

# VATE VCAA SURVEY

JUNE 2025



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The 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. VATE pledges our unwavering support to the First Peoples' Treaty process in Victoria.

**Positionality Statement:** The listed authors of this report are all uninvited settler Australians.

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the material contained in this resource, including links to websites, was correct at the time of publishing. VATE will be pleased to hear from interested parties to rectify any errors or omissions.

## **2025 © Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE)**

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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.

## Overview of this Survey Report

VATE highly values having the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) operating as an independent statutory body with its own board. We celebrate the innovative, research-based curriculum that we have in Victoria. We value the work the VCAA has done with VATE over many years representing the subject English teaching community. VATE highly values the close relationship with the English curriculum team at the VCAA. This is our motivation for preparing this response.

VATE has provided this response to the VCAA review in the form of a Survey Report. We have combined recent data we have collected from our membership with a historical overview of the relationship we have had with the VCAA (and its precedents).

Our submission is most relevant to the following aspects of the review:

- Victorian F-10 curriculum
- Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) curriculum and assessments.

We conducted a survey of the VATE membership specifically about their current expectations and needs in relation to the VCAA. We acknowledge that this Survey Report is produced in a time when our membership is under stress and facing significant challenges, with many of them working in schools which are chronically understaffed.

## VATE's relationship with the VCAA

VATE and the VCAA have a long history of constructive, respectful collaboration with our shared purpose of supporting the effective teaching and learning of English in Victoria. As English is the only compulsory area of study from Years 7-12 and has the most expansive curriculum time, English teachers are the largest group of secondary specialist teachers in Victoria. The importance of the relationship between VATE and the VCAA for the success of English education in Victoria cannot be underestimated.

Central to the relationship between VATE and the VCAA has been the mutual recognition and respect for the independence of each organisation. This has enabled VATE to act as a critical friend in advocating for its members and providing the VCAA with feedback to the curriculum enactment. VATE's advocacy for members to the VCAA often begins with VATE communicating member concerns, and the two organisations working closely towards a solution. The shared understanding of the different roles of each organisation has supported the positive collaboration between VATE and the VCAA and the translation of theory into practice in the English classroom. This has resulted in ongoing benefits for the students and teachers of Victoria, who have had the benefit of exceptional curricula in Years 7-10 and in the VCE Study Designs across the English suite.

### A history of open dialogue and cooperation

With the advent of the VCE in the late 1980s, the VCAA (and in its previous organisational structures) looked to VATE for both experienced classroom teacher and English academic input and guidance to develop senior English curriculum best suited to the Victorian educational system and the needs of students. There was a clear recognition that VATE was best placed to offer firsthand pedagogical and curricular input relating to English.

This was evidenced through the intervening years by VATE-nominated teachers and academics being formally appointed as members of VCAA-run VCE English, EAL, Literature and English Language review committees, curriculum development teams and working parties, and acting as critical friends. Since the advent of the VCE, VATE has been at the forefront of English curriculum implementation in support of all English teachers at the secondary level in Victoria.

Until recently, the relationship between VATE and the VCAA has worked as a partnership. There has been, over many years, regular dialogue between the appointed English Curriculum Manager and the VATE Executive Officer, Council and Office to enable an ongoing and direct link with the experiences and views of secondary English teachers across the state. VATE and the VCAA have worked in collaboration with each other in a number of different ways including:

- the sharing of expertise to help develop curriculum and assessment;
- support in setting up and running reference groups to discuss proposed changes to curriculum;
- the running of professional learning programs statewide to implement new VCE Study Designs; and

- the dissemination of important information in a timely and positive way to best support practising teachers.

This is exemplified by the longstanding collaboration in presenting the annual ‘Meet the VCE Assessors’ sessions for the four English subjects, which have been instrumental in offering VCE English, EAL, Literature and English Language teachers accurate, reliable and validated feedback and curricular advice, based on the accumulated knowledge of the relevant VCAA Chief and Assistant Assessors.

The [VCE History Project](#) (Doecke et al, 2019) also highlights the close working relationship between VATE and the VCAA (then VCAB) which goes back many years.

The nature of the relationship between VATE and the VCAA has notably changed in recent times. Unfortunately, it no longer works as a partnership, and this, most importantly, is to the detriment of English teachers looking for guidance and support in their teaching. There has been a frustration, on the part of VATE and many members, about the lack of timely communication of essential (often crucial) information which has directly impacted the work of English teachers and of VATE as the subject association committed to supporting them.

### **Recommendations**

- To re-establish a positive and constructive partnership between VATE and the VCAA which respects the independence of each organisation while clearly articulating the various ways in which we can work collaboratively together to support the English teaching community in Victoria.
- To develop shared Professional Learning activities between the VCAA and VATE to proactively support English teachers statewide in their effective teaching of Years 7-10 English and the VCE English studies.
- To continue to provide opportunities for VATE-nominated English teachers and academics to be appointed to VCAA curricular-review and development groups.
- For the VCAA to improve its open communication processes with VATE, and with the wider teaching community, by establishing timelines and practices that support the effective and timely dissemination of information that aligns more closely with the demands of the school year and teacher planning.

## The VCAA and subject expertise

The VCAA has had a long tradition of providing high level subject expertise, and Curriculum Managers, leadership and staff have come from strong educational and academic backgrounds with deep subject expertise. This has been crucial to the development of rigorous curriculum and assessment by the VCAA. VATE affirms the essential importance of subject expertise in the work of the VCAA and acknowledges the VCAA's support of the expertise of subject English teachers. In this section, we include recent pertinent research conducted with the VATE membership that provides quantitative data that links having and enacting subject identity to the retention of English teachers.

A member survey was conducted as part of the VATE-sponsored research project *Sustaining the English Teaching Profession/al* (Diamond et al, 2023). The project generated valuable data about the current conditions of secondary English teachers' work in Victoria and how English teachers sustain their practice and professionalism in the face of significant challenges and uncertainties. The project aimed to inform and support VATE's efforts to develop the knowledges, identities, and professionalism of its members in uncertain times, while also contributing to state and national debates about the sustainability of the English teaching profession.

179 members completed a survey, which collected data around the themes described above, but also had a set of items designed around issues drawn from research literature. The constructs of freedom (to enact the curriculum), support (provided from school), and identity (as a secondary English teacher) were measured against commitment (to the English teaching profession) as seen in Figure 1.

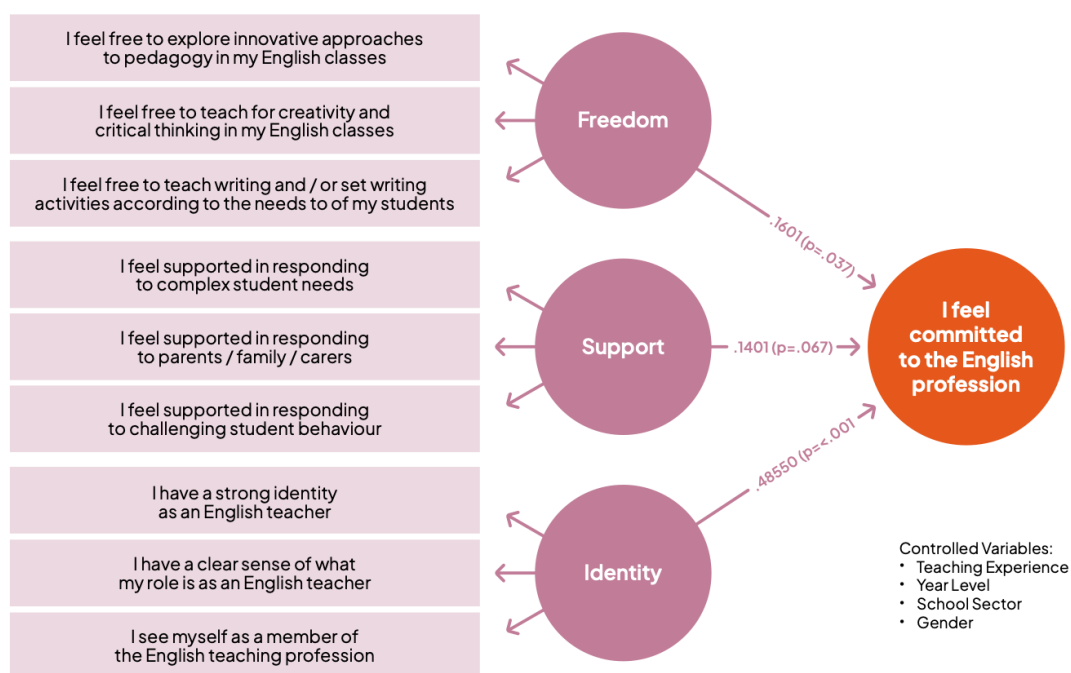


Figure 1  
Commitment to the English teaching profession



*While important and worth talking about, in these results ‘feeling supported’ did not seem to strongly influence teachers’ commitment to the profession, nor was the relationship statistically significant. This may be because support is located and felt most keenly at the school level, whereas commitment to the profession is a broader and more abstract idea. Having a perception of freedom within the classroom had a clear influence on commitment and is of statistical significance. Of the three constructs we measured, identity was a standout. Identity had a large coefficient of .48550 and the p value for this coefficient ( $p < .001$ ) was very small suggesting that these results were likely to be very replicable. This suggests that identity as a subject English teacher is extremely important to an individual English teacher’s commitment to the English teaching profession and their commitment to remaining as a teacher. This relationship is generalisable to a broader population (Hicks and O’Mara, 2024, p. 24).*

We highlight this relevant research to underline the important role that the VCAA has played over many years in supporting and strengthening the professional identity of subject English teachers. The relationship with the VCAA English Curriculum Managers is important in ensuring that English teachers feel valued and confident in their sense of professional identity as subject English teachers. They have, as we stated earlier, worked constructively and collaboratively with VATE over many years. These strong professional relationships increase the sense of identity in the professional sphere for both parties.

The VCAA English Curriculum Managers have also sought to build relationships with pre-service teacher education programs, often visiting pre-service English teachers at their universities and introducing them to the role of the VCAA in curriculum and assessment. This works to elevate the pre-service teachers’ sense of themselves as belonging to, and identifying with, the profession. In a time when we are experiencing a shortage of qualified English teachers, this aspect of the role is crucial for strengthening the workforce.

The role that the VCAA plays in enhancing subject identity and subject expertise is a vital one for Victoria and should not be underestimated in this review. The issue of teacher supply is ongoing. Our research shows that in order to attract and retain subject English teachers over time, developing identity and enabling identity enactment are key.



## About this survey

### Overview of the data collected

VATE circulated a survey to its membership via email. 93 responses were received over a two-week period with 12,347 words contributed. These responses were detailed, nuanced, and overall reflected a positive view of the VCAA and its importance in the development and implementation of a consistent and equitable curriculum and assessment for all students across Victoria.

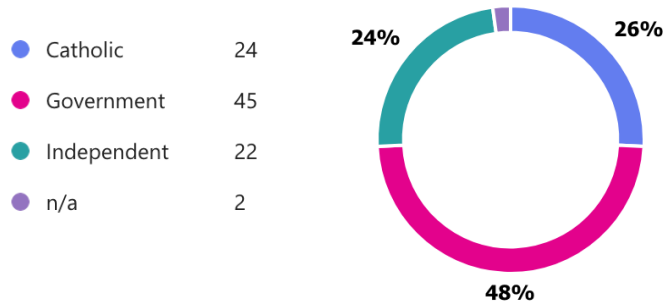
The survey consisted of the following questions:

- In your own words, what is the role of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority?
- Do you seek/receive information from the VCAA?
- How do you obtain information released by the VCAA?
- What type/s of information do you need or expect to be provided by the VCAA?
- Any additional comments.

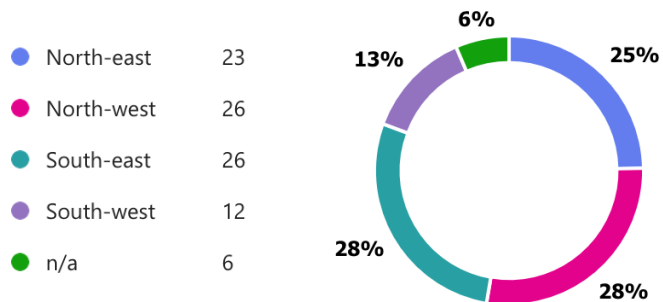
In the following sections, we report on the responses to each of these questions.

## Survey responses

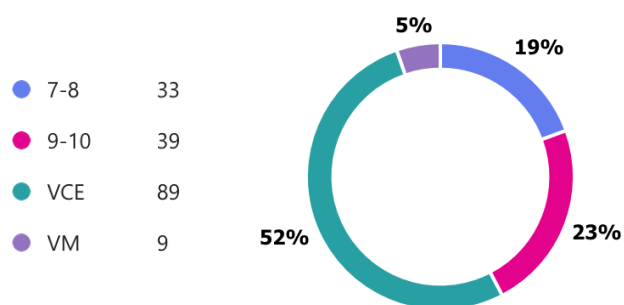
### Sector



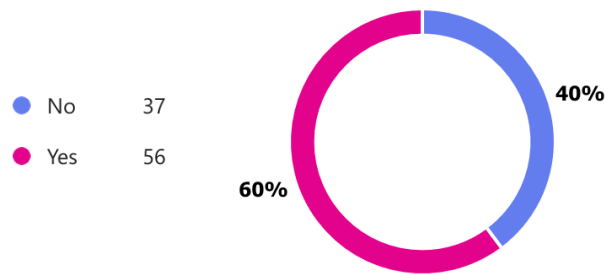
### Region



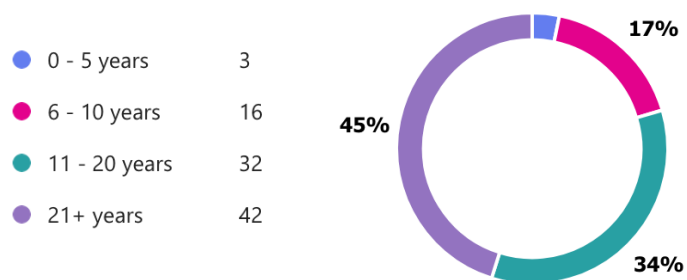
### Year levels currently teaching



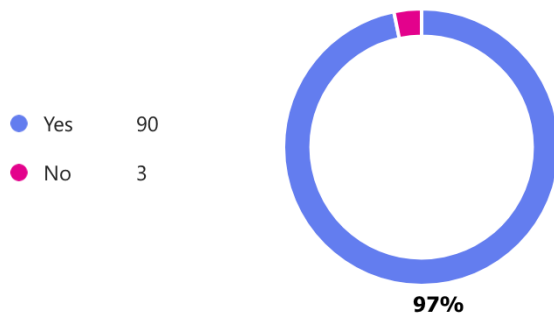
## Leadership position



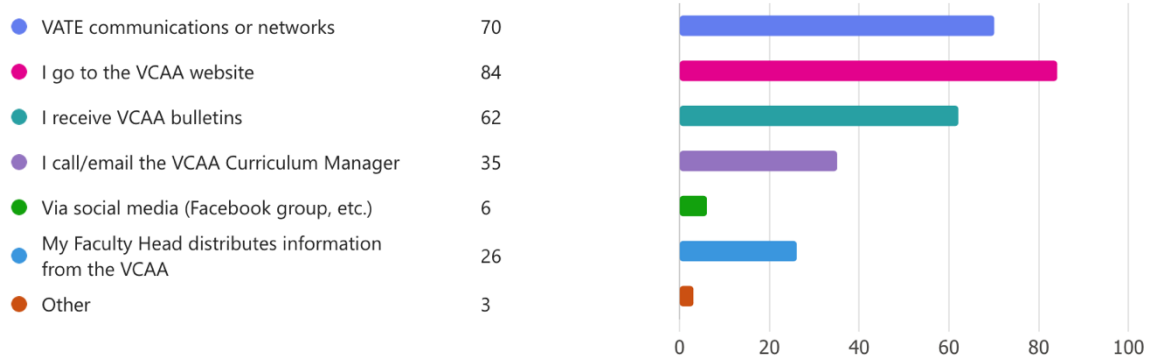
## Years of teaching English



## Do you seek/receive information from the VCAA?



## How do you obtain information released by the VCAA?



## **Question: In your own words, what is the role of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority?**

We received 93 responses to this question. The most succinct response was thus: *'Tell us what to teach.'* Consistency relevance, guidance and support were key terms as were the obvious 'curriculum and assessment'. The following tries to reflect the wide-ranging role of the VCAA: *'The role of VCAA is wide-ranging and complex and probably cannot be adequately captured in a single paragraph, but at its root its focus is on the content and skills taught in Victorian schools, and the way in which the understanding of these is assessed.'*

### **Equity and fairness**

Pleasingly, a portion of responses focused on the VCAA's essential role vis-à-vis ensuring equity and maintaining 'a level playing field for all students at all schools.' This reflects VATE's ambition for subject English: *'VATE is ... committed to a vision of subject English that is equitable, inclusive, robust, creative, responsive, and critical.'*

The responses certainly reflect the importance of the VCAA in developing and monitoring curriculum and assessment practices with 'care' and that are fair for all students across the Victorian educational landscape.

*'To oversee a fair and equitable passage through the education sector for all Victorian students.'*

*'The VCAA reflects the complex nature of our society and ensures that education in Victoria caters for every student regardless of socio-economic, health, family, gender status.'*

### **Focus on VCE**

Concerningly, more than a third of responses viewed the VCAA exclusively via the lens of the VCE: *'The VCAA determine the curriculum and assessment of the VCE and ensure standards and consistency.'* However, as 89 of the respondents taught VCE, this may have skewed the focus in this section. While we understand this focus, we would strongly encourage the VCAA to reflect on ways to ensure its work in the F-10 space is viewed with equal relevance.

*'To write and review the Study Design and provide guidance for teachers about its implementation.'*

### **Support for schools – advice, resources, professional learning**

A good portion of responses focused on the importance of the VCAA in providing clarity and support for the implementation of the curriculum: *'To support teachers across the State with the implementation of the curriculum and the interpretation of the Study Designs.'*

Interestingly, there were a variety of ways in which teachers viewed the VCAA and its role vis-à-vis support:

- assist schools with the delivery of that curriculum;
- provide teacher guidelines and resources;

- to produce materials to support the implementation of that curriculum and to remain responsive to and supportive of teaching inquires regarding the teaching of that curriculum;
- to advise and support schools/teachers to implement curriculum;
- to support teachers to implement the appropriate teaching and learning practices across the state.

One respondent, reflecting on the VCAA's role, believed they were not fulfilling its responsibility in terms of resources and PD: *'They \*should\* be supporting us with PD and resources but to be honest we've really found that area to be lacking.'*

### **World-ready young people**

The development of curriculum and assessment by the VCAA was clearly linked to issues of equity: *'To make sure that students have equal opportunity to succeed in life.'* In a complex democratic society, the importance of the VCAA and its work cannot be overstated: *'To provide curriculum that develops students to become literate and informed adults.'*

How that curriculum is developed was also highlighted in several responses. Research was listed as was national and global best practice: *'Creating and administering state-wide curriculum frameworks with reference to research and global and national best practice.'*

Pleasingly, providing *'opportunities for all students to be able to complete VCE as best suits their needs'* and facilitating pathways to future learning and employment were also highlighted: *'service the educational needs of young learners in preparation for a rapidly changing post schooling environment.'*

### **Recommendations**

- The essential importance of the VCAA is affirmed and communicated by the Review and the state government.
- The role of the VCAA is communicated more effectively to the education and broader community. This is particularly important vis-à-vis its role in F-10 curriculum and assessment.
- Subject expertise and knowledge are prioritised. This includes affirming the importance of the stages of education by employing separate Curriculum Managers for the early years, middle years, and senior secondary English. We would envision these Managers working collaboratively and constructively to develop robust and inspired curriculum. It signals to the English teaching and learning community the importance of each stage of learning and the expertise held by each of those Managers. Further, they each would be able to provide relevant advice and support to educators – based on experience and expertise of that stage of learning.
- The development of Working Parties of subject English educators (practising classroom practitioners and academics) to provide continual feedback about how the curriculum is working, being enacted and to support the managers with access to contemporary and enduring research.

- Partner with VATE to deliver professional learning – we don't necessarily see professional learning as the remit of the VCAA.



**Question: What type/s of information do you need or expect to be provided by the VCAA?**

We received 93 responses to this question.

**Curriculum:** Victorian curriculum 2.0; requirements and updates; documentation; sample units; exemplars/samples/models of quality curriculum maps; learning sequences and lesson plans from various schools across Victoria; material to support differentiation; resources for scaffolding; advice to teachers on suggested approaches to unit outlines; innovative English curriculum; timely advice on curriculum changes.

*'Most importantly, practical examples of how to implement curriculum effectively without having to spend fruitless time looking for support materials.'*

*'I access additional teaching materials for ideas on how to plan units of study and ways to try to offer engaging lessons.'*

**Assessment:** requirements and updates; rubrics for assessment; marking guidelines; performance descriptors; sample assessments; available resources; moderation practice examples and processes.

*'In recent years it has been exclusively regarding aspects of VCE, often assessment, particularly for students who need particular accommodations.'*

*'Teachers and students ... rely on the VCAA for important dates, guidelines for school-based assessments, and explanations of how scores contribute to final results like the ATAR. This information ensures consistency and fairness across all Victorian schools.'*

**VCE Study Designs:** Key knowledge and Key Skills for each AOS for VCE Englishes, updates when there are changes to Study Designs and procedures, advice for teachers on implementation; elaboration on points that are unclear, overly wordy or obtuse.

**Exams:** publication of VCE exams and the GAT; sample exams; exam specifications; timetable and other key dates; requirements and instructions; examiners' reports; marking schemes; past exams; any updates or changes.

**VCE text lists:** current texts as well as canonical texts.

**Data:** statistical information, e.g., graded assessment data; details regarding distribution and weighting of grades.

**Professional learning:** information about opportunities for professional development; training for new VCE teachers; specific advice from experts in particular areas e.g. VCE English study design assistance; job opportunities, e.g. as exam assessors.

**Other:** policy changes; advice about compliance; support with issues that arise; quality assurance processes; samples of student work; information about best pedagogical practice.

*‘Answer “curly” questions about non-standard programs or non-standard approaches to teaching and learning; to provide support and/or assistance with divergent needs; to provide guidance we can share with parents; to support teachers in their endeavours to develop complex and appropriate programs for their cohort; to support understanding of assessment processes and possibilities.’*

**Middle Years:** We received 52 responses to this section.

**Research:** use of research in Learner Progressions (such as that devised by ACER) to inform curriculum and to provide targeted support to all schools about the research into improving literacy with a range of texts.

**Resources:** suggested text lists; work samples; more differentiated exemplars.

*‘Some extra guidance on texts, particularly contemporary texts, and how they might be integrated into programs.’*

*‘Supply new models/exemplars of teaching strategies, samples of moderated student work, regular online catch ups, establish a buddy system, digital activities resources, clarify how AI can be used by students as this is a technological assistant that is here to stay and must be used to scale up student learning and outcomes.’*

**Curriculum:** sample units of work that can be adapted that meet the needs of the Vic Curriculum 2.0 and show the progression of skills and benchmarks of the expected standard.; sample scope and sequences that identify where all areas of curriculum are being met; help with making sure the curriculum is aligned.

**Assessment:** sample assessment tasks, criteria and rubrics; inclusion and disability assessment practices; clearer guidelines about how to implement the 2.0 curriculum in a practical not theoretical manner; more detailed sample assessments with annotated responses that reflect a range of achievement levels.

*‘Offering clearer guidance on how to interpret and apply assessment criteria—especially for analytical and creative tasks—would help promote consistency across schools.’*

*‘Skill-based rubrics or pathways leading from Year 7 to VCE to show how the expected/examined skills can be developed across the years.’*

*‘Clearly outline more imaginative assessment for junior years to encourage creativity and critical thinking (rather than sucking the joy out of English by writing another essay in class).’*

**Support:** more assistance with supporting EAL students in these middle years; professional learning to target teaching and learning in MY;

*‘Providing professional learning opportunities for teachers who do not teach the VCE level to know what they are teaching towards.’*

**VCE English:** We received 65 responses to this section.

**AI:** need better understanding of the changing world of education in relation to AI and its impact on student learning of English; not enabling assessment which can be completed by AI to be on the curriculum, nor burdening teachers with the responsibility of the near impossible task of authenticating student work in the current climate of AI proliferation.

**Assessment:** guidance on designing and marking school-assessed coursework (SACs); clearer and easy to use performance descriptors; high scoring samples for each section; more sample student tasks and assessment rubrics; comprehensive sample responses with annotations that clearly demonstrate how criteria are applied across a range of achievement levels.

*‘Outcomes that reflect the worlds the students are moving into. For the most part, the practices and assessments we are offering students in 2025 are little changed from what we were offering decades ago.’*

**Curriculum:** sample lessons; samples of moderated student work; practical examples and suggestions on how best to teach key skills and knowledge; ensure that the Study Designs are clearly communicated and when there are changes that they have videos as in the past.

*‘A more user-friendly version of the Study Design ... a lot of the language is vague and needs to be interpreted for students, which contributes to the perception that English is a "subjective subject".’*

*‘VCAA must acknowledge that VCE English is an enormous amount of work for teachers in terms of course writing, marking and assessment.’*

**Exam:** reduce to 2-hour exam so that there is parity with other Englishes exams; models of exam texts of high, medium and low to help teachers better moderate their own student work; assessor’s report for the Year 12 exam (more info on marking process would be helpful); dates for exams; provide full sample responses for all sections of the examination; the exam video link introduced by VCAA this year is helpful addition; using real-world (rather than contrived) texts in exam; need more transparency when errors occur in the examination process.

**Resources:** more online resources to support teachers; more differentiated exemplars; recommended terminology; mentoring workshops and recordings of how to run assessments for new and beginning teachers; the VCAA website is difficult to navigate.

**Text list:** select texts that enrich the capacity for students to learn and are well-supported so teachers are not forced to teach something obtuse; more resources and information about the set texts; make reading a stronger focus in the curriculum.

*‘I have very strong opinions about the text list for Section A – there is a growing trend of ‘literary’ texts that are of no interest or relevance to most Year 12 students. The VCAA should consider that the vast majority of students are not undertaking VCE*

*English by choice, and should consider what kinds of texts are most relevant to set them up for success beyond school.'*

**Support:** regular information about what is happening in VCE English across the state and more professional development for teachers of VCE English; more timely information especially about changes; help reduce marking load; understand the working reality of classrooms when reviewing Study Designs, the workload of staff and consider ALL student experiences.

*'It is also important that current practitioners have a voice that gets heard.'*

*'Give ample warning of changes and how these will look, give easy access to feedback channels – often difficult to access Curriculum Manager and have been referred to others when CM is unavailable who gave advice which went against documented procedures.'*

*'I have been teaching VCE English for over 20 years and a subject that was once considered to be a privilege to teach is now considered a burden. My school struggles to find teachers to want to teach at the VCE level and has difficulty retaining the ones who do.'*

**VCE English as an Additional Language:** We received 19 responses to this section.

**AI:** reducing the authentication burden on teachers by ensuring curriculum and assessment design addresses student growing reliance on AI.

**Curriculum:** sample lessons, resources and student tasks particularly in supporting EAL learners (and teachers) within mainstream classes; sample listening tasks so that more consistency can occur across schools; practical examples and suggestions for how best to teach key skills and knowledge.

*'Models/exemplars of teaching strategies, samples of moderated student work, regular online catch ups, establish a buddy system, digital activities/resources, clarify how AI can be used by students as this is a technological assistant that is here to stay and must be used to scale up student learning and outcomes.'*

**Assessment:** assessment rubrics and samples; advice as to how the listening task is moderated across schools.

**Professional Learning:** especially to support those teaching EAL students within a mainstream classroom.

*'I feel like this subject area has not been offered with enough support for teachers and creates confusion as to how to deliver this in the way that best suits the students' needs.'*

*'Language experts and realistic helpful suggestions need to be built as a resource. Good practice needs to be featured and showcased.'*

**Other:** assistance in supporting schools with low student numbers and need to find a partner school; regular and continuing consultation.

**VCE English Language:** We received 23 responses to this section.

**Metalanguage:** clarity around definitions of metalanguage terms (textbooks have conflicting definitions, some terms not included at all).

*'... there is uncertainty about how to write about new metalanguage such as "tenor" or there is a list that says "including" but then teachers aren't sure what else might be included in a list.'*

**Curriculum:** suggested unit structures; suggested responses; practical examples and suggestions on how best to teach key skills and knowledge; clarity on some of the study design terms and changes; expectations regarding student work are often only clear after the exam; clarity about link between Units 1-2 and Units 3-4 and progression of student skills; clarification notes when teachers seek explanations about the Study Designs – perhaps a feedback log or the like so teachers can check their understanding.

*'Ensuring that at least two places on any future study design review panel is filled by university representatives, so that irrelevant and outdated theories and concepts are not jammed into the course on the whim of a few outspoken teachers. Rather, the course should reflect current best practice in the field of linguistics, adapted for beginning learners.'*

**Assessment:** rubrics; marking guides; performance descriptors that align more closely to the typical assessment tasks used in English Language

**Exam:** sample answers; reassurance that the exam fully aligns with the Study Design, including using key terminology exactly as it is described in the Study Design; transparency around the marking guide used by assessors when marking exams.

*'This should not be "secret" knowledge reserved for those who are able to become VCAA assessors.'*

**Resources:** pre-recorded lectures and resources available to all – to benefit students/schools that don't access or subscribe to external providers, and to ensure a more equitable playing field.

**Professional learning:** tailored PD for new Study Design; train more EL teachers.

**VCE Literature:** We received 27 responses to this section.

**AI:** need to reduce the authentication burden on teachers by ensuring curriculum and assessment design addresses students' growing reliance on AI.

**Texts:** review the large number of texts on the current list; a 5th text seems to be unnecessary in a course that needs to be taught in 3 terms; include texts by African

writers/authors (African Literature); suggested (not mandated) adaptations included in the text list.

*'Students are not reading the texts (yes, even if they chose the subject) and if they are, they do not understand them. Our students are coming into this subject with lower skills each year – we should consider the reality of their lived experiences, future directions, and actual needs ....'*

*'It would be nice if VCAA acknowledged that the current study design is overloaded. Six weeks to adequately teach a Shakespeare play?'*

**Curriculum:** more sample responses and readings; practical examples and suggestions on how best to teach key skills and knowledge; it would be helpful to have more exemplar writing provided.

**Assessment:** more examples of SAC responses and tasks; assessment samples; advice/support for cross-marking with other schools for each outcome (small classes and needing external moderation); review the number of assessment tasks in the new Study Design; marking workload for teachers and increased student stress.

**Exam:** the change in exam date, with only two days separating English and Literature is extremely stressful for teachers and students; ensuring the parameters around the exam are clearly communicated and the examiners report session details how to find success in the exam.

*'It took a ridiculously long time to decide to let Literature students use dictionaries in the exam. This was never explained.'*

**Support:** often schools have to run composite classes which means teaching two different lots of curriculum and outcomes – this often means cutting corners; cross marking with other schools for each outcome (small classes and needing external moderation)- struggling to find similar texts studied for some of the outcomes.

*'Improve the provision of professional learning to support teachers to deliver the study design with integrity. Avoid caving in to discourse around the 'difficulty' or 'unpopularity' of Literature and champion it as an academic subject worthy of its place in the options available.'*

**VCE Vocational Major:** We received 12 responses to this section.

**Professional Learning:** suggestions on how best to teach key skills and knowledge; especially for staff new to VM.

*'Not enough support and clarity for the teachers who are teaching these students, which leads to some confusion at times from the students and their expectations of the course.'*

**Resources:** accessible assessment samples and tasks; models of implementing the curriculum; examples of projects; practical examples.

**Other support:** how VM can be married with the VCE; more information on what applied learning looks like in Years 7-10 to build in the right direction.

*‘The latest study design is a step in the right direction but also more on careers from a literacy and numeracy perspective.’*

### **Recommendations**

- To develop research-based policies that address the increasing use of AI in English classrooms and its implications for authentication in order to support teachers and students to navigate this everchanging landscape.
- Work with VATE to develop Professional Learning programs and resources that support teachers 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.



## Any additional comments

For our final question, we received 1272 words from 19 responses. Unlike other questions, the responses here are not easily grouped. However, three themes did emerge: the importance of listening to teachers; specific feedback on curriculum and assessment; support.

It should be noted, however, that these are individual responses and have not been discussed with the wider membership and are included as examples for the VCAA to consider vis-à-vis feedback and processes.

### Importance of listening to teachers

For some respondents, the current VCAA is viewed as *'divorced from the realities of schools.'* As one respondent lamented, *'the VCAA seems defeated currently: who are you listening to? Education matters now more than ever.'*

Importantly, the VATE community sees the vital importance of teacher voice and inclusion in the work of the VCAA – the VCAA should be 'listening' to ensure that they are reflexive and responsive to the lived experience of the current English teacher and student: *'VCAA needs to consider the experience and the views of teachers.'* Further, the below response captures the frustration vis-à-vis the lack of understanding of the education landscape post-COVID.

*'A greater understanding of what FT teaching looks like post-covid. The workload in schools increased enormously and has never gone back to "baseline". This is at least in part to students having missed core elements of the curriculum (even in primary school) and our now needing to plug gaps, but this isn't the only issue. [Curriculum] needs to be crafted with this in mind.'*

It should be noted, however, that teachers were appreciative when the VCAA was responsive to their feedback: *'Grateful also that VCAA listened to English teachers last year and reduced the creative writing load.'*

Finally, there were practical suggestions for ways in which the VCAA could listen to teachers that would be proactive. VATE is supportive of a process of continual feedback.

*'I would suggest that future Study Design reviews begin with a survey of current teachers of the subject to identify what currently works and what is problematic. I know that VCAA puts draft Study Designs out for review, but I think the viewpoints and opinions of teachers need to be taken into account before any re-writing commences, so that a clear understanding of how the Study Design currently works (or doesn't) is attained.'*

### Specific feedback on curriculum and assessment

Not surprisingly, many responses took the opportunity to focus their comments on specific aspects of curriculum and assessment. Again, VATE would encourage the VCAA to institute a responsive feedback cycle.

Examples of VCE specific feedback:

*'Assessment needs to have consistency between Units 1 & 2 to Units 3 & 4, so that the students have a sense of continuity and believe that they are building knowledge and skills in an achievable manner.'*

*'We like the new VCE Study Design, so glad that creative writing has come back.'*

*'Unit 3 AoS 2 – Creating Texts is a dreadful Outcome. It assesses nothing. It has increased my workload by 400%. And students can duplicate their pieces, which are also impossible to authenticate.'*

*'As a long-term teacher, I am becoming increasingly frustrated with VCAA's insistence on regularly re-writing the English and Literature Study Designs.'*

## **AI**

Interestingly, AI was not a prevailing theme in the additional comments section. However, the following responses engage with the concern that the VCAA has not adequately addressed the challenges of AI.

*'And it does often feel as though we are trialling ideas rather than being given well (not over) documented teaching and learning strategies that are facing contemporary challenges, such as the advent of AI.'*

*'There seems to be an almost violent disconnect between what the VCAA stipulates and what is required in the classrooms by students in many instances, such as the outlined Areas of Study. Further, the almost wilful ignorance regarding AI use by English students is stupefying. We must take concrete steps to only allow assessment that is based on student skills, not their interaction with AI. This is urgently required.'*

## **Middle years and lesson plans**

We include this comment firstly to raise the concern of the Department's Lesson Plans project and secondly to highlight the importance of working with VATE and our members in the development of resources.

*'I am trepidatious about the curriculum/lesson plan project forthcoming. As I wrote some of it, I didn't feel I would actually teach what was produced by the time it had been through the machine. Too busy. Would rather have something produced by VATE (talking 7-10 here) akin to the VCE materials/study guides VATE produces.'*

## **Support**

While we acknowledge that the VCAA does provide a range of support materials for teachers, the prevailing feedback from members is that the VCAA website is difficult to navigate and inaccessible. VATE agrees that the website and supporting documents need to be reviewed to ensure they are accessible and updated in a timely manner – transparency and accessibility would engender greater trust from the teaching and learning community.

*'Make the website easier to navigate. I use it often and still seem to get lost every time. Provide documents as pdfs rather than word docs.'*

*'Text lists this year bizarrely hard to access on new VCAA website: link now is direct to a Word doc that does not open.'*

*'Produces impenetrable documentation and offers little support, and what support is offered often comes very late in the game. Also, there are changes and deletions that are not properly explained.'*

*'VCAA needs better transparency. During the Study Design consultation, I tried to speak to someone – anyone – at VCAA English on a number of occasions and received no response.'*

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