the [Schools Policy Templates Portal](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/Pages/home.aspx) * Catholic schools may seek assistance from their Diocese – see [Diocesan Offices](https://vcea.catholic.edu.au/choosing-a-catholic-school/enrolling-in-a-catholic-school/#diocesan-offices) on the Victorian Catholic Education Authority website. * Independent schools (members of Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) only) – refer to the [isConnect](https://connect.iseducation.com.au/) portal. |

Support resources

Professional learning

The [VCE VM and VPC Professional Learning](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/VCAAProfessionalLearning/ProfessionalLearningPrograms/VCEVMandVPCProfessionalLearning/Pages/Index.aspx) page provides support resources and professional learning opportunities across different modalities including:

* on-demand learning modules via the VCE VM and VPC Professional Learning Platform
* information about upcoming webinars and face-to-face professional learning opportunities
* recordings of past webinars and information sessions.

Communities of Practice

The VCE VM and VPC Communities of Practice (CoPs) were launched in 2022 to provide support to teachers through local area networks focusing on collaborative development of curriculum and pedagogical practice.

For more information on CoP locations and how to become a member visit the [VCE VM and VPC Communities of Practice](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/VCAAProfessionalLearning/ProfessionalLearningPrograms/VCEVMandVPCProfessionalLearning/Pages/VCEVMandVPCCommunitiesofPractice.aspx) webpage.

Applied learning approaches

The VCAA has developed guidance and advice specifically regarding approaches to learning in the VCE VM and VPC.

Visit the [VCAA website](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/VPC/VPCCurriculumDesigns/VPCWRS/Pages/AppliedLearning.aspx) for more information.