

VCE English and EAL Crafting/Creating Texts VATE Survey Report

September 2024



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

VATE acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which the VATE office is situated. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations – and to their Ancestors and Elders past and present.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first storytellers; and that knowledge transfer through storytelling is woven into the fabric of this Country.

We acknowledge all First Nations peoples who make contributions to teaching and learning communities. VATE is committed to working towards Makarrata and truth-telling – we strive to use language that recognises First Nations peoples' continuing connection to land, waters, and cultures.

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About VATE

Ambition

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.

Purpose

VATE exists to support its members at all stages of their English teaching career in the continuous process of renewal necessary to engage with the dynamic nature of both the profession and subject English. Through professional networks, advocacy, research, journals, professional learning, and resources, VATE leads and nurtures a community of teachers of secondary English committed to their students and the advancement of the profession.

Commitments

VATE is committed to Makarrata and Truth-telling. VATE acknowledges that we work, teach and learn on unceded land. Our work will recognise and celebrate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia as the first teachers and storytellers. For a fair and just society, we will promote and advocate for truth-telling in the English curriculum and collaborate with First Nations people and organisations to co-create programs and resources.

VATE will advocate for the English teaching profession and our students in a range of educational contexts and the wider community. We will develop and provide policies and programs that underpin our advocacy work.

VATE will strengthen and nurture learning communities, professional networks, collaborative inquiry communities, and other professional learning contexts which allow teachers to reflect collaboratively, creatively, and critically on current practices and future directions for English teaching.

VATE will continue to develop effective professional learning programs for teachers to ensure continued development in the learning and teaching of English at all secondary levels. We will strengthen our commitment to equity of access for all members by delivering professional learning through a range of modes.

VATE will initiate, support, identify, and disseminate research to our members through our journal, Idiom, and other publications and resources.

VATE will strengthen and expand our suite of publications. We will commit to developing new resources that are freely available to our members.

To benefit its members, VATE will develop strategic partnerships at state and national levels with other teaching and subject associations, bureaucracies, statutory bodies and organisations.

To respond to the challenges of climate change, VATE will develop environmentally sustainable practices to minimise our carbon footprint at all VATE events, through our publications, and in all aspects of our work.

Background

280 members participated in this survey, with some schools represented by multiple teachers. The responses were thoughtful, nuanced and detailed. We also received emails addressing workload issues with the VCE English and EAL Crafting and Creating texts that were not covered by our survey questions. It is important to note at the beginning that responses were almost unanimously positive about the inclusion of Crafting and Creating texts as new Areas of Study. The feedback received mostly focused on workload issues stemming from the increase to the number of assessed pieces (the marking load), the enactment of the Study Design in schools, and the impact of this on the VCE English staff. Many of the responses were a cry for help, written by teachers who were faced with an overwhelming workload. It is also important to note that, while everyone is required to mark additional written pieces in the new Study Design, the impact of the workload issues and overwhelming experiences were not evenly distributed between schools. In drilling down more deeply through the data, it can be seen that differences in aspects such as the school context, decisions made regarding what was required in the moderation process at the school level, the provision of shared time for moderation, and the experience and confidence of the VCE English team, all contribute to individual teacher experience. In this report, we unpack the data systematically using a mix of **qualitative** (thematic analysis) and **quantitative** (Likert Scale, Response Counts) methods to show the ways multiple factors come together to impact upon VCE English teachers' work.

Overview of the data collected

The survey consisted of the following four questions and an invitation for open comments:

1. How have the Crafting/Creating texts Areas of Study impacted your workload?
2. How does your school support VCE English moderation?
3. What changes to the organisation of these Areas of Study do you intend to make in 2025 as a result of your experiences over the last two years?
4. In what ways can VATE support you?
5. Any additional comments?

In the following sections, we report on the answers to each of these questions. We have included the additional feedback sent in by email under **Q5: Additional comments**. Following a short discussion, we list a series of VATE commitments to action. We also make recommendations for others to consider based on our analysis of the data. We will direct these to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the Department of Education, the Victorian Catholic Education Authority, Independent Schools Victoria, the Victorian Principals Association, the Australian Education Union, Vic. Branch, the Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania, and to all VATE members (over 8000 individuals).

Q1: Impacts of the Crafting/Creating texts Areas of Study on workload

We received 280 responses to Q1: 'How have the Crafting/Creating texts Areas of Study impacted your workload?'. In reporting the responses to this question, we begin with a graph that classifies each response. This is followed by some samples of the impact of the workload on individual teachers.

Firstly, however, we need to address the fact that there is an increase in the required number of assessment pieces that need to be produced by English students and marked and moderated by teachers. The [previous English Study Design](#) across Units 3 and 4 had a total of 4 written tasks, 1 oral presentation and 1 short written task.

Unit 3 Outcomes	Marks allocated*	Assessment tasks
Outcome 1 Produce an analytical interpretation of a selected text, and a creative response to a different selected text.	30 30	An analytical interpretation of a selected text in written form. AND A creative response to a selected text in written or oral form with a written explanation of decisions made in the writing process and how these demonstrate understanding of the text.
Outcome 2 Analyse and compare the use of argument and persuasive language in texts that present a point of view on an issue currently debated in the media.	40	An analysis and comparison, in written form, of argument and the use of persuasive language in two to three texts that present a point of view on an issue. Texts must include written and visual material and have appeared in the media since 1 September of the previous year.
Total marks	100	*School-assessed coursework for Unit 3 contributes 25%
Unit 4 Outcomes	Marks allocated*	Assessment tasks
Outcome 1 Produce a detailed comparison which analyses how two selected texts present ideas, issues and themes.	60	A detailed comparison in written form of how two selected texts present ideas, issues and themes.
Outcome 2 Construct a sustained and reasoned point of view on an issue currently debated in the media.	10 30	A written statement of intention to accompany the student's own oral presentation, articulating the intention of decisions made in the planning process, and how these demonstrate understanding of argument and persuasive language. A point of view presented in oral form using sound argument and persuasive language. The point of view should relate to an issue that has appeared in the media since 1 September of the previous year. The issue does not have to be the same as the issue selected for study in Outcome 2, Unit 3.
Total marks	100	*School-assessed coursework for Unit 4 contributes 25%

Table 1: Units 3 and 4 School-assessed Coursework for English students from the VCAA English and EAL Study Design 2017-2023

The [current Study Design](#) has a total of 6 written tasks and 1 oral presentation in Units 3-4 English. This is an increase in written tasks from the previous Study Design.

Unit 3 Outcomes	Marks allocated*	Assessment tasks
Outcome 1 Analyse ideas, concerns and values presented in a text, informed by the vocabulary, text structures and language features and how they make meaning.	40	An analytical response to text in written form.
Outcome 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate effective writing skills by producing their own texts, designed to respond to a specific context and audience to achieve a stated purpose; and Explain their decisions made through writing processes. 	20 20 20	A written text constructed in consideration of audience, purpose and context. A written text constructed in consideration of audience, purpose and context. A commentary reflecting on writing processes.
Total marks	100	*School-assessed coursework for Unit 3 contributes 25%
Unit 4 Outcomes	Marks allocated*	Assessment tasks
Outcome 1 Analyse explicit and implicit ideas, concerns and values presented in a text, informed by vocabulary, text structures and language features and how they make meaning.	40	An analytical response to text in written form.
Outcome 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse the use of argument and language in persuasive texts, including one written text (print or digital) and one text in another mode (audio and/or audio visual); and Develop and present a point of view text. *Students must analyse one written text (print or digital) and one other form of text (audio or audio visual) that have appeared in the media since 1 September of the previous year.	40 20	An analytical response to argument in written form. A point of view oral presentation.
Total marks	100	*School-assessed coursework for Unit 4 contributes 25%

Table 2: Units 3 and 4 School-assessed Coursework for English students from the VCAA English and EAL Study Design 2024-2027

These additional marking requirements have come at a time when many schools are understaffed. This has had an impact on how time is allocated for assessment in the timetable. There are additional contextual factors that we will also unpack in this report. The response below provides an example of how this is working in some schools. The teacher provides some background to the school situation, and then compares the SAC requirements between the previous and current Study Designs.

The Creating texts unit alone, with three (minimum) pieces of writing to mark, along with practice writing, drafts, resubmissions due to N grades, etc., has added hours to mine and my colleagues' workloads this term. We have staff who teach both Year 11 and Year 12 English (as well as Year 10), and though we tried to separate the SACs as much as possible, the sheer volume of marking meant that they had a backlog built up which required them to work through several weekends (including a public holiday). Like many schools, we are understaffed and struggling to engage CRTs, and so we are not able to receive any additional time to support the marking load.

This increase of tasks for marking we can take as given, as there are additional marking requirements. However, the situated and contextual factors shaping this increase of tasks for marking are different between schools, often very significant, and result in much more work than it might seem on the surface. In the example above, the implication is that previously there was additional time provided, but this can no longer be the case as there are no available casual relief teachers (CRTs) to cover staff. So, as well as the additional requirements, there was a loss of time that had previously been provided. The unavailability of CRTs was often cited as a reason for no time or reduced time to what was previously given. Numerous Heads of English filled in the survey, and their responses reflected their leadership roles and concerns for other English teachers and the English team as a whole about the flow-on effects of these additional tasks. This response clearly articulates the ongoing impacts of increased workloads.

The heavy workload caused by the nature and number of SACs for Crafting texts in Unit 1 and Creating texts in Unit 3 must be addressed by the VCAA. The requirement for students to produce a written SAC text constructed in consideration of audience, purpose, and context, twice, in addition to a reflective commentary, is unnecessary and causing harm to the profession, not to mention students.

Crafting/Creating text SACs are more difficult to mark than other SACs because the students are writing in a wide variety of forms and on a wide variety of topics. It takes much longer for teachers to 'get in the flow' as they mark and be confident they are marking consistently and accurately.

So, even if all things were equal, Crafting/Creating texts is already an increase in marking workload for teachers when compared to, say, the old Creative response that students produced in the 2016-2022 Study Design. But all things are not equal. It is not only that each SAC takes longer to mark, but that there are twice as many SACs that need marking.

The amount of time VCE English teachers are required to spend on this forces us to do a lot of our marking outside of our regular work hours, which, of course, is incompatible with the VGSA and a breach of our industrial rights. Such an outcome is an inevitable and unavoidable result of the Study Design as it stands. The Study Design must be amended.

It needs be understood that many staff teach both Year 11 and Year 12 and so the issue of increased marking is compounded.

The erosion of teacher work-life balance is having a negative impact on staff morale, mental health, and wellbeing, and the quality and quantity of feedback the students receive in these Areas of Study is inevitably far less than ideal. As Head of English, I have had experienced VCE English teachers – valued members of our VCE teaching team – approach me and say that they no longer wish to teach VCE English. It is the sad reality that the VCAA's new English and EAL Study Design is driving teachers away. In a nation-wide teaching shortage, this is a very serious development and must be addressed.

Graphing the responses on a Likert Scale

We have graphed the impacts on workload through the use of a 5-point Likert scale. While the answers provided were given in open text, we went through the data and classified each response on a scale from 1-5: 1 representing 'Significantly increased'; 2 representing 'Increased'; 3 representing 'Neutral' or 'Neither decreased nor increased'; 4 representing 'Decreased'; and 5 representing 'Significantly decreased.'

The table below lists the language used and shows how it was classified for each Likert point. The full list of words is in **Appendix 2**. It was interesting to note that many teachers used terms commonly used in Likert scales, such as 'significantly', 'immensely' and 'exponentially'. 'Hugely' and 'excessively' were also popular. Because this language was used, the classifications were easily made. When a word seemed in between 'Significantly increased' and 'Increased', the default was to classify as 'Increased', a rounding down rather than rounding up. While it can be argued that this is not as accurate as the respondent making their own choice, the transparent classification process used provides the reader with a sense of how the language was used across responses and how then that language was classified to provide the points. In doing this, we aim to provide the reader with a simple view of the data and the described impacts on teachers' workload.

1. Significantly increased	2. Increased	3. Neutral	4. Decreased No responses	5. Significantly decreased
Hugely Immense increase Led to extreme stress and burnout Monumental The workload is frankly, unmanageable Tremendous impact Increased exponentially Increased dramatically Increased exponentially Phenomenal increase Significant increase Tripled my workload Untenable	Rather onerous Somewhat has increased Particularly difficult Noticeable increase Feels excessive Challenging, time consuming Increased Very time-consuming	Neutral		One response: <i>... it gave students confidence and I say that reduces my workload significantly as students were not fighting it ...</i>

Table 3: Language used for Likert Points (full lists in Appendix 2)

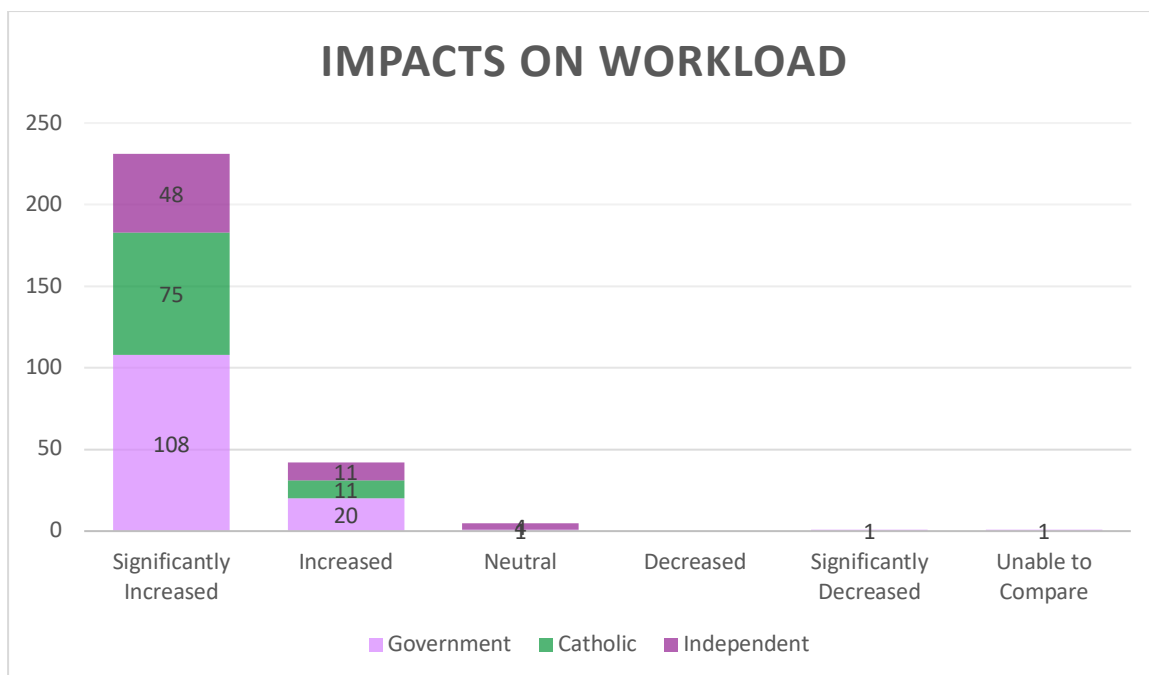


Table 4: Impacts of the Crafting/Creating texts Areas of Study on workload

There were 231 responses that indicated that workload was significantly increased. These were divided across sectors: 108 Government school teachers; 75 Catholic school teachers; and 48 Independent school teachers. 42 responses indicated an increase in workload: 20 Government and 11 each Catholic and Independent. Five were neutral (one Government and four Independent). No one said that there was reduced workload. One teacher (Government) said that the workload had reduced significantly.

Individual responses

Enjoyment of teaching creative writing but ...

As we noted earlier, while English teachers were experiencing significantly increased workload issues, the teachers were very positive about the teaching of creative writing. Many also wrote about the students' enjoyment and engagement, and how this, inadvertently, has led to some of the workload increase. For instance:

Teaching Personal journeys has been lovely... Marking the SAC, however, was extremely time-consuming – after drafting, etc. our students wrote about 12 pages each.

Here is a longer response that shows the complexities of the students writing more, and then the impact on the teacher:

I've enjoyed the creative writing from the students. This has brought me great joy and has given me an insight into them that I would not have had prior to this Area of Study. Creative writing is good for body and soul. In saying that, I would say that I have been more insular this year. I spend maybe 80% of my frees, recess and lunchtimes removing myself from my shared office into secluded interview rooms in our school as I have marking or planning to do for Year 12 English and I cannot do it with lots of people around, as it is intense work and distractions compound the workload. So, I have been far more siloed and that has impacted my mental health – as I enjoy the banter of rare social times we get with colleagues. That time has evaporated. The drafting has increased by double, I would say. By removing Analysing Argument from Unit 3 – it means I've been setting fortnightly AA practice pieces (both small and large) and I've been providing feedback on these (where I can) as well as the drafts

for RR and Creatives. The audio/visual task has meant a whole new unit of skills including analysing transcripts, teaching a key for transcribing, viewing and analysing audio/visual texts three times – one for content, one for audio features and one for visual. These are short pieces but take just as long to analyse as written pieces. And they employ different skills that need explicit teaching. Then, you have two creative pieces (which I love the concept). I love analysing the mentor texts (which takes time). I love finding supplementary pieces (which takes time). I love reading student writing (which takes time). Finally, marking the creatives is a challenge. The marking takes heart, not only mind. You are dealing with developing writers here, who work hard on their writing, but when they get marked you can see the disappointment and that kills me. No matter how many times you go over the rubric or point out the features of good writing in the mentor texts, or explain the connections between purpose, audience and context, marking creative work takes time because you want to be precise, so you can buoy the student while also explaining the difference between low, med, high. It is extremely emotionally taxing for a professional who got into teaching to build young people up with confidence, not knock them down from expectation. So, all in all – I've had an extremely draining year. I've never worked so hard. I've worked most weekends – at least a half day or full day. I've worked my fortnightly day off about 90% of the year, I've worked the long weekend – just to keep up. And I still feel like I could have done more.

This response captures the intensity of the work, with the depth of responsibility felt vis-à-vis supporting students, helping them to improve, be fair, and respond with insight and depth to the students' work. The response also shows the emotional toll of this professional care. The teacher experiences a certain degree of loss and feels siloed, due to the need to spend more time alone providing feedback.

Another teacher appreciated that the Study Design placed more time on the writing processes as the design is 'more forgiving in the slow process of writing exploration, experimenting and modelling writing (compared to studying two texts for comparative).' They noted that, despite this, 'Correction of the two SACs together with the written commentary, however, was momentous.'

The unpaid labour of English teaching

Many experienced teachers of VCE English wrote about the increased intensity of marking in this Study Design. These responses were not knee-jerk reactions but restrained and considered, often acknowledging that a new Study Design always brings more work while being initially established. This response shows the impact on an experienced teacher with small children:

Whilst it is no secret that teaching Unit 3 and 4 English carries an intense workload, the new Crafting/Creating texts unit has added a significant weight to this. Creating resources for a new Study Design is expected, however, the drafting process and the marking for the final writing folio was excessive. I currently work part time due to the fact I have young children at home, and I was forced to place my children into extra days of daycare, so I could sit at a local library and mark on my 'days off'. Essentially, I have been paying to work around the clock. This is obviously not ideal, and just another sign that the workload for teachers is an unrealistic one. I have taught Year 12 English for roughly 15 years and the workload is not new to me – this new Study Design, however, brings with it a much higher level of stress.

There were many responses about this, which will be unpacked further throughout the report. These are summarised well in this response:

The significant increase in marking has prolonged days at work significantly. English teaching is built on charity – so much of what we do centres on our willingness to get work done outside of our paid hours, and this has increased that ten-fold. It takes so much longer to mark these SACs then it does any other.

Impacts amplified due to teacher shortage

Teachers commented about the impact of the additional marking during a time of teacher shortage. There were many arrangements that schools were making in areas with acute shortages which had already brought extra pressure such as classes all at maximum levels or sharing arrangements. This increased the marking:

After teaching VCE English for 14 years now, through obviously a few Study Designs, having two SACs for the ONE outcome had created more work and shortened the timeframe. In order to do practice pieces, attempt the drafting process, struggle with the concept of peer feedback, provide teacher feedback AND teach how to write a commentary is ludicrous. My workload leading up to the SACS and then after it marking it is draining. Moreover, to have an extra piece to mark DURING a teacher shortage is a killer. For the first time, I have a class of 26 students and the workload is immense. Each student wanting to write correctly in a different form with unique ideas is just not doable.

There were a number of teachers who made similar comments about running classes all at 26 due to staff shortages, where in the past often VCE English classes were kept smaller in the range of other subject areas to create equity across different curriculum areas (where there may be a class running in Philosophy or Maths at 15, etc.). This contextual factor amplified the impact of the additional assessment pieces in these schools.

Too much work for students

Another theme was the increased pressure on students due to the additional pieces of assessment. Responses were mostly very supportive of the idea of redrafting as part of the process of learning to write. The summative assessment was generally seen to be excessive. Because some of these teachers were working in schools which had instigated much more intensive marking programs (beyond what is required for VCAA SAC marking), the marking burden was often intensified by individual school choice. For instance:

The philosophy of the Crafting/Creating texts involves a great deal of formative assessment as students draft and redraft, which I support. The summative assessment, particularly at Unit 3, feels excessive. In our context it involves benchmarking control scripts, marking two creative responses, and cross-marking each. Each teacher marks in excess of 90 pieces of writing. It feels somewhat unnecessary for schools to assess two crafted texts, particularly when this type of writing is assessed in the exam also.

This response from a Head of English, who is taking on an additional Year 9 class due to staff shortages, shows the impact on someone who is already under extreme pressure and officially overloaded. The respondent also comments about the results from students, questioning the worthiness of the additional tasks:

As I teach Units 1 and 3, I now have four additional finished assessment tasks to mark (two in each year level), as well as continuous drafts of these, during a time when with the previous Study Design there would only have been one task in each year level. Given that I am the Head of English, and that I have had to take a full additional Year 9 class owing to staff shortages (which are affecting everyone in the state) the workload was beyond reason and did not yield results which predicated such an increase in assessment tasks from the students. The same effect could have been wrought with a single task in Area of Study 2.

Staging of the Study Design

There were many comments about the staging and rollout of the Study Design both by VCAA and in individual schools. The response below outlines a series of issues that teachers confronted in different schools.

In the implementation of any new Study Design, there are going to be associated workload increases. This issue is replicated when we rotate List 1 texts as well and is part and parcel of English teaching. I would be loath to have necessary progressions of curriculum impeded because of the work associated with implementing them.

The staged implementation of the new Study Design was helpful in the distribution of the workload, with the ability to trial some strategies in Crafting texts in Unit 1. We changed our submission strategy from Unit 1, as we previously had students submit two written texts and the reflective commentary all at the same time, which was intense as a marking load. Instead, we did one SAC involving submission of Written Text 1 and RC, followed by an exam-style SAC for Written Text 2.

I understand the reasons that a sample exam was not made available sooner, but this may have mitigated some of the workload in 2024 as we developed a SAC in keeping with the stimulus-based task.

We changed our List 1 text for Unit 3 as well, so the balance of new material was in Unit 3/Semester 1, which made change fatigue manifest for our teaching team.

Increases in workload have been (in summary):

** The 1/2 team's unit from 2023 needed significant revision after more information and the sample exam was released, meaning that there was a doubling up of work in establishing the unit in 2024*

** Marking three pieces for one outcome (in addition to any practice SACs, feedback on pieces etc.) has been extremely onerous in terms of the hours given over to marking. Our team have undertaken an additional approximately 5 hours of benchmarking meetings, which we've had to find our own time for. Each Year 12 teacher has undertaken several extra hours of summative marking compared to a single-task SAC.*

** We have spent a number of extra hours in administration of catch-up time, extra costs in sourcing booklets for the students to draft in and have spent a lot of time on queries dealing with the challenges of setting consistent conditions to undertake extended drafting periods etc. and authenticate within the context of a large school with 9 x 3/4 classes and 10 x 1/2 classes. The catch-up classes alone have also put some pressure on our sub school in administering these for students who have special conditions, which has been more onerous than a typical SAC because of the number of tasks.*

** Most teachers at 3/4 level also have 1/2 classes, which has meant assessing up to 225 summative pieces within the space of a few weeks, along with teaching other subjects/levels.*

The English team above have been well prepared for the changes, but the extent of the changes themselves resulted in 'change fatigue' before the increased assessment tasks hit. However, the staging of the Study Design at a local level meant that teachers of Year 11 and Year 12 had summative pieces submitted from both groups at the same time, creating a much more intense workload.

The late release of the sample exam from VCAA was highlighted in many comments across the survey. In the case above, it meant that some of the work had to be redone. In this example, the time and effort felt redundant when the sample exam was released:

We had a huge focus on poetry in the Year 11 Crafting texts and to be told that this was not to be written on in the exam was disappointing. Our students are disappointed the skills and knowledge they learned is not applicable in Year 12. This has made both students and staff feel like our time and effort in creating our Year 11 unit has been made redundant by VCAA.

This response is about the individual school staging of SACs, designed to maximise student learning from the Study Design:

Like many schools, we arranged for one of the SACs to be completed in workshop conditions over several weeks, in order to honour the spirit of the task and give students an opportunity to actually develop their voice and style, to receive feedback and practise editing, and to submit a final piece of which they were proud. We then completed the second piece in exam conditions. Whilst we felt this honoured the Area of Study and prepared students for the exam, it was exhausting for students and teachers and took a lot longer as a unit than a single Area of Study usually takes. This has impacted our timing for the whole year, detracting from the time we are able to spend on other Outcomes.

It's clear that the staging of the SACs in the school was carefully considered, but the natural assumption made that this Study Design would take the same amount of time to complete as the previous Study Design was incorrect, having a flow-on effect to the rest of the year. This assumption was made by many schools in their planning and reflected through the comments in this report.

Administrational burdens

The Study Design had a series of increased administrative burdens that were reported. These went beyond the increase in administering the increased number of SACs:

This has had a tremendous impact. Firstly, the lack of proper and timely rubrics and samples from VCAA when this was being introduced last year caused great stress for teachers and students alike. Secondly, the administration of the tasks as workshoped pieces, whilst wonderful for the quality of the students' writing, was extremely difficult to manage if students were absent over that period of time. Trying to arrange alternative times and supervision of this and keep track of who needed how many periods for it to be equitable, was almost impossible at a large school. Thirdly, the increase in the marking load for senior teachers was exponential. We essentially had two extra SACs added to our load, and often across two year levels. There are not enough hours in the day to get all the SACs marked and returned with feedback in a timely manner. This took a toll on physical and mental health of staff.

Student absenteeism caused significant administrative burdens, and, as the Head of English above noted, this is particularly the case at a larger school. The teacher below also linked the difficulty of this to the checking and feedback at each point of the writing process:

... particularly when a student must draft, edit and finalise the first piece before writing a reflective commentary. Student absences increase this difficulty, with large schools like ours struggling to catch them up, when many students are absent for the initial SAC. With students needing to draft, edit, peer assess and also receive feedback on each piece, it reduces the amount of teaching time as more time is having to be given over to assessment. In addition, the increasing use of generative AI (such as ChatGPT) has meant that the bulk of work being produced must be in the classroom so it can be verified. Students need time to create pieces of writing, so this reduces the amount of time for direct, explicit instruction in the craft of writing.

As noted above, the administrative processes and assessment itself have reduced teaching time, particularly in schools which have taken the decision to produce the work in class to ensure that it is not produced by AI.

Negotiating AI

AI has become a significant issue in schools. Year 12 English teachers have had to grapple with how they will structure the writing tasks to ensure that they have been written by the students. This varied greatly according to context. We received a number of comments about the impact of AI from teachers who were working in situations where the students rarely produce independent work.

Trying to teach creative writing to students who do not like reading, struggle with writing, and rarely produce independent work is difficult. Also, because most students will take the opportunity to use AI to write their pieces, it was a challenge to mitigate this.

Across the state, the challenges of AI between cohorts will vary, but many teachers reported issues with it, and additional burdens:

It has impacted my workload immensely. No other previous Study Design has increased my work or stress load as much as this current one does. With the recommendation that the Crafting/Creating texts unit is done in two parts, and then another written statement to explain one, my marking was burdensome and tiresome. It took so long to read each piece as well as assign a mark and feedback. VCAA has also not considered the fact that AI use is rampant and including such an extensive creative writing unit in the Study Design while the ability to detect AI is extremely difficult, makes teachers' jobs so much harder. In line with VCAA's authentication processes, this creates an even greater workload to staff who are already overworked and time poor. With the rising use of AI, we have had to switch to handwriting where possible but even this does not limit AI's influence and impact.

Handwriting the task in class was seen to mitigate the usage of AI and be a determinant of authenticity. As mentioned previously, completing tasks in the classroom to ensure authenticity increased burdens on class time. The fear for many teachers, that with the temptations of easy access to AI students had not done the work themselves, and that ultimately teachers were responsible for ensuring authenticity, is real and was studied throughout the data.

Student wellbeing

While teachers appreciated working with the themes in the Study Design, there were some teachers who had additional work due to concerns with the content of students' writing raising wellbeing issues. These also required following up with a social worker/other service.

Q2: School supports for VCE English moderation

We received 280 responses to Q2: 'How does your school support VCE English moderation?'. Within these responses, teachers described the moderation processes used in the schools as well as the supports provided by the school. There was a wide variation in both the processes that schools adopted and the provision of supports to teachers. Some approaches to moderation and marking taken in schools were far more arduous than others, and some schools were more generous in the ways they supported the English staff to complete the work, particularly in the provision of shared time for moderation. Teachers recognised how much generosity was bound within the differential constraints of schools, where leaders of schools that are chronically understaffed with little/no access to casual relief teachers (CRTs) have reduced opportunities for releasing them. That said, there were large variations of time relief given in similar regions where circumstances would be similar in terms of access to CRT and funding to pay for release, which suggests that in these cases individual school leaders valued/did not value time provision for the VCE English team.

Differences in moderation processes

In this section we have collated some of the approaches to moderation that were reported. There is wide variation in the approach taken by different schools. Selections of the basic models of the suggested [VCAA Guidelines for Scored School Based Assessment](#) are copied in the table below with the full guidelines reproduced in **Appendix 2**.

Approach 1

Teachers meet to discuss performance descriptors or assessment criteria, topics and approaches used for the task.

Teachers grade the task from their own classes.

Teachers swap samples and carry out blind marking.

If necessary, teachers mark further tasks or reassess tasks from their own class.

Difficult cases are further discussed before results are entered.

Approach 2

Teachers combine and distribute the student tasks among themselves for assessment.

The results are returned to the class teacher, who reassesses all tasks or the tasks of students who have unexpected results.

Unusual cases are considered by all teachers concerned.

Approach 3

Samples from all classes are distributed.

All teachers assess the same tasks.

Differences in results are discussed to gain a clearer and more consistent understanding of the application of the performance descriptors or assessment criteria.

When all teachers are confident, they have a consistent understanding of the application of the performance descriptors or assessment criteria, each teacher assesses tasks from their own class.

Determining initial school-based assessments in partnership with another school

Best practice recommends that initial discussions take place at the beginning of the academic year between teachers from different schools.

It is useful to swap some drafts of typical work early in the process of completing the school-based assessment. The earlier a common understanding between teachers is established, the more smoothly the process will be completed.

Teachers in schools that are combining their individual assessments will find it useful to discuss, and come to an agreement on, student completion dates.

The reported variations occurred around the number of times pieces were marked, moderation practices, sampling or double marking of the cohort and how these practices were enacted. In the section below, we illustrate different approaches that schools took. One thing noted in our analysis of the data was a lack of description of approaches that began with the initial marking being distributed between teachers as per VCAA Approach 2. It is important to note that schools have often chosen to implement marking schedules which are beyond the basic VCAA requirements. Many teachers who filled in the survey stated that these were requirements placed on them by leadership over which they had no agency, so this indicates that the teachers are aware that there are acceptable approaches to moderation which are not as onerous. We would suggest that some schools may have long established practices which have not been reviewed in light of changing circumstances.

Use of Approach 1

Some schools were using Approach 1 or variations of it. Even with this variation, however, some double marking of the entire cohort would still occur. For instance:

We get 100 mins time release to do the initial benchmark. We benchmark, in this case five students which equals 15 pieces. We then first marked the 'SAC conditions' piece (this piece was double marked) then we marked all of our own, swapped five books with another teacher to check our rank, then did the Very High Students (over 17 for each piece) and any discrepant pieces went to a third mark. As you can imagine with a large cohort this was exhausting and the rest of our teaching suffered during this time.

The contextual factors also changed how a planned Approach 1 ended up occurring in practice. In the response below, some of the time of a full day of release is used to finish an absent teacher's marking:

Our school has provided a full day to moderate the two Crafting texts tasks and the additional commentary. We used this time to finish marking of tasks for an absent teacher, establish baselines for our marking categories, address anomalies between task 1 and task 2, complete rankings for tasks and to try to establish an overall ranking – it was exhausting!

It should be noted that the teacher has not questioned that this additional marking should not have been taken on by everyone and is not a complaint – it is simply part of being the VCE English team and covering for the absent teacher. However, we have included it because even schools who were given a full day of release to complete the task still had additional work, thereby increasing the pressure on the Approach 1 benchmarking.

Double marking of the cohort

Many of the approaches involved double marking of the entire cohort. In the response below the teacher describes the process at their school:

At Year 12 we are forced to double mark each piece of writing. With the Creating texts unit requiring three pieces (two + reflective commentary), this means that we are not only marking three pieces per student of our own, but an additional class worth as well. For context, my class of 23 then produces 69 pieces of work that need to be assessed, and I then need to also assess an additional class load, meaning that this unit requires me to assess around 140-ish pieces of writing, not including any student practices.

This isn't even considering the amount of marking I do for Crafting Texts, as I have multiple Year 11 classes. While our moderation is less than what we expect for Unit 3, it is still substantial.

The school provides us with minimal periods to do this cross-marking, which comes (usually) at the cost of classes we are teaching, thereby making it a difficult endeavour (to say the least).

The use of the word 'forced' implies a lack of collegial agency in the process. This, combined with minimal time provision, impacts on all the classes they are teaching. This pressure has an additional impact vis-à-vis their work in earlier year levels; this was repeatedly highlighted through the data, as the VCE timelines dominate their workflows.

Variations in double marking are illustrated in the three examples below. They show both the attention that schools are giving to ensure their marking is accurate, but also the pressure of this on the individual teachers.

We always ensure every SAC is marked at least twice with any in dispute outside a certain range sent to a third marker. Usually we have one cross-marking session with the whole cohort's responses. For this SAC, we could not support the time release for this kind of rigorous approach, so teachers swapped classes. Our moderation process is rigorous:

- 1. Benchmark 6-9 scripts as a team.*
- 2. Blind mark own scripts.*
- 3. Blind mark a class worth of other scripts.*
- 4. Mark any discrepant pieces in 3rd and 4th rounds.*

We were not given time to moderate this particular SAC – all SACs and commentaries were double marked so essentially that was 88 pieces of writing for each teacher (and that is AFTER reading TWO drafts from each student and holding a feedback meeting for each student.)

This has been far more impactful on workload than the additional reading – the pressure to mark six classes of sample essays and give feedback in a very short turn-around. Sometimes only a matter of hours. Each piece of student assessment is cross-marked (and third marked if necessary) by members of the senior English teaching team ahead of moderation discussions.

School examination report

One school created a school level examination report:

We have a great process where we are given a whole day to moderate as a team and then we collate an assessor's report which we then provide to students. Individual student marking is reduced this way, however, when you see the effort that a student puts into their work you can't help but feel the need to attend to their work with care and appropriate attention.

The provision of time, and in this case, for a cohort of students who had put a great deal of effort into the work, was enabling of innovation for this English team.

Provision of time for moderation and assessment

There were significant variations in terms of how the moderation and assessment processes were supported by schools. Internal differences between provisions for Year 11 and Year 12 and supports for English as an Additional Language were noted, so we begin with a discussion of these.

Differences between Year 11 provision and Year 12 provision

Throughout the responses, many teachers noted the different ways that the Year 11 and Year 12 teachers were treated in terms of time provision. Many schools had an expectation that Year 11 pieces would be moderated, but others reduced the expectation of this as it proved too difficult. The following sample comments provide some insight into the different complexities around this:

Moderation is also only granted at Year 12, not Year 11 VCE. Staff are expected to use their own time if they wish to moderate.

We will (sometimes) get up to one day in total of moderation for Year 12 only – the Year 11 team do not get time to moderate, I will often provide them time where possible in our KLD meetings (however, we only get 1-2 hours in total over the term, so this makes it quite difficult). The school has tried to make accommodations for us as a team, but this has been extremely difficult given the teacher shortage (we simply cannot cover the classes when we are missing multiple staff for seven English classes). This time is often only arranged late (after the SAC has been finalised).

At the moment there are no special provisions for moderation, so we have had to ditch moderating any work at Year 11 to help ease the meeting load for Senior English staff. Instead, we have only had benchmarking/moderation meetings at Year 12 as part of the after school meeting schedule.

English as an Additional Language

Another neglected group was provision for the English as an Additional Language moderation. The teachers who were working in this space were often in schools where the regular English teachers were working in teams to complete the moderation work. One teacher wrote that they felt isolated, and there was a broad sense of these teachers having to totally self-organise their processes.

English teachers meet once a fortnight for 40 minutes to share high, medium and low from each class to get a benchmark. As the sole EAL teacher at the school, I am unable to participate in any meaningful moderation, plus I am doing a different Framework to the mainstream classes.

I teach the only EAL class, so don't get time for moderation. When we have multiple classes, teachers usually are given one period to cross-mark or time as required.

I have to do work in partnership with another school to moderate because my EAL numbers are low. We have to find time to do this in our spare lessons.

NOT. I am an EAL VCE teacher and get NO support from my school. I have a professional partnership – this is all support I get.

Fast tracking to VCE

A few respondents discussed that, due to teacher shortages, beginning teachers were being fast-tracked into VCE. Some schools had multiple teachers teaching VCE English for the first time, which resulted in more pressure on the experienced English teachers:

The cross-marking process here is long and drawn out, especially with the large number of inexperienced teachers being rushed into VCE English classes as a result of teacher shortages. We have to mark, then the experienced teachers set benchmark scores, then there is an open and blind cross-marking process that begins with one-on-one chats, then a formal meeting, then a protracted ongoing process to ensure that all marks are spread correctly. This process at my school took over five weeks to complete after the students sat the SAC.

Provision of an external moderator

Six schools provided an external marker to assist with the moderation process. Five of these were independent and one was Catholic. These were all used differently. For instance, at the Catholic school there was only one Year 12 class teacher, so paying an external professional to mark/cross-mark the papers was the only way in this context to have a second marker. The independent schools tended to use the external markers to lighten the load for the teaching staff:

We have an external cross-marker but we obviously mark all of our own SACs/Outcomes and engage in third marking in-house. We have to complete our cross-marking after teaching hours or at lunchtime.

We are given time to discuss and review work. We are also lucky to have had the support of an external assessor to assist with marking all pieces twice for the Unit 3 SAC. As Head of Department, I have been allocated time to provide support for teachers in my team; however, it has been a huge undertaking.

Some schools are marking every piece twice or thrice, which is beyond the VCAA guidelines, but in larger cohorts this has become a practice to support with accuracy.

Provision of time for moderation and marking in Year 12

While 280 members answered the question, there were multiple teachers who filled in the survey from some schools. In this chart of time provided by the schools, we have only included each school once, so this data represents 214 different schools. There were 25 school responses that referred to being given time, however, from the text provided (in the case of two or more respondents from one school, all were checked) it was difficult to determine exactly how much time was provided, so these responses were classified as an indeterminate amount. While we have also included the provision of an external marker, this is in addition to time and is discussed below.

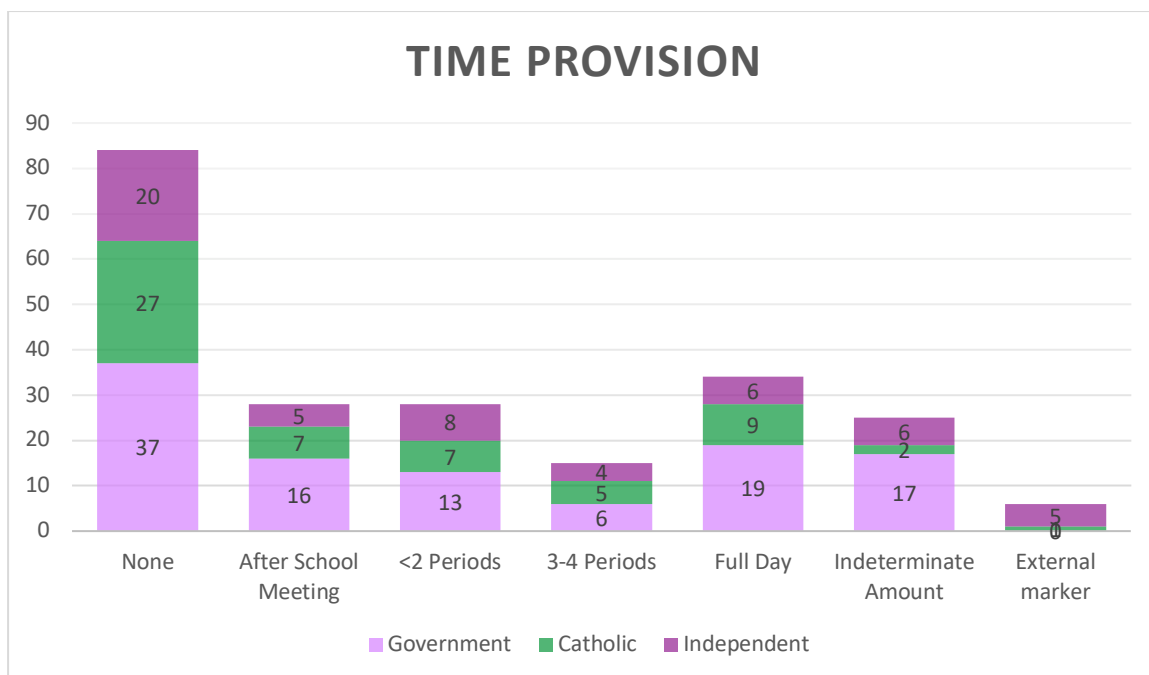


Table 5: Reported time provision for moderation activities – all school sectors

Reporting the data proportionally by school sectors

While there is a perception in the data that independent schools made more provision for teacher release than the Catholic sector and Department of Education schools, this does not occur equally in the sector and was not borne out in the analysis of the time provided for by sectors.

In our deeper analysis of this data, it can be seen that the additional tasks have impacted workload for VCE English teachers across the state. However, contextual factors are different. In some outer suburban, rural and regional schools, teacher shortages are so bad that schools are *'flat out trying to put staff in front of students,'* so no provisions are made for release and marking. This impacts schools from all sectors in these areas. However, in more middle class and wealthy parts of Melbourne, where teacher shortages exist but are not as extreme, pressure from parents and students on English teachers about VCE scores in all sectors is overwhelming. In smaller, usually rural, schools there is often only one VCE English class at Year 11 and 12, often taught by the same person. These English teachers have the complexities of having to find someone to moderate with, and concerns about where their class sits in the state, but have the surety that their sample is consistent. The process of moderating SACs in large cohorts is particularly complex, as there can be 15 English classes that need to be consistent. This means that larger schools from all sectors and in all regions have often adopted more onerous approaches for the sake of ensuring accuracy.

Some of the wealthiest independent schools had very demanding double marking practices with additional sampling with no additional time provision. The DE had the highest provision of full day allocation with the Independent sector offering the lowest, although the differences between sectors on full day release were not significant. The Catholic sector had 47% of schools with no time provided (Government 34%, Independent 41%).

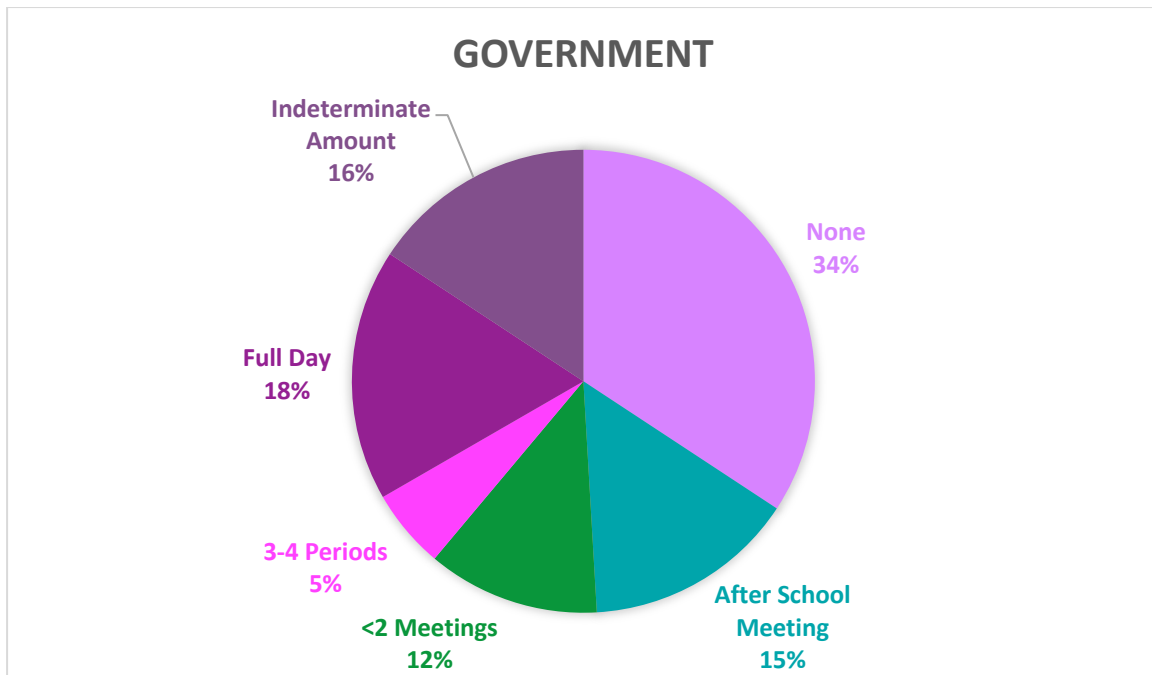


Chart 1: Reported time provision for moderation activities – Government school sector

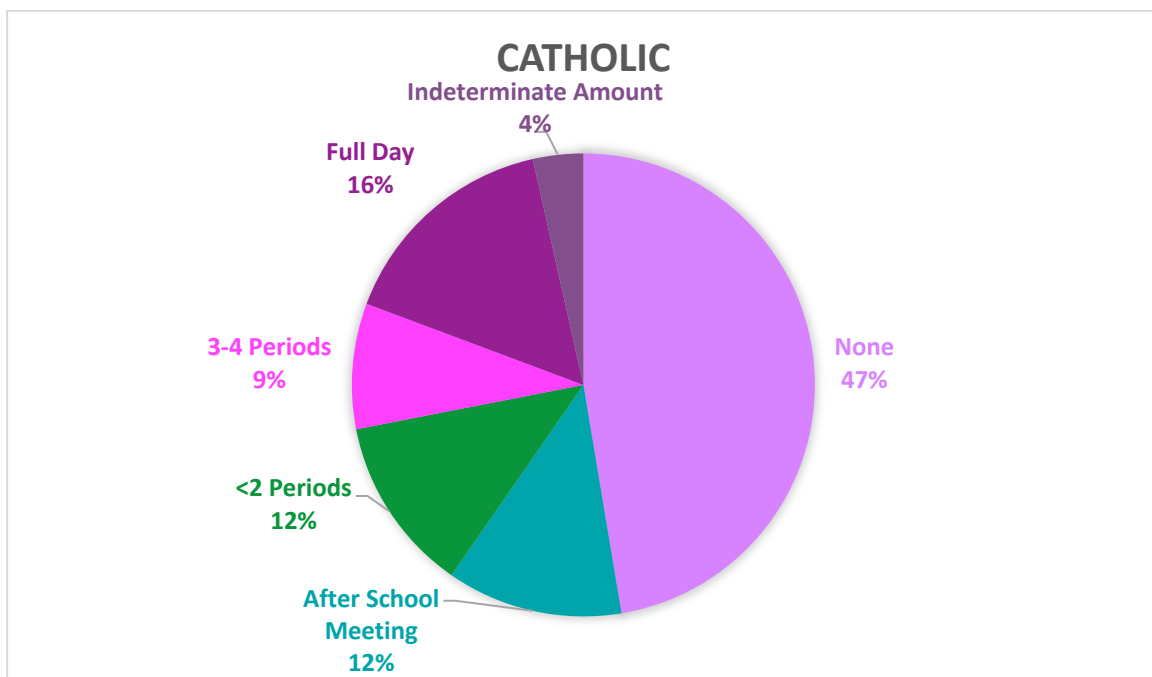


Chart 2: Reported time provision for moderation activities – Catholic school sector

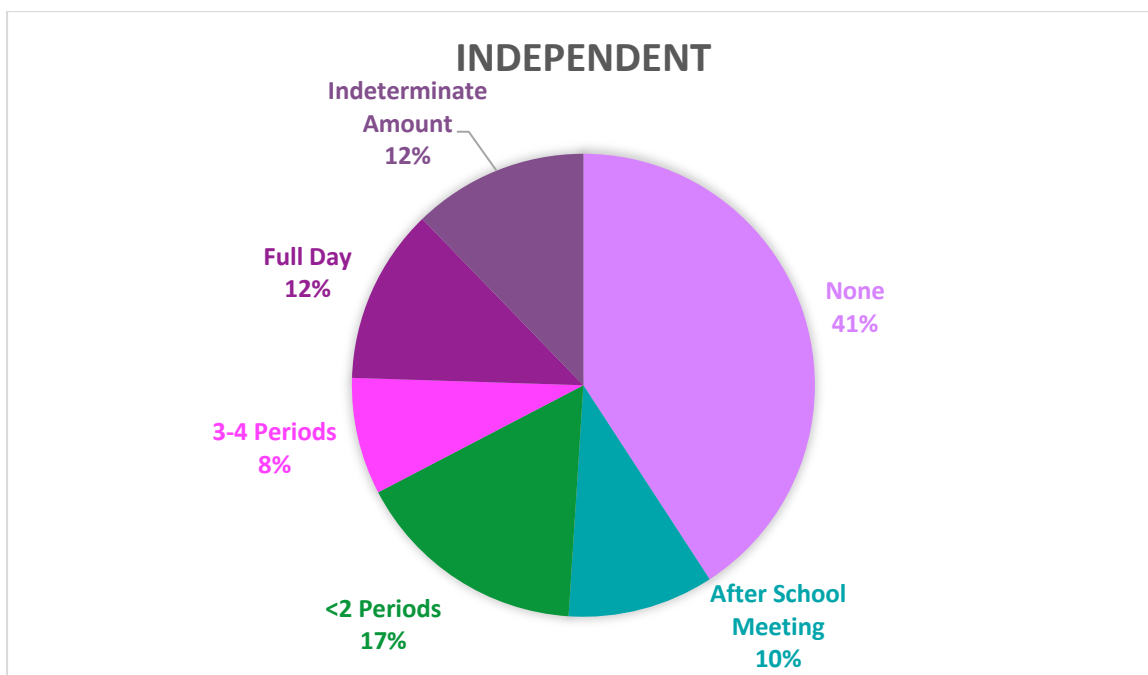


Chart 3: Reported time provision for moderation activities – Independent school sector

In this section we report on teacher responses to time provision. We have divided the comments under the reported time provision headers.

No time

86 schools provided no additional time. This included a school where the English staff were promised time and never received it. The difficulties of the moderation processes were made more difficult due to a lack of scheduled moderating time. In the samples we have included here, English teachers and Heads discuss details of why this occurred and how it played out in the context of their school. The selection of samples was made to illustrate the breadth of the issues faced by the Year 12 staff, with similar scenarios being described across many of the schools with no time provision.

Impact of staff shortages

Many teachers reported that they were given no time due to chronic or significant staff shortages and a lack of CRT. Often these schools had provided time in the past, however, this was no longer possible. The response below shows the ways that staff shortages led to no time release, but also this is further impacted by Year 12 classes becoming 'larger and larger' due to English teacher shortages:

The teacher shortage is having a big impact on my current school and previous school and their ability to facilitate time release for moderation purposes. The school is willing but not able to cover the classes to release teachers. Not only are Year 12 English classes becoming larger and larger due to the lack of available senior English teachers, but I am also disturbed by the poor moderation practices at my current school and the laissez-faire attitude towards this very important process. We are having our first moderation session for Unit 3 today (at the end of Term 2) to look at the Creating texts SACs five weeks after the SACs were completed. I feel very strongly that VCAA need to issue more explicit instructions on what schools need to do and stipulate time allowances for this process. If it is an essential process for schools to moderate each SAC, then this needs to occur during work hours – I keep coming back to the fact that professional people complete professional activities during work hours and not in their unpaid personal time.

The following comments are also from teachers who received no time release at their school:

We are six teachers short and cannot afford to take any staff off classes for time release.

Schools and teachers are maxed out with a shortage, so it is unreasonable of the VCAA to create more work and expect schools to cover it. We are flat out trying to put staff in front of students and don't need the additional marking, moderating and stress load the three separate tasks this unit creates.

Schools are already under pressure with attracting, supporting and retaining new/keen teachers. Selling this curriculum design to new English teachers to VCE is not going to work with the Crafting/Creating texts tripling the workload of staff before even looking at moderation.

Frustrations of scheduling changes

The response below provides an example of the frustrations for Year 12 English teachers due to constant scheduling changes to planned moderation meetings due to a lack of CRTs to cover other absences:

Although our immediate leadership are very supportive of moderation, teacher shortages and difficulty engaging CRTs has meant that we have been unable to have additional time for moderation (let alone for the extra marking). There have been occasions when we have had a moderation session planned, of which our Daily Organiser was aware, yet one or more of us have been scheduled to cover a class because there are no CRTs available. In the past, we have been able to be covered for classes in order to moderate; this year, we can't even use our time release to do it.

At this school, even planning to utilise free periods is under siege, as this time cannot be preserved if teachers are required to supervise classes to cover absences if there are no available CRTs. Notably, in the past, time was granted for release, but this is no longer possible. Across the data it was clear that the shortages are not evenly distributed, so schools facing more chronic shortages and a lack of CRTs were reporting these additional restrictions to their moderation processes.

Repurposing time

This case shows the impact on one school's Year 12 English teachers when they had to sacrifice their report writing day for moderation:

Our school gave us no time. We split the moderation up of Part A and Part B and went home to read them. We were not given time to do this. We were given our report writing day to discuss issues we came across for Part A and B, then we moderated Part C. Everyone else at school got personal time for the day except for us. We have almost 140 students and moderating each SAC takes an immense amount of time. We are dealing with a critical teacher shortage and have been told that they can't afford to release us to moderate.

The utilisation of the report writing day meant the necessary work was done but was unfair as these English teachers also had reports to write, setting them behind with this task.

Lack of reciprocity

In another school, staff from other classes were called in to double-mark subject English oral assessments:

Many staff are called on to sit on panels assessing English oral assessments, for an entire day. This kind of moderation is effective, but teachers are contributing to others' marking without any reciprocity.

Lack of team time

Some responses discussed the lack of time to work as a team. In the first instance moderation was virtual:

We don't have time to meet as a team, so moderation happens via OneNote. This means assessing an additional six pieces on top of the 25 (three x 25, as outlined above) students in my class.

This second example recognises the lack of time allocation also negatively impacts staff upskilling:

We do not have any time allocated for VCE English moderation. Staff are expected to do so, yet time is not provided. I have worked in other schools in the state sector and English teachers were allocated marking time to offset this workload. [My school] does not have that – as a result, I would argue staff stress / workload / assessment upskilling are all negatively impacted.

Crying and/or overwhelmed in the English office

The following response is from a high fee, well-funded, Independent school in a part of Melbourne that still has good access to CRTs. This school provided no additional time to staff, yet had high expectations of the marking and moderating processes. With the introduction of the additional SACs, things spiralled.

I teach both Year 11 and 12 English and within a ten-day window had 99 Crafting/Creating SACs land on my desk. I teach at a big school, so within our domain we had nearly 800 tasks to mark (and cross-mark).

It was entirely impossible for me to get that number of SACs marked within work hours – I was marking after work and over the weekends in order to get it all done. I'm not opposed to occasionally working outside of hours, but not to this extent.

This doesn't even factor in the marking of drafts and the feedback loop. There is not 'one way' to approach this SAC (or a text response or argument analysis, for that matter), which means students struggle to self-assess and are heavily reliant on teacher feedback. In other subjects, there are worked responses and answer keys, which is not the case for English.

The pressure everyone was under and the burnout experienced was intense. On any given day, it was almost a guarantee that someone would be crying and/or overwhelmed in the English office. The marking load was relentless and felt endless.

Range of textual genres of moderation

The range of textual genres required in the study also led to increased moderation complexity that could not be achieved in the timelines:

This particularly impacted the Creating texts unit at Year 12. The lack of time, along with the sheer volume of marking, meant that we were not able to moderate as thoroughly as was required, particularly for a new task with a variety of writing forms and styles submitted by students. To effectively compare, say, a short story with a persuasive speech, and equitably mark them on the same rubric, takes far more time than comparing two standard essays.

Reduced moderation quality

Several teachers commented on how the lack of time resulted in a reduced quality of the process; in this case, discrepancies in the moderation:

I 'know' this impacted grades, as I have reviewed the overall marking across the cohort and am certain there were discrepancies in the way teachers were marking. Whilst we implemented a brief moderation session when this came to my attention, we did not have the time, or the mental energy after marking, to do this as thoroughly as was required.

This is more subtle, but the teacher notes the process had less coherence than usual:

We usually are given a day to moderate after each SAC, however, due to significant staff shortages and an inability to cover classes, this was not the case. Especially as we did the Creating SACs 2nd in Unit 3 – just as winter hit. We ended up with a few snatched hours here and there, but it was not overly supported or as coherent as it usually is. Timing was poor and the requests were onerous.

Incorporation into current meetings

29 schools expected the English teachers to incorporate the moderation processes into already existing after school meetings. Many of the reasons provided were due to staff shortages, and the responses were generally very similar between these two groups (both of whom had not received any additional time).

In the following example, it can be seen how the additional time needed for moderation in the new Study Design impacts other areas of planning:

Moderation sessions are organised with each SAC and these are typically during planning time or meeting time at the Year 11 level. Such times are impossible to cover every variant in the Crafting texts unit, therefore we assign moderation buddies to give each other workshopped pieces that we could not discuss during moderation. These are reviewed and marked typically during planning sessions.

Some schools have timetabled meetings that are set at the beginning of the year:

Collaboration meetings occur twice a term – they did not fall during the SAC period. The school would not support giving us extra time to moderate so we had to do it informally.

This response shows how the additional pieces, combined with the shortage of CRT, meant that time that was previously given to do this work was no longer able to be provided:

Given how difficult it is for teachers to compare student work of totally different forms, content, and styles, and how important it is for us to get our ranking of student scores correct, moderation and cross-marking is particularly essential for Crafting/Creating texts. Our school is a rare public school that has well-funded and well-established moderation processes (we usually double mark every student's SAC), yet even we could not logistically find the money, time, or cover staff, to allow us to cross-mark three SACs (two written texts produced in consideration of audience, purpose, and context, and a reflective commentary) for this Outcome. This caused stress, uncertainty, and opened us up to accusations of inconsistency from families.

The time usually spent moderating tasks together and the cross-marking creates more certainty of consistency for the English team. Removing this creates stress and a sense of vulnerability.

Again, incorporation into the faculty meetings has meant a loss of time for planning:

It has to take place during faculty meetings. There is no time release, therefore the changes to the Study Design have had a huge impact on our planning and faculty time. Most of which is now dedicated to moderating and cross-marking.

<2 Periods time release

28 schools provided up to two additional periods for moderation. Again, the responses were similar to those who received no time release with teacher shortages cited for reduced time, and the impact of the additional SACs increasing the workload significantly. In this section, we have highlighted some approaches schools took to allow Year 12 English teachers to have some time together to do the work, although it was clearly not enough time to complete the task:

We are allowed an afternoon (L5&6) to moderate. We usually choose a time when minimal cover is required so in essence, most of us use a free afternoon and lunch (12.45-4pm).

We are provided some time release for moderation – usually a double period and those who have classes at that time are covered. We were also relieved of in-lieu classes during the GAT so that we could mark on that day.

If we don't ask, we don't get. We have to put in a request for SAC moderation every single time. This year we received 100 minutes for calibration/moderation of Unit 3 Creating texts. We were only able to calibrate with this time. We received no time to moderate Unit 1 Crafting texts.

We were given 80 minutes to moderate these. This was not enough time since there were three pieces per student and each student wrote so differently in terms of forms and ideas. How can we compare a philosophical reflection on the point of journeys to a short story on the experience of a migrant? Given that VCAA provided no samples or guidance as to what high scoring samples vs low scoring samples were, it was even harder to moderate. Even from this we had hours of cross-marking work after moderation.

3-4 Periods time release

15 schools provided 3-4 periods of time release. These were often built to run in an after-school session, so the process might run from 11am-5pm. At these schools, some of the promised time was provisional as seen in previous examples. For instance:

As well as it is able; however, given staff shortages, we have been notified in no uncertain terms that the moderation process may have to be postponed if on the day one of us is required to cover an absence. We are usually able to be allocated at least 2-3 hours for moderation.

This lack of certainty around the timing of the processes makes the planning more fragile.

The final three examples provide different ways that the schools are organising their time. The needs are different according to school size as well; in the examples below there is a school of four Year 12 English classes and another with eleven.

We had to retrospectively ask for support when we were in the thick of it – once we realised the sheer volume of marking the SACs generated, we asked for release from exam supervision during the Year 10 and 11 exams, and not to be issued in-lieu. This was issued on a pro-rata basis, e.g. supervision/in-lieu reduction was given on the basis of how many classes would have been taught during that time.

We cross-mark every Year 12 student's SAC – this is a five hour session with all Year 12 teachers (four of us) involved in re-reading and ranking every student's work. This has gone from four sessions in previous years to five sessions this year (we cross-mark the oral as it occurs with two teachers in each room). We start at 11:30 and finish at 4:30. The school gives us this time and covers our classes if we have any.

The Year 12 team (there are eleven of us) got three periods to moderate yesterday, which again, I had to ask for. I think moving forward, I will have to draft a proposal to build this release time into our marking plan, because we can't do it without it.

Full day time release

33 schools provided a full day of teacher release for the team to work together on the process. In the section below we provide five responses that show the different ways in which this time was used.

We receive a full school day to moderate the 210 papers. We only had enough time for the second SAC to moderate the written responses and any commentary where there was a greater than 2-point difference between the written and the commentary. It would have taken us a day and a half otherwise.

We have a very rigorous moderation process and at times, we will be given faculty time to do this in our teaching teams. Most of the time, the Year 11 team meets during a common free period to moderate. Our school is very generous with the Year 12 team – we are given a day to cross-mark; benchmarking occurs similar to the Year 11 team and requires at least 2-3 hours outside of meeting times to benchmark. Classroom teachers then mark their individual classes based on the benchmarking and then the Year 12 team is given a day to cross-mark and rank.

We are released from scheduled classes for a full day to moderate the pieces. I ask teachers to blind mark a selection of approximately 45 SACs before this day and we spend the day reviewing the results given by two teachers. If they are discrepant, they are remarked at least one more time but sometimes two or more.

We were granted a day at school (we still had to teach our Year 12 class) after the students had written the first Creating/Crafting texts piece to moderate. It was appreciated but not adequate and only granted because the students completed the task on a Wednesday and we were expected to return the SAC with extensive feedback before the next Friday so it could inform their second piece. It took ALL weekend (12 hours). For the second piece we were allowed two periods of time, one of which was our own preparation time to bench mark some sample pieces. The moderation was then completed in our own time. We were expected to mark our own class plus three SACs from each of the other four teachers within ten days. Again, it took most of the King's Birthday long weekend to meet the due date. This is unsustainable.

Our school is wonderful with moderation, affording all Year 12 English teachers a day off timetable to moderate each SAC – we haven't yet moderated the Creating texts SAC, but we're already concerned (after benchmarking, which took about 45 minutes for one student's work – with staff discussion) about how long this will take.

Q3: Intended changes to the organisation of Crafting/Creating texts at the school level

We received 280 responses to Q3: 'What changes to the organisation of these Areas of Study do you intend to make in 2025 as a result of your experiences over the last 2 years?'

Workload reduction

Because the focus of the question was around workload, most respondents answered in terms of what might be possible to reduce this. Obviously, the constraints are significant, as possible changes that can be made at a school level are limited. In the words of two teachers:

It is difficult to change anything that will help the workload and expectations of teachers, aside from fundamental changes to the AOS.

No matter how it is organised it will not reduce the correction load.

These sentiments were echoed throughout the data, with comments such as 'a reality is that the sheer requirements of the task make managing it and minimising workload (at least back to what the previous Study Design required of us) seems like an impossible task.' Some teachers wrote that they did not know what they were 'permitted to change' and that 'we will know more after the exam, when we are clearer on what is expected.' In a larger school with intense moderation pressures, a teacher wrote:

There do not seem to be any obvious areas to change without risking equity and cheating from students. Our cohort is enormous (17 Year 12 classes next year) and there are no obvious paths to reducing feedback/marking loads without hurting the kids who are actually trying to do well.

Time constraints

Because so many English faculties had lost planning time to moderation, many of them wrote comments about how this has stopped them reviewing in order to plan ahead. Here is an example that represents this perspective:

As we are currently still working our way through other aspects of the new Study Design (new texts and new resources to be created) we are yet to make any decisions. The workload for other Areas of Study has greatly impacted our opportunity to meet and plan for 2025. This is something we have had discussions about, but not yet acted upon due to time constraints and workload.

This question also invited comments about the exhaustion felt at the time, blocking a path forward:

At this stage people are too exhausted to think about where we go to next. Half of the Year 12 English team are thinking about stepping away from teaching it altogether. There have been passing conversations about making the entire unit centred around the exam style response for both creative submissions and creating a commentary on the process they undertook.

Once my Year 12 English teachers have had a chance to shake off the 'Unit that was' I will endeavour to look at solutions. At the moment no one is seeing past 'scrap it'.

Advocacy

Teachers and English coordinators wrote about advocacy at a state and individual school level. At the state level it was for VATE to advocate to other bodies for the marking of VCE Englishes:

There needs to be MANDATED time allowance for the marking of VCE Englishes, irrespective of State/Catholic/Independent sector. The three-part component of this Outcome needs to be reduced. Why do we need to assess the commentary when the exam does not have it?

At a school level, teachers and English coordinators wrote about different timetabling changes that they could advocate for. These included advocating ‘*strongly for time to be allocated to English teachers to complete the required marking*’ and advocating for a return to smaller VCE class sizes. These were often framed around the constraints of what might be possible. For example:

I do not have the decision-making authority to implement organisation level change. However, I am advocating for additional time for assessment and moderation for Year 12 Creating texts assessment. We have also been overhauling our descriptive assessment rubrics to better support efficiency of marking and provision of feedback.

This response illustrates the multiple ways that teachers were thinking about this – both in increased time provision and trying to run the marking and feedback in ways which were more efficient.

Assessment practices

Changing assessment practices was a strong theme in the data – from moderation processes determining the authenticity of the texts submitted and student redrafting.

Moderation

Many responses were around less moderation. Some responses simply stated ‘*less moderation*’, but others mentioned how this might occur:

We will likely spend less time moderating the SAC in order to use some time-release to complete benchmarking so that we do not have such an onerous after-hours load during the unit.

Teachers talked about balancing the need for moderation with the workload:

I understand the need for vigilance when it comes to authenticity, but something needs to be changed in regard to the expectations on teachers. The marking/feedback load is ridiculous – even for English teachers.

Determining authenticity of texts

Across the survey there was a great deal of anxiety about authenticity. There were multiple suggestions made around how schools were changing processes to be able to feel more assured that students were not submitting work that had been written by AI, tutors, or from other sources. While these risks have always been there, as mentioned in the earlier sections, the easy access of AI has heightened this. As a result of this, schools were discussing running the creative tasks at school in class time, so that teachers could oversee this:

For the sake of expediency, preparing handwritten first drafts and final submissions would be one way to avoid the influence of AI/tutors, but nothing has been finalised/discussed. The whole unit needs to be halved.

Some schools were also considering running these SACS under exam conditions to increase certainty of authenticity, or at least the optics of authenticity.

Student redrafting

While it was widely acknowledged that the return to more processual approaches to the teaching of creative writing was a positive and much-needed step for VCE English, the provision for student redrafting in schools had further increased the workload for teachers. Many VCE English teams have been discussing and planning ways to reduce this. Some of the approaches described were that there would not be any feedback provided from teachers on drafts *'because the workload is too unmanageable.'* One teacher who was working at a school where they were discussing *'less frequent drafting and a push towards self-assessment of drafts'* wrote that:

... we are not sure this will work as the students want their teacher's feedback, rather than using a checklist to check their own work. They want to feel confident that they are satisfying the criteria and that their writing is good – only their teacher can provide this.

Nevertheless, this is being considered at schools across the state, with the idea of building peer-to-peer assessments of work and self-assessment into the writing process. This follows the standard writing approaches that are often used in industry-based writing courses offered in universities and TAFEs.

Reduction of writing/drafting time

Many responses also discussed reducing the time allocated to the drafted piece, with the hope that this will also reduce the length and the workload:

We are going to reduce the time provided to students to draft their work. This will result in both of their pieces being written under more constrained conditions but will cut down on some of the load with administration and organisation and make authentication less onerous.

Along with less time allocated to the drafted piece, schools were also placing stricter word limits on student work:

With the Year 12 course, we are unlikely to change the number of pieces being produced; however, we will look at reducing the time students can have in drafting their pieces – the thinking being that shorter pieces will be quicker to assess.

However, writing shorter pieces is a different skill, and changes the nature of the task:

No matter what changes are made, the reality of the marking remains unchanged. Perhaps guiding students to write shorter texts – but this is also a challenge, because it requires a different type of skill.

Another option was to have students prepare two pieces as formative tasks but only submit one piece of work for marking. The suggestion was that students *'can submit the one they believe is best.'*

Assessment rubrics were also discussed:

I would suggest a more rigorous rubric that demonstrates what elements teachers are marking because creatives are subjective. I would suggest supplying worked examples to teachers demonstrating the sort of outcome expected.

Delivery

Order of delivery

Many respondents discussed different ways that the order of the delivery would be changed, especially across Years 11 and 12 to avoid clashes between large sets of marking:

As most teachers who teach Year 12 also teach Year 11, the plan is to change the order of units so that the two creative units don't run at the same time.

In our brief moments between marking and creating new units of work, we have discussed changing the order of teaching Outcomes 1 and 2. Whilst this reduces the pressure at the end of the semester when we are trying to mark other work and write reports, it does not lessen the workload. It simply means we have the additional holiday time to mark!

At 3/4 level, we will likely begin with Creating texts instead of Text response so that it is staggered with Year 11. For many years we have found that beginning with the text is the best way to harness our Early Commencement and holiday homework and start the year running with Year 12, but we will be making this change for staff wellbeing.

There were also plans to complete the first task in the 'first four weeks of school under test conditions' and 'to build in more time between the three SACs in order to be able to manage the marking load'.

Time allocated to/within the Area of Study

Schools are also considering a reduction of time allocated to this Area of Study, particularly the creative writing pieces:

A minimal amount of time will be allocated to this Area as what is taught in class is not assessed on the exam.

This has obviously been the subject of enormous discussion. Our current plan is to cut down on teaching time for AoS1 (not ideal) and to set prep of the first Creative response as Easter break work (also not ideal, having had minimal teaching time for it). We're also exploring external assessors for the second Creative, but finding room in the budget for this will be tricky. I cannot imagine how under-resourced schools are navigating this.

Mentor texts

Many schools are planning to greatly reduce the time spent on the mentor texts due to them not being on the exam. There were plans underway to 'shorten the amount of time spent reviewing mentor texts' as well as 'not covering all four mentor texts that have been set for the Framework at Year 12 – focusing on 3.'

Writing skill development

Teachers wrote about the ways that they were planning to focus on the development of writing skills in Years 7-10 so that students were more prepared for writing in VCE. Plans included:

- *More stringent teaching of the reflection in Year 10 so we are not teaching it for the first time in Year 11.*
- *Year 10 learn story writing, so we just need to review that in Years 11 and 12.*
- *Increased time to write.*
- *More time on writing experiments and crafting, generally.*

There were also plans to introduce and reintroduce more conferencing into the class schedule. This was connected to also reducing the marking load:

Last year I think I was better at building conferencing time into my class schedule and I will try to re-introduce that. I am also thinking about teaching it first so that I have more time to finalise the assessment prior to end-of-semester reporting and Unit 1 exams.

The use of drafting booklets and folios was also suggested as something that will be introduced or strengthened. Some suggestions around this, apart from ideas about students compiling folios of writing, included *'having a separate drafting booklet and SAC booklet, and more time spent on examples of written reflection.'*

There were also two suggestions about the creation of hybrid genre pieces, with the idea of encouraging these *'for complexity and usefulness for exam preparation'*.

Q4: Suggestions for VATE support

We received 277 responses to Q4: 'In what ways can VATE support you?' We grouped these responses into three categories which reflected the arms of VATE operations: Advocacy; Professional Learning; Resources. We then further sorted these by school sectors. The compiled list of responses (edited for brevity) can be found in **Appendix 3**.

Resources

We grouped the suggestions for resources under the following categories: assessment; exam; mentor texts; teaching writing; samples; teaching materials; units of work. While a Working Party will explore these options, and VATE does already provide many of these resources, an issue that emerged was the limited financial resources facing many schools.

To be honest, I really don't know. Study guides can only do so much. Government schools are broke and have no money, and can't release staff for PL, so something that is created for free would be highly regarded.

There were many requests for bespoke resources, however, members were also keen to learn from their English teaching colleagues from across the state:

I'd really like VATE, if possible, to collate best practice examples of how schools are tackling this AoS and then providing a suite of resources to help develop some consistently between schools. This is sort of happening in an uncoordinated way via the network email list but could, perhaps, be formalised.

Professional Learning

We grouped the suggestions for professional learning by sector. All sectors requested support with exam preparation and moderation practices. Those in the government sector discussed support vis-à-vis sustainable teaching approaches, literacy skill support, and resource sharing.

More PL on the foundational skills of English/literacy that is targeted to senior audiences. It's a lot of work to adapt the resources for juniors (and often they are at a primary school level that I am not trained for at all).

Respondents from the Catholic sector were interested in Professional Learning around authentication, the use of AI, and clarity around the Study Design.

Perhaps some PL sessions on how to deal with authentication issues, as well as how to reduce the teaching and learning time for this outcome.

Members from Independent schools were keen to focus on innovative writing practices and were concerned about regional accessibility to PL.

More regional PL on each of the Areas of Study. It is difficult to get to the PL, most of which is in Melbourne.

Advocacy

As previously discussed, all sectors saw advocacy from VATE as crucial.

Make our exhausted voices heard.

Advocate for change – this task is not sustainable. It feels like it was created by people who are out of touch with the competing demands placed on teachers and students within the VCE, or who are fortunate enough to have a heavily reduced face-to-face schedule or incredibly talented students.

We need VATE to represent us and demand a more equitable situation. English is the only compulsory subject to Year 12 and the amount of correction English teachers have to do impacts on our personal lives as we have to take so much correction home.

You can advocate to VCAA on our behalf about the excessive workload that this has had on teachers, and the impact that this will have in the longer term in attracting teachers to English and VCE English in particular.

Advocate for the teachers. While creative writing is important and there is some value in the process of this unit, it isn't working for students or teachers. Everyone feels burnt out.

Please convey to VCAA the very real increase in our workload...VCAA needs to make some changes to the Study Design to relieve the pressure and additional burden – the marking load itself is simply unsustainable...This is not the time to increase teacher workload, when so many are fleeing the profession. Let whoever designed the change know that they have probably driven many good English teachers out of the profession by implementing an exponential growth in preparation and marking loads that was perfectly foreseeable.

Further, respondents not only wanted VATE to lobby the VCAA for changes to the Study Design and workload adjustments, but they were also looking to VATE to advocate to school leadership vis-à-vis moderation time:

I'm not sure what VATE can do – this appears to be an issue that schools need to address. There are ways that schools could accommodate this unreasonable workload – class sizes need to be much smaller (15 at most) or schools need to give Year 11 and 12 marking days.

Put out a statement addressed to school executive teams on behalf of English teachers, and subject English, clearly outlining the additional time demand of our subject in general particularly at VCE level that other subjects don't have and suggesting a 'best practice' model for how school leaders can support their English faculties (including suggested time allowances for moderation, marking, rubric design, professional learning etc.) If the organisation could attempt to advocate on our behalf to decision-makers directly it might help at least some teams in some schools if those leaders choose to read the information and do something about it.

Notify our leadership team of the increased workload with the new Study Design. Also, reinforce that English staff should have allocated time that is not in our own planning time to moderate work.

Q5: Additional comments

This section brings together comments from Q5: 'Additional Comments' with six unsolicited emails received by the VATE Office from members who wished to supply additional information. We received 170 responses to Question 5. 14 of these were thank you notes, which we appreciated, and there were other comments which have been summarised here. We have combined these sets of comments in this section and have ordered them thematically under the following headers: Design, Implementation, Contextual factors, and VCE English teacher supply.

Design

As we have reinforced throughout this report, teachers are generally positive about the philosophy of Crafting and Creating texts but critical of the pragmatics. The comments below represent a series of different outcomes that teachers have observed in their students while teaching in different contexts.

The first points to supporting both students who are intending and not intending to participate in further study, highlighting the growth in writing skills, the valuing of process and continuity from the Years 7-10 curriculum:

I genuinely believe that this AoS has the potential to support our students to be better prepared for academic writing in further education as well as ensuring greater engagement with students who may not be set on further study at the end of their Year 12. The growth that my students have seen has built confidence and a willingness to engage with learning in a subject that they have openly admitted to being disengaged from before. This also works well with the research around the need for explicit teaching of skills by valuing the writing process rather than just the summative assessment and the memorisation of content. My higher achieving students are challenging themselves with their writing in ways that they were unable to within the old Study Design as this AoS makes space for experimentation and feedback. This AoS also allows for greater continuity from the F-10 curriculum and will support our conversations as a school about the need to embed confidence in working with a wider range of text types from Year 7 onwards.

One teacher noted that their students 'loved' the Creating texts Outcome pointing to the ways in which the Framework of Protest enabled the students as they were 'freed to find their voice and articulate their concerns, at least within our Framework (Protest).' Importantly, 'many students have grown significantly as expressive writers and come to have a far clearer grasp of the importance of audience and purpose in shaping their writing.' Specifically, the teacher said, 'So many of my girls have stopped being "polite" and given vent to rage and a cumulative anger at the gender divide' and that a student who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander has 'also stopped being polite and taken heart from Meyne Wyatt to give voice to his experience of a racist Australia.'

However, this same teacher reflects on the downside of the negative impacts of the workload on staff wellbeing and the limitations of changes necessary to counter this:

These seem to me the outcomes VCAA sought to achieve. But the cost is staff wellbeing and there is surely a better balance possible. Sadly, the only one I can see is reducing the number of assessments; 'sadly' because 'forcing' students into writing in non-preferred styles (e.g. monologue) has been the revelation of the unit – for staff and students. But if we cut out the second task then it will be easier for students to avoid experimentation. I suspect the easier task to lose is the Reflective Commentary; I suspect this will increasingly be a tokenistic task and not where the real power of the unit resides.

Similarly, this response blends the enthusiasm for the tasks with the toll of the workload, in this case, focusing on the issues of authentication and the numerous students with special arrangements:

As a faculty, we have really enjoyed teaching this Area of Study. We like it more than the comparative because of the opportunities it offers students to craft their own voice and explore ideas that interest them personally. We are finding that it affords students a great opportunity to develop complex thinking and writing skills. That said, it is also easy (particularly for students who are not concerned about study scores) to tackle this Area of Study at a quite simplistic level – and coupled with the reduced reading requirement that does raise some questions about the quality of the qualification some will receive.

Also, authentication is a far greater challenge than ever before, and a genuine drafting process is very difficult to manage. We mandated hand-written drafting in class over a couple of weeks but ran into problems of equity and supervision with large numbers of student absences. This was further complicated by a high proportion of students who also qualify for special arrangements (typing, scribes, extra time) and became, frankly, a logistical nightmare.

Teachers in some contexts did not see any advantage in the design and felt negative about the whole Area of Study:

This Crafting/Creating texts unit aims to make students writers but it is not respecting or acknowledging the art of writing. The mentor texts were not written in a double period. They were months, years, and weeks of work but we are expecting students to mimic this quality of work in an hour? This unit is disappointing overall.

This is the single largest, most convoluted, and difficult Area of Study I have taught in twenty years of teaching VCE English. The preparation of the course, teaching the students, and the onerous marking for this AoS is unmatched. There has not been a single advantage that I can see that this AoS provides teachers or students in terms of teaching or learning. It is utterly unredeemable as an Area of Study.

Suggested changes to the Study Design

Many responses suggested a reduction in the number of SACs. These responses were sometimes couched in a positive comment about the unit:

I do love this unit, and I think it's important, but the assessment needs to be reconsidered.

I feel that doing two tasks in this Area of Study is overkill and the same effect could be achieved by getting students to complete one task and a reflective commentary.

Any new Area of Study impacts workload as both teachers and students must develop new ways of reading, responding and writing. Outcome 2 certainly required a lot of work but the freedom it afforded students made additional effort on my part worthwhile when I saw student engagement and production. Having said that, a few students are still overwhelmed by the requirement of two texts plus a written explanation. I'd like to see a change to the final outcome allowing the submission of one text and a written explanation. This would allow students to 'play' with form through formative work and more time for me as a teacher to teach form through exploration of the mentor texts, but allow students to focus on the production of one final piece (rather than two) and a written explanation.

It was also noted by teachers throughout the survey that the commentary could be removed:

... That style of self-criticism and reflection is great as a class task, but students struggled to see the benefit of it, especially given that it's 'not on the exam'.

VCAA should consider reducing the Outcome to one piece; that would reduce the marking load significantly and allow for more time to teach the Framework and examine the mentor texts. It would also allow more time across the board for the other Outcomes. Due to the intensity of the Creating

texts unit, we have felt rushed teaching Analysis of Argument, which also has the new requirement of an audio text which we are not confident we have taught adequately.

Impact on students

While some of the comments above discussed positive outcomes on students in terms of them finding a voice and developing their skills as a writer, teachers also wrote about student anxiety and stress due to the excessive workload and multiple SACs:

I am also concerned about the increased workload on students compared to what they are required to do in other subjects. This has replaced the listening in EAL (skill – can't memorise something to spit out, so actually reflective of a vital and useful life/study skill) – a change for the worse in my opinion. I have heard of schools only teaching part of one text for English (not EAL) and treating it like a throw-away activity that isn't needed for the exam to make up for the workload created by this Area of Study.

Also, several comments such as this echoed previous concerns that the two pieces did not lead to better submitted work from students:

In all honesty, for a majority of students, we found that they had one really good idea for their Creating texts pieces that they used for their first piece. The second piece was too close to the first, which couldn't be avoided due to fitting everything else in, and as a result, the second idea wasn't as good seeing results go down rather than go up. That surely is not the intention of the Study Design. As a school that was audited for Unit 3 this year, there was so little information around how to run these SACs. We used what the VATE network (via email) gave us in terms of other schools encountering the same issues (with planning and audits) and tried to base our model on what we thought we could make work and ultimately, support our students to achieve their best. The lack of direction from VCAA in specifics on how to run these SACs to ensure parity in the state was deafening. Now back to those Unit 1 exams ...

VCAA consultation

Not broad enough.

The task is great in theory, but terrible in practice. This is a common issue with any curriculum design coming from VCAA. We need more experienced, active teachers working with VCAA for curriculum design to counter any ideological pipe dreams and unrealistic pedagogical practice.

Frankly, as Head of the English Faculty at a large government secondary college, I am sick of VCAA creating curriculum in a vacuum. They need to create curriculum and policies that meet the needs of students and teachers, in a way that is consistent with the VGSA, and cognisant of the realities of the teacher staffing crisis, and the shameful inequitable funding arrangements between public and private schools. They need to get out of their ivory tower and stop looking to academics who have never taught, and old retired English teachers who spent their careers at elite private schools, for their advice.

I am unsure if VCAA thought this through with regards to workload – there is also the extra requirement for AV in the AoA which has to be completed separately, albeit it's not long but it's another assessment to plan and mark. Despite VCAA asking for feedback in 2021/22 – the way in which Creating and Crafting texts would look was an unknown. If we had known it was three tasks, I do not believe it would have been accepted as it was.

I have been utterly dismayed by the implementation of this Area of Study. The communication on all fronts has been horrendous, including the fact that we had no idea what this year's exam would look like until the start of this year and when it was revealed, it sent shockwaves through the students and teachers I know as it is confusing.

I remember speaking with the VCAA reps in the consultation period about the implementation of this new Area of Study and I was told that things that were to be closely focused on was reducing teacher workload in VCE English and hoping to lower the English exam to a more standard two-hour response. Well, the exam is still an arbitrary three hours and teacher workload has increased exponentially as a result of this Area of Study. New teachers to VCE English at my school have been stunned at the confusing nature of the Area of Study, and lack of consistency that appears to exist with this Area of Study across the schools we have been in contact with.

Also, why has the VCE mandated that the three sections of the SAC be marked 20-20-20. 20 marks, or one third of the SAC, for a personal reflection is preposterous.

System is too restrictive

Honestly, having taught only in NSW up until now, I find the system here so restrictive and totally at odds with good assessment design. Why mandate exactly what assessment looks like, down to the rubric used and the marks assigned? I know we don't have to use VCAA rubrics, but ... if you get audited you have to explain why – I was loathe to do so given I'm new AND that my reason is 'they're bad'.

In NSW, the rules are – no more than four assessments in Year 12, and only one can be a formal exam. The maximum weighting of a task is 30%, and one task must be multimodal in nature. Module C must be assessed at least 20% of the overall mark. That meant we could design assessments that worked for our cohort, in line with contemporary pedagogical practices e.g. Universal Design for Learning.

VCAA generate a lot of anxiety in English teachers (and I assume other subject teachers as well) by being at once so restrictive, but then giving no clarity. If they want us to all do the same thing in every classroom for every SAC, just write them for us!

Exam

There is a lot of anxiety around the exam in the first year of the rollout of the Area of Study. There were comments which both disagreed with, and supported the Area of Study being in the exam. This first response argues against it being in the exam:

In theory, I love this unit. I love the notion that we are actually encouraging and nurturing our students to be writers in real-life contexts. I love that we are exposing them to a range of genuine, authentic pieces of writing and teaching them how to recognise why the writing is effective. I love that we are focusing on purpose, context and audience outside of persuasive texts. It is a much better and more authentic iteration of the old Writing in Context unit.

However, in practice, it is not a unit that belongs in a VCE subject with an exam to measure its outcome. Nobody, let alone teenagers, can produce their best, most authentic writing in an hour. It feels quite hollow and insincere to be developing students' individual voice and style, to be encouraging them to edit, refine and polish their work, and then to turn around and force them to do that under pressure, producing what we 'know' will not be their best writing.

You may be able to infer that I am not a fan of exams in general, but I can appreciate that analytical text response and analysing argument 'are' appropriate and reasonable tasks for students to complete in exam conditions. Yes, it will not be their best work, but it still allows them to demonstrate their skills and understanding in a more-or-less equitable and authentic way. The Creating texts portion of the exam will not do that; it is not a task that belongs on an exam paper to be written in one hour.

Here are some arguments for retaining this in the exam:

I know the 'wish list' item for a lot of schools is to cut Section B from the exam, and have the English exam align with Eng Lang and Lit as a two hour exam. I'm not sure I see that happening. I actually really LIKE the spirit behind this Area of Study. What we need is more TIME – both to really dig into the honing of skills, and (naturally) to assess and provide authentic and detailed feedback. We had to restrict the amount of drafting feedback we provided, which increased anxiety in our students significantly.

I really like that the Study Design requires students to draft their work and I do not think that everything should be designed to teach to the test. I like that this Area of Study is on the exam because otherwise schools would rush through it in their Head Start program and not give it a second thought. I think that it might simply be a factor that Principal teams have to be alerted on a larger scale (by VCAA and VATE perhaps) around the extra workload it has created so that we are given more support and not classed as 'whingers'.

Implementation

Professional learning and resources

Numerous suggestions were made for professional learning for creative writing at middle years and VCE in addition to professional learning about implementing the VCE English and EAL Study Designs. There were also calls for more contemporary resources to support the Study Design:

Generally speaking, there are not enough resources to assist with the implementation of this new Area of Study. More experienced teachers can fall back on their understanding of Context, but newer teachers would benefit from more concrete resources.

Concerns teachers using AI to mark

What I found most distressing though was on the VATE email chain, teachers from private schools offering to pay other teachers to do their marking AND EVEN WORSE, teachers asking for recommendations for AI tools to do the marking for them. That's the reality of this new Study Design.

Fragility of circumstances

As we have seen across the data, contextual factors vary across the state. Regardless of place, there is a fragility within the schools of Victoria in all places and sectors impacting VCE English. These fragilities have been highlighted throughout the report, caused by circumstances in the profession such as teacher shortages, additional pressures on existing staff for further mentoring of new teachers, particularly pre-service teachers on Permission to Teach, and a reduction of time for assessment in most contexts (due to more 'extras' and larger classes at VCE). These circumstances have amplified the impact of additional assessment requirements in VCE English.

In this section, we consider responses which highlight current circumstances that are adding to the fragility of our schools more broadly and the teaching of subject English in particular.

English teachers' workloads

Many leaders in schools don't understand the workloads in and out of class on English teachers – having a better understanding of this is important.

At (our school), the balancing of a teacher's workload doesn't occur due to how the school is across two campuses – no Year 12 teacher teaches Year 7 or 8. This is normally how a school can balance

the workload of teachers, so whatever solution VATE proposes needs to be one that addresses the issues specifically at Year 11 and 12.

English teachers are already overworked. Full time English teachers are understandably leaving the profession due to the marking, which is not recognised as TIL, as per some of our teaching counterparts. For example, an Outdoor Education teacher gets TIL for going skiing or bike riding whilst my nine hours of marking on the weekend is just expected as par for the course. This is wage theft in my opinion.

Equal workload should accompany equal salary. However, English teachers (along with our colleagues in Humanities) are saddled with larger VCE classes and a heavier marking load, compared to some other subjects. I am concerned we will lose VCE English teachers if this situation of inequity continues.

With some VCE class sizes in excess of 25 students, the workload is just not fair. It never has been but the new Area of Study has created additional burdens. Several of our staff are taking personal days to do marking.

... the marking load was unreasonably and completely disproportionate when compared to any other VCE subject or English year level.

Out of field teachers teaching subject English

This first comment discusses the skewing of subject English through teachers of other subject areas (or in other contexts, generalist primary school teachers teaching subject English) and the impacts of the teaching of VCE in the light of this:

I think that we need to look at supporting all teachers of English – we're underprepared coming into the workforce, notably with so many undergraduate students hired as Permission to Teach with inadequate experience. As a team, we are still actively teaching these PTT staff how to teach (i.e. basics about lesson plans, student interactions) as they are severely underprepared. This is causing issues within the team (e.g. enactment of curriculum, marking and moderation, planning and preparation) as competent staff are having to pick up this workload. In addition, staff that are not English trained are being put into English classes without the appropriate training, again perpetuating the same issues. We continue to have Humanities teachers chunked into an English class 'because they can basically teach English', but this is a solution that is only creating further issues in VCE – we are inheriting students in Units 1/2 who are barely literate but have been pushed through the year levels having not gained the foundational skills of literacy. As a result, we are having to teach basic literacy skills from level 6-10 curriculum. This is preventing us from completing/teaching the actual content properly. This is then causing them to not be able to achieve a satisfactory score in their SACs, resulting in decreased confidence (which students already lack) and emotional turmoil for staff. Most of these students are a direct result of the shortages/staff not trained to teach in English. Essentially, the students are coming into VCE (or forced into VM pathways) severely underprepared – 70% are not ready to access the content required from the Study Design.

As aforementioned, the lack of English staff is also putting significant pressure on the current English staff. As a collective, we are burnt out, emotionally drained from dragging our kids through the units and feeling very unsupported by the department (our leaders are trying their best, but it is not enough when they are so overwhelmed themselves). I am only in my fourth year of teaching, and I genuinely consider leaving the profession every week due to the workload and constant stress (I am also one of many in the same boat in my school).

Impacting Years 7-10

Numerous comments discussed the impact of the workload on the Year 7-10 students in schools:

My workload for grading assignments has significantly increased. It is essential for me to ensure that students are given opportunities to practise the skills they are learning. Regrettably, due to my concentration on the Year 11 students, my responsibilities for other year groups have been temporarily deprioritised.

Unfortunately, for many, it appears as if what has had to give is time with family, time to rest, and time to prepare for other classes.

Timing with the rise of AI

Concerns with authentication due to students using AI have led to schools stopping practices across Year 12 which may have been more generative and open. The comments cited below illustrate a few of the impacts that were reported because of this, and many comments across the different sections of our survey spoke to other schools responding in similar ways. Some teachers also called for VCAA to respond to this, with guidelines that had an official position on how to manage potential use of AI.

The timing of bringing in the Creating texts unit at exactly the same time as the exponential growth of AI, was quite unfortunate, and adds to the workload generated by this unit.

The proliferation of AI added to the stress as we worked hard to ensure all writing could be authenticated – much harder to do with drafting, etc.

We tried to do one of the tasks using Google docs and tracking the drafting that way. Because we caught several students using AI, the school has said we can no longer do this. However, now that we have to monitor handwritten assessment in class over multiple sessions, and we are a large school with numerous classes, it pushes out the SAC time even longer and means it is harder to get parity between classes due to events/excursions/public holidays, etc. If you have any ideas of how we can run this to streamline, simplify and take out the AI issue, it would be gratefully accepted.

Too much change at once

Related to the fragility of general circumstances is the amount of change introduced all at once. The comment below shows the impact of so many changes in one year:

I feel that the VCAA lost its mind expecting so much change over one year. A whole new Area of Study, all new texts, new tasks for EAL and English. This year has been hell, last summer holidays were hell, and I feel like a hamster running on a wheel that goes faster every term. The people making the decisions clearly haven't taught in actual classrooms for a very, very long time.

VCE English teacher supply

There was a significant theme in the comments from Question 5 around the impact of the Study Design combined with contextual factors and impacts of fragilities on VCE English teacher supply. The relationship between highly significant workload and its impacts on VCE English teacher supply was commented on by many teachers, usually English coordinators who completed the survey, who were already struggling to fill English teaching allotments. Because Question 5 was calling for 'Additional Comments', these answers were often summative, and so led to concluding comments about VCE English teacher supply, even though it was a totally open-ended response.

We have included responses here in their entirety, as they illustrate different contextual examples of the impacts on VCE English teacher supply. We begin with some general comments and then have

clustered the responses around the following themes: English teachers' health and wellbeing; English teachers considering leaving/retiring early due to VCE pressures; English teachers wanting to stop teaching VCE; and English teachers not wanting to start teaching VCE.

I am increasingly concerned about staffing as a result of the marking involved in this unit. Previously I could have teachers teach two Year 12 classes, with this Study Design I cannot. Additionally, where teaching Year 12 English was always a coveted position, now teachers are telling me that they cannot do it again. I will be struggling to find staff and the teaching will suffer.

This current way of doing it is unsustainable and unreasonable. There is no equity for the marking load of a VCE English teacher compared to any other teaching position in the school.

I wonder if there is any likelihood of changes being made to this Area of Study to ensure that teacher burnout does not occur. VCE English teachers already have a significant workload as a result of marking and providing students with adequate feedback to improve. But this Outcome has certainly applied a significant pressure to members of our small team. We are already finding it difficult to find English teachers, particularly those willing to take VCE. I believe the workload attached to this Outcome will contribute to the current English teacher shortage.

English teachers' health and wellbeing

As seen throughout the report, numerous comments were themed around the health and wellbeing of English teachers, either teachers self-reporting their own health issues, or teachers reporting their concerns for others in their teams:

I am now at home sick, as I am so rundown from this work.

I love teaching English at the senior levels, however, I am rethinking the sustainability of teaching in this area due to the impact on my family life and the ability to balance work and life. My RSI has also flared up due to the intensive marking requirements. Have loved teaching this area of English – I think it has been great to hear student voice and the writing has been enjoyable to mark – it is just the level of marking that is negatively impacting.

This workload is not sustainable. Everyone is stressed.

We are going to find it difficult to retain teachers in 12 VCE English. The burden of marking is leading to stress and burnout. The students are also finding the cognitive load of the different variables in each SAC across Years 11 and 12 (mentor texts, stimulus, framework of ideas; audio visual and written language features, personal response/analytical response) overwhelming.

VCE English needs to be way more attractive for teachers. Too many staff don't want to do VCE because of the workload. The current VCE teams are burning out. I personally love teaching VCE, but I also have a leadership role and am finding the juggle of my responsibilities to be really stressful and challenging. I rarely get the opportunity to mark/assess during the school day, so therefore this is a lot of unpaid overtime to meet the needs of my Year 12 students.

English teachers considering leaving/retiring early due to VCE pressures

If there are no modifications made to the Study Design, several of my colleagues and I are considering options such as early retirement or seeking alternative employment opportunities.

Education is losing teachers by the scores, and it is in some part due to the excessive workloads units like this place on English teachers who already carry the heaviest load in schools.

The additional marking and continuous feedback has nearly made me want to leave the profession. The unit's emphasis on constant drafting and revision has set up this intense negativity, where all I

am is good for is giving feedback and not teaching. Also, what is 'good' creative writing? Everyone has a different definition which makes moderation really difficult.

English teachers wanting to stop teaching VCE

I won't be teaching Senior English in 2025.

If this marking workload continues, I will be requesting not to teach VCE English in 2025 and beyond, after having taught it since 2010. Every other subject I teach has suffered because of my need to prioritise Year 12 marking. Essentially, between practice SACs, moderation, cross-marking and reporting on Unit 3, I have been marking for twelve weeks straight. Ridiculous! And here come the orals so goodbye to another set of holidays.

I mentioned, I am not planning to teach VCE next year. This is a choice I make reluctantly; I love working with senior students and am skilled/experienced. However, I can no longer justify the time commitment required and maintain any kind of work/life balance.

If workloads are not managed better from VCAA then teachers are less likely to teach Year 12 English. I am able to teach Humanities and that is certainly a more attractive option at the moment. I have taught English in four countries and have never seen a workload like this!

English teachers not wanting to start teaching VCE

This is my first year teaching Year 12 English. Will not be doing this again as it has had a negative impact on my work/life balance.

It is important to note that younger teachers and/or those who don't teach VCE, have commented that they would not wish to teach at this level given the new workload and increased stress. It has also caused some friction with other faculties, who don't understand the new Study Design and feel VCE English teachers are somehow getting special consideration, given time release, etc!!

Conclusions

Across the responses from all sections, the philosophy and intentions behind the new Study Design are respected and almost universally agreed with by the respondents to our survey and feedback from members of VATE more broadly. This comment in Question 5, sums up this feeling: *'I support the ideals behind the changes, but they are impractical.'*

Returning to the comment from the Head of English we quoted at the beginning of this report: *'It is the sad reality that the VCAA's new English and EAL Study Design is driving teachers away. In a nation-wide teaching shortage, this is a very serious development and must be addressed.'*

Given that schools are already suffering impacts from a shortage of subject English teachers, and that these shortages are not spread evenly across the sectors, this is a crucial equity issue for the state to address.

VATE actions

In our [communication](#) to VATE members on 30 July 2024, we committed to the following:

- *We will advocate on behalf of our English teaching community to the relevant parties: school principals, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Department of Education, the Catholic and Independent school sectors, and the education unions.*
- *Developing a report from the survey responses, establishing a Working Party to look at the Study Design and development of potential professional learning and resources, and supporting teachers to be advocates within their school setting vis-a-vis planning and moderation practices.*

Other recommendations

In making these recommendations, VATE is advocating on behalf of the information collected in our survey contained in this report. We will direct these to different stakeholders: the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the Department of Education, the Victorian Catholic Education Authority, Independent Schools Victoria, the Victorian Principals Association, the Australian Education Union, Vic. Branch, the Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania, and to all VATE members (over 8000 individuals). We realise that many members have already worked towards and taken many of these suggestions, and that the contextual factors are different in every school. These recommendations for consideration are drawn from the collective wisdom (while not universally representative) of the VATE membership who participated in the survey. We make them to support the membership.

VCAA

We suggest that VCAA conducts its own broad-based statewide review into the unintended consequences for English teachers, students and schools. VCAA would then be in a position to act based on VCAA data and findings in the context of the VCAA vision to be a global education leader with the mission of the provision of high quality curriculum, assessment and reporting to enable learning for life.

Based on the data received in our VATE survey we suggest:

1. Reduce the required number of assessment pieces that need to be produced by VCE English students and marked and moderated by teachers.
2. Provide explicit instructions for schools about marking and moderation requirements beyond the *Guidelines for Scored School Based Assessment*. Stipulate time allowances that are needed for teachers to complete this process.

3. Set up moderation supports at VCAA that can be accessed by all schools in the state.
4. Produce guidelines that have an official position on how to manage potential use of AI.
5. Provide more resources for the implementation of the new Study Design.
6. Refine/review the rubrics supplied for Units 3 and 4.
7. Consult more broadly in the development of new curriculum, accounting for the varied and changing contexts across the state.

School leadership

1. Provide a full day time release for the Year 11 VCE English team and the Year 12 VCE English team for moderation of each Area of Study. This takes into consideration that:
 - English teachers are often teaching much larger classes than those in other subject areas, and;
 - Most schools have multiple subject English classes at VCE, so the moderation requirements can be greater than those of other subject areas.
2. Ensure that there is some preserved meeting time on top of this for earlier sample discussion and that the timing aligns with the submission dates.
3. If there are large numbers of English staff new to teaching VCE, consider ways of supporting the processes further. Provide additional time for senior staff to mentor staff new to VCE from the beginning of the year.
4. Consider additional marking requirements as eligible for time-in-lieu in line with other out of school work such as camps or excursions.

English faculties

While some of this data is harrowing at times, there is throughout it all a very strong sense of commitment, love of subject English, care for students and philosophical commitment to the teaching of creative writing. Many English faculty leaders and teachers who responded were doing so when they were feeling tired and burnt out due to the burdens of the workload, but still were providing care for the profession and their students in this moment.

1. In the data the schools who were provided with a full day to moderate, or at least a significant proportion of a day (five periods into the afternoon), had used this time to productively work as a team on these tasks: being able to mentor English teachers new to VCE into the processes while moderating the work as a collective. Several schools noted a feeling of care from leadership when they were provided with some food during the moderation sessions. This provision of time has a long-term gain for the team, as well as enabling the VCAA Approaches to be successfully implemented. While the provision of a day still did not cover all the additional workload, it helped with moderation and the recognition of the demands through this provision is important. We recommend that faculties advocate for this with leadership. We also realise that many members have already strongly advocated for this to no avail due to chronic staff shortages at their school. VATE is preparing a document that can be used to help with this advocacy.
2. While we advocate that VCAA provide more explicit instructions about moderation, in the interim we suggest that English faculties reconsider which VCAA Approach they take to their internal moderation processes. While often practices become established as 'best practice' in a school community, given current contexts and the demands of the Study Design as it stands, we recommend faculties review their practices against the approaches outlined by the VCAA. Less arduous approaches that still meet the requirements may be in the best interests of staff and students in your current context. In saying this, we recognise the additional contextual complexities faced by schools, particularly ensuring moderation consistency in large cohorts.

3. Many schools are planning to review the timelines for 2025 to have less overlap between Units 1 and 3.
4. Teaching creative writing as a significant part of the curriculum from Years 7-10.

Appendix 1: VCAA Guidelines for Scored School Based Assessment

<https://vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-handbook/sections/Pages/08ScoredAssessmentSchoolBasedAssessment.aspx> - SBA

Determining initial school-based assessments where there is more than one class in the school

If there is more than one class in a study, teachers should consult with one another to develop school-based assessments. The following approaches will help schools to review their current assessment arrangements or establish new practices with regards to cross-marking or internal moderation or both.

Approach 1

- Teachers meet to discuss performance descriptors or assessment criteria, topics and approaches used for the task.
- Teachers grade the task from their own classes.
- Teachers swap samples and carry out blind marking.
- If necessary, teachers mark further tasks or reassess tasks from their own class.
- Difficult cases are further discussed before results are entered.

Approach 2

- Teachers combine and distribute the student tasks among themselves for assessment.
- The results are returned to the class teacher, who reassesses all tasks or the tasks of students who have unexpected results.
- Unusual cases are considered by all teachers concerned.

Approach 3

- Samples from all classes are distributed.
- All teachers assess the same tasks.
- Differences in results are discussed to gain a clearer and more consistent understanding of the application of the performance descriptors or assessment criteria.
- When all teachers are confident, they have a consistent understanding of the application of the performance descriptors or assessment criteria, each teacher assesses tasks from their own class.

Determining initial school-based assessments in partnership with another school

Best practice recommends that initial discussions take place at the beginning of the academic year between teachers from different schools.

It is useful to swap some drafts of typical work early in the process of completing the school-based assessment. The earlier a common understanding between teachers is established, the more smoothly the process will be completed.

Teachers in schools that are combining their individual assessments will find it useful to discuss, and come to an agreement on, student completion dates.

Refer to [Administrative information: Schools and registered training organisations](#) for information about setting up partnerships specifically for school-based assessment.

Producing a combined set of comparable scores for a school-based assessment

The following steps are recommended:

1. Participating teachers should discuss the requirements of the Study Design, the chosen assessment tasks for each outcome, the performance descriptors or assessment criteria for each task or outcome, and the assessment program of each of the partnership schools. This communication should occur as early as possible, and not later than the expected date of completion of the first designated assessment task for the unit.
2. The teachers should establish agreement on the procedures to be followed to ensure comparability of assessments. This includes the scheduling and marking schemes of any tasks to be done in common.
3. Each school reviews the assessment tasks of its own students. It is expected that the schools with more than one class for the study will apply their own procedures to achieve comparability of assessments within their school.
4. Each school selects student tasks for cross-marking. For small-group partnerships, this should include all the tasks from the school with the small group, and at least an equivalent number from the partner school. For other partnerships, teachers should agree on an appropriate number, preferably at least five pieces from each school. For each task, the second marking should be 'blind' – that is, made without any knowledge of the assessment given by the student's own teacher.
5. Teachers then discuss both assessments for each task and agree on a final score. If the teachers cannot reach consensus, the two scores should be averaged or adjusted appropriately. As a result of the cross-marking exercise, it may be necessary to adjust the assessments of other tasks not included in the cross-marking.
6. When all assessments have been finalised, the scores for each student on each task should be collated in a single list for the partnership. 'Each school must keep a copy of this list, as the VCAA may request it for analysis purposes.' (VCE Partnership Policy 2022')

Appendix 2: List of words used for Likert scaling

Significantly increased

a great deal
absolutely exploded
almost unachievable level
around 15 hours per week just on these two classes
asking too much
Assessment of one Year 11 class increased by approximately 13 hours this year
astronomical unsustainable
Astronomically
at least doubled
at least twice the amount of work and no commensurate benefit to students
challenging
comparison chart illustrating significant extra work
completely unsustainable
considerable increase
considerably
Considerably more...put us under great stress and strain
Considerably!
created a lot of extra work
definitely increased
doubled if not tripled
doubled my marking
doubled workload
doubles what we had to mark previously
draining, a killer
Dramatically
dramatically
dramatically increased
endless
enormous
enormous impact
enormous increase
enormous
Enormously
Enormously
equivalent of two weeks full time work
exacerbated workload issues
excessive
excessive workload
excessive
exponentially

exponentially
exponentially increased
extra marking, extra moderation, bench-marking and cross-marking with the team
extremely
Extremely negatively
extremely onerous
extremely time-consuming
four additional finished assessment tasks
from 1 SAC to 3....
full on.
greatly increased
have 2 Year 12 classes this year so that's 46 students doing 3 pieces each, that's 136 pieces to mark.
It took all of my free periods for 2 weeks and I took home work every night so that I wasn't falling behind with other things at work which meant I was falling behind on family time, house work and exercise. And that's not counting all the practice pieces I read in the lead up to the SAC. It honestly was a month of my working life where it was my sole focus.
Heavier moderation
Heavily
high level of increase
huge
huge impact
huge impact
Huge impact on workload... unworkable and exhausting
huge increase
huge increase in workload
huge, consumed a lot of time
huge, enormous
Huge, onerous, oppressive
Huge. Close to burn out
hugely
Hugely – the amount of work with marking is absolutely insane in ways I can't even express
HUGELY!
Hugely! Unbearably. It has made me quite ill due to the heavy marking load in a very short time.
I have been teaching since 1988 and have never had such a heavy workload in this subject
I was completely overwhelmed with marking
immense
immense amount of work
immense increase
Immensely
immensely
immensely impacted
immensely overwhelmed
Immensely
impacted my workload immensely

increased considerably
increased dramatically
increased exponentially
increased marking compounded
increased my workload exponentially
increased our workload so much. Everyone in the Year 12 English team felt this.
Increased the workload significantly
Increased workload by 30%
incredibly
incredibly time consuming
incredibly
instead of marking 5 SACs for the year, we are now marking 7
intense
IT HAS BEEN HUGE!!!
It was entirely impossible for me to get that number if SACs marked within work hours – I was marking after work and over the weekends in order to get it all done. I'm not opposing to occasionally working outside of hours, but not to this extent.
large increase
led to extreme stress and burnout
load almost tripled
Major increase
many additional hours
markedly increased
massive
Massive extra marking burden
massive time-sink
massively
Massively
momentous
monumental
More than double the marking
more than doubled
much more labour intensive
much more time
multiplied the marking X 3
My marking load for this Area of Study has tripled
notably increased my workload
Two thirds extra (.66)
onerous
out of this world
overwhelming
phenomenal increase
relentless
significant

significant
significant increase
significant increase
Significantly
significantly added to my workload
significantly increased
significantly increased
Significantly more
Significantly more feedback required
significantly worse
Significantly!
Significantly
stressed out with the amount of marking
substantial additional work
The drafting has increased by double, I would say
the workload has been INSANE
The workload is frankly, unmanageable
three pieces
Three SACs in one Area of Study = a substantial increase in workload
three times the marking load of previous years ... long hours and a huge uptick in weekend work
three-fold jump in correction
three-times the marking of previous units
to a high level
tremendous impact
tremendously
Triple the marking
triple the workload
tripled
tripled it
tripled my workload
tripled the marking load
tripled the workload
tripled the workload
unmanageable
unmanageable
very full-on slog
very late nights
very time consuming
workload is enormous
workload near untenable

Increased

a lot of marking in a short period of time

additional time

been an impact in terms of planning...marking...moderating

breadth is too wide to complete in a unit's worth of work

challenging, time consuming

change fatigue manifest for our teaching team

considerable, a lot of work

definitely increased

had an impact

higher workload

impacted my junior classes

increase

increased

increased

increased

Increased marking and moderation

increased the marking and feedback workload

It added a bit of planning to the workload

It's a lot of marking

more work

noticeable increase

noticeably harder to manage

particularly difficult

rather onerous

Somewhat has increased

The result was staff working hours in the evening and on weekends to read drafts and provide feedback in addition to the verbal feedback in class.

The summative assessment, particularly at Unit 3, feels excessive

The two week turn around creates a stressful environment

the workload did escalate

There has been an increase in the amount of student work that I am reading (compared with the creative response from the previous Study Design) however I think part of that is the process of finding a new equilibrium.

Too many tasks

twenty-five hours of work generated from the SAC, for me

very time-consuming

yes. Challenging

Appendix 3: Q4: In what ways can VATE support you?

Sector	Professional Learning	Advocacy	Resources
Government	<p>More PD on exam prep for crafting texts.</p> <p>Workshops/suggestions about how to better manage this area of study.</p> <p>Once the first exam of this Study Design is published, support us with strategies for how to improve students' skills in the Creating Texts Area of Study.</p> <p>Perhaps some PL about ways to approach the teaching and assessing of this unit in a way that is sustainable.</p> <p>More PD on the foundational skills of English/literacy that is targeted to senior audiences. It's a lot of work to adapt the resources for juniors (and often they are at a primary school level that I am not trained for at all).</p> <p>Perhaps offering some more PD around the use of Mentor Texts?</p> <p>It would be beneficial to see a range of ways that schools have approached this – maybe an online Community of Practice page on the website where you showcase what different schools are doing? Wouldn't have to be in great detail but could include some dot</p>	<p>Advocate for change - this task is not sustainable. It feels like it was created by people who are out of touch with the competing demands placed on teachers and students within the VCE, or who are fortunate enough to have a heavily reduced face-to-face schedule or incredibly talented students.</p> <p>We need VATE to represent us and demand a more equitable situation. English is the only compulsory subject to Year 12 and the amount of correction English teachers have to do impacts on our personal lives as we have to take so much correction home.</p> <p>Encourage a review.... more guidelines and guidance from the VCAA about these tasks. Support to develop AI guidelines too.</p> <p>Authentication was an issue in spite of efforts to use class time.</p> <p>Take the concerns to VCAA and know that this could potentially drive teachers out of the profession.</p>	<p>If you could provide schools with more ways to be able to structure this assessment in school as well as more sample assessments (for audio-visuals).</p> <p>To be honest, I really don't know. Study guides can only do so much. Government schools are broke and have no money, and can't release staff for PD, so something that is created for free would be highly regarded.</p> <p>Modelled course suggestions from teachers not struggling so much with ideas for how to break up the unit to be more achievable.</p> <p>Sample tasks and assessment criteria would be great. Also sample writing in each of the frameworks.</p> <p>Samples of work, specifics re: teaching writing creatively, what that actually looks like. How to really curb, or utilise AI in our teaching.</p> <p>Provide mentor texts for the range of student English language skills.</p>

	<p>points and images of resources? For example, we have put together an 'authentication booklet' that students must complete throughout classes, with all notations and work signed and verified by their teacher.</p> <p>PD on effective and efficient marking strategies at the summative and formative level.</p>	<p>Ask the department to create additional relief for VCE English teachers, e.g. time allowance (without the subsequent additional responsibilities this would somehow inevitably attract), TIL, a limitation on how many (senior) English classes one can teach.</p> <p>Advocate for amendments to the VCE English Study Design in 2025. I think a reasonable adjustment would be to go from three pieces down to two - one crafted/created text (40 marks) with a commentary (20 marks). This will put more emphasis on the writing and allow students to be adequately rewarded (through mark allocations) for the significant time, effort and energy students put into their workshoped texts. While it would not resolve the marking workload issue, it would be a significant improvement from this year.</p> <p>It would also be a huge help for VATE to advocate on our behalf with the AEU and other education unions ahead of negotiations for new agreements. The unique workload of English teachers needs to be recognised and additional time release needs to be embedded into our allotments so that we can complete the significant amount of marking. If we fail to recognise the efforts of VCE English teachers, staff will refuse to</p>	<p>Provide rubrics/performance descriptors written in language students can understand.</p> <p>Perhaps a collection for teachers to purchase for year 11. Teaching Year 12 that is resourced better and where the texts have been vetted is much easier.</p> <p>More teaching resources on different frameworks with explicitly clear teaching materials and multiple examples of different high-level responses.</p> <p>More sample pieces for the framework and guides on how to write in styles perhaps?</p> <p>Can we see possible yearly overviews from other schools so we can see how other schools are managing their units? I think also seeing what COURSEWORK requirements other schools supplement the units with.</p> <p>A developmental rubric across the assessment tasks, or a way to decrease the formidable number of pieces being created for assessment.</p>
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		<p>teach these classes in future, and we will lose more expertise and quality teachers.</p> <p>Advocate for changes to the current Study Design to reduce teaching load and therefore teacher burnout (i.e., reduce number of SACs for Crafting Texts unit; remove audio-visual component from Unit 4, Area of Study 2).</p> <p>Please share my disappointment at the lack of information given to us in 2023 to begin the year with two new units of work, and my frustration that this feels like added assessment and feedback, in an English workload that is already weighed down by this.</p> <p>You can advocate to VCAA on our behalf about the excessive workload that this has had on teachers, and the impact that this will have in the longer term in attracting teachers to English and VCE English in particular.</p> <p>Advocate to VCAA to make adjustments to the Study Design and reduce it back to ONE piece of creative</p> <p>By advocating to the VCAA that the additional marking load is beyond the capacity of a full-time teacher.</p>	<p>Free resources, including templates on how to deconstruct model texts in terms of register and mode.</p> <p>Development of resources to expedite assessment process.</p> <p>Resources for peer feedback?</p> <p>Sample texts (annotated and non-annotated), templates, proformas, guides, etc. Supporting resources for low-end students.</p> <p>Creating texts prompt bank for assessment and practice tasks.</p> <p>Give more resources for each theme that we can just pick up and run with. More mentor texts, more guidance on what student work should look like, worked examples etc.</p> <p>Annotated exemplars of different text types, a comment bank for reports and a student friendly rubric.</p> <p>Provide resources on teaching the different frameworks.</p> <p>Create banks of lessons and sample responses with feedback.</p>
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		<p>Advocate for guidelines for drafting for Crafting/Creating texts.</p> <p>It would be great if additional time release could be implemented for VCE English to accommodate the heavy marking load. It would be great if there could be more specific advice on how SACs should run and how we can manage marking more effectively.</p> <p>Change the requirements of this unit in communication with the VCAA. Mentor texts and the exam style SAC would be enough to build the skills students need.</p> <p>Lobby VCAA to alter the Study Design and provide rubrics that match the allocated marks. Exam boards in other countries provide the rubrics; and if students are ranked against one another in Victoria, then they should be marked against an identical rubric.</p> <p>VATE can campaign the principal class to allow us to be given time release for marking this heavy load of extra SACs - Part B and C are more marking. Maybe we only need one Creative and the written explanation could be part of the SAC so therefore VCAA could adjust their SAC requirement.</p>	<p>Provide the exemplars of a full-length texts of each of the outcome - this is what I have to do to show the students what to aim for. It'd be vital for both teachers and students to see. This also pertains the oral presentation, a recording of it - backward design.</p> <p>Marking guide.</p> <p>I'd really like VATE, if possible, to collate best practice examples of how schools are tackling this AoS and then providing a suite of resources to help develop some consistently between schools. This is sort of happening in an uncoordinated way via the network email list but could, perhaps, be formalised.</p> <p>I would like more teaching materials, especially for students who need differentiation or EAL students.</p> <p>Once the assessor's report is completed it would be beneficial to have a summary created of what the examiners are looking for so that we can better tailor our units to VCAA's expectations.</p>
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		<p>Reduce the requirements to one written piece and a commentary. Make their requirements clearer (in the Study Design and in the rubric).</p> <p>By advocating for adjustments to the Study Design: reduce the number of SACs. The Language Analysis marking load has also increased.</p> <p>Provide resources for leadership as to how they can support their English team – it feels as though there is often a very big disconnect between leadership and the English team. We are sometimes seen as quite demanding with our time (I and both my team constantly feel as if we're overwhelmed with the workload). I think that they forget how much work goes into teaching texts (especially at a senior level) and just chalk it up to 'that's what comes with teaching English'. But this view just continues to perpetuate the idea that the disparity of workload (considering marking assessments and preparing to teach texts effectively) is something that is equitable and contributes to the lack of staff wanting to teach English/number of English teachers in the profession.</p> <p>I'd love to have pressure put on VCAA to provide clearer AI policies and procedures and direct communication</p>	<p>Sample materials, additional suggestions of texts, examples of writing.</p> <p>Provide templates to help students self-assess.</p> <p>Provision of resources, marking guides.</p> <p>Provide more resources for the expected outcomes. This should help ease the workload of creating resources.</p> <p>Maybe more prompts for writing???</p> <p>More resources, including exemplars and idea generators for each Framework.</p> <p>More suggestions for frameworks and mentor texts at other year levels.</p>
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		<p>with students each year about AI – rather than just schools fighting the battle individually. I think VCAA could be more directly communicating with students on this issue.</p> <p>Advocate for VCAA to remove the requirement for students to produce two written SAC texts constructed in consideration of audience, purpose, and context. It should be reduced to one in 2025.</p> <p>Advocate for some relief from the onerous nature of this Study Design. Marking three pieces of substantial length and complexity for one Outcome is difficult in terms of hours, it is logistically tough to administer in a large school, and it is challenging to moderate/benchmark/rank. Social media groups, my personal network of colleagues as well as the VATE network provide ample evidence for the stress that Year 12 English teachers are under right now. It's not sustainable and I ask VATE to convey this to VCAA in the strongest of terms.</p> <p>When you change the Study Design, have more direction. We completed PDs from mid-last year, but there wasn't too much clarity given.</p>	
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		<p>More explicit dialogue with VCAA about their unrealistic understanding about the role of English teachers in modern secondary schools.</p> <p>Advocate for changes to the VCAA to reduce the workload required in Y12 VCE, particularly this unit of study.</p> <p>Please advocate for us. I don't understand why there needs to be a commentary component to the workshop SAC at all.</p> <p>Just advocating for some sort of recognition of the marking load for VCE English teachers, compared to other subjects. Ideally, the Department would change the full-time load to allow more of this marking to take place at school.</p> <p>Advocate for English teachers to have greater time allowance.</p> <p>Is it possible for VATE to suggest to VCAA that the assessed part of Creating Texts be reduced to one piece (with the reflection) for each student, rather than two? Students might write two, but only select one for submission.</p> <p>VATE could urge VCAA to review and amend the need for seven separate tasks in Units 3-4. This is highly</p>	
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		<p>inequitable compared to the many subjects that only have four. As this is a workload issue, and not a deficiency in the teachers' ability to teach the content and skills, I do not see how professional development or other offers would be of any benefit</p> <p>I'm not sure what VATE can do – this appears to be an issue that schools need to address. There are ways that schools could accommodate this unreasonable workload – class sizes need to be much smaller (15 at most), or schools need to give year 11 and 12 marking days. These accommodations are often made in the private sector but not in the government system. Perhaps VATE's responsibility to advocate to higher authorities that can enforce workload adjustments.</p> <p>Advocate for the teachers. While creative writing is important and there is some value in the process of this unit, it isn't working for students or teachers. Everyone feels burnt out.</p> <p>Support us in notifying the Department about increased workload and that schools need to give more time for moderation for English teachers.</p>	
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		Advocate on our behalf to reduce the workload associated with the new Study Design – this level of work is unsustainable.	
Catholic	<p>Some discussion of the exam task would be helpful.</p> <p>Could you share best practice in how schools are managing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Area of Study 2. exam prep for section B. <p>Perhaps some PL sessions on how to deal with authentication issues, as well as how to reduce the teaching and learning time for this outcome.</p> <p>Guidance as to how schools can attend to the use of AI in essay writing. VATE can also provide guidance on how the stimulus material should be used.</p> <p>Clarity around some of the ambiguity in the SD and supporting documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of 'I' and other personal pronouns in the Unit 1 Personal Response. There has been a split in opinions at our school. - Unit 3 Creating Texts Reflective commentary: is it a commentary on the writing process across BOTH creative pieces, or just one? <p>There is conflicting information coming from Insight and Ticking Mind, as well as other organisations. The VCAA docs are ambiguous.</p>	<p>Advocate for a revised Study Design as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>Agitate for this AoS to become less of a burden – one task, shorten the time frame, two mentor texts.</p> <p>VATE can advocate to schools via the VCAA to direct them to provide senior English teachers with additional time (in loads or via release) to complete mandated additional work, that is, correction/assessment that other teachers do not have to do. The workload of an English teacher has been significantly increased by this new AOS. Literature 3/4 now also has additional tasks that need to be assessed. English teachers at our school are burnt out.</p> <p>Lobbying VCAA for a Study Design review!</p> <p>Advocating to VCAA.</p> <p>VATE could share the main concerns with the VCAA about the new Study Design and champion for much needed</p>	<p>Sample pieces for students to review and look at.</p> <p>Could we have sample responses?</p> <p>Could you share best practice in how schools are managing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Area of Study 2. exam prep for section B. <p>Examples of works/Sample pieces.</p> <p>VATE can provide exemplar texts.</p> <p>More resources that break down the style and language of the mentor texts. Maybe some ideas about supplementary.</p> <p>Teaching materials, worked examples.</p> <p>VATE could suggest ways that VCE Unit 3/4 English teachers could try to make the current area of study more manageable for next year. VATE could give examples of suggested timelines and dates for Sacs for Units 3/4. Any suggestions on</p>

	<p>- Degree to which the students work must respond to the Framework texts as well as the stimuli. There is no explicit reference required in the SD or Assessment guide materials.</p> <p>Showing and sharing existing units of work and timelines that have been effective for staff and students.</p> <p>Offering PD on how we can best moderate tasks such as these in a more efficient manner</p>	<p>changes. This Study Design doesn't need just small tweaks, it needs a complete rethink. It doesn't work.</p> <p>Tell VCAA they are increasing staff workload when there are already teacher shortages and we're spread thin as is.</p> <p>Appeal for Study Design surrounding SACS to be edited.</p> <p>Advocate to VCAA the issue of workload on behalf of staff and for equity across all schools with regards to dissemination of information.</p> <p>Advocate for the Crafting Texts and Creating Texts Unit to be changed from TWO folio pieces and a commentary, to ONE folio piece with commentary. The drafting/ feedback process is good, but having TWO folio pieces is too much.</p> <p>Make our exhausted voices heard.</p> <p>Please request some sort of review of teacher workloads.</p> <p>Recommend that the request for additional SACs in the Framework be revised for 2025. Exhaustive marking will not retain staff in the subject.</p>	<p>making the marking load more sustainable would be very welcome.</p> <p>Showing and sharing existing units of work and timelines that have been effective for staff and students.</p> <p>Writing models of units to show what it can look like</p> <p>A list of supplementary texts for students for each Framework of Idea at Year 12, an example Framework for Year 11, an example unit plan, example student pieces for expository, narrative and persuasive writing.</p> <p>I think what I really need is unit examples for years 7-9. We are constantly rewriting our 7-9m unit plans, updating them with new books, film, issues, resources etc and I find this is a real stress when also trying to handle Senior English.</p> <p>I'd love framework/text suggestions for Unit 1 that are packaged resources as well, with activities and rubrics to use - this would be a great support that VATE could offer.</p> <p>Perhaps providing a meaningful self-assessment tool for students to use</p>
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		<p>Advocate for a moderation day.</p>	<p>in the drafting process and for practice tasks leading up to the Creating Texts SAC.</p> <p>Some suggested ways that we could do these tasks that would minimise both the teaching and marking workload. Provide annotated samples that would help with moderation.</p> <p>The resources VATE produces for Year 12 English are excellent, but I would like to see you produce similar resources for common/popular texts at other year levels.</p> <p>Examples of practice stimulus prompts are great, or suggestions on how to structure the two assessments. Examples of how to moderate efficiently is also good. How to pull relevant parts out of the mentor texts.</p> <p>More examples work and resources for developing skills within frameworks.</p> <p>If you could provide schools with more ways to be able to structure this assessment in school as well as</p>
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			more sample assessments (for audiovisuals).
Independent	<p>More PL on this AoS.</p> <p>Professional development sessions on this Area of Study – in particular, looking at ways in which teachers can get students to experiment and look at more hybrid text construction. Resources and ideas to look at how this impacts 7-10 with the new Victorian Curriculum/ACARA. This is where a lot of our work is being directed at: re-evaluating how we teach writing and look at the writing process in the middle years.</p> <p>More regional PD on each of the Areas of Study. It is difficult to get to the PD, most of which is in Melbourne.</p> <p>PD on various ways of running the task</p> <p>PL about how to prepare students for the Section B exam task would be useful.</p>	<p>Could VATE put out some guidelines for moderation time allocation that we could present to the school?</p> <p>Put out a statement addressed to school executive teams on behalf of English teachers, and subject English, clearly outlining the additional time demand of our subject in general particularly at VCE level that other subjects don't have and suggesting a 'best practice' model for how school leaders can support their English faculties (including suggested time allowances for moderation, marking, rubric design, professional learning etc.) If the organisation could attempt to advocate on our behalf to decision-makers directly it might help at least some teams in some schools if those leaders choose to read the information and do something about it.</p> <p>Advocate for an urgent revision of the assessment of Creating Texts. In my opinion, it needs to be one scored piece and a reflective commentary.</p> <p>Advocate for teachers by raising questions about these areas of the new</p>	<p>Provide us with access to a broader range of texts of various forms for each framework of ideas.</p> <p>Transcripts of audio versions.</p> <p>Provide model/worked examples of student work.</p> <p>An exemplar unit planner with recommended approaches/suggested resources.</p> <p>Provide some sample texts and transcripts. – Provide an annotated model example for the 4 x different purposes (reflect, express, explain, argue).</p> <p>More ideas for developing the responses to the Frameworks.</p> <p>Any guides are good. Guidelines for how to structure this AoS over a 6–7-week period.</p> <p>Recommendations of mentor texts in terms of text form. Not limiting to just</p>

		<p>Study Design and perhaps reframing them to minimise the demands of the task on students, as well as specifically addressing best practice approaches that acknowledge the challenge of authenticity.</p> <p>Please convey to VCAA the very real increase in our workload – not only has 1 SAC been replaced with 3 in Unit 3 (Frameworks) but they have added an audio component to the assessment of Argument Analysis in Unit 4. VCAA needs to make some changes to the Study Design to relieve the pressure and additional burden – the marking load itself is simply unsustainable. (And in our case, we have 2 teachers teaching 2 Year 12 classes, so there is double the workload. There will be many schools that find themselves in this boat, especially with teacher shortages and, I would imagine, regionally.) This is not the time to increase teacher workload, when so many are fleeing the profession. Let whoever designed the change know that they have probably driven many good English teachers out of the profession by implementing an exponential growth in preparation and marking loads that was perfectly foreseeable.</p>	<p>short narratives, or persuasive pieces.</p> <p>Let us know what other schools did and what worked well and what was a nightmare so we can collectively learn together.</p> <p>Resources on teaching writing for different purposes.</p>
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		<p>Approach VCAA with a selection of teacher responses to this survey – they need to see the negative impact this is having on English teachers. VCAA can't function without VCE English teachers, yet their decisions when creating new Study Designs are driving teachers from the subject / profession.</p> <p>Advocate for the ludicrousness of this new Study Design on behalf of English teachers.</p> <p>Advocate for a 'common sense' approach to the number of pieces required for U3 AoS2.</p> <p>Write a letter to principals asking to consider providing additional time for English teachers in their teaching allotments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide a much clearer indication of the assessment expectations at for Unit 1 (Crafting) – Communicate with all school leaders to encourage moderation time to be granted. <p>Either negotiate curriculum modification, assist in negotiating for more time release for Senior School English teachers, or make changes to the exam.</p>	
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		<p>They can advocate for a removal of extra SACs though.</p> <p>Please advocate for teachers! With this new SAC PLUS the addition of audio-visual analysis in Unit 4 Analysing Argument (essentially adding ANOTHER piece to mark), the extra skills required to be taught and texts to be sourced for analysis has been burdensome. Not to mention the logistics of administering the SACs.</p> <p>Advocate for a modification of the unit.</p> <p>Feedback to VCAA about the increase in workload, pressure on schools to support staff by providing time dedicated to moderation (staff taken off teaching duties to do this).</p> <p>Notify our leadership team of the increased workload with the new Study Design. Also, reinforce that English staff should have allocated time that is not in our own planning time to moderate work.</p> <p>Advocating for an amendment to the Study Design through VCAA. For example, only mandating one SAC for the unit, accompanied by a Reflective Commentary, with other</p>	
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		<p>writing used to satisfy the key skills in the outcome.</p> <p>VCAA could make explicit what conditions the SAC/s must be completed in. I am certain there are schools who have just pushed the exam-style task, disregarding the spirit of the unit and force-feeding the skills needed for the exam. This will, undoubtedly, advantage those students in the exam.</p> <p>They could remove the AV component from the Analysing Argument SAC, reducing the workload of that AoS and balancing out the additional work in Creating Texts.</p> <p>Lobby to remove one of the outcomes. The sentiment of the Creating and Crafting texts is good but coupled with the aural in Analysing/Exploring argument the number of assessments has significantly increased and therefore marking workload and stress for students has significantly increased.</p> <p>Lobby VCAA to re-visit Exploring Argument Unit 4. Rather than three parts, it should be two with the audio-visual being one, the oral presentation being the second.</p>	
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		<p>Ideally, collate the 3 creative writing tasks into ONE task that is like the exam – to build the skills you wish to assess in the final exam. If you find that does not meet the purpose of the original intention behind that unit of work, then cut out the creative writing from the exam and reduce the SACs to one creative and reflective piece only.</p> <p>PLEASE EMAIL OUR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TO INFORM THEM OF THE WIDE-RANGING DIFFICULTIES WE ARE HAVING AND HOW THEY CAN SUPPORT US WITH MORE MARKING AND CROSS MARKING TIME! They do not listen to us teachers and perceive our struggles as simply complaining for the sake of complaining, but that is NOT the case!</p> <p>Reduce the expectations on staff in terms of assessed coursework. Reduce the examination to a more sizeable task (2 hours = 2 responses)</p> <p>Speak up on behalf of English teachers and request VCAA make a modification to the Study Design. Remove one of the creating text SACs (there does not need to be two) and shift the weighting from 20, 20, 20 to simply 40 (creating text) 20 (reflective commentary)</p>	
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		<p>Lobby the VCAA to amend this section of the Study Design. While the intent is admirable – the fact it came into being when Generative AI has really taken off has made the whole process so much more challenging. If they could be far more stringent with the processes for how this should be done that would also be welcome; it is very nebulous, and this has made it so much harder in schools with many classes.</p>	
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