

[Balsamo to VATE]

30 January 2025

Dr Jo O'Mara
VATE President
Email: executiveofficer@vate.org.au

Dear Jo

Thank you for your letter of 21st January 2025.

We appreciate the detailed feedback on the 2024 VCE English Language examination and are grateful for your advocacy of VCE English Language teachers and students across the state of Victoria.

We worked with teachers and schools who approached us directly with their concerns during and after the examination, and monitored the feedback through the VATE English Language network. All feedback that we received directly was treated with a high level of importance, and investigations were conducted for every issue raised. Responses were provided to each stakeholder within 24 to 48 hours, to ensure that reassurance and support was provided as soon as possible.

These concerns and the subsequent investigations provided key points of reflection and learning that have informed the work that we are undertaking in 2025, and into the future.

We acknowledge there were some challenges with the 2024 VCE English Language examination. Section A, Question 1 was found to contain an error due to misalignment with the metalanguage as outlined in the Characteristics of the study in the *2024-2028 VCE English Language Study Design*. As a result, the item was invalidated, as is standard procedure where an item is identified as psychometrically anomalous. In practice, all students who attempted any part of the examination were awarded the 2 marks for this question.

We also acknowledge other questions in Section A were challenging, and there were issues with the typesetting of the text for Section B. All the feedback we have received about the 2024 VCE English Language examination will guide the development of the 2025 English Language examination.

Each year, the assessment guidelines are adjusted to reflect the level of achievement that can be observed in the responses provided to each question by the unique cohort. This process ensures accurate and fair ranking of students across the state, based on their responses and overall performance. It is a process that addresses issues that may arise from length and complexity of the texts, wording, and stimuli.

Throughout the assessment period, assessors were briefed with detailed and extensive advice about rewarding student responses for each question. In assessor training sessions, assessors discussed both the examination and the student responses respectfully, and

considered the multiple ways students responded to the examination, and how students could be rewarded for their knowledge and skills.

The observations from the assessment process and any adjustments go on to inform the external assessment report that will be published shortly.

Our data did suggest that the 2024 VCE English Language student cohort performed well in a difficult examination.

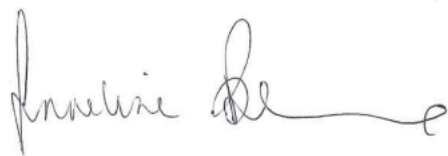
We would like to reassure you that VCE examinations are assessed by expert teachers and there are checks and balances in place to mitigate against any anomalies. Each section of the examination is blind marked by two assessors. If there is discrepancy between the marks, the examination will go to a third assessor, and if there are any ongoing discrepancies it can be marked by a member of the chief assessor panel. In addition, before issuing final results, an anomalous grade check is undertaken by comparing marking to indicative grades provided by the school (and the VCE teachers), and GAT component scores. If the differences are statistically significant, the chief assessor panel will review these students' assessments. The VCAA is committed to fairness and equity; our processes are in place to support this commitment.

We will always work with teachers, students, schools and stakeholders to take on feedback in order to continually improve.

Furthermore, we welcome any opportunity to meet and discuss how we can work together in future examination periods to support and reassurance to teachers, encourage them to direct their concerns through the formal channels, and mitigate against unnecessary stress and anxiety.

Thank you again for your letter and your feedback.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Annelise Balsamo', with a stylized, flowing script.

Annelise Balsamo
Manager, English, Curriculum Division