

5 June 2020

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Dr Emily Frawley
President
Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE)
admin@vate.org.au

Dear Dr Frawley

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 April 2020 and 8 May 2020 regarding delivery of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in 2020. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The need to communicate quickly and effectively in these unprecedented times meant we needed to rely on established communication channels such as letters to principals and notices to schools. We also used our website to provide targeted up-to-date information to teachers in a timely way. Due to the rapidly evolving and complex situation, it was not possible to provide advanced notification, and I apologise for any disruption this caused.

The Victorian Government announced on 7 April that school-based assessment tasks would be reduced where possible to relieve some pressure on students as they move to remote and flexible learning arrangements. As many study designs do not require the outcomes in Unit 3 to be taught sequentially, the English studies included, there was no certainty in what content had been covered in Term 1. With most schools at that point undertaking remote and flexible learning for Term 2, the only possible way in which to reduce workload, including assessment, was to adjust Unit 4. I acknowledge this has necessitated some teachers making changes to their planning.

Study designs are written to enable teachers and students to engage meaningfully with a particular discipline and vary across studies. The reduction in workload and assessment in each English study reflects the specific design; adjustments could not be identical across study designs. The changes emphasised connections between key knowledge and key skills, maintained the integrity of the studies, and considered the implications for the end of year examination.

Changing the assessment for Outcome 2 in Unit 4 from an oral presentation to a written piece would not have reduced the workload as intended. The intent was to enable teachers to assess their students' understanding of argument through a planning document rather than a sustained piece. As the assessment is now worth ten marks, it is unreasonable to keep an assessment task that, for some, could be more difficult than an oral presentation. The flexibility of this task allows teachers to use their professional judgement and provides a less formal version of a written point of view task for students.

We have recommended that schools extend the indicative dates of the end of VCE Unit 3 by two weeks to 26 June 2020. The date for entering Unit 3 school-assessed task scores has also been extended. The date for the provision of Unit 3 school-based assessment scores is also extended.

As you may be aware, on 22 May 2020 the dates for the General Achievement Test (GAT) and end of year examinations were announced. The GAT will be held on 9 September 2020, and written examinations will begin in the week commencing 9 November 2020 and completed by 2 December 2020. More detailed information on the schedule will be available soon.

Since you wrote, we have provided guidance regarding authentication and equity on our website which we continue to update as a resource for students, teachers, and parents.

I appreciate you raising your members' concerns with us, as we value highly our working relationship with VATE and supporting teachers of English. If you would like to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me on 0477 387 343.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Donald'.

SHARYN DONALD
Chief Executive Officer