



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Ms K White
Acting CEO
VCAA
Level 7/ 2 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

15 April 2024

Dear Ms White,

I am writing in my capacity as the Acting President of the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) to outline concerns raised by VATE members, and discussed by VATE Council, vis-à-vis VCE Literature. If you are not already familiar with our organisation, VATE is a not-for-profit subject association committed to a vision of subject English that is equitable, inclusive, robust, creative, responsive, and critical. Through collaboration and community, VATE serves its members and their students from all sectors and regions across the state of Victoria.

VATE has had a long and collegial relationship with the VCAA and the English Curriculum Managers. I write this letter on behalf of the VATE Council to open a dialogue around the concerns itemised below. These concerns reflect correspondence received by the VATE Council, discussions via the VATE VCE Literature online Network, and discussions within the broader English community. VATE is committed to supporting the VCE Literature Study Design, Literature teachers and their students, and ensuring the Study's continued success.

1. Delay in the release of the VCE Literature Examination Report.

You will recognise that the perceived reliability of VCE subject results is a matter of importance, both to students and teachers. Hence, when changes occur to existing VCE Study Designs, through new iterations, VCE teachers seek accurate, reliable, and comprehensive guidance from the VCAA as the organisation which oversees all aspects of curriculum structure and exams. Accordingly, VATE members were disappointed that the Literature exam report for 2023, a key document for all VCE Literature teachers, was not released before the annual Meet the Assessors' presentation on Tuesday 5 March. VATE has been informed that the draft Literature exam report was in the hands of the VCAA before mid-December 2023. The absence of this key document created undue tension in the session and undermined the efficacy of this important professional learning activity. We note that the report was uploaded the day after the event. Could the VCAA please explain the delay in the release of the report?

2. Decline in VCE Literature student enrolments.

VATE coordinates a supportive and active online network of Literature teachers from across the state. This network seeks to share resources, ideas, questions, and implementation strategies. Concerns have been raised on the Network about the differences in results for students undertaking the study of both Literature and English. Further, correspondence received by Council outlined concerns vis-à-vis a demonstrable pattern of high student performance in English not being appropriately matched by performance in Literature, notwithstanding outstanding internal SAC results. Some members have commented that these often-significant differences have contributed to the decline in student uptake of Literature at their schools. We acknowledge that the reasons behind the declining numbers in Literature are obviously more complex than the perception that the assessment is not reliable. However, we request a response to these concerns around assessment and wonder if this is being investigated and what interventions (if any) are proposed to address this perception of external assessment practices.

VATE Council raises these concerns not only as advocates for our Literature teachers and their students, but also as committed advocates for the study of VCE Literature. VATE would actively support you in any investigations and we look forward to continuing our close collaboration to best support the learning outcomes of all VCE Literature students.

In the context of workload concerns and teacher shortages in subject English, we believe it is essential to support the work of English teachers, be responsive to their voices, and to actively promote the study of Literature.

I look forward to your response and will share this with the VATE membership.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Amanda McGraw
Acting VATE President

CC: Dr Annelise Balsamo