

## VCE AND VCE ALTERNATIVES – INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

This fact sheet provides information to international students and their parents on how to get the most out of studying the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and what to consider if you think the VCE is not for you and you would like to pursue alternative study options through a Victorian government school.

### Completing the VCE and getting an ATAR

The VCE is a world-recognised qualification with successful completion providing a pathway to top universities, TAFEs and other training organisations in Melbourne, Australia and worldwide.

If you want to gain entrance to a university after studying in a school, you will need to undertake the VCE (or the International Baccalaureate, which is currently offered in one Victorian government school) including completing all course, attendance and exam requirements.

Each VCE subject is made up of two units. For example, Maths Methods 1-2 is made up of Unit 1 and Unit 2 and Maths Methods 3-4 is made up of Unit 3 and Unit 4. Unit 1 and Unit 2 are usually studied in Year 11 and Unit 3 and Unit 4 are usually studied in Year 12. However, your school may offer you an opportunity to complete Unit 3 and Unit 4 subjects in Year 11.

Students need to complete a total of 16 of these units (8 subjects), including 8 units (4 subjects) at the Unit 3 and Unit 4 level, in order to satisfactorily complete their VCE. Students must also satisfactorily complete three units from English or English as an Additional Language (EAL), including one unit as either Unit 3 or Unit 4, as part of their total 16 units (8 subjects) of study. International students can choose all other subjects depending on their planned tertiary study pathway, academic strengths and individual interests.

To be awarded the VCE and obtain an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) score, students are required to sit the final exams in their Unit 3 and Unit 4 subjects.

To learn more about the VCE, see: [VCE](#).

### Choosing VCE subjects that suit your strengths

Everyone has different strengths and skills which is why there are over 90 different VCE subjects to choose from. The 90 different VCE subjects offer the flexibility to achieve further study or workforce goals. These subjects come from a wide range of learning areas, including:

- English
- Languages (other than English)
- Mathematics
- Science
- Business Studies
- Humanities
- The Arts
- Technology
- Health and Physical Education.

For a full list of all available VCE subjects, see: [VCE Studies](#).

The diversity of subjects gives you the opportunity to choose the subjects that best suit your prior learning, abilities and strengths so that you have the best possible pathway to a university. For example, most of our international students undertake their native language either through their school or at no extra charge through the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) to help their VCE studies and final ATAR result.

It's important to speak with your school Career's Counsellor to know what subjects are the best to choose for your intended university or TAFE course, and to make the most of your academic strengths and interests.

To view VCE subject choices and their possible university pathways, see: the [Picture Yourself Studying in Melbourne and Victoria Brochure](#).

To view search for VCE language subjects at the VSL, see: [VSL](#).

## Choosing VCE VET

There are a number of options available in Victoria for international students who are looking for alternatives to the standard Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).

One of these options is undertaking Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects as part of your VCE. Victoria has a strong reputation for its skills training, particularly through its TAFE institutions, with a focus on industry engagement and job readiness.

VET subjects provide specialist or industry knowledge and technical skills for specific types of jobs or industries. They also provide employability skills like communication and problem solving. VET subjects are suitable for some of the fastest growing professions like aged and disability care, nursing and early childhood education.

The types of VET courses offered through the VCE include:

- Engineering
- Build and construction
- Health
- Business
- Automotive
- Community services
- Information, digital media and technology
- Hospitality, and many more.

VET subjects give you job opportunities and pathways to Victoria's TAFE institutions and universities. This is because VET subjects count towards your VCE and can be used in the calculation of your ATAR. For every 90 hours of training completed, you will receive one unit towards your VCE.

VET courses can also count towards other VET courses, higher level VET qualifications, like a Certificate 3 in Allied Health Assistance, and also university bachelor degrees.

Speak to your school Career's Counsellor to learn how you can include VET subjects in your VCE.

For more information, see: [Get VET](#).

## Choosing VCAL

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a hands-on learning senior high school qualification and is an alternative to the VCE. The VCAL provides students with pathways to TAFE institutions, prepares them for beginning an apprenticeship or helps in getting a job after school. VCAL is not a pathway to a university for international students.

Students who undertake VCAL are required to study subjects in the following four compulsory areas known as 'strands':

- Strand 1 - Literacy and numeracy skills (by undertaking either VCAL units, and / or VCE subjects or further education studies like the Certificate in General Education for Adults)
- Strand 2 - Industry-specific skills (by undertaking VET subjects, like those listed above)
- Strand 3 - Work-related skills (by undertaking a structured work placement, part-time apprenticeship / traineeship or part-time work)

- Strand 4 - Personal-development skills (by undertaking community or school projects that develop teamwork skills, self-confidence and other skills important for life and work).

The Department's annual survey of graduating international students indicates that a small number of students choose to study VCAL. Most of these students who undertake VCAL are admitted into TAFE institutions to study courses like hospitality, automotive and business.

In 2017, 71.5 per cent of students successfully completed VCAL. For the students that did not successfully complete VCAL, the education pathways include continued engagement with VCAL (because students who study VCAL do not need to complete their VCAL studies in a calendar year), vocational training and apprenticeships, returning to an academic pathway via VCE or other tertiary education providers or workplace training associated with their employment.

## Choosing ungraded VCE

When all other options have been exhausted, international students have the opportunity to undertake the ungraded VCE.

The unscored or ungraded VCE requires students to satisfactorily complete VCE units in order to be awarded their VCE. For satisfactory completion of a VCE unit, a student must demonstrate achievement of the unit's outcomes by satisfactorily completing school assessed coursework (SACs), school assessed tests (SATs) and other tasks, as specified in the unit's study design. The decision about satisfactory completion of outcomes is based on the teacher's professional judgement of the student's performance over the unit. This decision is distinct from giving graded assessments. Students must attend classes until they have achieved a satisfactory completion mark for the unit.

The difference between the VCE and an ungraded VCE is that students are not required to sit their final exams in order to receive an ungraded VCE. However, by choosing this pathway, students will not have a study score calculated for their studies and they will not receive an ATAR score. An ungraded VCE is not a pathway to a university for international students

International students who can demonstrate significant health or learning disorders can apply to their school to complete an ungraded VCE. Schools are required to conduct an assessment of the student's suitability for an ungraded VCE in consultation with the student, the student's parents and the treating doctor or specialist. Schools are required to provide a copy of the international student's Application for Ungraded VCE along with all supporting material, including treating doctor or specialist's assessment, to the International Education Division for retention on the student's file.

DET's annual survey of graduating international students indicates that a small number of students choose ungraded VCE. Some of these students who undertake ungraded VCE are admitted into TAFE institutions, to study courses like hospitality, automotive and business, while others enter university foundation studies.

## University pathways

You may also wish to consider undertaking university foundation studies. By undertaking a university foundation program, you will not obtain a high school qualification and you may be limited to a specific type of course and university provider. International students and their parents should carefully discuss their options with their current school and the proposed university provider as a foundation program is not a guaranteed pathway and is dependent upon the student's academic performance.

## Further information

- Speak to your school International Student Coordinator and Career's Counsellor about your concerns
- [VCE frequently asked questions - current students](#)
- [VET programs for secondary students](#)
- [VCAL information for students and parents](#)