Federation University

A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum: Victorian Edition

Josh Ambrosy &
Sandy Allen-Craig

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Federation University Australia
Ballarat

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We would like to begin this book by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands, waters and seas on which we work, live, have written this book on, and refer to at times in various examples. Josh lives and works on the lands of the Wadawurrng. Sandy lives and works on the lands of the Boonwurrong. Through writing this book, we pay our respect to all elders and all First Nations people. By doing so, we acknowledge the continuing connection to Country of First Nations people and that sovereignty has never been ceded.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Josh Ambrosy has significant expertise in the development and delivery of curriculum-based outdoor education programs. He has taught ITE (Initial Teacher Education) outdoor education units in higher education since 2018. Josh has 8 years of teaching experience in schools, including significant time teaching VCE OES, and other outdoor education subjects. He also coordinated a large outdoor education program at an independent school in Melbourne. Josh has been a VCAA examiner since 2016. He has written several commercial resources for both VCE OES and OE in general. He has been a regular PD facilitator in this area since 2014. Josh has also been an expert panel member for state and federal curriculum review and renewal projects. Josh is also part of the Outdoor Education in the Victorian Curriculum (OEVC) project, a collaborative effort between Victorian universities and peak bodies.

Sandy Allen-Craig has over 35 years' experience supporting teachers of outdoor education in Victoria. She has developed and implemented courses and curriculum in outdoor education (OE) and outdoor leadership at national and state levels for preservice OE students. She is a published academic and researcher in OE curriculum and program outcomes, risk management, bush adventure therapy, conditions of outdoor employment, & diversity and gender equity within the Outdoor profession. Sandy has been awarded an Australian Learning and Teaching Council citation, for outstanding contribution to student learning. She is currently an executive member of Outdoor Education Australia, a board member of Outdoors Victoria, an associate editor of Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education and Australian Tertiary Outdoor Educators Network (ATOEN) member. Sandy has also been an expert panel member for both state and federal curriculum review and renewal projects. She is also presently working on the Outdoor Education in the Victorian Curriculum (OEVC) project, a collaborative effort between Victorian universities and peak bodies.

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PART I
CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO OUTDOOR EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN VICTORIA

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the structure of this book and identify its purpose
- Analyse reasons for including outdoor education in the school curriculum
- Define outdoor education and outdoor learning within your own contexts
- Explain how Bloom's taxonomy underpins the curriculum in Victoria
- Describe how this book can be used to develop your knowledge of teaching outdoor education

1.1 Why Teach Outdoor Education as Part of the School Curriculum?

Outdoor Education offers students a unique opportunity to learn about themselves and the world around them. It develops resilience, criticality and other personal competencies in young people that are key to surviving the complexities of our ever-changing world. Through outdoor education, students develop a greater understanding of the natural world and the impacts that changing human lifestyles are having on the planet. Via direct outdoor experiences, along with theoretical lessons, students question their own and a range of other peoples' relationships with outdoor environments and how these relationships have changed over time.

Outdoor education, as a curriculum area, offers young people who partake in both experiences and the study of outdoor education more than simply the discipline-based knowledge that many would expect from other parts of the curriculum. It offers us, as teachers, an opportunity to engage with young people during some of their most significant developmental stages and equip them as resilient young people to manage the challenges they face now and into the future (Wattchow, 2023).

Victoria, Australia, has been at the forefront of outdoor education curriculum for over 40 years. Outdoor education in Victorian schools is both well-established and diverse in its take-up. Common articulations include the inclusion of specialist elective subjects and intensive experiences using a diverse range of outdoor environments. Despite the widespread uptake of

outdoor education in Victoria and a significant body of research to support it, there is currently a lack of literature specific to teaching outdoor education curricula in Victoria to guide teachers in the development and deployment of their programs.

This book has been written to support initial teacher education students and teachers who want to develop their skills and knowledge to develop and implement outdoor education curricula in schools. Through writing this book, we aim to empower you as a teacher to build confidence in planning outdoor education programs that align with the *Victorian Curriculum F-10* (VCF-10) and *VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies* (VCE OES). This book has been written to respond to a gap in the literature, being a practical guidebook for teachers of outdoor education in Victoria. We hope that it is of value to you, and we wish you well in your future endeavours teaching outdoor education.

1.2 Curricula in Victoria

Curriculum in Australia is a complex and often politically driven tool that is used to dictate what happens in schools. Governments, parents, policymakers, academics, the broader community, and teachers all share a common interest in what is included in our curriculum and what is left out. As a teacher or future teacher, reading this book, you may have—or possibly through reading this book, you will have—developed your own views about what should and shouldn't be included in the curriculum. Such thoughts are very worthwhile and should be part of your work as a teacher. This is because the curriculum is not, and should not, be treated as a stagnant or fixed apparatus. Rather, the curriculum is an ever-moving and continuously updated set of ideas that reflects society's broader social and political movements. To enforce this point, we echo Yates et al. (2011) who offer that "Curriculum is a deceptively complicated topic" (p. 1). Through this book, we aim to help you feel more comfortable as a teacher working with the curriculum. In turn, we also hope it empowers you to understand that teachers can and should influence the curriculum in their classrooms, at schools and at a system level.

Australia is a federation of states. When you delve into the curriculum across the country, the impact of a federated system of government becomes prevalent. Historically, education, and in turn curriculum, was a state responsibility. A landmark decision in 2008 (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008) by all education ministers of the time led to the formation of ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority), and the development of a national curriculum—The Australian Curriculum. Despite the newly formed body, the responsibility for the implementation of the curriculum was left to each of the individual states. This has resulted in Victoria, like some other states of Australia, creating its own version of the curriculum and retaining a unique senior secondary curriculum.

In Victoria, there are two parts to the school curriculum: the *Victorian Curriculum F-10* (VCF-10) and the *Victorian Certificate of Education* (VCE)[1]. The Victorian Curriculum F-10 is the state-

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1. Most schools in Victoria use the VCF-10 and the VCE; however, a small number of schools have chosen to implement the various components of the *International Baccalaureate* (IB) programs instead.

based version of the Australian Curriculum F-10. It is an adaptation of ACARA's curriculum that embodies state-based priorities. The VCE is Victoria's senior secondary curriculum, through which students choose several subjects that are of interest to them. Through recent VCE reforms, students can also choose to study a vocationally focused VCE.

Outdoor Education is a significant part of many schools' curriculum. Despite this, it is not formally included in all aspects of the curriculum in Victoria. Outdoor education is explicitly included in Victoria through the inclusion of VCE OES. VCE students can also elect to undertake vocational Outdoor Recreation certificates from the 'Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package'. Despite this longstanding inclusion in the senior years' curriculum (see 8.2), outdoor education does not have a formal recognition within the VCF-10 curriculum. Rather, teachers of outdoor education working in the F-10 year levels have two current options to develop curriculum for their classes[2]. The first is to use other learning areas, along with the general capabilities to develop integrated units of work, and the second is to deliver other areas of the curriculum through outdoor learning activities. In this book, we provide practical advice to help you develop a curriculum for your classes using both approaches, along with guidance on teaching VCE OES. This book does not focus on the teaching of vocational outdoor recreation certificates as the teaching of the content for those is heavily prescribed by the Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package.

1.3 Outdoor Education vs. Outdoor Learning

1.3.1 Outdoor Education

Outdoor education is a unique subject area. It has its own established curriculum, which in Victoria, is both formalised within the VCE and enacted (Marsh & Willis, 1999) within many schools at other year levels. Outdoor education differs from outdoor learning, which we return to at the bottom of this section. Although no single definition of outdoor education exists, it is important to preface this book with some common understandings of outdoor education. Outdoor education has been defined before as follows.

> Outdoor Education focuses on personal development through the interaction with others and responsible use of the natural environment. It involves the acquisition of knowledge, values and skills that enhance safe access, understanding and aesthetic appreciation of the outdoors, often through

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2. There have been longstanding calls for the inclusion of a formal outdoor education curriculum in Victoria. We discuss this further in chapter 6

adventure activities. (Victoria. Board of Studies (1995) Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF). Melbourne: Board of Studies)

Through interaction with the natural world, outdoor education aims to develop an understanding of our relationship with the environment, others and ourselves. The ultimate goal of outdoor education is to contribute towards a sustainable community. ("Education Outdoors – Our Sense of Place." 12th National OE Conference (2001) Bendigo, VIC)

Through interaction with the natural world Outdoor Education provides unique opportunities to develop relationships with the environment, others and ourselves. These relationships are essential for the well-being and future of individuals, society and our environment. ("The Human Face of Outdoor Education." 11th National OE Conference (1999) Perth, WA.)

(S. Allen-Craig, personal communication, November 10, 2023. With permission)

1.3.2 Outdoor Learning

Outdoor learning is a pedagogical approach that can be used to deliver curriculum from other subjects. It is commonly used to teach curricula such as science, geography, health and physical education. Outdoor learning is not simply the process of taking students outside, rather, it is the delivery of curriculum through and with the outdoors as a site of learning. There are comprehensive resources to support the development of outdoor learning programs on the Outdoors Victoria website.

Learning Activity 1.1

Outdoor education and outdoor learning are terms that are often used interchangeably. We argue that this is not helpful and that a better understanding of each term is needed by teachers. Furthermore, outdoor education and outdoor learning, like many parts of education, are not fixed terms. Rather, their meanings are continually socially constructed by those who use them. Complete the following activity to help you better understand these terms.

1. Define, in your own words, outdoor education and outdoor learning.
2. Provide an example that you have observed in schools, or your own education, of each outdoor education and outdoor learning.

3. Share your examples and definitions with a peer, and provide each other feedback on them.

4. Revise steps 1 and 2 as needed following the feedback.

1.4 Bloom's Taxonomy

Understanding *Bloom's Taxonomy* as a teacher will help you to understand the underpinning structure of both state-level curricula and the curriculum you develop for your own classes.
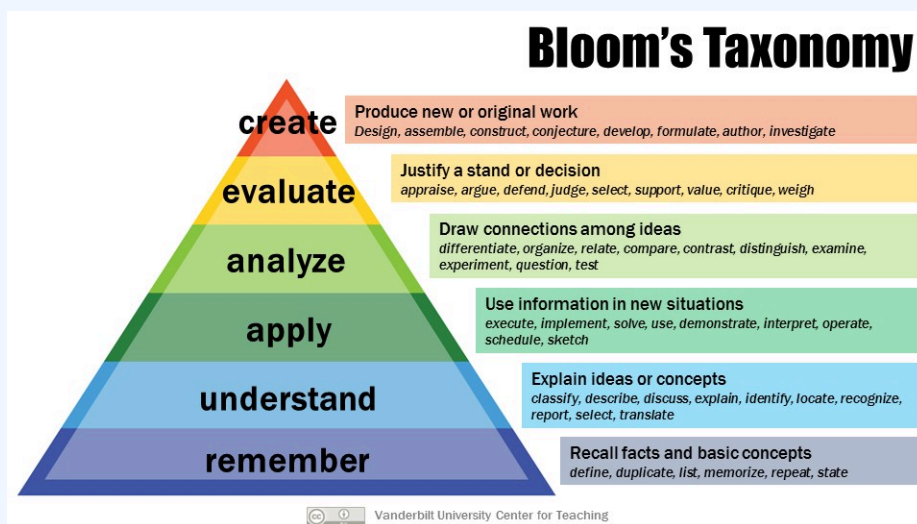
Fig 1: *Bloom's Taxonomy,* by Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. CC-BY-NC-4.0

Background Information

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom with collaborators Max Englehart, Edward Furst, Walter Hill, and David Krathwohl published a framework for categorising educational goals: *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Familiarly known as *Bloom's Taxonomy*, this framework has been applied by generations of K-12 teachers and college instructors (or university lecturers) in their teaching.

The framework elaborated by Bloom and his collaborators consisted of six major categories: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. The categories after Knowledge were presented as "skills and abilities," with the understanding that knowledge was the necessary precondition for putting these skills and abilities into practice.

While each category contained subcategories, all lying along a continuum from simple to complex and concrete to abstract, the taxonomy is popularly remembered according to the six main categories.

The Original Taxonomy (1956)

Here are the authors' brief explanations of these main categories in from the appendix of *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Handbook One, pp. 201-207):

- Knowledge "involves the recall of specifics and universals, the recall of methods and processes, or the recall of a pattern, structure, or setting."
- Comprehension "refers to a type of understanding or apprehension such that the individual knows what is being communicated and can make use of the material or idea being communicated without necessarily relating it to other material or seeing its fullest implications."
- Application refers to the "use of abstractions in particular and concrete situations."
- Analysis represents the "breakdown of a communication into its constituent elements or parts such that the relative hierarchy of ideas is made clear and/or the relations between ideas expressed are made explicit."
- Synthesis involves the "putting together of elements and parts so as to form a whole."
- Evaluation engenders "judgments about the value of material and methods for given purposes."

The Revised Taxonomy (2001)

A group of cognitive psychologists, curriculum theorists and instructional researchers, and testing and assessment specialists published in 2001 a revision of *Bloom's Taxonomy* with the title *A Taxonomy for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment*. This title draws attention away from the somewhat static notion of "educational objectives" (in Bloom's original title) and points to a more dynamic conception of classification.

The authors of the revised taxonomy underscore this dynamism, using verbs and gerunds to label their categories and subcategories (rather than the nouns of the original taxonomy). These "action words" describe the cognitive processes by which thinkers encounter and work with knowledge:

Remember

- Recognizing
- Recalling

Understand

- Interpreting
- Exemplifying
- Classifying
- Summarizing

- Inferring
- Comparing
- Explaining

Apply

- Executing
- Implementing

Analyze

- Differentiating
- Organizing
- Attributing

Evaluate

- Checking
- Critiquing

Create

- Generating
- Planning
- Producing

In the revised taxonomy, knowledge is at the basis of these six cognitive processes, but its authors created a separate taxonomy of the types of knowledge used in cognition:

Factual Knowledge

- Knowledge of terminology
- Knowledge of specific details and elements

Conceptual Knowledge

- Knowledge of classifications and categories
- Knowledge of principles and generalizations
- Knowledge of theories, models, and structures

Procedural Knowledge

- Knowledge of subject-specific skills and algorithms
- Knowledge of subject-specific techniques and methods
- Knowledge of criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures

Metacognitive Knowledge

- Strategic Knowledge
- Knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge
- Self-knowledge

Why Use Bloom's Taxonomy?

The authors of the revised taxonomy suggest a multi-layered answer to this question, to which the author of this teaching guide has added some clarifying points:

1. Objectives (learning goals) are important to establish in a pedagogical interchange so that teachers and students alike understand the purpose of that interchange.
2. Organizing objectives helps to clarify objectives for themselves and for students.
3. Having an organized set of objectives helps teachers to:

   - "plan and deliver appropriate instruction";
   - "design valid assessment tasks and strategies"; and
   - "ensure that instruction and assessment are aligned with the objectives."

From *Bloom's Taxonomy [Teaching Guide], b*y Patricia Armstrong and Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. CC-BY-NC-4.0 .

1.4.1 Bloom's Taxonomy and Outdoor Education Curriculum in Victoria

Bloom's Taxonomy underpins the organising structure for both the Victorian Curriculum F-10 and the VCE. Both curriculum documents present a series of constructs and levels of application. The constructs tell us as teachers what is to be taught, whilst the level of application (of skill) articulates the cognitive level. Although named differently, in the F-10 vs. VCE curriculum, they function similarly. We discuss the specifics of the structures of the VCF-10 and the VCE in their respective parts of this book.

The taxonomy shown in section 1.4 demonstrates one understanding of a taxonomy of the application of knowledge from relatively low order thinking skills (name, identify) to more complex processes (evaluate, create, etc.). Whilst debate exists between scholars, teachers and policymakers alike around the use of a single taxonomy of application to underpin the curriculum in Victoria—the above is still a useful tool for teachers as they plan their outdoor curriculum as it prompts intentional planning beyond the question of 'what is to be learnt?' and furthers the planning process by encouraging us to think about 'what level will this be learnt at?' and 'what level of achievement am I expecting from my students?'. As you undertake your

planning for outdoor education curriculum, you should consider not only what is being taught but also the level of application that is desired.

1.5 Using this Book

This book has been written to assist both pre-service teachers and teachers of outdoor education to develop the skills and knowledge required to structure outdoor programs of study in Victoria. Pre-service teachers are emerging professionals, and hence, throughout this book, when we refer to the role of teacher, we collectively refer to both pre-service and qualified teachers. Each chapter begins with a series of learning outcomes to help frame the focus and learning of the chapter. As you work through the chapters, you should refer to and reflect on these outcomes. The learning outcomes are worded using Bloom's terms in a similar way that they are articulated in both the VCE OES study design and the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

A series of learning activities for you to undertake are embedded within each chapter. These activities are designed to help you apply, in a practical manner, the skills and knowledge you are learning about. These activities range from analysing a case study to developing tools to use with your class. Each chapter concludes with a series of reflection questions. You might complete these in your own time or discuss them with others who are reading the book, such as your colleagues or university classmates. The book also contains a number of appendices through which we have provided examples, including unit planners and assessment tasks.

1.6 Overview of Book and Chapters

This book is divided into two parts, each with a distinct focus. Each contains a series of chapters offering practical advice about different aspects of the outdoor education curriculum in Victoria. The chapters are broken down as follows.

Chapters 2-7: Outdoor Education in the Middle Years. This section guides teachers in how to develop programs using the Victorian Curriculum F-10. This section explores how units of outdoor education can be developed using integrated curriculum structures drawing upon a range of learning areas in the Victorian Curriculum F-10 and the general capabilities. This section concludes with information about advocating for outdoor education in the middle years at both a school and a broader level.

Chapter 8-12: VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies (VCE OES). This section unpacks the process for planning the curriculum for VCE OES. It has a significant focus on the development of assessment tasks for students and preparation strategies that can be used to help students prepare for both school-assessed coursework (SAC) tasks and examinations.

There are also a series of appendices that serve as examples of practice. Those numbered 1.1-3 relate to the Victorian Curriculum F-10, and those numbered 2.1-3, are related to chapters 8-12.

1.7 Glossary of Terms

The following terms are useful for outdoor education teachers. The terms defined here align with the VCAA's use of these terms. They are useful for understanding the information in this book, the curriculum, and the associated curriculum support materials.

- Outdoor education: A field of study that teaches students about themselves, others and the environment through both study and experience of outdoor environments.
- Outdoor environments: refers to any outdoor places that students may visit or study as part of their curriculum. These vary from environments with minimal intervention by people to developed and urban areas.
- Outdoor experience: refers to a broad range of activities students undertake during outdoor education and outdoor learning programs. Activities during outdoor experiences vary from adventure activities to more passive pursuits.
- Outdoor learning: A pedagogical approach to teaching content and skills in other learning areas of the curriculum through outdoor experiences.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the purpose and structure of the book, outlining how it supports both pre-service and in-service teachers in developing outdoor education programs aligned with the *Victorian Curriculum F-10* and *VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies* (VCE OES). It explores the significance of outdoor education, highlighting its role in fostering resilience, environmental awareness, and personal development. The chapter also provides an overview of curriculum structures in Victoria, discussing the complexities of curriculum development and the challenges outdoor education faces due to its lack of formal inclusion in the F-10 curriculum. Additionally, it distinguishes between outdoor education and outdoor learning, explaining their pedagogical differences, and introduces Bloom's Taxonomy as a framework that underpins curriculum planning. Finally, it outlines how the book is structured, the key chapters, and how teachers can use it as a practical guide to enhance their professional practice.

Reflection Questions

- What can you expect to learn in this book?
- Why would you include outdoor education in the school curriculum?
- How does Bloom's Taxonomy underpin the curriculum in Victoria?

- How can this book be used to develop your knowledge of teaching outdoor education?

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CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTION TO OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN THE VICTORIAN CURRICULUM F-10

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the history and structure of the Victorian curriculum F-10
- Explain the role and place of Outdoor Education and Outdoor Learning in the Victorian curriculum F-10
- Analyse ways of making thematic integrated units of Outdoor Education curriculum

2.1 The Victorian Curriculum F-10

Outdoor Education (OE) does not have a formal recognition in the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Despite this, many schools offer elective and core OE subjects or units during these year levels. These subjects and units are aligned with the curriculum from several learning areas, including Health and Physical Education, Geography, Science, and General Capabilities, whilst aligning to various curriculum 'norms' within OE more generally. This chapter introduces you to the Victorian Curriculum and examines how you, as a teacher, can use it to develop integrated units of OE. This is needed due to the current lack of formal recognition of OE in the Victorian curriculum (see Chapter 7 for further discussion on the need for formal recognition).

2.1.1 Background and History

The Victorian Curriculum F-10 v2.0 is the state version of The Australian Curriculum F-10. It has been 'adapted and adopted' in line with Victorian Government priorities. The development of the Australian Curriculum F-10 resulted from a significant shift in curriculum policy in Australia. In 2008, all federal and state education ministers signed the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (hereby Melbourne Declaration) (Ministerial Council on Education, 2008). This landmark document sets out a vision for the future of education in

Australia. Specifically, to develop a new federal body responsible for curriculum development across Australia. Before the Melbourne Declaration, curriculum development was solely a state-based responsibility. The former setup resulted in fragmentation throughout the country, causing various issues. For instance, students who moved from one state to another experienced duplication and gaps in their learning due to differences in the curricula set out by each state.

ACARA (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority) was formed after the signing of the Melbourne Declaration. This newly formed federal body was tasked with harmonising curriculum across the country through the development of the Australian Curriculum F-10. However, ACARA was not granted the responsibility of implementing the curriculum universally. Rather, ACARA is responsible for implementing the curriculum in the various Australian Territories (e.g., Australian Capital Territory (ACT), etc.), whilst implementing the curriculum in the different states was left to remain a state responsibility. Accordingly, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) remains responsible for implementing this harmonised federal curriculum within Victoria.

The Victorian Curriculum

F-10 is Victoria's version of the Australian Curriculum (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, n.d.). Although similar in both structure and content to the Australian Curriculum F-10, the Victorian curriculum incorporates state-based priorities and standards. At the time of writing, the latest version of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 is version 2.0. This book draws on content from this curriculum through the worked examples in chapters 2-8, along with the various appendices relevant to these chapters.

2.1.2 Structure of the Victorian Curriculum F-10

Three dimensions underpin curriculum frameworks in Australia, including the Victorian Curriculum F-10. They are Learning Areas, General Capabilities, and Cross-Curricular Priorities. There are eight learning areas within the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Some are single learning areas (English, mathematics, science, and health and physical education), while others (languages, the arts, humanities and technologies) are multiple subjects. The learning areas specify the knowledge and skills that you, as a teacher, should be teaching within your curriculum. As an OE teacher, this can be a challenge for you as there is no explicit curriculum—we return to this point in detail below (see 2.1.3).

The other dimensions of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 are the general capabilities and the cross-curriculum priorities. These dimensions are not written to be taught specifically or in isolation. Rather, they are designed to be taught through the learning areas and to enrich the content taught in schools. The Victorian Curriculum F-10 has a slightly different approach to these dimensions. Whilst the Australian Curriculum F-10 has seven general capabilities, the Victorian Curriculum F-10 has chosen to focus on five and integrate the other two through the learning areas. Furthermore, in Victoria, cross-curricular priorities have been embedded within learning areas, and teachers do not commonly plan for them explicitly.

The Victorian Curriculum F-10 displays the curriculum in learning areas and general capabilities via content descriptions and achievement standards. These descriptions inform teachers what is to be learnt within the various programs of study. The achievement standard helps you understand the cognitive level at which the curriculum should be taught and what a student is required to demonstrate at different year levels. Most parts of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 display the curriculum in two-year bands. Due to the breadth of learning levels across a two-year band, students will achieve a proportion of the continuum of learning within a certain period.

Within both the learning areas and the general capabilities, what is taught is articulated by a series of descriptions. The descriptions are then further unpacked by a series of elaborations. As shown in image 2.1, there are multiple elaborations for each description. Understanding the relationship between these elements and how they impact you as a teacher is important. Simply put, the descriptions are what needs to be taught. For example, if you were a health and physical education teacher, you would need to teach students the articulated curriculum across the two years of years seven and eight. The elaborations suggest how a descriptor could be interpreted and taught in a particular school. You do not need to align your curriculum with them—and should not use them as a prescribed list. The Victorian Curriculum F-10 is a framework through which you create your units as a teacher or a group of teachers working at a school. Accordingly, you have the agency as a teacher to interpret descriptions as required within your school context.

Table 2.1 From *Health and Physical Education, Levels 9&10, Curriculum, Elaboration,* **by Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2025. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Content description	Elaborations

Content description
 	
Students learn to:
  plan, rehearse and evaluate strategies (including first aid and CPR) for managing situations where their own or others' health, safety or wellbeing may be negatively impacted at home, school and in the community VC2HP10P08
  Learning area: **Health and Physical Education**
  Strand: **Personal, Social and Community Health – Health Education**
  Sub-strand: **Contributing to healthy communities**
  Level: **Levels 9 and 10**
	Elaborations
	
	This may involve students:
	
	• **critiquing the appropriateness and effectiveness of help and support services available for young people in the local community (MH, RS, S)**
	• **proposing and practising a range of realistic responses to scenarios where peers are encouraging them to take unnecessary risks, such as in relation to the use of alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cannabis, psychostimulants, opiates or hallucinogens (AD, S)**
	• **planning and practising responses to emergencies where they may be required to administer first aid to a friend or stranger, including CPR (S)**
	• **understanding the factors that impact a person's ability to seek, give or deny consent, including when a person is affected by alcohol and other drugs or there is an imbalance of power or coercion within the relationship (AD, RS, S)**
	• **examining practices, policies and processes for ensuring safe blood practices in a range of situations, including not sharing needles, taking precautions when participating in physical activities, administering first aid, and safe practices during sexual activity, including the use of condoms and dams (HBPA, RS, S)**
	• **evaluating visual and multimodal health campaigns in print-based and digital environments to promote health and wellbeing in their community (AD, FN, HBPA, MH, RS, S)**

Activity 2.1 – Interrogating Learning Areas and General Capabilities

• Visit the Victorian Curriculum F-10 website.
• Familiarise yourself with the website's structure and how to navigate between the learning areas and the capabilities.
• Choose one learning area and one capability that interests you and examine the curriculum for each year level together.
• Answer the following questions:

  ◦ What type of knowledge and skills do the learning areas contain?
  ◦ What type of knowledge and skills do the general capabilities contain?

◦ How could your chosen capability enhance the teaching of your learning area?

2.1.3 Outdoor Education and Outdoor Learning in the Victorian Curriculum F-10

OE is a unique subject with its own knowledge and skills. Outdoor learning is a pedagogical approach to teaching other learning areas. At the same time, outdoor learning can be used to teach curriculum from any of the current learning areas. In chapter eight, we specifically address the pedagogical approach to outdoor learning.

Currently, OE does not have a formal place within the Victorian Curriculum F-10. OE is well established as a subject in Victorian schools (Lugg & Martin, 2001; Parker, 2023). Accordingly, the lack of a formal inclusion of OE in the Victorian Curriculum presents a unique challenge for you as an OE teacher. Specifically, as a teacher of OE, you are required to work as what Mockler (2018) describes as a 'curriculum maker'. Through this, you become an author of your own curriculum. This task is further muddied by the need in many (but not all) schools to also align your curriculum to other learning areas in the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Although this challenge is forced upon OE teachers, it presents an exciting opportunity. This and the subsequent chapters will focus on how you can 'make' integrated units that align to the well-established norms of OE as an 'enacted' (Marsh & Willis, 1999) OE curriculum (we discuss this below in 2.2.3) whilst demonstrating enough curriculum links from other learning areas to satisfy school reporting requirements and the like. In chapter seven, we also discuss the need to advocate for inclusion in the formal F-10 curriculum as outdoor educators to the government.

At this junction, we would like to note that, as authors, we strongly oppose the current omission of OE from the Victorian Curriculum F-10. This omission devalues the work of outdoor educators and limits educational opportunities for students in Victorian schools whilst adding to the already intensified workloads of teachers. Accordingly, we offer advice in this and the following chapters in the hope that one day, we can rewrite them to focus on adopting a formal OE curriculum once it is established. However, in acknowledging this position, we also understand that navigating this less-than-ideal situation as OE teachers poses a significant challenge. In this chapter and the subsequent chapters, we present advice on navigating this current curriculum situation as a middle-year OE teacher. Specifically, using an integrated approach to curriculum that encompasses both curricula as written by the relevant peak bodies (see 2.2.3) and curriculum from other learning areas in the published Victorian Curriculum F-10.

2.2 Outdoor Education as Integrated Curriculum in the

Middle Years

2.2.1 Integrated Curriculum in the Middle Years

An integrated curriculum is a familiar idea in the middle years of schooling. Yet, despite several successful case studies (Paige et al., 2019) being implemented in the middle years as a mechanism of curriculum reform. Empirically, its use remains limited in schools. Despite this, integration offers a significant opportunity for middle-year curriculum reform in schools and a way for teachers to develop OE units in the middle years. Although many definitions of the middle years of schooling exist, this text refers to middle years as years 5-10. Further, although curriculum integration can be used to restructure the middle years more broadly, it can also be used to structure curriculum in individual classes.

Teachers can use several models of curriculum integration to structure their middle-year curriculum. These include:

- Multidisciplinary, wherein the curriculum is structured using a common theme (i.e. 'The only thing that is certain in our world is that change is inevitable) that feeds into several discipline-based subjects (e.g., Science, Health and Physical Education, etc.) (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2007). Such approaches require re-organising the curriculum in secondary schools to align topics with shared interests (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2007).

- Interdisciplinary, wherein individual learning areas co-contribute to integration, sometimes done as an adjunct to the regular curriculum (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2007), for example, through a student-driven project that crosses disciplinary boundaries. Such an approach requires significant cooperation between teachers.

- Transdisciplinary (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2007; Paige et al., 2019), also referred to as an integrative approach (Dowden, 2007, 2014), wherein multiple learning areas are planned concurrently along with general capabilities. A transdisciplinary curriculum works from more significant meta-based themes that better prepare students for a changing world. Such themes are drawn from either the general capabilities curriculum (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2021b) or through other frameworks, such as the eco-justice principles proposed by Paige et al. (2019) (or the OEVC project we discuss below). Such models prioritise student interest and cognitive development over content knowledge by allowing them space to make connections between discipline areas (Ambrosy, 2021, pp. 41-42).

It can be useful to think, in the various models, about how a student might experience OE curriculum. Table 2.1 provides an example of what the three different models might look like in practice. In all three articulations below, students are in year 7 and are studying a curriculum with multiple identified outdoor education learning outcomes that is also aligned

to the Humanities and Science learning areas in the Victorian Curriculum F-10 learning areas. Students also undertake an outdoor experience at Phillip Island.

Table 2.2 – *Student's Experiences of Outdoor Education Curriculum through Curriculum Integration* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Multidisciplinary	Interdisciplinary	Transdisciplinary
Students participate in different classes that all relate to central theme 'Island Life' in the 3 weeks before their Phillip Island Experience.		
In OE, they learn practical skills for their upcoming outdoor experience at Phillip Island including safe beach swimming, tent site selection and set up, and plan meals to cook in groups on Trangia's.	Students participate in the similar classes as outlined in the multidisciplinary approach but the classes are sequenced via the teachers to work across the disciplines. For example, students participate in an intro to minimal impact lesson in OE before they learn field work sampling techniques in science.	In the week after the year level outdoor experience to Phillip Island, students have a collapsed timetable to complete a project about 'Island Life'. During the trip, students gather a range of primary observations that relate to aspects of island life including reflections on outdoor experiences, observations of a flora study and fauna sightings and conversations they had with local shop keepers.
In Humanities, students learn about local industries including tourism and consider how people on the Island can profit whilst persevering the sustainability of the place.	During the trip, students complete a workbook which is an assessment task for all three units. In their workbook, they gather observations and data about different outdoor education practices they participate in, observations of different flora and fauna and they record details about the shops they visit for humanities. Following the trip, students are given a period to complete their booklet before it is assessed.	Following their trip, students work across their experience, students are given a week of time for all three classes to develop a project in small groups about 'island life'. In this guided inquiry, students can choose to focus on various parts of the curriculum and have freedom to present their project in their choice of format.
In Science, students learn about the ecological communities that inhabit Phillip Island and develop strategies for the conversation of a species of their choosing.		

As OE teachers, a transdisciplinary approach is arguably the current most fit-for-purpose approach to developing an OE curriculum in your school. This is because it allows you to create a curriculum that encompasses both OE skills and knowledge, content from the Victorian Curriculum F-10 and another curriculum such as the curriculum that has been

established by the OE in the Victorian Curriculum project (see 2.2.4). Furthermore, a transdisciplinary curriculum structure will enable you to develop units that are place-responsive and create meaningful experiences by connecting students to specific places through a range of curriculum links. Although Table 2.1 demonstrates how a transdisciplinary approach can help to integrate curriculum across multiple classes through the collapsing of the timetable, it can also be used to organise a single class curriculum drawing on descriptions from numerous learning areas.

2.2.2 The Role of Place in Middle Years Outdoor Education Curriculum

Over many years of teaching pre-service teachers about the current conundrum of developing a curriculum for middle years students without a formal curriculum, we have both given the same enduring advice on multiple occasions—teach a place. The notion of place and, in turn, place-responsive practice for outdoor educators is well established. For those not familiar with this idea or who want to explore it more, we suggest reading *A Pedagogy of Place* by Brian Wattchow and Mike Brown (2011). We borrow their words below to briefly introduce the idea of places as important to praxis for OE teachers.

> People and places always exist in mutual bonds of interdependence. Both people and places have a physical reality, but it is the identities of both people and places that are continually emerging as an unfolding, interdependent phenomenon – always evolving, always becoming. As the future of places is inherently linked with how humans experience them, there is tremendous potential for OE to make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of both people and places. (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. 42)

This phrase was undoubtedly penned while considering OE more broadly than just middle-year programs aligned to the Victorian Curriculum F-10. However, it is still relevant in our context. Specifically, to think about a starting point for making a thematic OE curriculum. Through our curriculum as outdoor educators, it is necessary that you visit places. In doing so, we suggest that you consider the activities that you might undertake with your students and the learning about and through the places central to our praxis. We revisit this idea and offer a model for developing lessons that enable this approach in Chapter 3. For now, ask yourself, what are the educational potentials of the places I intend to visit with my current/future classes? How can a curriculum be place-responsive?

Activity 2.2 – The Curriculum Potential of Place

- Choose a place that you know well and have visited several times.
- Create a concept map through which you think about this place's learning potential. In doing so, think about:

  ◦ The types of activities that you could run:
  ◦ The types of learning about and with the place that might occur during an outdoor experience;
  ◦ How an outdoor experience might contribute to the well-being of individuals and the place.

- Once you have created your map, visit the Victorian Curriculum F-10, and identify several descriptions from a range of learning areas and the general capabilities that could link to your place's learning potential.

2.2.3 The OEVC and Integrated Curriculum

The OE in the Victorian Curriculum (OEVC) project is a joint initiative of *Outdoors Victoria*, the *Australian Council for Health Physical Education and Recreation* (ACHPER) Victoria, the *Residential Outdoors Schools Association* (ROSA) network, and Victorian universities. The project aims to advocate for formally including an optional OE curriculum within the health and physical education learning area within the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

The OEVC project team have developed a draft of an optional OE curriculum. A copy of this can be found in Appendix 1.1 OEVC Curriculum. Although not formally recognised within the Victorian Curriculum F-10 yet, the OEVC curriculum can be used in two capacities. Regardless of the approach adopted, the OEVC curriculum can provide a useful starting point for developing units of the OE curriculum for the middle years. The possible approaches are:

1. Some schools may adopt it as a curriculum for years 7-10 OE. This is because the minimum standards for registration as a school with the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) allow schools to develop a curriculum framework provided that it aligns to the key learning areas (e.g., English, mathematics, etc.) within the Victorian Curriculum F-10 (Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority, n.d.). In other words, as long as the learning areas of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 is substantially taught, they can offer the OEVC curriculum alongside it. This can be interpreted as providing other timetabled class time that covers the key learning areas. Thus, the OEVC curriculum can be adopted in full. Although

possible, this approach is likely limited to independent schools at the current time.

2. The OEVC curriculum can be used as a basis for developing integrated units of OE, or integrated into the teaching of other subjects (HPE, etc.). These units will align with the OEVC curriculum and other learning areas and capabilities in the Victorian Curriculum F-10. This approach is more likely in Government schools that need to align with centralised directives from the state around curriculum development. Specifically, there is a need for government schools to report against the Victorian Curriculum F-10 (Department of Education, n.d.). This approach is not unheard of in Government schools. For example, schools that have been approved by the department to run the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) are still required to report against the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

2.2.4 Making Outdoor Education Curriculum

As we have outlined above, there is a need as a teacher of OE to work as a curriculum maker. Through this process, you are likely required to use a combination of the informal curricula, such as the OEVC curriculum and the current Victorian Curriculum F-10. Curriculum-making work, depending on your current or future teaching context, happens at various levels of schooling. These include:

- Whole-school planning: This typically includes developing scope and sequence documents that guide the development of curriculum at various year levels and map what is to be taught and when.
- Unit planning: These normally dictate what is taught and in a particular learning sequence, including a series of assessment tasks. Unit planners will typically replace lesson planning once you are established as a teacher.
- Lesson/outdoor experience planning: These planners are focused on individual lessons or experiences. They may be used in schools where OE is limited to individual experiences.

Chapter 2 Summary

There is no current OE curriculum within the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Despite this, OE remains well-established in schools. As a teacher of OE, you will be required to work as a curriculum maker. In doing so, what you may be required to do will vary across different school governance structures (government vs. non-government schools) and depending on the type and scope of your school's OE program. The OEVC curriculum should be used as a starting point for developing curriculum; it can be used as a stand-alone curriculum in non-government schools or as the basis for developing a thematic integrated curriculum in government schools.

Reflection Questions

- What is the Victorian Curriculum F-10, and where did it come from?
- What is the current place of OE in the Victorian Curriculum F-10?
- As an OE teacher, what options do you have in how you approach curriculum development in the middle years? How might these approaches change in different schools?

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CHAPTER 3: LESSON PLANNING FOR MIDDLE YEARS OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the purpose of lesson planning as a pre-service Outdoor Education teacher
- Analyse models for the development of lessons outdoors
- Develop lesson plans using templates and models for outdoor education in and outside the classroom

3.1 Introduction to Lesson Planning

Planning lessons is a key skill you will develop over time as a teacher. In outdoor education (OE), the planning of effective lessons needs to consider how lessons can be delivered effectively both during outdoor experiences and at school in the case of OE programs that have timetabled class time. This chapter begins by considering the various parts of an effective lesson. We then explore how different lessons may have different focus areas depending on their place within a teaching and learning sequence. Following this, we will ask you to think about the young people you will teach and how their assets, wants and needs (Bahr, 2017) might guide your middle years OE lesson planning. Finally, and possibly most importantly, we offer a teaching model which is responsive to not only the learners but the place in which they are learning, enhancing the unique opportunities that emerge when teaching outside as students participate in carefully planned and conducted outdoor experiences.

3.1.1 Key Parts of a Lesson

Although there are many ways of structuring lessons, we have found that a guided inquiry approach is best when teaching OE in the middle years. Through this approach, most of your lesson planning should focus on what the students will be doing at different times. This requires you to consider your role as a teacher. Rather than being the source of information,

with this approach you work as a guide to the learning. The key phases of an effective middle-year OE lesson can be broken down as follows.

The timings below are based on a lesson that runs for around an hour and can be scaled as required.

Table 3.1. *Example of structure of lesson for Outdoor Education in the middle years*, **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Section	Approx. Time	Include
Introduction/ Warm-Up	10-15 minutes	Students are drawn into the lesson engaging activity that links to the overall purpose of the lesson.
Instruction to Task	5-10 minutes. The less time, the better!	Students are introduced to the main body of the lesson and given instructions about what they need to do. Explicit learning intentions are shared with students, if they haven't been in the introduction. For a longer lesson, or a lesson with multiple parts, you may need to have a second and even a third instruction to task during the body of the lesson.
Body	3/4 of the total lesson time and run for around 30-40 minutes	Within the body of a lesson, students will be participating in active learning as set out in the instruction to task. This could be during an outdoor exercise or in the classroom. Regardless, the focus is on active learning and inquiry through teaching. The premise is, that the lesson should offer genuine opportunities for students to engage and critically think through the materials or activities presented. Within the body of a lesson, students should be able to access the content at various cognitive levels to support learners of all abilities.
Reflection/ Conclusion	5-10 minutes	In the last part of a lesson, students should be allowed to reflect on what they have learnt. This can come in many forms, for example, reflecting on what has been taught, making goals for the next part of the lesson, or completing small assessments for or as learning tasks (see Chapter 6).

Activity 3.1 – Your Role in the Lesson

The above lesson structure encourages you to teach in a manner that focuses on the student's engagement in the learning rather than the source of the information and knowledge (Tancredi et al., 2024). In doing so, it adopts a learner-centred ideology of education (Schiro, 2013), where the underlying belief is that students hold agency and can themselves create knowledge through education. This approach is not only suited to outdoor education as a progressive form of education but also to the broader middle years students' learning styles that we address in the first half of this book (Bahr, 2017); we address this in more detail below (see 3.1.3).

To adopt this teaching style, it is important to consider your role as the teacher in the classroom and during outdoor experiences. Specifically, consider how you can become a guide to learning rather than a source of information or knowledge within the school. Below is a sample lesson plan that focuses on teaching students about the equipment they need to go canoeing. It specifies what the students would do throughout the different phases of the lesson.

- Read through and think about what the students would be doing and learning in each part of the lesson.

- Complete the teacher's boxes for each part.

Answer the following questions:

- What would year 9/10 students like about this lesson?

- What might they find challenging/difficult?

- What safety considerations would I need to monitor for during the lesson?

- What would be a good next lesson for students? Why?

Case Study 3.1 Equipment for Canoeing

Table 3.2 *Equipment for canoeing*, **by Josh Ambrosy, CC BY-NC 4.0**

Year	9/10	
Lesson Title	Introduction to Canoeing Equipment (School grounds, outside)	
Content Descriptors	participate in physical activities that promote health, safety and social outcomes in outdoor environments and aquatic settings to design and evaluate participation strategies for themselves and others (VC2HP10M06)	
Learning Intention	What equipment and knowledge do we need to be safe when going canoeing to explore relationships with the Yarra River?	
Time and section	Teacher will…	Students will…
Introduction (10 minutes)		Recap of last lesson. In pairs, students create a story of how relationships with the Yarra River have changed over time. They use, as many Woiwurrung words as they can remember from their previous lesson in their story.
Instruction to Task (5 minutes)		Students listen to the explanation of the stations. Students watch the canoe lifting demonstration.
Body (25 minutes)		Students work in groups through stations set up to practice skills. Each station has the required equipment and information (cards, videos, etc.). At each station, students use a cause-and-effect model to analyse why the equipment is necessary on a worksheet (table) to consider the risks that each piece of equipment/skill is helping to address. Station 1: Identify all parts of a canoe and demonstrate safe lifting as a group Station 2: Fitting a lifejacket and helmet Station 3: Dryland paddle strokes with a partner (Forward, backward, sweep, pull) Station 4: River signals – call and response Station 5: River swimming safety and clothing (Theory only)

Conclusion (20 minutes)		In groups, students compare their cause-and-effect analysis with another group. Each group is assigned one station, to present their analysis to the group.

3.1.2 e5 Model and Inquiry-Based Teaching for Outdoor Education

The e5 instructional model can help you as a teacher to think about the focus of your lessons, whether they be during outdoor experiences or at school. Specifically, the five stages of the e5 model can assist you in considering how content might be structured across a unit planner; we discuss how lessons should be sequenced in the chapter 4.

Within your OE lessons, you should focus on students participating in learning. However, the type of participation within each lesson should change and progress throughout a unit of work. The e5 Model can help you to think about the types of active participation within the learning that students will undertake at different points within your units of work or even across the period of outdoor experience if you are teaching a unit that is solely delivered during an outdoor experience.

Activity 3.2

- Read through the below summary of the e5 model (Department of Education, n.d.)
- Observe which part of the model you think the canoeing lesson from Activity 3.1 would align to.
- Develop an idea for a lesson (focus area, body activity, etc.), for the other four parts of the model.
- Reflect on how the five lessons you have developed would be scaffolded across a unit and analyse how active student participation in learning might change across different stages of the e5 model.

Table 3.3 *e5 Instructional Model* **, by Victoria. Department of Education. Copyright State Government of Victoria. CC – BY**

Engage	The teacher fosters positive relations with and between students and develops shared expectations for learning and interacting. They stimulate interest and curiosity, promote questioning and connect learning to real world experiences. The teacher structures tasks, elicits students' prior knowledge and supports them to make connections to past learning experiences. They present a purpose for learning, determining challenging learning goals and making assessment and performance requirements clear. The teacher assists students to consider and identify processes that will support the achievement of the learning goals.
Explore	The teacher presents challenging tasks to support students to generate and investigate questions, gather relevant information and develop ideas. They provide tools and procedures for students to organise information and ideas. The teacher identifies students' conceptions and challenges misconceptions. They assist students to expand their perspectives and reflect on their learning. The teacher is mindful of the learning requirements of the task, attentive to student responses and intervenes accordingly.
Explain	The teacher provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their current level of understanding through verbal and non-verbal means. They explicitly teach relevant knowledge, concepts and skills. This content is represented in multiple ways. The teacher provides strategies to enable students to connect and organise new and existing knowledge. They assist students to represent their ideas, using language and images to engage them in reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. The teacher explicitly teaches the language of the discipline. They progressively assess students' understanding and structure opportunities for students to practise new skills.
Elaborate	The teacher engages students in dialogue, continuously extending and refining students' understanding. They support students to identify and define relationships between concepts and to generate principles or rules. The teacher selects contexts from familiar to unfamiliar, which progressively build the students' ability to transfer and generalise their learning. The teacher supports students to create and test hypotheses and to make and justify decisions. They monitor student understanding, providing explicit feedback, and adjusting instruction accordingly.
Evaluate	The teacher supports students to continuously refine and improve their work using assessment criteria in preparation for a performance of understanding. They integrate evidence from each phase, formally recording students' progress against learning goals. The teacher provides feedback and assists students to evaluate their progress and achievements. They support students to reflect on their learning processes and the impact of effort on achievement. The teacher guides students to identify future learning goals.

3.1.3 Lesson Intentions

It is important, when presenting all lessons to students, that you frame them correctly. To do this, you need to explicitly introduce the focus of the lesson and help your students understand the purpose of the learning by adequate framing. This framing should be in the form of a learning intention, which can be framed as a statement or a question. For example, an open-ended question might be, 'How can we leave the Yarra River better than we found it?'.

An open-ended learning intention is preferred when using a learner-centred approach (Schiro, 2013), which we advocate for in this chapter. Specifically, using a question or statement is better than a closed-ended learning intention and success criteria. These have become popular in schools but may not have the best needs of the students in mind because:

- Open framing can promote critical thinking and help students think about their learning.

- By using open framing, you can better cater to the diverse cognitive levels within your classes, as well-developed questions and statements will enable students to access them at various cognitive levels.

- The use of open framing can be used across multiple lessons (e.g., one question used to frame the lessons for a week of classes or even a week-long outdoor experience), this will:

  - help students to access the curriculum at a deeper level and

  - reduce the planning time for you as a teacher.

When structuring your learning intention as a question, you should provide multiple levels of entry to the question so that students at different levels can access your curriculum. When you structure your learning intention as a statement, phrase it using a verb at the beginning and consider what is being learnt by the students rather than the activity being completed.

Activity 3.3 – Developing Lesson Intentions

You are teaching a unit on how technologies used during outdoor experiences impact the health of outdoor environments for a year 9/10 Outdoor Education elective. You and your students have recently

been on an overnight outdoor experience to the Surf Coast, where you undertook a range of activities that involve different technology, including:

- Surfing
- Canoeing
- Bushwalking
- Base Camping

Following the outdoor experience, you plan to teach a lesson where students evaluate the impacts of different technologies used on the trip, which can impact the outdoor environment's health (e.g., soft surfboards that are made from expanded polystyrene).

- Write out 5 different learning intentions you could use to teach this lesson (at least two should be a statement starting with a verb, and two as a question).

- Cross out the learning intention that you like the least.

- Combine two or more of the remaining intentions into one.

- Select the most appropriate learning intention.

- Read it aloud as if you were introducing it to your class.

- Make any edits you need to, after reading it aloud to help with flow.

- Reflect on:

    - The process you have undertaken to develop a learning intention.

    - What types of learning intentions have you used in the past?

    - The types of learning intentions you might use in the future based on this activity.

3.1.4 Planning for Middle Years Learners

Students in the middle years are unique cohorts to teach. Students undergo significant development during the middle years. In many schools, the curriculum is structured differently to best cater to the students during these formative years. For example, many schools in Victoria deliver their year nine curriculum via specific programs and structures that are more

relevant to middle-year learners and allow students to learn about themselves and the world around them (Ambrosy, 2023).

When developing lessons for students in the middle years, consider what is being taught and who you are teaching. What you teach is articulated by the content descriptors, what is being assessed and at what cognitive level, as articulated by the achievement standards in the Victorian Curriculum F-10. However, there is a more underlying need as a teacher of the middle years, to not only be responsive to the formal curriculum, but to plan your lessons based on who you are teaching and the outdoor environments you are teaching through.

Bahr (2017) provides teachers of the middle years with a helpful framework to conceptualise the middle years learner. Specifically, rather than falling into the traps of the dominant and at times, unhelpful discourses of students in the middle years being disengaged, lost, or being defined by what they are not (not an adult, not a child). Bahr's framework helps teachers of middle years students to consider the assets, wants and needs of students at this age group, which can, in turn, help underscore the development of engaging lessons.

Table 3.4 *Assets, Wants and Needs of Middle Years Learners* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Assets	Self-centred/orientated, Globally aware, Concrete vs abstract, Tensions, Untested/unknown, Unique, Physicality
Wants	Fun, Relevance, Success, Direction/goals
Developmental Needs	Support/guidance/acceptance, Connection with prior knowledge, Authentic/situated learning, To take risks

Activity 3.4 The Assets Wants and Needs of Middle Years Learners

The above table from Bahr (2017), presents a framework for thinking about who you might teach as a middle years outdoor education teacher. Although this framework can help you to develop relationships with your students at this age group, it should also be used to underpin your lesson and curriculum planning (see Chapter 4).

1. Take the time to review the various assets, wants and development needs in Table 3.2.
2. For each of the 15 assets, wants, and developmental needs, write down three observations about the types of students you are planning outdoor education lessons for.

E.g., Globally aware:

◦ Students are interested in big issues that have real-world consequences.

◦ Students are questioning the world around them on many scales.

◦ Students are likely to enjoy learning based on responses to global problems, such as local ecological restoration as climate mitigation strategies.

◦ Imagine you are teaching an outdoor education elective to year eight students where you will be undertaking an outdoor experience, including downhill snow sports. In preparation for this experience, you have a double period (120 minutes) through which you plan to teach the students about snow sports safety and the alpine responsibility code (Case Study 3.1), in preparation for their trip. Develop a lesson that:

  ▪ Teachers students how to be safe when in an alpine resort, including their obligations under the alpine responsibility code.

  ▪ Is taught in a way, that the unique assets inform the, wants and needs of middle years students. In doing so, consider both how information might be presented to the year eight students and how they might take an active role within the classroom.

Alpine Responsibility Code

1. Stay in control and avoid other people and hazards.
2. Use appropriate protective equipment, especially helmets, to minimise the risk of injury.
3. You must have the ability to use each lift safely. If in doubt ask the lift attendant.
4. Obey all signs and warnings, and keep off closed trails and areas.
5. It is your responsibility to avoid and give way to people below and beside you.
6. Do not stop where you are not visible from above or where you obstruct a trail.
7. Before starting downhill, or merging into a trail, look uphill and give way to others.
8. Use care to prevent runaway snowboards.
9. If you are involved in or see an accident, alert and identify yourself to Resort Staff.
10. Be aware that it is dangerous to ski, board or ride lifts if your ability is impaired by drugs or alcohol.

From Alpine responsiblity code [Australian version]. Snowsafe. *Note.* Versions from UK, USA, Canada and Australia exist, with National Ski Areas Association [USA] being noted as the creator of the US original version.

3.1.5 Collaborative Learning for Effective Outdoor Education Classroom Practice

In many schools, outdoor education appears in the middle years solely through experiences. In others, outdoor education might be an elective that encompasses both timetabled weekly classes along with outdoor experiences. Although the use of outdoor experiences, both at school, locally and further afield, should constitute most of these scheduled classes, some scheduled class time will end up inside for various logistical and other pragmatic reasons. Accordingly, it is important to think about how this time can be used effectively to both deliver curriculum whilst meeting the overachieving aims of what outdoor education is trying to achieve.

Collaborative learning is a powerful pedagogical practice for the middle years classroom more generally (Main, 2017), and is well suited to teaching outdoor education. Collaborative learning is based on Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. Through cooperative learning, students become responsible for their learning and the learning of others around them and take on an active role in co-creating knowledge through classes. Furthermore, through collaborative learning, students build relationships within their class groups which can be leveraged in multiple ways during outdoor experiences.

1. **Simulations and Scenarios:** Role-playing activities that mimic real-life situations for practical learning. **Example:** Students participate in a first aid scenario, practising decision-making and teamwork.
2. **Peer Learning:** Students work in pairs or small groups to share knowledge and solve problems together. **Example:** Students pair up and plan a route card for a section of an upcoming hike that their pair has been assigned to lead.
3. **Environmental Issue Debates:** Students participate in discussions where students argue different sides of an issue. **Example:** Students debate land use policies, such as conservation, versus developing for a nearby reserve.
4. **Jigsaw Strategies:** Students learn different parts of a topic and then teach their peers. **Example:** Groups research various aspects of a national park's history and then teach each other, promoting collaborative learning.

3.2 A Model for Lessons in the Outdoors

When teaching your students outdoors, it is equally important to develop lessons that are responses to the place, to the learners, and leverage the unique opportunities to teach outside. Lessons should be part of a broader sequence of learning (see Chapter 4). In our experience, we often see pre-service and beginning teachers conduct lessons in outdoor environments that could have been easily done in the classroom (worksheets, comprehension-based activities, etc.). Such approaches not only miss out on the pedagogical benefits of being outside but also allow school leaders to raise questions about the necessity of outdoor experiences (see

Chapter 6). When planning outdoor experiences, the following four constructs are helpful to think about. This model of planning.

Table 3.5 – *A Model for Lessons in the Outdoors* **(J. Quay, personal communication, 6 August 2024). Reproduced with permission.**

Construct	Planning Questions
Venturing – to venture into outdoor environs. A sense of adventure can be sought near and far from the school. The environment is their environs.	What do you want students to achieve during this venturing into outdoor environs? How will the lesson connect their way of venturing with their environs? Who do you expect them to be?
Learning – to learn through the ways they are being, in the place and outdoor environment visited. What is learned through Outdoor Education happens through connected being, doing and knowing.	How will the experiences students participate in enable them to express the knowledge you wish them to learn? Who are you asking them to be during the lesson, in connection with the place they are in?
Being – the environs and the venturing are inseparable, as who they are in this place.	Who will students 'be' when participating?
Doing – the venturing practices they undertake are how they engage with the environs.	How will students participate and be this person, in this place?
Knowing – the knowledge they need to undertake these venturing practices and be this person in this place, these environs.	What is it important for students to know to be able to participate and be this person in this place?

Chapter Summary

Lesson planning is a fundamental skill for outdoor education teachers, requiring careful consideration of both classroom-based and outdoor learning experiences. This chapter introduces key elements of effective lesson planning, emphasising a student-centred, inquiry-based approach. It explores structured lesson components, including warm-ups, task instructions, active learning activities, and reflection. The e5 instructional model is presented as a framework for structuring lessons, ensuring a progression of student engagement and critical thinking. Additionally, the chapter highlights the importance of lesson intentions, advocating for open-ended, inquiry-driven framing to promote deeper learning. Planning for middle years learners requires responsiveness to their unique assets, wants, and developmental needs, which can be leveraged to create meaningful and engaging lessons. The

chapter also introduces collaborative learning strategies, such as simulations, debates, and peer-led activities, to enhance both classroom-based and outdoor education. Finally, a model for planning lessons in outdoor environments is provided, ensuring lessons are purposefully designed to utilise the unique opportunities of learning outside.

Reflection Questions

- Why do you need to undertake lesson planning as a pre-service Outdoor Education teacher?
- What are some approaches to developing lessons both in the classroom and during outdoor experiences suited to middle years outdoor education?
- What are the unique assets, wants and needs of middle years learners? – How can your planning reflect these students?

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CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPING A SEQUENCE OF LEARNING IN MIDDLE YEARS OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the different components of a unit planner for outdoor education in the middle years.
- Analyse how the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework can be applied to develop successful units of outdoor education.
- Recommend how middle years units of outdoor education can help prepare students to study VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies.

4.1 Introduction to Unit Planning

The planning of units of work is an essential skill to develop as a teacher. Through the development of units of work, you can design a specific sequence in which learning can take place, create and scaffold understanding across a period, and leverage outdoor experiences. Furthermore, the development of work units, rather than individual lesson planning, is a time-efficient process giving you additional time to be able to respond to the other pressures of the job. By having a detailed plan at the outset of a term or semester for your classes, you can be more intentional about teaching towards specific outcomes that you are trying to achieve within your outdoor education (OE) program.

This chapter argues for the importance of a backward design process known as *Understanding by Design* (UbD) (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) when developing a curriculum for outdoor education in the middle years. Following this, we turn to the pragmatics of unit planning and offer suggestions to help you plan purposeful learning through these tools. We conclude by considering how middle years outdoor education electives can prepare students to undertake the VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies course (see Chapters 8-12).

4.2 Understanding by Design and Outdoor Education

The UbD framework provides teachers with a specific process to help plan meaningful work units. Although this process wasn't developed specifically for OE, it provides an excellent framework for planning units or courses.

Understanding by Design is a book written by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe that offers a framework for designing courses and content units called "Backward Design."

In *Understanding by Design*, Wiggins and McTighe argue that backward design is focused primarily on student learning and understanding. When teachers are designing lessons, units, or courses, they often focus on the activities and instruction rather than the outputs of the instruction. Therefore, it can be stated that teachers often focus more on teaching rather than learning. This perspective can lead to the misconception that learning is the activity when, in fact, learning is derived from a careful consideration of the meaning of the activity.

The Three Stages of Backward Design

"Deliberate and focused instructional design requires us as teachers and curriculum writers to make an important shift in our thinking about the nature of our job. The shift involves thinking a great deal, first, about the specific learnings sought, and the evidence of such learnings, before thinking about what we, as the teacher, will do or provide in teaching and learning activities."
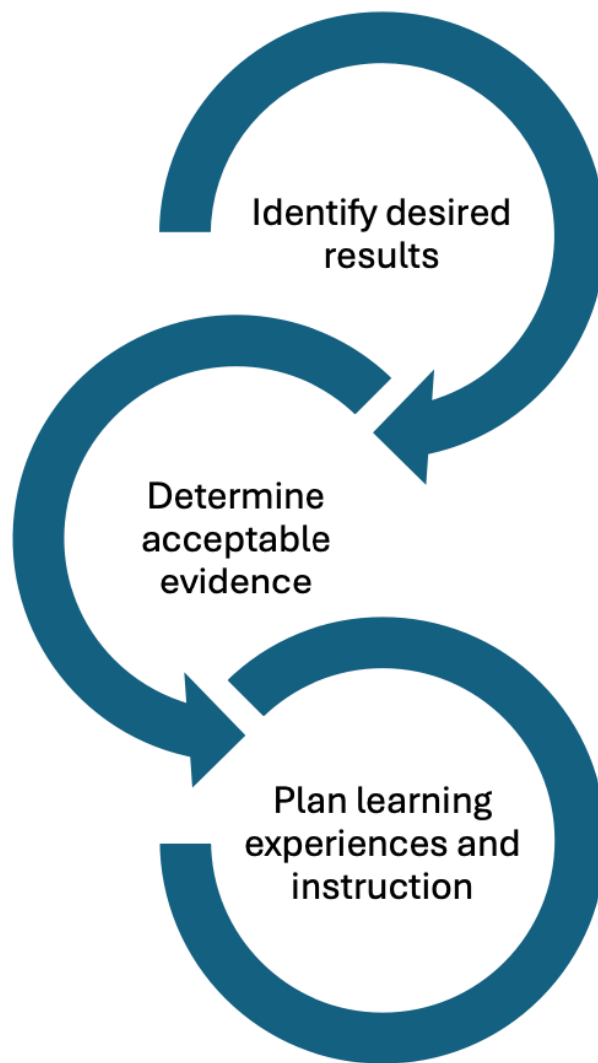
Figure 2. *Stages of UbD*, by Josh Ambrosy, adapted from Brown (n.d), Understanding by design https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/Understanding-by-Design.docx CC BY

Stage One – Identify Desired Results

In the first stage, the teacher must consider the learning goals of the lesson, unit, or course. Wiggins and McTighe provide a useful process for establishing curricular priorities. They suggest that the teacher ask themselves the following three questions as they progressively focus in on the most valuable content:

- ◦ What should participants hear, read, view, explore or otherwise encounter?

- This knowledge is considered knowledge worth being familiar with. Information that fits within this question is the lowest priority content information that will be mentioned in the lesson, unit, or course.
- What knowledge and skills should participants master?

The knowledge and skills at this substage are considered important to know and do. The information that fits within this question could be the facts, concepts, principles, processes, strategies, and methods students should know when they leave the course.

- What are big ideas and important understandings participants should retain?

The big ideas and important understandings are referred to as enduring understandings because these are the ideas that teachers want students to remember sometime after they've completed the course.

Stage Two – Determine Acceptable Evidence:

The second stage of backward design has the teacher consider the assessments and performance tasks students will complete in order to demonstrate evidence of understanding and learning. In the previous stage, the teacher pinpointed the learning goals of the course. Therefore, they will have a clearer vision of what evidence students can provide to show they have achieved or have started to attain the goals of the course. Consider the following two questions at this stage:

- How will I know if students have achieved the desired results?
- What will I accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?

Stage Three – Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction:

The final stage of backward design is when teachers begin to consider how they will teach. This is when instructional strategies and learning activities should be created. With the learning goals and assessment methods established, the teacher will have a clearer vision of which strategies would work best to provide students with the resources and information necessary to attain the goals of the course.

Adapted from Brown (n.d), Understanding by design. https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/Understanding-by-Design.docx CC BY

To summarise, the UbD framework flips, the planning process to start with the outcomes and finish with the learning. This is often the reverse to how many teachers might plan. Due to the administrative and other pressures of the job, in many schools, planning what is taught first is not uncommon. Although a UbD approach requires additional time at the start of a unit of work, that time can be recouped throughout the semester.

Activity 4.1 Backwards or Forwards Design.

Complete the following table, to help you think about the advantages and disadvantages of taking a UbD or backward approach to your planning for middle years outdoor education.

Advantages of UbD	Disadvantages of UbD	Other Observations

An editable copy of this activity can be accessed here: A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum Activity 4.1 (.docx)

4.2.1 Establishing Learning Outcomes

When beginning your planning, it's essential to establish clear learning outcomes guided by the principles outlined in section 4.2. Start by developing your essential understandings with a focus on the specific outdoor environment you will be teaching in, the needs and characteristics of your students, and the overall objectives you aim to achieve with your program.

Once you have defined the direction for your unit, we recommend linking your outcomes to the relevant curriculum descriptions and achievement standards in the Victorian Curriculum F-10. This ensures that your program is aligned with the broader educational framework and that you are approaching your curriculum development holistically. After mapping your learning goals to the curriculum, you may need to refine them to ensure they align seamlessly, particularly with key terminology and concepts.

Activity 4.2 – Establishing Learning Outcomes

Imagine you are working in a school and developing a unit for all Year 7 students to complete during their pastoral period. The unit will run for 60 minutes once a week for four weeks, leading up to a four-day camp. The camp, organised by an external provider at a hard-top facility, will involve a range of activities including a surfing day, a visit to a local ecological education centre, and several on-site activities such as canoeing, high ropes, and initiative challenges. Additionally, students will participate in a one-night mini hike and sleep-out, designed as preparation for longer hikes in Years 8-9. The trip has already been booked by a previous teacher.

The Deputy Principal – Teaching and Learning, has requested that you develop a series of preparation activities, as last year many students were not adequately prepared for the camp. They have also asked you to consider the overall learning outcomes of the program.

Provide 1-2 responses for each of the following questions:

- **What should participants hear, read, view, explore, or otherwise encounter?**
- **What knowledge and skills should participants master?**
- **What are the big ideas and important understandings that participants should retain?**

Brainstorm using a mind map to outline what the learning experience will look like, taking into account the above responses.

4.2.Determining Evidence of Learning

Evidence of learning is not a synonym for assessment tasks. Yet, assessment tasks are one way of capturing and identifying what has been learnt. Prior to thinking about the types of evidence of learning you might want to see in your assessment tasks, first consider what the evidence of learning itself needs to demonstrate. As teachers, there is often a tendency towards the pragmatic parts of the planning process. Identifying evidence of learning, prior to determining the assessment task can be a good way to focus on the outcomes you are wanting to see, rather than the completion of a task. The below case study (4.1) demonstrates this in action.

Once you have established the evidence of learning you would like to see, you should then determine the assessment tasks that you will assign students. We discuss in detail the ways you might use assessment tasks as part of your middle years outdoor education programs in Chapter 5. Assessment tasks can be broken down into three broad purposes:

- Assessment for learning: occurs when teachers use inferences about student

progress to inform their teaching (formative assessment)

- Assessment as learning: occurs when students reflect on and monitor their progress to inform their future learning goals (formative assessment)

- Assessment of learning: occurs when teachers use evidence of student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards (summative assessment).

(Department of Education and Training, 2021)

Case Study 4.1 – Planning with UbD

Indoor rock climbing by Bady Abbas on Unsplash

Background

A year 9 outdoor education class is completing a unit titled "Responsible Relationships in Outdoor Education". The key focus of this unit is how students can become responsible for their own and others leaning during outdoor experiences, and how they can become responsible stewards of outdoor environments through examining how people use outdoor environments. As part of this, the teacher has decided to develop some outdoor experiences based around climbing. Through climbing, students must learn how to work together safely to succeed in the activities in groups. Further, as part of an outdoor experience to Dyuritte (Mount Arapiles), students will consider the ethics of climbing, including access to different rocks and how climbing as an activity might impact on outdoor environments and the continuous connection to Country of the Traditional Owners the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia

and Jupagulk peoples who have occupied the lands around Dyuritte for thousands of years before climbing became a outdoor activity.

Without UbD

If you were to think about this scenario without utilising the UbD approach, you would likely plan the learning activities, then the assessment tasks. This might result in a range of learning like:

- A climbing gear introduction session at school
- Local climbing sessions at the local climbing gym
- Theory classes based on the Traditional Owners relationship with Country
- The trip to Dyuritte

In turn an assessment task may include a reflective journal at the end of the unit of work based on what the students learnt in the unit.

Upon assessing these journals, it is likely that you might discover that the students spent more time focusing on the climbing itself, rather than their relationships with each other and Country. The learning tasks, although valid, may also seem somewhat fragmented for the students. Without a skilled and highly experienced teacher, building the interconnections between the learning about climbing and the ongoing relationship to Country may have not been recognised or understood.

With UbD

By taking a UbD approach, you would begin by thinking about the desired results of the unit. If you were to answer the UbD questions above designed to help you identify desired results you might respond as follows.

- What should participants hear, read, view, explore or otherwise encounter?
- Traditional Owners Relationship with Country
- Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples Language and Custodianship for Country
- Climbing and the impact of climbing on Country
- Climbing as a way to build relationships with self and others
- Ways of being responsible when climbing on Country
- What knowledge and skills should participants master?
- Working safely in teams to bely, climb, etc.
- Respecting Country through actions (minimal impact)
- Analysing Traditional Owners Relationship with Country
- What are big ideas and important understandings participants should retain?
- People and Country are inseparable, Country cares for People and People need to care for Country
- Through undertaking respectful learning activities on Country, we can build

relationships with self, others and the environment

Following this, you could then answer the questions about the desired results as follows.

How will I know if students have achieved the desired results?

- ◦ Students demonstrate through actions during practical activities, discussions, and assessment tasks a respect for Country
- ◦ Students approach climbing in a mature way, that supports themselves and their peers to take managed risks and learn from those risks

What will I accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?

- ◦ Students document their experiences of the unit through photographs and videos. They then use either multi-media or a written narrative to present a story of their learning journey to answer the question: 'What does it mean, to develop a respectful relationship with Country and peers?'

By taking this approach, we have shifted the focus of both the unit and the assessment task, whilst still providing a rigorous framework through which learning can take place.

4.3 Unit Planning and Sequencing Learning

The development of unit planners is a key skill for teachers. There are multiple benefits to planning via a unit planner rather than a sequence of individual lessons. These include:

1. Scaffolding: Through the planning of a unit, you can develop a sequence of learning (4.3.1) that scaffolds students through a process of guided inquiry. This means that you can be strategic about how both constructs (what is taught) and skills (the cognitive application of what is taught) are scaffolded within the unit. For example, students might first describe different minimal-impact strategies that could be used on a bush walk, then, during and after the walk, evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies.
2. Diversity of Practice: Students in the middle years respond to diverse teaching and assessment strategies. Through using a unit planner, you can map a diverse range of teaching strategies and assessment practices across a given number of weeks to help make your curriculum more relevant to middle years students.
3. Teacher Workload: The development of unit planners helps to manage teacher workloads, which has been directly linked to teacher wellbeing. Through planning over a larger period, you can develop a better curriculum and become more efficient with your planning time and manage your workload.

4.3.1 A Sequence of Learning and e5

Model

The e5 Model (3.1.2) can be used to help structure units that you develop. Through doing so, the model will assist you in scaffolding learning across the unit and create opportunities for students to take an active role in their own learning during units of work.

Activity 4.3 Scaffolding with the e5 Model

Imagine you are planning a unit for year 10 students that examines how technology impacts on students' relationships with outdoor environments. Key outdoor activities in your unit include geo-cashing, mountain biking and surfing.

1. Review the e5 Model in 3.1.2
2. Plan, using dot points, the types of learning activities that might be appropriate for the technology unit using the table below.

Engage	
Explore	
Explain	
Elaborate	
Evaluate	

An editable copy of this activity can be accessed here: A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum Activity 4 3 (.docx)

4.3.2 Negotiated Curriculum

In the 1980's Garath Boomer (Bron et al., 2016) and colleagues proposed a model of curriculum negotiation. This model is still highly relevant for teachers of middle years outdoor education today. Boomer's negotiated curriculum is an educational approach focusing on collaboration between teachers and students in designing the learning experience. Rather than following a traditional top-down model where the teacher decides all aspects of the curriculum, this framework allows both parties to negotiate what will be studied, how it will be learned, and

how progress will be assessed. It aims to make learning more student-centred by integrating students' interests, needs, and experiences.

Key elements of Boomer's negotiated curriculum include:

- Shared decision-making: Teachers and students work together to determine the learning content, pace, and methods.
- Student-centred learning: Students have a voice in shaping their educational experience, ensuring that the material is more relevant and engaging for them.
- Flexibility: The curriculum is adaptable, allowing it to evolve based on students' interests and needs, creating a dynamic learning environment.
- Empowerment and engagement: By involving students in decisions, they become more motivated and take greater ownership of their learning.

Activity 4.4 Negotiated Outdoor Education Curriculum

Using the table below, complete the table to explain how you might embed each of Boomer's key elements into your unit planning as a middle-year outdoor education teacher.

Key Element	Use
Shared decision-making	• Students undertake a coastal trip, and during the trip, activities are decided on based on weather conditions and the group, not a pre-determined schedule • Following a series of local outdoor activities, students are going to undertake a project through which they investigate a local sustainability issue that is impacted by recreational activities. Students choose the issue and negotiate the focus and presentation of the project.
Student-centred learning	
Flexibility	
Empowerment and engagement	

An editable copy of this activity can be accessed here: A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum Activity 4 4 (.docx)

4.3.3 Student Research Tasks

Student research tasks are common in middle years education. However, some teachers avoid this approach to learning, believing that students may not acquire the necessary knowledge or may become off-task during research time. This is often due to issues in the design of the task itself and the accompanying instruction. When designing student research tasks, the following elements should be considered:

- Purpose and appropriateness: Student research tasks should be purpose-driven—for example, when there is a genuine topic to be investigated by the students. They should align with the intended learning outcomes of the lesson. Assigning all students to research the same case study is not an effective use of a research task, as answers can be easily shared among the group and a lack of interest can be the result. Instead, an appropriate research task might be based on a student's or small group's interest in a particular topic or problem, where they have been able to negotiate aspects of the task (see Section 4.3.2).
- Scaffolding and teaching: For research tasks to be effective, they need to be scaffolded and broken down into achievable parts. Deciding on research questions or determining the types of sources to be used are components that should be embedded within the task. When developing research tasks over one or more lessons, teachers should consider how to break down the elements of the task and identify explicit skills (note-taking, analytical skills, communication skills, etc.) that may need to be taught.
- Use of technology: Students will primarily use technology during these tasks. Teachers should ensure that the use of technology is taught in a safe and ethical manner, including the use of generative AI as part of the task. It is important to follow the school's relevant policies. Further information about the use of technology in schools and developing digitally literate citizens can be found on the following websites:

  - eSafety Commission: https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators

  - Curriculum Connection: Online Saftey https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/teacher-resources/understand-this-curriculum-connection/online-safety/

  - Curriculum Connection: Artificial Intelligence https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/teacher-resources/understand-this-curriculum-connection/artificial-intelligence/

4.3.4 Mapping Assessment Tasks

When developing a unit planner, it is essential to map assessment tasks that include

assessment as, of, and for learning. This is particularly important for middle years outdoor education teachers for several reasons:

1. Assessment drives effective teaching and learning practices: For example, if students are tasked with a project examining how outdoor activities can be made more inclusive for diverse user groups, you might plan your surfing or biking sessions differently to equip them with the necessary insights and experiences for the project.
2. Engagement through varied assessment: By mapping assessment tasks (especially those used for learning) from the outset, you can enhance student engagement through a variety of smaller tasks that allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in different ways, catering to diverse learning styles.
3. Supporting skill development: By establishing formative assessment tasks throughout the unit, you can monitor student progress on particular skills, ensuring they are adequately prepared for a summative (assessment of learning) task at the end of the unit. This ongoing assessment provides valuable opportunities for feedback and skill development, fostering greater success in the final assessment.

4.3.5 Integrating Outdoor Experiences and Environments into Unit Planners

The use of outdoor experiences is pivotal to teaching outdoor education in the middle years. Chapter 5 will provide a detailed overview of the types of experiences you might incorporate. As direct experiences in outdoor environments are an integral part of the curriculum, it is important to plan these within your unit planner. Doing so ensures that these experiences contribute to a holistic approach to teaching, both inside and outside the classroom.

Moreover, by including outdoor experiences in your unit planner, you can align your school-based lessons with the outdoor environments in which you teach (see Section 2.2.3). A best practice approach is to align each middle year's unit with a specific outdoor environment. This alignment allows you to tailor both theoretical and practical learning to the chosen environment, reinforcing the central ideas of your unit and ensuring a cohesive learning experience.

4.3.6 Pathways to VCE OES in Year 7-10 Outdoor Education Curriculum

Outdoor education in the middle years should present a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for the age group being taught. While the middle years should be regarded as more than just preparation for VCE, there is increasing pressure in some schools for teachers to begin early preparation for senior studies, particularly in Years 9 and 10. Empirically, we have observed that this pressure often leads to attempts to bring VCE content forward and structure the middle years in ways similar to VCE teaching (see Chapters 8-12). We do not support this approach. Instead, the following strategies can be used to develop students' skills and

knowledge in the middle years, preparing them for VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies (OES) in a manner that remains suitable for middle years learners:

1. Develop key skills: As discussed in Section 8.4.2, key skills underpin the teaching of OES. Rather than replicating content from VCE in the middle years, you can teach distinct and age-appropriate concepts while still fostering the development of analytical skills that will benefit students in future studies

2. Focus on hard skills: In VCE, students must complete a number of outdoor experiences aligned with the study design. If students have already developed basic hard skills such as navigation and campcraft in previous years, you can focus more on aligning your outdoor trips with VCE content.

Chapter 4 Summary

In chapter 4, we have focused on the development of unit planners in middle years outdoor education, emphasising the importance of using the *Understanding by Design* (UbD) framework. UbD encourages teachers to plan backward by first identifying desired learning outcomes, then determining acceptable evidence, and finally designing learning experiences. The chapter discusses how a well-structured unit planner can scaffold learning, enhance student engagement, and manage teacher workload. Additionally, it highlights the value of aligning outdoor experiences with theoretical learning and planning curriculum pathways that prepare students for VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies without simply replicating senior-level content. The chapter also explores the benefits of integrating key skills, formative assessments, and negotiated curriculum to create a holistic and developmentally appropriate outdoor education experience.

Reflection Questions

- How can the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework help you create more meaningful and engaging outdoor education units for middle years students?
- What strategies can you use to ensure that your outdoor education unit integrates both theoretical learning and outdoor experiences effectively?
- In what ways can assessment tasks be designed to support student learning throughout a unit, rather than just measuring outcomes at the end?
- How can you develop key skills in middle years outdoor education that will help students transition smoothly into VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies without replicating senior-level content too early?

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CHAPTER 5: OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES IN MIDDLE YEARS OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe different types and learning outcomes of outdoor experiences that can be used within Middle Years Outdoor Education
- Analyse how different outdoor experiences might suit different learning contexts and outcomes
- Explain the importance of designing outdoor experiences for inclusion
- Explain ways that you can support all students to access your curriculum

5.1 Introduction to Outdoor Experiences

Outdoor experiences are central to outdoor education. They are more than just a site of learning or an activity. Instead, outdoor experiences should be approached as a cornerstone of your outdoor education curriculum. These experiences should not be planned as secondary to your curriculum; rather, the environments you teach in and through (see 2.2.3) should guide the design of your curriculum as a place-responsive outdoor educator.

This chapter supports you in planning outdoor experiences that align with and enhance the rest of your curriculum planning. It should be read alongside other chapters in this section, as planning lessons (Chapter 3), units (Chapter 4), outdoor experiences, and assessments (Chapter 6) is an integrated process. Additionally, this chapter addresses key safety considerations and strategies for ensuring that outdoor experiences are inclusive and accessible to a diverse range of learners.

5.1.1 Types of Outdoor Experiences

A broad range of outdoor experiences may be suited to your middle years program. While the types of experiences you include will vary depending on your school's location, budget, and other factors, it is valuable to consider how a diversity of experiences can become part of

your program. The term outdoor experiences, borrowed from VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies (see Chapter 10), is a useful umbrella term (rather than adventure activities) as it encourages consideration of the wide range of learning opportunities that can take place outdoors, making it well-suited to a middle years outdoor education curriculum.

A diverse range of experiences aligned with your learning outcomes can be incorporated into your program. Outdoor experiences may take place on school grounds or further afield. These activities can range from highly active to more passive pursuits, provided they are suitable for the educational purpose you aim to achieve, align with your school's risk management framework, and adhere to relevant safety guidelines (see Section 5.1.3).

Examples of outdoor experiences might include:

- At school: biodiversity audits, mapping using symbols, navigation practice, mountain bike skills sessions, and campcraft practice (e.g., setting up tarps, tents, or Trangias).
- In your local area: orienteering, bike touring at local mountain bike parks, creek exploration (either at a specific location or following a watercourse), and service-based learning with community groups.
- Adventure activities: abseiling, artificial climbing and abseiling walls, bushwalking, camping, canoeing/kayaking, challenge ropes courses, cycling (including Bicycle Education), horse riding, orienteering, rafting, rock climbing, sailing, scuba diving, sea kayaking, snorkelling, snow activities, surfing and stand-up paddleboarding, swimming and water-based activities, water skiing, and windsurfing.

5.1.2 Resourcing Outdoor Experiences

An ongoing challenge in many school environments is sourcing appropriate equipment for outdoor experiences. While some equipment, such as Trangia cooking stoves, is relatively inexpensive and durable, other items, like a fleet of mountain bikes, can be more costly to purchase and maintain. In some cases, hiring equipment or working with a specialist provider who can supply both instructors and equipment may be a more cost-effective option. Depending on the activity, engaging a provider might reduce overall expenses compared to running the activity solely through the school. There are also a range of grants that you may be able to apply for such as, via your local council or through philanthropic organisations, depending on the affluence of your school community.

If you are developing a program from scratch, it is essential to be strategic about how you allocate your budget, particularly focusing on items that will see the most frequent use. Based on experience, a good starting point is equipping your school gear shed with basic group camping equipment. This allows you to run relatively low-cost overnight trips using national and state parks, Scout camps, or caravan parks. From there, you can gradually acquire, hire, or borrow specialised equipment for other activities. Additionally, consider what equipment is truly necessary and explore cost-effective alternatives. For instance, bamboo poles and tarpaulins can serve as an excellent alternative to tents, encouraging students to develop camping skills without relying on commercial products. Students could also be asked to purchase their own foam sleeping mats, as these are prone to wear but are often better

maintained when owned by individuals. Some schools even adopt the practice of having students purchase Trangia stoves and later sell them second-hand to incoming cohorts.

The responsibility for equipment need not rest solely with you as the teacher. Managing and sourcing equipment can become a valuable learning opportunity for students. This might involve students planning and procuring equipment as part of a project or taking responsibility for equipment management before and after trips, fostering a sense of accountability. Furthermore, involving students in equipment selection can create opportunities to consider the environmental sustainability of their choices. Additionally there may be support staff at the school, ie groundsperson or maintenance that through negotiation can be allocated time to assist with equipment logistics.

Proper storage and timely repair of gear are crucial for maintaining equipment in good condition. Delayed repairs can lead to a growing pile of unusable items. Once an item is no longer serviceable, ensure it is either repaired, replaced, or repurposed promptly. A proactive approach to gear management will help maximise the longevity and functionality of your resources.

Activity 5.1 – Equipment Audit

At the school where you are teaching, conduct an audit of the available equipment. Think broadly—there may be equipment located in other areas of the school, not just in the outdoor education cupboard. Complete the table below, then answer the following questions:

Item	Qty	Notes (repairs needed)

An editable copy of this activity can be accessed here: A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum Activity 5.1 (.docx)

Reflection Questions:

What activities could I run with the equipment I currently have?

What needs to be included in next year's budget request?

What equipment might I be able to borrow or hire?

What might students be able to source for themselves?

5.1.3 Safety and Compliance of Outdoor Experiences

As a teacher, it is critical to always prioritise both the safety and compliance of outdoor experiences. Three essential questions should remain at the forefront of your mind during both the planning and delivery of outdoor experiences:

1. Is the activity safe for the students and staff involved?
2. Is the activity compliant with the relevant legislation and guidelines?
3. Is this activity going to enable the program outcomes to be achieved?

If you cannot confidently answer "yes" to these questions, you must pause and adjust your plans until you can. It is also important to remember that ignorance of your fiduciary obligations is not a valid defence. Therefore, careful and thorough planning of your outdoor experiences is imperative to ensure student safety and meet legal and professional responsibilities.

In Victoria, the Department of Education provides a comprehensive set of guidelines governing how school students can participate in excursions and adventure activities. These guidelines are part of the broader *Policy Advisory Library* (PAL), which can be accessed at https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/excursions/policy

Activity 5.2 Planning within the PAL Policy

Imagine you are a graduate teacher who has been asked to plan a 2-night camp to Tidal River for a group of 22 year 7 students. Your camp is going to include the following activities:

- Bushwalking – Day walks.
- Surfing – run by a provider.
- Rock pooling.
- Campcraft including cooking, sleeping in tents, etc.
- Swimming in tidal river.

1. Locate the adventure activity planning checklist.
2. Work through the checklist and locate the relevant guidelines and resources that you would need on to plan the camp.

Case Study 5.1 Strict Aversion to Fatalities

As an outdoor education teacher, it is imperative to approach the planning and management of risk for outdoor experiences as more than a compliance or tick-the-box activity. Risk management is arguably the most important part of your role, as the safety of the young people under your care depends on it. A fundamental concept that all outdoor education teachers should adopt is a strict aversion to fatalities approach, ensuring that every decision prioritises the safety and wellbeing of students and staff at all times. Thomas et al. (2019) explains this as:

> Outdoor educators demonstrate a depth of understanding in relation to safety and risk management and the critical nature of fatality prevention. They learn from case studies of past fatalities in led outdoor activities and are able to plan and lead effective and safe outdoor education experiences in a variety of contexts. Outdoor educators are able to continuously and critically evaluate the purposes of a program, the context of the program, and their own practices in relation to safety (p. 180).

The following case study from Worksafe (2024) demonstrates how tragic outcomes can happen quickly during outdoor experiences. Not only has this drowning resulted in financial penalties for the pool

operator and the Department of Education, but it would also have no doubt impacted the wellbeing of the teachers, the student's family and the other students attending the camp.

$180,000 in fines after student drowns on school camp

A local pool operator and the Department of Education have been fined a total of $180,000 after the tragic drowning death of an eight-year-old boy at Port Fairy while on a school camp.

Published: 31 May 2024

Read the full article on the Worksafe website.

Worksafe. (2024). *$180,000 in fines after student drowns on school camp.* https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/news/2024-05/180000-fines-after-student-drowns-school-camp

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Activity 5.2 – Where am I Safe?

To effectively meet compliance requirements in the planning of outdoor experiences and adopt a strict aversion to fatalities approach during these activities, it is crucial to have a deep understanding of the environments and activities you are running. Familiarity with the terrain, conditions, and potential risks of a location, along with appropriate activity knowledge and skills, is an essential part of ensuring student safety.

Open your outdoor education logbook and reflect on your current level of experience in various environments. Create two lists:

- Environments and activities you can confidently lead: These are locations where your knowledge and experience allow you to take full responsibility for the group.
- Environments and activities you could confidently act as an accompanying teacher: These are locations where you would feel more comfortable supporting another leader who has greater familiarity with the area.

5.2.1 Teaching through Outdoor Experiences

When incorporating outdoor experiences into your outdoor education classes, it is essential to be explicit about the learning outcomes of each experience. Early-career teachers sometimes adopt what could be described as a 'fruit salad' approach, where students engage in a variety of activities, but without intentional structure or clearly defined learning outcomes to tie them together. While variety is important, it's equally vital to ensure that all activities contribute meaningfully to the overall objectives of your program.

Extending this metaphor, no one enjoys a fruit salad dominated by one ingredient, like overripe banana. Similarly, in outdoor education, it's important to avoid an imbalance in your planning. When budgets are tight, there's a risk that schools invest heavily in one or two high-cost activities, with the remaining experiences being less engaging for students. This is why being strategic about learning outcomes is crucial, particularly when balancing school-based class time with outdoor experiences. A well-planned program ensures a cohesive, engaging, and educational experience for all students.

Case Study 5.2 – Discovering the Central Goldfields

The following sequence of outdoor activities might be useful if you were teaching in a school on or near the central goldfield. It is broadly based on the idea of discovery of the place, which would allow many different ways of engaging in the outdoors and is tied together by the idea of how the place has changed over time. Many of the activities are low or free of cost and could be adapted to different parts of the goldfields.

Table 5.1 *Outdoor activities for discovering the Central Goldfields, by Josh Ambrosy. CC BY NC 4.0*

Outdoor Experience	Activities
Mount Buninyong	Hike, Buninyong Township to the Fire Tower Use "Peak finder" to locate Mountains in the landscape Discuss the importance of Mountains for Aboriginal People and compare to how they are used today
Creeking	Headwaters of the Yarrowee River (Federation University) Explore and follow the water courses through the campus, and examine how the water courses have been impacted by people over time and their current health.
Bike Tour	Ride a loop of Ballarat using the Canadian Creek Trail, Goldfields Track and Yarrowee Trail. Stop at Sovereign Hill and participate in an education session on the environmental impacts of the Goldrush on local waterways.
Open Water Swim	Lake Esmond – Focus on safe entry and exit, lifejacket fitting, etc. Learn the history of the lake.
Paddle Lake Wendoureee	Paddle Lake Wendouree and learn the story of how the lake has changed since colonisation.
Out-the-gate ride	Ballarat to Castlemaine via the Goldfields Trail on Mountain Bikes.

5.3 Inclusion during Outdoor Experiences

When developing outdoor experiences, it is vital to ensure they are accessible to a diverse range of students. What works one year may not work the next due to the differing needs of each cohort. For example, at the time of writing, many young people are experiencing mental health challenges following the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, programs may need to be adjusted to ensure students feel comfortable participating. This could include reducing distances travelled or selecting less remote locations to ease anxiety and increase inclusivity.

The *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) framework is a widely used tool to support this process. In Case Study 5.2, (Kelly et al., 2022) outlines three key principles of the UDL framework and provides critical questions to guide your planning. These principles and questions can help ensure that outdoor experiences are designed to be inclusive and accessible for all students.

Case Study 5.2 UDL Inclusion in the Outdoors

Universal Design for Learning – A framework for inclusion in Outdoor Learning

The principles of UDL and their relationship with outdoor learning

A fundamental goal of UDL is to anticipate and redress barriers to learning, using considered pedagogies to meet all learning needs and abilities through effective design. Such barriers could be physical, cognitive, cultural, social, and/or emotional. For the teacher planning outdoor learning, implementing effective instructional plans, focused on engagement and using flexible materials in meaningful ways, generates an inclusive environment for all learners. Enacting this inclusive environment in a meaningful and sustained way, is the real challenge for teachers. If pedagogy is guided by ill-defined goals and equipped with only conventional instructional methods, using inaccessible resources, and inflexible ways of demonstrating knowledge and understanding, the barriers to learning may be difficult to comprehend.

UDL core principle 1: multiple means of engagement

The ultimate goal of applying the UDL framework is to enable learners to become experts (CAST, 2018). Arguably, a prerequisite for developing expertise is the engaged learner. Engagement can be fostered through designing a curriculum with built-in options for the learner to navigate the appropriate level of challenge and support. The UDL framework considers a learning environment that is flexible enough to account for learner variability; meeting the specific needs of every learner. To address varied learner capabilities and needs, multiple and flexible options for engagement in the learning process are used to support affective learning. Teachers planning outdoor learning can design, deliver and evaluate lessons that involve creating interest and offer learning opportunities that motivate and stimulate learners according to their personal backgrounds and interests.

Providing options for multiple means of engagement requires developing interest, purpose, challenge, motivation, and strong self-regulation as a learner. What UDL researchers call "self-regulation" is the ability to set motivating goals; to sustain effort toward meeting those goals; and to monitor the balance between internal resources and external demands, seeking help or adjusting one's own expectations and strategies as needed (Meyer, Rose and Gordon, 2014, p.` 53). In practice, three broad types of options emerge: options for recruiting student interest, options for sustaining effort and persistence, and options for developing the ability to self-regulate (CAST, 2018).

How does this lesson spark my students' excitement and curiosity for learning and understanding their environment through direct engagement? (recruiting interest)

How does this lesson tackle potential challenges with focus and determination? (effort and persistence)

How does this lesson harness the power of my students' emotions and motivation in learning? (self-regulation)

UDL core principle 2: multiple means of representation

To plan for and address inclusion in the outdoor learning environment, multiple and flexible methods of

presenting information are used to support recognition of learning. Providing instructions, concepts and content through multiple methods such as discussion, readings, digital texts, and multimodal presentations can account for varied learner capabilities and needs. The teacher planning outdoor learning can present learning materials through a variety of media (visual, auditory, or tactile), and provide multiple examples that can be modified in complexity to reach every learner in the class.

How are my students able to interact using multiple senses with the outdoor environment? (perception)

How are my students able to participate regardless of their background knowledge or understanding of language, text, or symbols? (language and symbols)

How are my students able to construct meaning and generate new understanding of information? (comprehension)

UDL core principle 3: multiple means of action and expression

The third principle in the UDL framework is concerned with supporting strategic ways of learning (i.e., how we learn). Affording opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways, addresses varied capabilities and allows the learner to practice tasks with different levels of support and to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a range of ways. Employing multiple means of action and expression, the teacher planning outdoor learning can support the development of expertise in executive functions such as: goal setting, self-monitoring, strategy development, and managing information and resources.

Does my lesson have accessible materials and tools for students to interact with in the outdoor space? (physical action)

Are there multiple ways for my students to construct, communicate, and share ideas in a way that works for them? (expression and communication)

How does the outdoor learning environment lesson provide support for my students to plan and get the most out of the lesson? (executive functions)

Adapted from *Universal Design for Learning – A framework for inclusion in Outdoor Learning*, Kelly et al., 2022. CC BY 4.0

Chapter 5 Summary

This chapter emphasises the critical role of outdoor experiences in middle years outdoor education, exploring their integration into curriculum planning and the importance of intentionality in achieving learning outcomes. It highlights the diversity of outdoor experiences, from school-based activities to adventure pursuits, and provides guidance on resourcing and managing these activities effectively. The chapter stresses the importance of safety and compliance, introducing the concept of a strict aversion to fatalities approach and its application in risk management. Inclusion is a key focus, with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework presented as a tool to ensure outdoor experiences are accessible to all students. Practical examples and case studies illustrate how outdoor educators can create

engaging, inclusive, and meaningful learning opportunities that connect students with their environment and each other.

Reflection Questions

- How can you ensure that outdoor experiences in your program are intentionally linked to learning outcomes?
- What strategies can you use to balance engaging activities with budget constraints while maintaining student interest and learning?
- How does the concept of a strict aversion to fatalities influence your approach to risk management in outdoor education?
- In what ways can the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework assist you in designing inclusive outdoor experiences that cater to diverse student needs?

References

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CHAPTER 6: ASSESSMENT IN MIDDLE YEARS OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe different approaches to assessment *for learning*, *as learning*, and *of learning* in middle years Outdoor Education.
- Analyse how assessment can drive curriculum reform and support negotiated curriculum in the middle years.
- Develop strategies for innovative assessment both at school and during outdoor experiences.
- Evaluate how rubrics that transcend multiple tasks can enhance middle years Outdoor Education.

6.1 Introduction to Assessment in Middle Years Outdoor Education

Over a decade ago (Collins, 2011) likened assessment and the associated reporting of it as the 'tail that wags the dog' in Australian education. Although assessment in many cases is forced upon teachers (e.g., NAPLAN), you as a teacher can also think about how assessment can help drive forward the curriculum you want to put in place.

Historically, schools often had fewer expectations for how their outdoor education programs contributed to the curriculum in the middle years. Outdoor education electives were typically established to provide students with opportunities to explore themselves and their connection to outdoor environments. However, with an increasing emphasis on academic results and the 'datafication of schooling' along with the pressures of a crowded curriculum, schools have begun requiring more stringent curriculum mapping and a minimum number of assessment tasks per hour of instruction, even in outdoor education.

This shift has both positive and negative implications for outdoor education teachers. On the positive side, assessment can be a powerful tool for driving curriculum reform, demonstrating the value of outdoor education to school administrators, and preparing students for VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies (see Section 4.3.6). However, the requirement to align outdoor education with formal assessment can also be a challenge. Outdoor education lacks

a dedicated curriculum in Victoria for Years F–10, meaning teachers must develop their own curriculum and assessment tasks. These must also align with the content descriptions and achievement standards of other curriculum areas to meet reporting requirements, making the task both complex and time-consuming.

This chapter explores strategies for developing a series of assessment tasks that align with the curriculum while also enabling you to drive curriculum reform in your school.

6.1.1 Types of Assessment

As teachers, it is important to think about how you can use different types of assessment for what should be its primary purpose in your outdoor education classes—to support teaching. To support students through their learning of your curriculum, it is important to think about how assessment tasks can have different functions within your curriculum. Assessment can be broadly classed as:

- Assessment for learning: occurs when teachers use inferences about student progress to inform their teaching (formative assessment)
- Assessment as learning: occurs when students reflect on and monitor their progress to inform their future learning goals (formative assessment)
- Assessment of learning: occurs when teachers use evidence of student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards (summative assessment).

(Victoria. Department of Education and Training (2021).

Activity 6.1 – Types of assessment for middle years outdoor education

Imagine you are teaching a year 8 semester-long introductory outdoor education elective at a school on the Murray River called 'Participating in Outdoor Experiences'. The learning outcomes of the elective are:

- To help students prepare for and safely participate in a range of outdoor activities.
- To develop strategies for working both individually and as a group during outdoor experiences.
- To examine how minimal impact strategies can be used during outdoor experiences.

During the unit, students participate in a range of outdoor experiences, including:

- Canoeing on the Murray River – Focus on teamwork, safety procedures, and navigation.
- Biodiversity survey – Conducted in local bushland to explore the ecological health of the area.

- Campcraft sessions – Practice setting up tents, cooking with Trangias, and packing for trips.
- Orienteering activity – Developing navigation and problem-solving skills using maps and compasses.
- Overnight hike – Along the Great Dividing Trail near Bendigo, focusing on teamwork and minimal impact camping strategies.
- Riverbank clean-up – Service-based learning activity addressing the impact of human activity on the environment.

The table below demonstrates the types of assessments that students might complete in this unit.

1. Label each of the sample tasks using the language from the Department of Education (as, of, for learning).
2. For each task, complete PMI analysis:

   ◦ Positives of the task
   ◦ Minuses of the task
   ◦ Interesting observations about the task

Table 6.1 *Assessment Tasks Table* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Assessment Type	Task	Description
	Navigation Skills Check	Students participate in an orienteering activity where they navigate checkpoints using maps and compasses. Teacher observations and feedback help guide further instruction on navigation techniques.
	Campcraft Skills Workshop	Students practice pitching tents and using Trangias. Teacher assesses their ability to follow instructions and apply skills safely and effectively.
	Reflective Journal Entries	After each outdoor activity, students write a short reflection on their personal performance, teamwork, and application of minimal impact strategies.
	Overnight Hike Minimal Impact Plan and Evaluation	Students create a plan outlining minimal impact strategies for the overnight hike, followed by an evaluation of their participation post-hike through a trip report. In pairs, students plan a section of walking to include in their project.

6.2 Developmental Rubrics

Developmental rubrics are an effective tool for assessing student progress in outdoor education as they allow for a nuanced understanding of learning across a continuum. Rather than providing a simple pass-or-fail judgment, developmental rubrics outline stages of achievement, enabling students and teachers to see where progress has been made and identify areas for further development. In the context of outdoor education, developmental rubrics can transcend both practical, environmental and personal components of the

curriculum. Developmental rubrics provide clear, measurable criteria that align with learning outcomes, fostering a growth mindset by encouraging students to see learning as an ongoing process. They also enable teachers to provide targeted feedback, making the assessment a tool for both accountability and meaningful learning. In outdoor education, this approach aligns well with the experiential nature of the subject, ensuring that assessment supports skill development and personal growth.

A well-written rubric is more than just a mechanism for assessing students. It can serve as a valuable tool for fostering discussions about student progress, supporting self and peer assessment, and even enabling students to negotiate aspects of their assessment tasks, which can positively impact engagement and agency in learning. Developmental rubrics are designed from the perspective of what a student needs to demonstrate at a particular learning level, rather than focusing solely on the completion of specific tasks. The cognitive level of student achievement in the rubric can be adjusted by varying the complexity of verbs, the tasks, or a combination of both. An example of a developmental rubric is provided in Appendix 1.3.

Activity 6.2 – Generative AI and Rubrics

Generative AI, such as ChatGPT, can be an excellent tool to assist in developing rubrics. However, the tool's effectiveness depends entirely on the quality of the prompts and information you provide. While it may be tempting to rely on such software to fully automate this part of your teaching, we recommend using it as a co-generator. This collaborative approach ensures that the rubric is tailored to your specific curriculum and teaching context.

Steps to use Generative AI for developing rubrics

1. Open a generative AI tool of your choice

Select an AI platform (e.g., ChatGPT) to begin developing your rubric.

2. Introduce the AI to your task

Instruct the AI that you want to co-develop a rubric. Inform it that you will start by providing key information for it to learn from.

3. Provide essential inputs

Feed the AI with the following details to ensure it understands the context:

- Learning outcomes: Clearly state the desired outcomes for the unit.
- Curriculum descriptors: Include relevant content descriptions.
- Assessment tasks: Share a brief description of the assessment task(s) the rubric will be used for.

(Tip: You can use the information from Activity 6.1 as a starting point.)

4. Create a rubric framework

- Select a rubric template (e.g., the one provided in Appendix 1.3).
- Populate the focus areas for your rubric. These focus areas should align with the big ideas of your unit.
- Write a sample descriptor for the "at standard" column of each focus area. Ensure that this aligns with the achievement standards.

5. Refine with AI assistance

- Prompt the AI to complete the remaining columns (e.g., below standard, above standard) or refine your initial descriptions.
- Provide feedback to the AI's output to ensure the rubric is accurate and relevant and ask it to redo tasks until you are happy with the output.

Example Prompts for Generative AI

The following prompts may be useful to complete this activity.

- "I am developing a rubric for a middle years outdoor education unit. The learning outcomes are [insert outcomes]. Based on this, help me create criteria for a rubric with three levels: approaching, at standard, and above standard."
- "Using the achievement standard [insert text], generate examples of what a student might demonstrate at each performance level for the assessment task [insert task]."
- "Here is a rubric template with focus areas: [list focus areas]. Complete the criteria for the levels below standard, at standard, and above standard."
- "Refine the following rubric descriptors to align with the Victorian Curriculum achievement standards: [insert draft descriptors]."

6.3 Formative Assessment Tasks

Formative assessment tasks typically serve two key purposes. The first (*assessment for learning*) is to help you and your students monitor learning progress. The second (*assessment as learning*) is to enable reflection on the learning process. While both purposes can be integrated into a single assessment task, it is important to be specific about their intentions and communicate these clearly to students. For instance, you could create a two-sided worksheet, with Side A focused on assessment for learning and Side B on assessment as learning, clearly labelling each and providing corresponding instructions.

Formative assessments should be used in a "data-wise" manner, meaning tasks should be intentionally designed to support learning while also generating meaningful data to guide the overall teaching and learning process. A "less is more" approach is often more effective than routines such as an exit pass after every lesson, which can sometimes become busy work and fail to provide meaningful insights into students' progress.

It is also important to remember that assessment for and as learning does not always need to be a formal written process. For example, group debriefs in outdoor education are a common and valuable method that can yield rich data for both the teacher and the students to monitor and inform learning. While this type of assessment may not easily translate into a markbook, that is acceptable. Alternatively, students could complete a peer or self-assessment of their participation in the debrief using a rubric if you need to record it formally.

Regardless of the assessment type, tasks should always align with the learning outcomes of the unit and be deployed in a purposeful and measured way. This ensures that assessment supports learning without dominating valuable teaching time.

Case Study 6.1 Logbooks and Journals

A common type of assessment for learning that is used in outdoor education is the use of a student journal or logbook. Such a task can support both assessment for learning as a way of monitoring progress and evaluation as learning to help prompt reflective practice. The advantage of a well-set logbook is that it can be done during outdoor experiences or even on the bus ride home. As many outdoor education classes in the middle years are electives, this can help students to see the relevance of the logbook and task completion.

Logbooks or journal tasks can vary from more open-ended tasks to more structured approaches. We favour the latter, as you can vary the types of responses that students are required to complete whilst also building students' skills toward studying VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies, where the logbook is a mandatory component (11.6). A well-developed logbook will typically align to the outdoor experiences you are conducting in your unit. For example, you may have an experience each week during your double period, and a logbook entry for each. Either a developmental rubric discussed above, or a logbook rubric based on the overall application of skills and knowledge written for the logbook, can and should be used to assess the logbook; this helps you shift from assessing the completion of the task to the application of knowledge against the curriculum which is what you will in turn report on. At a practical level, it also means that if a student misses an entry, it doesn't matter as you are assessing holistically.

Logbook entries do not need to be written or have long written sections. Some examples of logbook entries that we have found work well include:

- A photo essay showing skill development over multiple sessions (e.g., surfing or mountain biking).
- A collage made from beach rubbish with an environmental message.
- A table of observations of local flora during a bushwalk.
- A graphic organiser that analyses the effectiveness of different minimal impact strategies.
- A student-made map using symbols and pictures that shows Aboriginal people's use and understanding of an outdoor environment.

Note: Although these tasks could be curated into a logbook, they could also be used individually as for learning tasks.

6.4 Summative Assessment Tasks

Summative assessment tasks (of learning) are used to determine what a student has learnt in a unit. In many secondary schools, there are minimum requirements for students to undertake a certain number of Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) that are attempted by all students doing a particular unit or subject based on the hours per week of instruction. Summative tasks can be narrow tasks such as a test or case study sat under exam conditions. Or they can consist of projects and problem based learning that students may work on for some time as part of a unit of inquiry. We argue that the latter is a more holistic way of working in the middle years and is more aligned with the outcomes of outdoor education.

6.4.1 Principals of Effective Summative Tasks

When developing open-ended tasks, there is no single universal method for creating summative assessments in outdoor education. However, the following principles, tested and refined through practice, can guide the development of effective assessments:

- **Outdoor Environment**: The assessment should be closely tied to a studied outdoor environment. For example, if students have walked the Great Dividing Trail, they could complete a project that showcases their experience and understanding of this environment.
- **Time**: While the knowledge and skills needed to complete the assessment may be developed over several weeks, the time allocated for completing the task should be bounded. Tasks that require more than a week of class time risk students losing focus and engagement.
- **Agency**: Students should have a degree of agency within the task. This could involve choosing from a range of questions or projects or even negotiating the task itself through a model like the negotiated curriculum approach (see Section 5.1.2).
- **Difference**: The project's focus should vary between students. Having all students research the same question reduces engagement and misses opportunities for diversity in learning (see Section 4.3.3 and the example developmental rubric in Appendix 1.3).
- **Differentiation**: The task should cater to varying cognitive levels, allowing differentiation to meet the needs of all learners and to challenge students appropriately.

6.4.2 Negotiated Assessment

Negotiated assessment is a student-centred approach that allows learners to have a voice in

shaping their assessment tasks while maintaining alignment with the learning outcomes of the unit. This method can foster greater engagement, agency, and ownership of learning, as students are given the opportunity to explore their individual interests and strengths within the framework of the curriculum. In outdoor education, negotiated assessments can vary in terms of their **focus**, the **outdoor activities** involved, or the format in which learning is **presented**.

Variability in Focus

The focus of a negotiated assessment might centre on an outdoor environment that has been studied or experienced by students. For instance, one student may choose to investigate the ecological health of a local river system, while another explores the cultural significance of a nearby mountain range. By offering students options to select the focus of their assessment, teachers can encourage deeper personal connection and engagement with the subject matter.

Variability in Outdoor Activities

Students might also negotiate which outdoor activities are the basis of their assessment. For example, some may focus on the skills developed during a canoeing trip, while others reflect on their experience of campcraft or bushwalking. This flexibility acknowledges the diverse interests and strengths within a cohort, allowing students to highlight their individual experiences and insights.

Variability in Presentation

Negotiated assessment can also include flexibility in how students present their learning. Some may opt to create a visual presentation, such as a photo essay, while others might write a reflective journal, design an infographic, or produce a video documentary. Allowing students to choose their mode of presentation can cater to different learning styles and creative abilities while ensuring the assessment remains meaningful and relevant.

Supporting Negotiated Assessment with Developmental Rubrics

Developmental rubrics are a powerful tool to support negotiated assessment. These rubrics outline a continuum of achievement, making them adaptable to a variety of tasks and levels of complexity. By focusing on the skills and knowledge demonstrated rather than the specific task completed, developmental rubrics provide a consistent framework for evaluating diverse outputs.

For example, a developmental rubric for a negotiated assessment might include criteria such as:

- **Understanding of the outdoor environment**: Progression from basic descriptions to complex, evidence-based analysis.
- **Application of skills**: Ranging from demonstrating foundational skills with guidance to applying advanced techniques independently.
- **Critical reflection**: Moving from surface-level observations to insightful reflections that connect learning to broader concepts, such as sustainability or cultural significance.

These rubrics ensure that despite the variability in focus, activity, or presentation, all students are assessed fairly and consistently. They also provide clear expectations, enabling students to understand the standards they are working towards, even when their tasks differ from their peers.

Negotiated assessment, when supported by developmental rubrics, creates a dynamic and

inclusive approach to learning that values student choice while maintaining rigour and alignment with educational goals. This approach not only enhances student engagement but also helps develop critical skills in decision-making, self-regulation, and personal responsibility.

Chapter 6 Summary

This chapter highlights the role of assessment in middle years outdoor education, addressing how it can support both student learning and broader curriculum reform. It explores different types of assessment—*for learning*, *as learning*, and *of learning*—and demonstrates their application within outdoor education contexts. The chapter introduces the use of **developmental rubrics** as an effective tool for assessing student progress across practical, environmental, and reflective learning tasks, ensuring a focus on growth rather than task completion. Additionally, the concept of **negotiated assessment** is presented as a student-centred approach that allows flexibility in focus, activity, and presentation, fostering engagement, agency, and differentiation. Through thoughtful design, outdoor education teachers can create meaningful, inclusive, and rigorous assessment tasks that align with curriculum goals while maintaining the experiential nature of the subject.

Reflection Questions

1. How can developmental rubrics enhance both teacher feedback and student learning in outdoor education?
2. What strategies can you use to balance flexibility and rigour when designing negotiated assessment tasks?
3. In what ways can formative assessment (for and as learning) be embedded into outdoor experiences to monitor student progress and reflection?
4. How can summative assessment tasks be designed to reflect the practical and experiential nature of outdoor education while meeting curriculum reporting requirements?

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CHAPTER 7: ADVOCATING FOR OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN VICTORIAN SCHOOLS LEARNING INTENTIONS

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Explain the importance of advocacy for outdoor education.
- Analyse ways of advocating for outdoor education within schools.
- Compare different approaches to advocating to governments and other stakeholders.
- Analyse effective strategies for writing for advocacy.

7.1 Introduction to Advocacy for Outdoor Education

If you're reading this book and have made it this far, it's likely you recognise the significant benefits of outdoor education in schools. Outdoor education not only provides an excellent platform for personal and social development, but it also helps young people understand their place in the world and grapple with some of the most pressing issues of our time, such as climate change (Jukes, 2023). However, outdoor education in Australian schools is increasingly under threat and requires strong, passionate advocates to ensure its continuation.

This need arises, in part, from a broken and inequitable schooling system (Reid, 2020) that has, in many ways, lost sight of the broader purpose of education for young people. Beyond funding issues, schools have become increasingly narrow in their focus, where the risks inherent in broad and enriching curriculum outcomes have largely been replaced (Hardy, 2024) by a pursuit of false certainties in narrowly defined areas such as literacy and numeracy.

Compounding these challenges is the fact that outdoor education demands specialist equipment, higher staff-to-student ratios compared to classroom-based learning, and time out of school. These factors often result in additional costs, the need for teacher replacements, and the provision of time in lieu for overtime worked. As a result, it is more critical than ever for outdoor education teachers to become effective advocates for their subject at both the school and broader levels.

This chapter begins by exploring strategies for advocating for outdoor education within

schools. It then shifts focus to the importance of advocacy at the governmental and stakeholder level, offering practical approaches for engaging in these broader conversations. It is important to note, that this chapter addresses the issue of advocacy broadly, and it could be applied to advocating for outdoor education and outdoor learning across different school levels. We also offer specific advice about advocating for Outdoor and Environmental Studies (OES) later in this book (10.5).

7.2 Advocating for Outdoor Education in Schools

There are many ways to approach advocacy, both generally and within schools specifically. While some favour a more vocal approach—bordering on activism—we suggest, based on our collective decades of experience in schools, universities, and working with peak bodies and governments, that collaborating *with* those you seek to influence is the most effective strategy. Historically, outdoor educators have lacked political astuteness, which has often hindered progress (Gray & Martin, 2012).

   When advocating for outdoor education programs in schools, there are three key pieces of advice to consider:

1. **Key Message**: Having a clear and concise message is crucial for effectively conveying your ideas. Principals are typically very busy and don't need an overload of details that educators often tend to provide. Instead, focus on what your proposal will achieve for the school. Additionally, it is highly beneficial to demonstrate explicit alignment with the school's strategic plan or relevant government or sector policy.
2. **The 'Ask'**: Your request should be clear, well-thought-out, and appropriate to the school's context. Principals make numerous decisions daily, so a concise and structured proposal will make it easier for them to approve or deny your request. When crafting your "ask," do your research and think like a principal. Clearly outline the costs, implications for the school, and benefits of your proposal. It can also be strategic to present multiple options with separate costings for consideration.
3. **Relationships**: Strong working relationships with various stakeholders in your school are essential for building a successful outdoor education program. These relationships begin with the principal and business manager but should also extend to colleagues, support staff, and even the grounds crew. Effective relationships with these individuals can significantly enhance your program's success and longevity.

By focusing on these three elements—message, ask, and relationships—you can advocate more effectively for outdoor education programs in your school context. The following two sections give more specific advice about both advocating to start and retain programs in schools.

7.2.1 Advocating to Introduce Programs

Although outdoor education is well-established in many schools, there are still numerous schools where outdoor education programs are either minimal—such as an elective at a single-year level—or entirely absent. Furthermore, due to the lack of a formal curriculum for Years F–10, outdoor education is sometimes overlooked in new schools, apart from its inclusion in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). As a result, it is not uncommon for educators to find themselves in a position where they need to advocate for the establishment of an outdoor education program during their career.

If you are tasked with establishing a program from scratch, it is recommended to start small and gradually build interest among students and parents, while simultaneously increasing resources and capital within the school. This approach requires both opportunism and strategic thinking. For instance, in schools facing challenges with student engagement in the upper middle years (typically Years 8 and 9), you might propose an outdoor education elective or even a Year 9 program (Ambrosy, 2023) as a strategy to engage students. Alternatively, in a school seeking to expand its VCE offerings, you could advocate for the inclusion of Outdoor and Environmental Studies (OES) as a unique subject that enables students to learn in diverse and engaging contexts.

While this opportunistic approach can often be successful, it is equally important to have a long-term vision for the program. Consider the broader potential of outdoor education within the school, and advocate for its inclusion in alignment with your school's strategic goals when the time is right. This balance of immediate action and long-term planning will help ensure the program's success and sustainability.

7.2.2 Advocating to Retain Programs

Due to a range of external and internal factors (see Section 7.1), outdoor education programs can sometimes face reductions in funding, diminished offerings, or even the risk of being discontinued altogether. During these times, advocacy becomes more critical than ever. You may need to work closely with school leaders to highlight the value and importance of your program or negotiate acceptable compromises to ensure its retention. Proactive and strategic advocacy during such periods can help safeguard outdoor education and maintain its role in fostering personal, social, and environmental learning opportunities for students.

Activity 7.1 – Advocacy Writing

When advocating for outdoor education, you will often be required to provide written submissions. The

style of language used for such pieces is unique. The below letter is a sample that you could adopt when writing to advocate for your program. In the letter below:

- Analyse the language: Identify the tone, persuasive techniques, and professionalism in the letter.
- Evaluate the 'Ask: Highlight the specific request and assess its clarity, feasibility, and context.
- Examine the message: Break down the main arguments and consider how effectively they communicate the value of outdoor education.

Example advocacy letter to principals – General camps, journey-based programs and other outdoor learning experiences.
Instructions. Please update all [fields] marked by square brackets. In the below, we have used the term outdoor learning as an umbrella term for outdoor experiences. You may wish to update all to a term that better reflects your program. Delete this box when done.

Dear [Name],

Re: Proposed changes to year [X camp/journey/excursion]

[I/we] write regarding the decision to [reduce camp length/cancel our upcoming trip] to [insert further details here]. [I/We] take the firm stance that [name of trip or excursion] should proceed in its entirety for the following reasons. We would like to meet with you, to discuss how we can develop a new model of [insert program name] for the school to ensure that the benefits to the students are not missed.

- **Outdoor learning programs offer students unique opportunities to encounter the curriculum. Through this, they develop as individuals and build positive relationships in groups and with school staff. Additionally they are   building a connection to the outdoors for lifelong learning.**
- **Time in the outdoors has significant health benefits. Students' and staff mental and physical health can be improved through time on our proposed [name of] program. In addition, time learning to be outside helps students build lifelong physical and outdoor literacies that can lead to better lifelong health outcomes.**
- **Education in the outdoors should be for all, not just those whose families are privileged with private resources to enable such opportunities. School programs like [name of] help to ensure that all students, regardless of cultural and socioeconomic background, have an opportunity to learn outdoors.**
- **Outdoor learning programs help students to feel connected to the school. With our students significantly impacted by the last few years of COVID-19 public health restrictions, our outdoor learning program will help to build a better connection between students and staff which will no doubt translate to positive outcomes in the classroom.**
- **Outdoor learning programs allow students to learn on and with the country. This is a vital part of the school curriculum that other approaches to curriculum in the school often overlook.**
- **The Department of Education recognises the significant benefits of outdoor learning programs. This has been evidenced through the recent $80m investment in the positive start and policy guidance regarding outdoor education schools.**
- **Teacher Time in Lieu should not be a barrier to student learning, given the recent announcement of funding for government schools. In addition, many schools have found amicable and creative solutions when they value and prioritise student learning through the outdoors.**
- **Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the CEO Andrew Knight and his team at Outdoors Victoria. Andrew would be more than happy to be provided with further information about the benefits of outdoor learning as part of our curriculum. You can contact him via info@outdoorsvictoria.org.au or stay up to date with outdoor education and recreation news by subscribing to Outdoors Victoria's Newsletter.**

We await your timely and hopefully positive response soon,

Regards,

[Your name]

Case Study 7.2 Negotiating the Timetable

School timetables can both be of benefit and a hindrance to programs that require time out of school. When your program requires you to be covered or the students to miss other classes, it can significantly limit your ability to run outdoor experiences outside of broader overnight trips and full-day experiences as part of your program.

Although negotiating the timetable can be a difficult task, when leadership sees that you are working with them to minimise the disruptions and cost of your program to the school, it is often warmly received. The following strategies can assist to help you get regular time outside of school with your class.

Table 7.1 Table of Strategies for Negotiating the Timetable by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0

Strategy	Description	Benefits
Ask for time at the start or end of the day	Schedule outdoor experiences to begin early or finish after the school day, reducing disruptions to other classes.	Minimises the need for relief teachers and reduces the impact on the school timetable.
Split periods over lunch	Combine a class period with lunch to extend the available time for outdoor activities.	Provides extra time without requiring significant changes to the existing timetable.
Leave at lunch or return after school ends	Plan trips that start during lunchtime or extend past the end of the school day.	Allows for meaningful outdoor experiences while reducing time missed from other classes.
Advocate for longer periods (e.g., 3-4 period days)	Propose a whole-school approach to longer class periods to allow for extended activities.	Supports deeper learning opportunities across all subjects, not just outdoor education.
Plan regular outdoor sessions	Schedule consistent weekly or fortnightly outdoor experiences into the timetable.	Provides predictability for staff and students, making outdoor learning a regular part of the program.
Utilise non-instructional periods	Use times like homeroom, wellbeing sessions, or enrichment periods for outdoor education.	Reduces timetable conflicts while incorporating outdoor learning into non-traditional periods whilst ensuring a sustainable workload. E.g., a reduction in yard duties as you are traveling at lunch time.

7.3 Advocacy Beyond the School

In addition to advocacy at a school level, there is a need for a unified approach to advocacy

by outdoor educators at a broader level. For the benefit of outdoor education, there is a need for this to be both a coordinated and consistent approach to advocating in particular to governments.

7.3.1 Peak Bodies

In Victoria, there are two peak bodies that are relevant to your work as an outdoor education teacher.

- **Outdoors Victoria (OV)** – OV provides advocacy on behalf of the outdoors sectors of Victoria, consisting of outdoor education & camp providers, nature-based activity & tourism leaders and bush adventure therapists.

We support the sector by guiding efforts to improve and enhance the safety and regulatory environment associated with outdoor learning, and activities; showcasing outdoor career pathways to help restore the workforce after the pandemic; as well as delivering major projects such as our annual conference, which provides sector-wide professional development opportunities, our *Nature Stewards Program*, helping to educate people about their local environment and our diversity & inclusion in the outdoors program.
   (Outdoors Victoria, 2024)

- **ACHPER Victoria** – The *Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation* (ACHPER), Victorian Branch (or ACHPER Victoria) is a not-for-profit organisation working towards the state's education goals.

Founded as the *Australian Physical Education Association* in the 1950's, ACHPER Victoria now has more than 2,000 members state-wide, and is a key provider of high-quality and professional learning programs to government, Catholic and independent schools in Australia.
   (ACHPER Victoria, 2024)
   Both organisations run significant professional learning programs each year, a great way to network and get further involved in your profession. In addition, it is worth connecting with both organisations via their socials or signing up to their newsletters.

7.3.3 Curriculum Authorities and Departments

The *Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority* (VCAA) is the state curriculum authority in charge of both the Victorian Curriculum F-10 and VCE OES. From time to time VCAA updates both of these curricula. If you as a teacher want to advocate for changes in the curriculum, you should keep abreast of the work of the VCAA and sign up to be part of these important working groups when you get the chance to.

Chapter 7 Summary

This chapter highlights the importance of advocacy for outdoor education at both the school and broader levels. It begins by emphasising the benefits of outdoor education, such as personal and social development, health, and fostering a connection with the environment, while acknowledging the challenges posed by a narrow and inequitable education system. Strategies for advocating within schools focus on the importance of having a clear message, crafting a well-thought-out "ask," and building strong relationships with stakeholders. Specific advice is provided for both establishing and retaining outdoor education programs.

The chapter also addresses broader advocacy efforts, outlining the roles of peak bodies such as Outdoors Victoria and ACHPER Victoria, which provide support and resources for outdoor education teachers. Additionally, it discusses the role of curriculum authorities and the OEVC project in advancing outdoor education within the Victorian Curriculum. These collective efforts highlight the need for outdoor educators to adopt strategic and collaborative approaches to advocacy to ensure the continued presence and growth of outdoor education in schools.

Reflection Questions

- What are the key elements of an effective advocacy strategy when working within schools to promote outdoor education?
- How can outdoor educators balance short-term opportunities with long-term strategic planning when advocating for new programs?
- What role do peak bodies such as Outdoors Victoria and ACHPER Victoria play in supporting outdoor education advocacy?
- How can outdoor educators stay informed and involved in curriculum developments and broader advocacy efforts within the sector?

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CHAPTER 8: INTRODUCTION TO VCE OES

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the history of VCE OES
- Explain the structure and underpinning concepts within the new VCE OES study design
- Analyse why students may want to study VCE OES
- Evaluate a possible model of teaching cross-study specifications and relationships in VCE OES

8.1 Introduction to VCE OES

Victorian Certificate of Education Outdoor and Environmental Studies (VCE OES) is a world-leading example of a senior years outdoor education curriculum. This study introduces students to an array of environmental issues that help them to understand the relationships that they and other people have with outdoor environments. Via direct outdoor experiences, students experience a breadth of Victorian outdoor environments and study a range of environmental constructs through their experiences.

This chapter introduces you to some of the key concepts in VCE OES. It is designed as an introduction to the course of study. Through this chapter, we explore the structure of the VCE OES study design, the history of the course, the latest updates and some of the overarching ideas that underpin VCE OES teaching. Whilst this chapter tries to draw your attention to some of the key ideas behind the VCE OES curriculum, it is prudent in this and the other chapters in Part C of this book, to remind you that they should be read in conjunction with the VCE OES study design. The latest version of which can be downloaded from the VCAA website.

When teaching any VCE study, you should ensure you are using the latest version of the study design. In addition, due caution is required to ensure that resources used are either: published alongside and relevant to the current study design or audited by you as the teacher to ensure compliance. Part C of this book was written in 2023 following the release of the newly revised study design. Accordingly, the case studies and other information contained herein are an accurate reflection of the current VCE OES curriculum at the time of publication. However, it remains the sole responsibility of the teacher running the course to ensure that their practices

align with the requirements of the VCAA. You should remember this when reading chapter 8-12 of this text and stay abreast of any changes to the course through the VCAA communications.

In addition to the study design, the VCAA also publishes support materials for teachers. Many publications such as this book, student textbooks and other commercial resources are available to support your teaching of the VCE OES curriculum. It is important to understand the respective role of the different publications.

- The VCE OES Study Design – Sets out the curriculum and dictates what can and cannot be assessed in the VCE OES examination and school-assessed coursework (SAC).
- The VCAA Support Material (Previously *Advice for Teachers*) – Guides how to interpret the study design.
- All other publications (Textbooks, Commercial SACs, etc.) – Are not endorsed by the VCAA. You should regularly audit publications other than those produced by the VCAA to ensure they align with the most recent study design. We further discuss strategies for adopting commercially produced assessment tasks in 11.4.

8.2 History of VCE OES

VCE OES, and outdoor education more broadly, has a long history as part of the senior secondary curriculum in Victoria. Outdoor Education, one of two predecessor subjects to the current VCE OES course, was introduced into the senior secondary curriculum in 1982 (Gough, 2007). The now outdated outdoor education course focused more on the individual student's participation in adventure-based activities centred around their own development (Preston, 2014). The other course of study, that was also an originally independent subject, was the now redundant VCE Environmental Studies.

In the late 90s, a reorganisation of the environmental-based curriculum in Victoria within the VCE was undertaken by the Board of Studies (now VCAA) (Gough, 2007). This reorganisation of environmental education in the VCE saw: a) the amalgamation of VCE Outdoor Education and VCE Environmental Studies to become VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies; b) the inception of a new VCE course of Environmental Science; and c) the strengthening of the environmental components of other study designs (geography, biology, etc.) (Gough, 2007). The newly harmonised course of VCE OES introduced in 1997 has been marked as a significant greening (Martin, 2004) of the senior secondary outdoor curriculum in Victoria.

VCE OES has continued to evolve since this time. This has included two major revisions of the study. Implementation of the most recent major revisions happened in 2012 and in 2024. During this time, we observe that the study has continued to undergo processes of greening through which less emphasis is placed on student's own responses to outdoor experiences and, rather, their study of environmental constructs through their own experience. This is particularly the case in units 3 and 4 of the study. Although the newly published study design (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023) helps strengthen the role and purpose

of direct learning in the outdoors, it continues as an environmentally focused outdoor curriculum.

8.3 The Revised VCE OES Curriculum

The VCAA, as the authority responsible for Victoria's curriculum, regularly reviews and updates the VCE OES curriculum to ensure it remains current. The newly released VCE OES curriculum was revised following a major review of the curriculum in 2021-2022 (Ambrosy, 2021). As stated above, this revised study design follows the ongoing trend toward a green outdoor education curriculum. In particular, the revisions follow the remarks about the prior VCE OES curriculum in the review benchmarking report that "Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Outdoor and Environmental Studies (VCE OES) is a unique offering both domestically and internationally. The nexus between different ways of experiencing and knowing outdoor environments from both socio-cultural, and at times, scientific perspectives results in a contemporary and timely subject for students undertaking their final years of secondary schooling." (Ambrosy, 2021, p. 3).

The latest VCE OES curriculum review saw significant structural and content reorganisation. When compared to the previous versions of the study design, the significant changes introduced in 2024 are:

- The introduction of the cross-study specifications that underpin the course.
- A revised push for direct outdoor experiences as part of the teaching of the course, including the introduction of Area of Study 3 (See 8.4.3) to better align the curriculum to these experiences.
- A stronger focus on Indigenous peoples' relationships with the outdoors is embedded across the course.
- A shift away from structured questions (test style) school-assessed coursework.

8.4 Structure of VCE OES

This section unpacks how VCE OES is structured. It discusses some of the key parts of the VCE OES curriculum and, through doing so, aims to develop your competence to work with the study design.

8.4.1 Units and Outcomes

The VCE OES curriculum comprises four units of study. Each unit has two or three outcomes (or Areas of Study). The first two outcomes per unit set out the key knowledge and skills (see 8.4.2) based on a series of constructs and associated cognitive levels. Units 1, 2 and 4 all have an additional area of study that articulates the key practical knowledge and skills to be embedded in outdoor experiences (see 8.4.3).

The units and outcomes are below:

- Unit 1: Connections with outdoor environments

    ◦ Outcome 1 Our place in outdoor environments
    ◦ Outcome 2 Exploring outdoor environments
    ◦ Outcome 3 Safe and sustainable participation in outdoor experiences

- Unit 2: Discovering outdoor environments

    ◦ Outcome 1 Understanding outdoor environments
    ◦ Outcome 2 Observing impacts on outdoor environments
    ◦ Outcome 3 Independent participation in outdoor environments

- Unit 3: Relationships with outdoor environments

    ◦ Outcome 1 Changing human relationships with outdoor environments
    ◦ Outcome 2 Relationships with Australian environments in the past decade

- Unit 4: Sustainable outdoor environments

    ◦ Outcome 1 The importance of healthy outdoor environments
    ◦ Outcome 2 The future of outdoor environments
    ◦ Outcome 3 Investigating outdoor environments

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, n.d.-b Reproduced with permission.)

8.4.2 Key Knowledge and Skills

The VCE OES study design is articulated through three broad mechanisms. The key knowledge (KK) and key skills (KS) and the cross-study specifications (addressed in 8.4.4). The key knowledge breaks down what is to be learnt within each outcome by students. The key skills articulate how the knowledge will be applied and at what cognitive level based on Bloom's verbs (Armstrong, 2010) (see 1.4).

Understanding the interplay between the KK and KS is imperative for successful VCE OES teaching. Whilst a focus on key knowledge is in many ways the driving force behind the development of a teacher's curriculum in VCE OES, it is vital that the planning and delivery of this KK aligns to the relevant cognitive levels articulated within the study design for two key reasons. Firstly, during both school-assessed coursework and exams, students demonstrate their knowledge of the key skills being assessed at, or up to, the required cognitive level (this idea is unpacked further in chapters 11 & 12). Secondly, and likely more importantly, education is and should be shifting toward a greater focus on teaching (21st century) skills within the curriculum (Martinez, 2022). This shift sees a greater focus by students and teachers on the application of, rather than simply the acquisition of knowledge. The VCE OES curriculum

provides one such opportunity to embed such an approach due to the value placed on skills and knowledge throughout the course.

Assigning a number system for quick reference is often useful when working with the VCE OES curriculum. When discussing the curriculum with experienced teachers, you will often hear them discuss parts by number. The commonly used numbering system comprises two or three-digit numerals. For example:

Table 8.1 Key Skills Numbering by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0

Numbering style	Example	Meaning
2 digits	2.1	Unit 2, Area of Study 1.
3 digits	2.1.1	Unit 2, Area of Study 1, KK dot point 1 in the list.

It is uncommon for teachers to number the key skills as they are typically thought of alongside key knowledge points. Mostly, in VCE OES, each KK will have a corresponding KS. Unit 3 AoS 1 KK/KS are displayed as printed in the study design below. As you will observe below, each KK point matches a KS. In addition, the last KK in 3.1 has a second key skill.

Key knowledge

Australian outdoor environments before humans arrived, including characteristics of biological isolation, geological stability and climatic variations

relationships with outdoor environments expressed by specific Indigenous peoples' communities before and after European colonisation

relationships of non-Indigenous peoples with specific outdoor environments as influenced by and observed in local or visited outdoor environments during historical time periods:

- Early colonisation (1788–1859)
- Pre-Federation (1860–1900)
- Post-Federation (1901–1990)

the beginnings of environmentalism and the resulting influence on political party policy, as observed in one of the following historical campaigns:

- Lake Pedder
- Franklin River
- Little Desert

Key skills

- explain characteristics of Australian outdoor environments before humans arrived
- analyse the changing relationships with Victorian outdoor environments expressed by specific Indigenous peoples' communities before and after European colonisation
- analyse the changing relationships of non-Indigenous peoples with Victorian outdoor environments as observed during historical time periods
- describe the beginnings of environmentalism as observed in a historical campaign
- evaluate the influence of environmentalism on the development of a government policy or political party

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, pp. 22-23 Reproduced with permission.)

When you read the above key skills, you should recognise that the Bloom's level varies across the outcome. For example, students are required to analyse the changing relationships of a specific Indigenous peoples' community. In contrast, they are required to evaluate the influence of environmentalism on the development of a government policy or political party. The latter is a higher-order cognitive skill. When developing courses of study and assessment for this area, you will be required to do so based on the cognitive levels detailed within the study design. This is particularly important when preparing students for their school-assessed coursework and the externally set VCE OES exam. Both assessment mechanisms align with the cognitive levels set out in the study design. In Chapter 9 we unpack further how you might plan a learning and teaching sequence based on the cognitive levels expressed in the key skills.

Interestingly, in the first two outcomes of the study design (Unit 1 Area of Study 1 and 2), additional key skills are taught concurrently with all listed key knowledge points. As shown in the table below, the additional key skill of 'interact sustainably with outdoor environments' does not have a specific KK point that it is associated with. When this is the case, you should teach it alongside as many KK points as is practicable.

Table 8.2 Unit 1 – Area of Study 2 – Exploring Outdoor Environments (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, p. 15 Reproduced with permission.)

Key Knowledge	Key Skill
• the influence of depictions of experiencing outdoor environments on personal responses, such as in the mainstream media, social media, music, art, writing and advertising • factors that affect access to experiencing outdoor environments, including socioeconomic status, cultural background, age, gender and physical ability • relevant technologies and their influences on outdoor experiences • the variety of personal responses to risk when experiencing outdoor environments, including the interplay between competence, perceived risk and real risk	• analyse the depictions of experiencing outdoor environments on personal responses • explain factors that affect access to experiencing outdoor environments • explain the influence of relevant technologies on experiencing outdoor environments • compare a range of personal responses to risk when experiencing outdoor environments • interact sustainably with outdoor environments

8.4.3 Area of Study 3

In the revised 2024-2028, VCE OES study design, three new Areas of Study (AoS) have been introduced. These are:

- Unit 1 – Area of Study 3 – Safe and sustainable participation in outdoor experiences
- Unit 2 – Area of Study 3 – Independent participation in outdoor environments
- Unit 4 – Area of Study 3 – Investigating outdoor environments

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023 Reproduced with permission.)

Structurally, the above represents an increase from eight to eleven areas of study and resulting outcomes to report on when compared to the previous study design. However, these outcomes do not introduce further content; they are a reorganisation and grading structure to support teaching outdoor experiences within the VCE OES curriculum.

Outdoor experiences are fundamental to the teaching of VCE OES (see chapter 10). Outdoor experiences as part of a course of VCE OES should relate to a broad range of key knowledge and skills likely across at least an entire AoS or unit. In addition, the new AoS 3 outcome provides information about the types of learning experiences and practical skills that should be included in outdoor experiences. Thus, AoS 3 should not be taught in addition to the other

AoS' within a given unit but through an integrated approach to outdoor experience and other curricula from AoS 1 and 2. The structure and function of AoS 3 differ at units 1 and 2 and units 3 and 4. We unpack this below.

Units 1 and 2 each have their own AoS 3. The KK and KS contained in each are inherently practical. These outcomes should be taught alongside the other outcomes within their respective units. In units 1 and 2, AoS 3 details the practical knowledge and skills that should be embedded within the VCE OES course. The majority of both outcomes should be taught and assessed as part of your chosen outdoor experiences, complimented by relevant activities that necessitate being done in class, for example, route planning for a walk before departure. In units 1 and 2, AoS 3 is assessed through a student-completed logbook that records the experiences undertaken and gathers evidence of learning. The structure and form of the logbook can vary based on the outdoor experience undertaken and the KK/KS being taught and assessed (see 10.4 and 11.6).

Unit 1 and 2, AoS 3 KK/KS are written to be taught as a scaffolded sequence of practical skills. In Unit 1, AoS 3, the focus is on the student's own personal preparation and participation in outdoor experiences. This includes selecting and using personal and group equipment and minimal impact strategies to ensure that their participation in outdoor experiences is safe and sustainable. In Unit 2, AoS 3, the focus shifts from the students' own participation to beginning to lead others. As part of this, students consider the role of external factors (weather, environment, etc.) on their own and others' participation in outdoor experiences. To demonstrate this outcome, students are required to lead peers as part of outdoor experiences. We provide a case study of peer leading in chapter 11 (see 10.3).

Unit 4, AoS 3 differs in structure and its KK/KS from the AoS 3s included in units 1 and 2. This outcome will be taught and assessed across units 3 and 4 using a selection of KK and KS drawn from units 3 and 4 (see an example in 11.6). Your role as the teacher is to decide which KK/KS from other outcomes you will teach and report on in unit 4, AoS 3. The KK/KS in this AoS 3 differs from its unit 1 and 2 equivalents. In unit 4 AoS 3, the focus shifts from practical skills and knowledge to the use of the outdoors as study sites for the teacher-chosen KK/KS.

8.4.4 Cross-study specifications

The revised 2024 study design introduced cross-study specifications that underpin all units and outcomes within the VCE OES. The specifications are broken down into three categories.

1. Key concepts
2. Outdoor experiences
3. Key practical skills

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, pp. 10-12)

Four new key concepts have been introduced within the VCE OES study design, they are: Indigenous Australians' knowledge, culture and history; outdoor environments; environmental citizenship; and sustainability. The study design explains each of these concepts. In addition

to the information in the study design, the following points provide advice regarding implementing these key concepts. We discuss outdoor experiences and key practical skills in chapter 10.

Indigenous Australians' Knowledge, Culture and History

You should embed Indigenous peoples' perspectives within various parts of your course. To do so, it is important to follow cultural protocols when working with Indigenous people. An example protocol is as follows:

Cultural Interface Protocols for Engaging with Aboriginal Knowledge

1. Use Aboriginal processes to engage with Aboriginal knowledge.
2. Approach Aboriginal knowledge in gradual stages, not all at once.
3. Be grounded in your own cultural identity (not "colour") with integrity.
4. Bring your highest self to the knowledge and settle your fears and issues.
5. Share your own stories of relatedness and deepest knowledge.
6. See the shape of the knowledge and express it with images and objects.
7. Build your knowledge around real relationships with Aboriginal people.
8. Use this knowledge for the benefit of the Aboriginal community.
9. Bring your familiar understandings, but be willing to grow beyond these.
10. Respect the aspects of spirit and place that the knowledge is grounded in.

(8 Ways, n.d.)

In addition to operating within a cultural framework, consider how you can teach Indigenous peoples' perspectives and use Indigenous peoples' ways of communicating and knowing. The 8 Ways of Learning framework (below) provides a useful tool to achieve this. Further information can be found at www.8ways.online
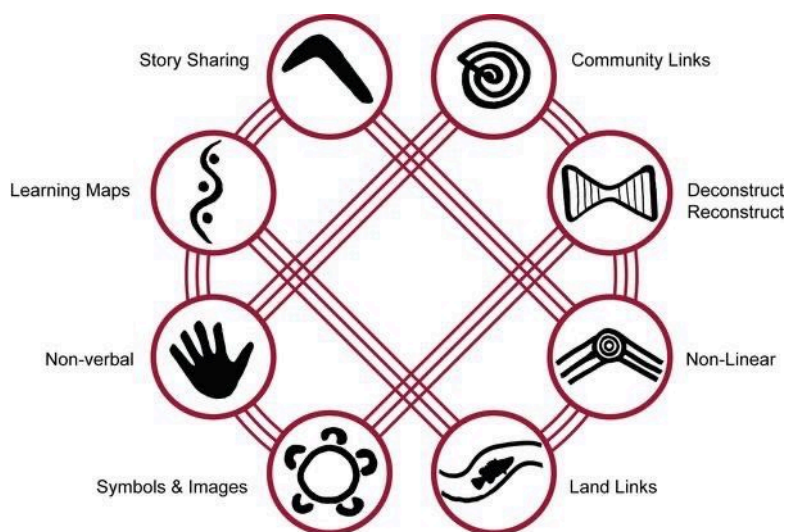

Fig. 8.1 – 8 Ways (8 Ways, (n.d.) https://www.8ways.online/about. is licenced under CC0)

Outdoor environments

Within your VCE OES course, you should plan to visit and teach about a range of outdoor environments. "A wide variety of outdoor environments could be studied, ranging from those that have experienced minimal human influence, through to those that have undergone significant human intervention" (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, p. 10). Accordingly, it is recommended that you plan your course around various outdoor environments. The VCE OES course should be delivered through diverse outdoor environments, including those local to your school. Local experiences often come at little cost yet enhance the theoretical teaching of your OES program.

Environmental citizenship

The VCE OES course has been written to encourage active environmental citizenship from students who complete/are undertaking the course. As part of this, consider how you can model positive environmental behaviours during your course. As Verlie et al. (2021) discuss, positive environmental actions are a way in which educators can empower students to learn about the environmental crises that we face. Some ways in which you could participate in positive environmental action through your VCE OES course include:

- Emphasising minimal impact strategies when conducting outdoor experiences.
- Participating in activities such as citizen science, rubbish clean-ups, weed removal or tree planting days.
- Have students write letters calling for environmental change by the school, government or local industries.

In addition to providing opportunities for your students to participate in positive environmental actions, you should also be aware of how your students engage in the content around issues such as climate change. Students showing signs of distress and anxiety surrounding these topics may need to be referred through your school process for additional support.

Sustainability

Sustainability is explicitly addressed in the KK/KS and is an underpinning concept in VCE OES. Like many constructs in the course, it is a complex and interwoven idea through which students can examine and make judgments about various relationships and interactions humans have with outdoor environments. The three pillars model (see image 8.2), sometimes called the

triple bottom line model of sustainability, can help you to examine different actions and consider their sustainability. A good way of doing this is discussed in the case study below, where students are asked to use the three pillars model to examine the technology they have used on a recent outdoor experience.

Fig. 8.2 – Pillars of Sustainability (VCAA, VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies: Planning webpage; graphic Dmitry Kovalchuk stock.adobe.com)

Case Study 8.1 – Sustainability as a Thinking Tool

KK: 1.2.3 relevant technologies and their influences on outdoor experiences

KS: explain the influence of relevant technologies on experiencing outdoor environments

Outdoor environment: Surf Coast

A unit 1 VCE OES class has recently completed a four-day outdoor experience along the surf coast. The experience included surfing, stand-up paddle boarding, bird watching, sunset photography, visiting a local historical society and a bush walk. Back in class, the teacher has the

students brainstorm different technologies they used on their trip. They came up with the following list:

- Trangia stoves
- Gore-tex rain jackets
- Foam surfboards
- Wet suits
- Stand-up paddle boards and paddles
- Lifejackets
- Maps and compasses
- Mobile phones
- Nylon tents and tarps

The teacher assigns pairs of students one piece of technology to think about. The students are then given a sheet and asked to think about the sustainability of their piece of technology from social, economic, and environmental perspectives. They do so by annotating the following diagram.
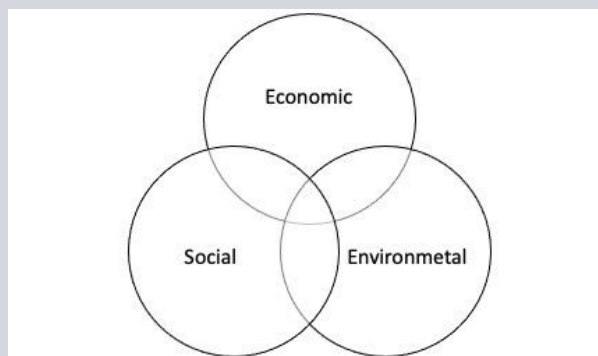
Fig. 8.3 – Venn diagram of three pillars sustainability model
– by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0

8.5 Other Underpinning Concepts in VCE OES

Relationships with outdoor environments is a further underpinning concept in the VCE OES curriculum. This concept is the basis for unit 3, but is also helpful in other parts of the course. In unit three, students consider both historical and contemporary (defined as relationships occurring in the past decade) relationships with the outdoor environments they study. The VCAA provides the following information in the support material regarding relationships. This

model is often referred to by teachers and students using the abbreviation P.I.I. (Perceptions, Interactions and Impacts).

Human-nature relationships are very complex. There are many types of relationships including social, cultural, spiritual and physical. The following diagram represents one way of studying relationships within Australian outdoor environments. Perceptions of, interactions with, and impacts on outdoor environments are part of an interconnected understanding of these relationships.
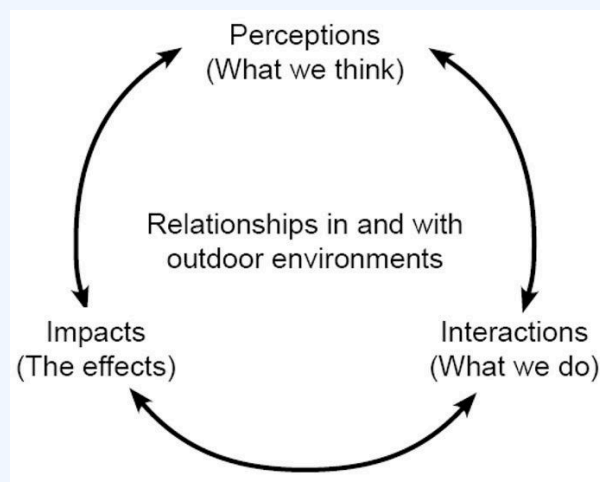
Fig. 8.4 – PII Model of Relationships (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. n.d.-a Reproduced with permission)

Students are encouraged to go beyond this simplified diagrammatic approach in their understanding of, and writing about, these relationships. One useful way of doing that is to consider the use of metaphors as useful descriptors of and analogues for these relationships. Some examples that can be helpful include:

- the outdoors as a mother
- the outdoors as an adversary
- the outdoors as a museum
- the outdoors as a gym
- the outdoors as a cathedral.

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, n.d. Reproduced with permission.)

Case Study 8.2 – Teaching Relationships

KK: 3.2.2 conservation, recreation and economic relationships with outdoor environments

KS: compare different human relationships with outdoor environments, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples' relationships

Outdoor environment: Canadian Corridor (Ballarat)

A VCE OES group is using the Canadian Corridor (the area around Canadian Creek on the east side of Ballarat) to study relationships with outdoor environments in the last decade. As part of this, the group goes on a bike ride that stops at key locations to study the relationships in the area. The teacher has the students record the relationships they observed in the following table (note, this table could be used as a logbook entry, see 12.6).

Table 8.3 Canadian Corridor excursion relationships example by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0

Location	Group	Perception	Interaction	Impact
Fed Uni Tree Planting Site	*Fed Uni Staff and Students*	*The environment as...a site for restoration, a place that needs protection to ensure a sustainable future.*	*Fed Uni staff and students have planted indigenous tube stock to rehabilitate the hill and water course at the top of the university.*	*Appropriate plants are being planted in a water course, which will help limit erosion during heavy rain as deeper roots of trees and shrubs can stabilise the dirt better than introduced grass.*
Mount Clear Loop	*Club Mud Mountain Bikers*	*The environment as...a gymnasium, a place to test and build your skills.*	*MTB riders come to the Mount Clear loop to ride the blue and green runs. These runs also play host to 'dirt crits'.*	*The impact of mountain biking is minimised as Parks Victoria has installed a wash station at the trailhead. MTBers wash their tyres to avoid spreading cinnamon fungus through the park.*
Ballarat Gold Mine	*Miners*	*The environment as...a resource, a commodity that can be bought and sold.*	*The Ballarat Gold Mine (company) run a deep mine through which they blast twice a day and bring rock to the surface that gets crushed and 'assayed' in search of gold.*	*The gold extraction process is very dependent on water and the use of chemicals. These are then discharged to be stored in a tailings dam with strict environmental controls to make sure it does not make it into the local catchments.*

Chapter 8 Summary

This chapter has introduced some key ideas within the VCE OES study design. It has broken down some of the structure and function of the study. As stated in the introduction to the chapter, you must read this in conjunction with reading the latest available version of the study design from the VCAA. If you have not already done so, you should download it and read through the study's aims and rationale before completing the reflection questions below.

Reflection Questions

- When did VCE OES become part of the VCE? Which two previous studies amalgamated to make this course?
- How is VCE OES structured?
- What is the role of the cross-study specifications and area of study 3?
- Why might students want to undertake the VCE OES course?
- How might you teach the cross-study specifications and other underlying concepts, such as relationships within the VCE OES curriculum?

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CHAPTER 9: PLANNING FOR LEARNING IN VCE OES

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the types of lessons and units of work that suit the VCE OES curriculum
- Describe strategies to develop student knowledge of key skills and literacy in the VCE OES classroom
- Analyse what effective VCE OES lessons look like
- Evaluate student-centred activities for the VCE OES curriculum
- Recommended resource types to support teaching and learning within the VCE OES curriculum

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we explore key ideas around planning to teach the VCE OES curriculum. Through doing so, we unpack how to structure VCE OES classes when delivering content, and preparing students for school-based and externally set assessment tasks. This chapter focuses on VCE OES teaching within the classroom. Many ideas presented here can also be used during outdoor experiences. This chapter starts by considering different strategies that will support your VCE OES teaching, focusing on teaching individual lessons. We do this by unpacking a series of examples. Following this, we explore strategies to assist in planning an entire outcome (or AoS). Due to the specific nature of planning for the various AoS 3 curricula, we address it in the following two chapters.

9.2 Structure of VCE OES lessons

Planning effective lessons is a skill and an art you develop over many years of teaching. Many books, policy documents, and articles are dedicated to planning effective lessons. Like many other texts, we do not claim that the advice in this and the following sections present a notion of 'ideal' lesson planning. That probably doesn't exist! Rather, we offer this and the next three

sections to provide ideas to help you think about how you will go about planning for your VCE OES classes to maximise your instructional time.

To begin with, we believe that the following checklist can help you in developing lessons. A high-quality VCE OES lesson will typically adhere to the following principles.

1. Have a clear focus for the lesson that is communicated to the students at the beginning and reiterated throughout.
2. Have a distinct beginning, middle and end.
3. Focus on students working with the knowledge they have learnt rather than large periods of time 'watching, note taking or listening'.
4. Emphasise and explicitly teach the relevant key skills from the study design.
5. Be responsive to the individual student's learning needs.

The below case study provides an example of a typical VCE OES lesson. The lesson below embodies some of the principles above. In this lesson, you will observe a focus on students working within the knowledge being taught—in this case, how the urban heat island effect (urbanised areas that may experience higher temperatures than nearby rural areas), is an example of the impact of urbanisation on outdoor environments. The sample lesson plan also focuses on students experiencing the curriculum (in this case, in the schoolyard) and then applying their knowledge throughout the lesson in line with the key skills of 'discuss and predict'.

Case Study 9.1 – A sample VCE OES Lesson

Table 9.1 *Sample VCE lesson plan*, **by Josh Ambrosy, CC BY NC 4.0**

Lesson Title	The urban heat island effect (works best on a sunny day)	
KK	2.2.4 the impact of urbanisation on outdoor environments	
KS	discuss and predict impacts of urbanisation on outdoor environments	
Learning Intention	To discuss and predict the impact of the urbanisation including the urban heat island effect on outdoor environments	
Time and section	Teacher will...	Students will...
Introduction (15 minutes)	1. Take students outside to an area and hand out infrared thermometers in pairs. Instruct students that they need to measure as many surfaces as possible in the school yard and record their results in their book. 2. Discuss which materials had different readings. What patterns did the students observe between material types?	1. Use infrared thermometers to record the surface temperature of different materials. Possible surfaces include: – Synthetic turf – Real turf – Asphalt – Bricks – Timber – Rubber – Under shrubs – Under tree canopies 2. Participate in class discussion.

Body (35 minutes)	Return to classroom.	
	3. Recap – discussion using write, pair, share – from the previous lesson – What is urbanisation?	3. Participate in the write, pair, share activity.
	4. Instruct students to find their house on the Google Timelapse site, have them:	4. Visit https://earthengine.google.com/timelapse/ and complete the activity as instructed.
	– Pause at 1984 and observe their neighbourhood.	
	– Play till 2000, then predict what will happen over time to today.	
	– Watch and observe the rest of the time-lapse.	
	5. Instruct students to form pairs and complete the analysis of urbanisation activity. Reinforce that they should identify cause and effect for each observed impact. 'Because of x, y is happening'. Discuss as a class what groups have come up with.	5. In pairs, create a table of impacts of urbanisation based on their observations. For each observation, 'analyse' the observed impact showing cause and effect. Write down additional impacts and effects during discussion.
	6. Play the clip about the urban heat island effect in Sydney. Discuss the impact of suburbs with high thermal mass, black roofs, and low areas of vegetation on the people who live there.	6. Watch the clip about the urban heat island effect. Participate in class discussions.

Conclusion (10 minutes)	7. Instruct students to complete practice structured question about urban heat island effects. Collect question as a formative task.	7. Complete the following question. Increasingly dense growth suburbs that use high thermal mass materials and lack trees and other vegetation cause the urban heat island effect. This can result in temperatures reaching between 3-5°C hotter than neighbouring suburbs with higher levels of open space and canopy cover. a. Describe one impact of the urban heat island effect on an outdoor environment you have visited or studied (2 marks). b. Predict how the urban heat island effect may impact residents of the outdoor environment named in part a (4 marks).

Activity 9.1 – Lesson Audit

The principles for effective lesson planning can be a useful reflection tool to audit lessons. Use the following table to audit both the lesson above and another VCE OES lesson you have planned or observed. As part of this, make recommendations for refining each lesson you audit.

Principle	Beginning to...	Achieving...	Mastering...	Recommended refinements
1. Clear focus.				
2. Beginning/Middle/End				
3. Students 'doing'				
4. Emphasis on skills				
5. Responsive to individual needs				

An editable copy of this activity can be accessed here: A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum Activity 9 1 (.docx)

9.3 Using Case Studies within the VCE OES Classroom

The VCE OES curriculum is best approached as a framework of knowledge and skills that students will need to learn. One of the unique parts of this study design is that you, as the teacher, will contextualise your teaching of the course through the outdoor environments you will be visiting and teaching. In Chapter 10 we further unpack the selection of outdoor environments as part of building your VCE OES course.

When teaching about the different outdoor environments you have based your course around, it is best to teach the different KK/KS through case studies. Throughout teaching VCE OES, you will naturally start to build a resource bank of case studies relevant to the outdoor environments you choose to teach about. Case studies can come in many forms, these include:

- News articles
- Websites
- Videos
- Excerpts from academic articles
- Brochures and other materials collected during outdoor experiences
- Photos
- Podcasts
- Art
- Other written sources

In addition to the outdoor environments you have chosen to base your course around, you are also required, at times in specific outcomes, to also teach about named outdoor environments in the study design. For example, in 3.1.4, you must teach about the foundation of one of three environmental movements based on particular historical environmental campaigns: Lake Pedder; the Franklin River; or Little Desert National Park. Again, case studies collated

from various sources are useful in teaching about these named environments across the study design.

When using case studies, it is important to do so in a structured and scaffolded manner. The below example provides an insight into teaching using case study material. This lesson is based on a timeline for the foundational environmental movement that surrounded the area now known as the Little Desert National Park. The VNPA (Victorian National Parks Association) has been reproduced here with permission. In addition to the timeline on the VNPA website, the VNPA has also published a podcast that delves deeper into the historical campaign that ultimately led to the establishment of the VNPA. The Little Desert podcast is available on the VNPA website along with major podcast players.

Case Study 9.2 – Little Desert National Park Historical Environmental Campaign Timeline

Little Desert Timeline

For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal people hunted and gathered food in the Little Desert. The local Wotjobaluk people maintain a connection with the area even after their forebears were moved into the Antwerp mission near Dimboola in the 19th century.

July 1836: Assistant Surveyor Granville Stapylton, second in command of Major Mitchell's expedition through what is now western Victoria, crossed part of the Little Desert, reporting that the country was "dreadfully deep" (in sand and mud).

1840-1880s: The Little Desert became known as 'scrub country'. Settlers avoided it because of its infertile sandy soils and low rainfall, although there was some sheep and cattle grazing.

1870s to 1950s: Much of the natural vegetation of the Wimmera and Mallee districts was cleared for farming by selectors and soldier settlers (especially after World War I). The Little Desert, however, remained 'an island of biodiversity in a sea of agriculture'.

1946: Small conservation reserves were established near Dimboola.

1955: Kiata Lowan Sanctuary (218 hectares) was established to protect malleefowl (also called lowans), which were in decline. The Sanctuary was incorporated into a 945 hectare Little Desert National Park in 1968.

1963: The AMP Society, a large insurance company, proposed to subdivide and clear the Little Desert for agricultural and pastoral development. However, declining wool and wheat prices, and government indecision, led to the scheme being abandoned in March 1967.

June 1967: Sir William McDonald, a local pastoralist and long-standing Victorian Member of Parliament, was appointed Minister of Lands by premier Henry Bolte.

Early 1968: McDonald announced the Little Desert Settlement Scheme, under which 48 wheat farms would be established. Agricultural experts, economists and conservationists opposed the scheme. Conservationists set up the Save our Bushlands Action Committee, representing eight conservation groups, including VNPA, and held two major public meetings in Melbourne in 1969, each attended by over 1000 people. Local Wimmera people also ran a campaign against the clearing scheme.

Mid 1969: McDonald scaled back the Little Desert Settlement Scheme to 12 sheep farms and also announced a larger national park to cover 35,300 hectares. But conservationists were not satisfied with this, believing that national parks must have 'ecological integrity'.

October 1969: Labor MP J.W. Galbally MLC set up a Select Committee to inquire into the Little Desert Settlement Scheme. Leading ecologists such as Malcolm Calder gave evidence about the natural values of the Little Desert. The Age newspaper ran articles suggesting that the scheme was proposed partly because a new road it included would benefit McDonald's brother-in-law.

December 1969: The Victorian Liberal government lost the Dandenong by-election, partly because of community opposition to the Little Desert scheme. The Legislative Council voted to block the scheme. Little Desert National Park was enlarged to 35,300 hectares and the clearing scheme was abandoned.

May 1970: In the Victorian election, the Liberals won with a slightly reduced vote, but McDonald lost his seat of Dundas after 15 years as member. During the election campaign Premier Bolte promised to create and extend national parks so that they covered five per cent of Victoria's area. He also promised to set up a new independent body, the Land Resources Council (later named the Land Conservation Council) which would encourage public involvement. The Council would study Victoria's public land and recommend how it should be used. It continues today as the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC).

William Borthwick became Minister for Lands (later Minister for Conservation) in the new government.

1988: The western part of Little Desert was added to Little Desert National Park, roughly tripling it in size and making it the state's second largest national park at the time.

1991: An addition of seven hectares was donated to the park by a local family.

1997: 640 hectares was added to the park.

2005: Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and the Victorian and Australian governments entered into the first Indigenous Land Use Agreement in Victoria. A cooperative agreement that includes Little Desert National Park ensures that the Traditional Owners will continue to be able to care for country by being involved in the management of the areas where their native title rights have been recognised.

(Victorian National Parks Association, 2018. Reproduced with permission.)

Case Study 9.3 – Teaching with Case Studies Lesson Plan

Table 9.2 *Sample VCE lesson plan*, **by Josh Ambrosy, CC BY NC 4.0**

Lesson Title	Little Desert Timeline	
KK	3.1.4 the beginnings of environmentalism and the resulting influence on political party policy, as observed in one of the following historical campaigns: – Lake Pedder – Franklin River – Little Desert	
KS	describe the beginnings of environmentalism as observed in a historical campaign	
Learning Intention	To describe the timeline of events at the historical Little Desert (LD) campaign To identify key events with the LD campaign timeline	
Time and section	Teacher will...	Students will...
Introduction (10 minutes)	1. Iinform students that there is a proposal from a mining company to reclassify the area you have recently visited on a trip from a protected park to allow a mining company to explore the area for future mineral extraction. Have students break down their relationship with the area before and after the reclassification using PII. 2. Discuss student responses. Inform students that this example is hypothetical, but it wasn't that long ago that many areas were facing such changes. One such area is the Little Desert National Park.	1. In a pair, brainstorm PII for the area recently visited before and after the reclassification of use. 2. Participate in the discussion.
Body (30 minutes)	3. Instruct students that they are going to spend 10 minutes exploring the Little Desert National Park Area on Google Earth. 4. Discuss – What type of outdoor environment is it? What makes it unique? What areas surround the park? What is the park used for today? 5. Explain that there have been a number of changes to the LD and surrounding area over the last few hundred years. Tell students that they are going to identify key features of the timeline.	3. Explore the area, ensuring the photos are visible on Google Earth. Note down any interesting facts and figures about the park. 4. Participate in discussion, adding to notes about the park. 5. Identify the key features of the timeline by annotating it, and looking for key features to describe the campaign to save it from development. Ask students to highlight the timeline and annotate key examples they could use in a SAC.

Conclusion (20 minutes)	6. Set practice structured questions. Give students time to answer it. Work through an example response as a class. Then have students peer assess their attempts. Record peer marks.	6. Answer the question: Describe a historical environmental campaign using examples from an outdoor environment you have visited or studied (3 marks). Peer mark work.
	7. Set homework, listen to Ep. 1 from the VNPA Little Desert Podcast taking notes of further key dates, people and events on their timeline from class.	7. Record homework in the calendar.

Activity 9.2 – Finding Case Studies

Choose a KK/KS you are planning to teach soon or are interested in. To support your teaching of this KK/KS, find three examples of case study material you could use to support the teaching of this. For each example found, answer the following questions.

1. How would you use this in your class?
2. What is good about the case study?
3. How could you use this to support teaching your chosen key skill?

9.4 Scaffolding Student-directed Research in the VCE OES Classroom

Significant research has called for an emphasis on student agency within the modern classroom. These calls are long-standing and were pioneered by influential educational theorists such as Dewey and Vygotsky (Vaughn, 2020). However, within the fast-paced and highly prescribed structure of the VCE, deploying pedagogies that encourage agentic approaches in the classroom are sometimes overlooked. An agentic learning approach develops higher-order cognitive and socio-emotional skills. It develops a strong sense of self-efficacy and resilience. It develops risk-taking, problem-solving, and critical thinking, to name a few.

Vaughn breaks down student agency in the classroom using a three-dimensional model.

• (a) dispositional dimensions of individuals who act and transform environments;

- (b) motivational dimensions of individuals who regulate their actions, exist within contexts, and make choices and decisions; and
- (c) positionality of individuals in that individuals negotiate and interact within complex social contexts (p. 110).

Although elements of all three dimensions of agency can be embedded within the VCE OES classroom, the ability of students to self-regulate and participate in complex situations, or their positionality, is the easiest to focus on. One mechanism for teaching with student agency in mind is through structured research tasks. Providing opportunities for students to engage in structured research can be an effective mechanism to develop students' knowledge of the required KK/KS and allow students to engage in learning that encourages them to develop their positional agency skills, their abilities to self-regulate and participate in complex situations.

In outcome 4.3, students are required to learn and demonstrate skills in gathering both primary and secondary data. The data collected will relate to at least two outdoor environments visited and form the basis of a written report that assesses 4.3. We unpack further the selection of KK/KS for 3.4 in chapter 11. The following table demonstrates ways to scaffold your students to collect secondary data within your VCE OES course. Depending on the purpose of your research task, one or more of these strategies may be useful.

Table 9.3 *Strategies to Support Student Research in the VCE OES Classroom* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Strategy	Details
Identifying Quality Sources	The CRAAP test provides a checklist to help students identify if the source they have found is accurate. **Currency** Is it up-to-date? Does it need to be? When was it published, or last updated (web page)? **Relevancy** Is the information useful and does it support your work? Does it cover your topic in enough depth and scope? e.g. Geography i.e. Australian? International? Does it meet your needs? – i.e. is it peer-reviewed if you are required to use a peer-reviewed journal? **Authority** Who is the author? Are they known in their field? Are they associated with reputable organisations? e.g. a university or official body For a web page: is the author noted or is the organisation well known? e.g. government agency? do the links work? Does the site look well maintained? Is there advertising alongside the information? **Accuracy** Is it supported by reliable facts or statistics? References? Look at the URL for web pages. Is the site commercial (.com), government (.gov) or educational (.edu)? **Purpose** Why was it written? Is it to inform, teach, sell entertain or persuade? Is the work fact, opinion or propaganda? Does it contain extreme viewpoints? Is it biased? Does it contain emotive or derogatory language? Is there disclosure of author affiliations or funding for the research or study? Is there advertising alongside the information? (Adapted from Meriam Library (n.d.) Evaluating Information – Applying the CRAAP test. [PDF] https://library.csuchico.edu/sites/default/files/craap-test.pdf. CC-BY 4.0)
Development of Research Questions	When students are researching a particular KK/KS, it can be useful first to have them develop a series of research questions to answer. After forming questions, students can then develop key search terms, and identify databases and the like to help with their search. For example, if a student was assigned a research task for 2.1.3, they could choose two of the listed professions, then write a career profile of someone who does that job. If a student chose to focus on natural resource management (NRM), the questions they might develop with your guidance could be: – What organisations do people who work in NRM work for? – What qualifications are needed? – Where can you study the required qualification? – What does an NRM job look like day to day? – What is the pay like?

Databases	Databases can help students to quickly locate relevant information that the owner of the database for accuracy has vetted. Some useful databases for VCE OES are: **Trove** https://trove.nla.gov.au/ is a database run by the National Library of Australia. It allows you to search the National Library and a range of institutional libraries for both physical and online collections. **Victorian Collections** https://victoriancollections.net.au/ allows you to search various collections from institutions based in Victoria. Most helpful for 3.1. **Collection Explorer** https://collectionsearch.nma.gov.au/ lets you search the National Museum of Australia's online collection.
Providing sources/ templates	When assigning a research task, assigning students a particular website or list of websites to use can be helpful. When teaching 2.1.1, have students identify biotic and abiotic components of the biome to be visited they might encounter on an upcoming outdoor experience. You could support this by providing them with relevant websites and also a template to use. In this example, relevant websites might include: **Atlas of Living Australia** https://www.ala.org.au/ **MapShare Vic** https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/mapsharevic/ **GeoVic** https://gsv.vic.gov.au/sd_weave/anonymous.html

Finally, it is important to ensure that when assigning research-based tasks to your students, you do so appropriately and in line with the VIT (Victorian Institute of Teaching) Code of Conduct, AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) standards, and school policies. For this reason, it may be better to avoid research tasks regarding certain parts of the course. As an example, the parts of the course relating to risk and risk-taking may not be appropriate as students may quickly come across news sources discussing fatalities that have not been vetted by you for appropriateness.

Activity 9.3 – Thinking About Student Research in VCE OES

As discussed above, scaffolded student research can be a useful pedagogical tool. In part, this is because it not only helps teach the relevant KK/KS being taught, but also, because learning to find and work with online sources is a transferable skill that all people will use after school.

- Choose an outcome within the VCE OES curriculum
- For each of the chosen KK/KS, consider if you could use scaffolded student research to help teach this.
- For each of your chosen KK/KS, identify which strategies might help with your teaching.

9.5 Teaching Literacy through the Key Skills

The explicit teaching of key skills is vital when teaching VCE OES. Like other subjects in the VCE, the key skills drive the assessment practices at school and through the externally set examination. Central to teaching the VCE OES course is that you do so at an appropriate cognitive level (see 1.4 & 8.4.2). As part of this, developing your students' subject-specific literacy using the task words (see 11.3), and other VCE OES-relevant terminology should be a regular part of your VCE OES pedagogy. The below lesson demonstrates the explicit teaching of literacy and key skills within the VCE. This lesson would be toward the end of teaching 2.2.4 as it builds on student understanding of the KK taught in prior lessons. The next two chapters discuss assessing key skills based on their associated task words.

Case Study 9.4 – Teaching of Key Skills and VCE OES Literacy

Table 9.4 *Sample of explicit literacy and key skill VCE lesson plan*, **by Josh Ambrosy, CC BY NC 4.0**

Lesson Title	Comparative Language and Personal Responses to Risk	
KK	2.2.4 the variety of personal responses to risk when experiencing outdoor environments, including the interplay between competence, perceived risk and real risk	
KS	compare a range of personal responses to risk when experiencing outdoor environments	
Learning Intention	To use comparative language to describe different personal responses to risk	
Time and section	Teacher will...	Students will...
Introduction (20 minutes)	1. Hang 5-7 photos of people participating in different outdoor activities around the room. Run a 1min round robin, where students are required to go and write how they think they would feel if they were in each photo. 2. Discuss the different responses to fear depicted in the photos? How might the interplay between real and perceived risk influence these responses?	1. Write a personal response to each of the photos in the room. Example – Photo of free climbing big rock 'rush and fear'. 2. Participate in the discussion.
Body (30 minutes)	3. Introduce that today we are going to focus on the key skill of comparison. Brainstorm, what would a comparison question be asking you to do? 4. Next we will begin by looking at a poor example (Example 1 – below) of comparative language. Can you identify why this is not an example of a high-scoring response? 5. Ask students to create a marking scheme for this response in pairs. Show them the actual marking scheme. 6. Workshop a better response using the same two examples with comparative language (Example 2).	3. Participate in the discussion. 4. Discuss why this is not a high-scoring response. 5. Work in pair to create a marking scheme. Compare your own scheme to the example. 6. Participate in discussion and offer suggestions.
Conclusion (10 minutes)	7. Exit pass: Instruct students that they are to write a list of strategies to help with writing comparative responses in their books.	7. Write a list of strategies for writing comparative tasks.

Worked Examples	Question: Compare two different personal responses to risk that a person or group may experience when participating in two different outdoor activities (4 marks) Marking Scheme. 2x 1 mark is awarded for describing two different activities and two different responses to risk. 2 marks for the use of comparative language. Example 1. A person going rock climbing on a single pitch might feel anxious if they are not an experienced climber despite it being safe. In comparison, an experienced climber free climbing big rock might feel in control as they trust their abilities. Example 2. A beginner climbing a single-pitch roped is likely to feel anxious because they perceive the risk to be greater than it is. In comparison, a person climbing a big rock without a rope may have a feeling of cognitive reward, as, unlike the person on a single pitch, they have spent years developing their skill. However, the person on a big rock (without a rope) is likely taking on a larger risk, vs. the person on a single pitch, as if one hold fails, they could fall to their death.	

9.6 Developing a Unit Planner

Unit planners are an invaluable tool when designing your VCE OES curriculum. If you are a pre-service teacher, your course to date may have focused more on developing lesson plans. Although an important step, and yes, still mandated in some schools, lesson plans are often replaced by unit planners once you have graduated and are working in schools. Appendix 2.1 contains a sample unit planner to help you gauge the level of planning that experienced VCE OES teachers would work from.

To support you in developing your own VCE OES unit planners, we offer the following principles that we have used to develop effective unit planning. Some of these principles are universal to unit planning, whilst others are more specific to planning for VCE OES.

1. **Sequence learning.** A good unit planner will attend to what is being taught and the order

of things being taught. As part of this, when developing a unit planner, please pay attention to what key skills you are embedding and ensure they are presented logically.

2. **Use a variety of approaches.** Unit planners should include a variety of approaches to learning within the classroom. This will help to maintain student engagement. Even the most engaging activity can become disengaging when repeated too often.

3. **Provide sufficient detail.** Within your planner, consider what another experienced VCE OES teacher would need to teach your planner and try to include that. Likely, many pedagogical details you would include in lesson planning as a pre-service teacher are no longer needed. Instead, include a learning intention for the lesson (or series of lessons), an introductory activity, a body activity and a conclusion or reflection activity.

4. **Map formative and summative assessment tasks.** Your unit planner should include a variety of formative and summative assessment tasks. As a rough guide, VCE OES teachers typically aim for one formative task that is collected and marked each week.

5. **Base each outcome on a case study outdoor environment.** Your planner should be specific to the environment you are studying. This includes details of what is taught during outdoor experiences and other information about your focus outdoor environments.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores effective strategies for planning and delivering VCE OES lessons, focusing on maximising student engagement and preparing them for assessments. It introduces core principles of lesson structure, highlighting the importance of active student participation, key skill development, and adaptability to individual learning needs. Through case studies, the chapter demonstrates how to design lessons that integrate experiential learning, such as investigating the urban heat island effect. The use of case studies is emphasised as a tool for contextualising knowledge, with practical examples including the historical environmental campaign for Little Desert National Park. The chapter also outlines how to scaffold student-directed research, leveraging structured research tasks to build analytical skills and foster student agency. Teaching literacy through key skills is explored, with strategies to help students effectively respond to VCE assessment tasks. Finally, the chapter provides guidance on unit planning, outlining best practices for sequencing learning, incorporating varied teaching approaches, embedding assessment tasks, and grounding content in specific outdoor environments.

Reflection Questions

- What would you include in an VCE OES lesson plan?
- Identify three strategies you could use to support the teaching of key skills and literacy in the VCE OES classroom.
- What does an effective VCE OES unit planner would look like? What key parts would you include in writing one?
- Why would you include a student-centred approach to teaching VCE OES?

References

Vaughn, M. (2020). What is student agency and why is it needed now more than ever? *Theory Into Practice, 59*(2), 109-118. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2019.1702393

Victorian National Parks Association. (2018). *Lessons from the Little Desert*. https://vnpa.org.au/lessons-little-desert/

CHAPTER 10: OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES IN VCE OES

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the role of outdoor experiences in VCE OES
- Identify suitable outdoor environments and describe the type of learning experiences suitable for the VCE OES curriculum
- Evaluate methods for assessing outdoor experiences, including the development and use of the logbook in VCE OES
- Create arguments to support the inclusion of outdoor experiences in schools and identify support available to help advocate for outdoor experiences

10.1 The Role of Outdoor Experiences in VCE OES

Outdoor experiences are central to the VCE OES course. Through direct experiences in various outdoor environments, students can experience the theoretical constructs or key knowledge they are studying through the VCE OES course. Outdoor experiences also play a key role in allowing students to gather primary data about their own experiences as part of a student-led investigation central to units 3 and 4 (9.4). These outdoor experiences allow students to develop their personal confidence and competence to engage in outdoor participation alongside the course and after completion.

As stated in the study design:

Outdoor experiences allow the development of understandings of outdoor environments from various perspectives. This includes geological and human history over the last 60,000 years, changes to human interactions with the outdoor environment, protocols and management of outdoor environments and strategies to care for, and goals for sustainable use of, outdoor environments.

Outdoor experiences provide opportunities for students to develop the observational knowledge and theoretical application required to satisfactorily complete each outcome and collect primary data needed for School-assessed Coursework tasks.

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, pp. 11-12. Reproduced with permission.)

Outdoor experiences in the VCE OES curriculum require the teaching of KK/KS from a particular part of the course through a carefully selected trip and outdoor environment. To do this, it is important to think about outdoor experiences in VCE OES and how they align with broader ideas around outdoor education. Two longstanding and often-cited definitions of outdoor education may help here. Being that outdoor education is about learning "in, about and for the outdoors" (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958), and that through outdoor education, we learn about "relationships between self, others and the environment" (Priest, 1986, p. 13). Both of these definitions have relevance today and help many educators frame their outdoor teaching, particularly the students' experience of your outdoor curriculum.

To design effective outdoor experiences within your VCE OES curriculum, moving beyond thinking purely about the students' experience and considering the relationship between knowledge (what is being learnt) and process (how it is taught) is helpful. Quay (2016) offers that "(c)ontent is nothing without process, the process is nothing without content — both require each other." (p. 48). When designing outdoor experiences for your course, you should consider not just what is being taught but also the process through which it is being taught. Although many VCE OES trips are rich and multilayered experiences that connect to multiple KK/KS from the outcome studied, the focus should not be solely on what is being taught (in particular examinable knowledge), but also how.

The combination of focusing on both process and knowledge can be done in many ways. By way of illustration, the below provides an example of combining the two. As shown in case study 10.1, many outdoor experiences can still focus on process and knowledge, even in local outdoor environments.

Case Study 10.1 – Teaching Technology

KK: 1.1.3 relevant technologies and their influences on outdoor experiences

KS: explain the influence of relevant technologies on experiencing outdoor environments

Outdoor Environment: Local Park/School Yard.

Activity: Students are to work in small groups to set up a shelter as a practice for their upcoming hike. They carry all equipment (shown below) to the park/school grounds and rotate through the different equipment options. After students experience putting up and taking down a shelter at each station, discuss the technology used and how it impacted their ability to participate in the activity.

Station 1	Station 2	Station 3
Canvas Tarp Natural Fibre Rope Large (Iron/Heavy)/Wooden Tent Pegs Timber Poles	Plastic Sheet (no eyelets) Nylon 3-strand Rope Steel Poles Tent Pegs Heavy Steel Tent Pegs	Modern Hiking Tarp with in-built Guy Lines and Plastic Tensioners 6mm Kernmantle Rope Aluminium Trekking Poles Light Weight Aluminium Stakes

Outdoor Experience Hours

In the revised VCE OES curriculum, the VCAA has introduced a recommended minimum number of hours that students spend on outdoor experiences in each of the four units of the VCE OES curriculum. This inclusion demonstrates the importance of outdoor experiences within the VCE. The study design suggests that students should spend between 25-50 hours learning through outdoor experiences per unit. A possible calculation of outdoor experiences is shown below for outcome 1.1. Note: This plan uses the maximum recommended 50 hours and is scalable depending on budget, location, etc. The activities below marked with a * would be completed in class time.

Table 10.1 – *Hours of Outdoor Experiences for Unit 1* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Activity	Target KK	Hours
Bike Ride Main Yarra Trail	1.1.1	4
Water Safety Session – Local Pool*	1.1.3	1
SUP Experience – St Kilda	1.1.1-3	2
Overnight Southern Peninsula Trip – Walk, Surf, Camp	1.1.1-3	16
Ways of Knowing Day Trip to Mornington Peninsula	1.1.4	4
Depictions – Local Park with Local Artist*	1.2.1	1
Technology Activity – Local Park*	1.2.3	1
Intercultural Experience – Local Park*	1.2.2	1
3-Day Hike/Climb – Gariwerd/Grampians	1.2.1-4	24

Student Safety

Student safety is vital during all outdoor experiences. As a teacher of VCE OES, you have legal obligations to ensure that you have adequately managed the risks for your chosen outdoor experiences and gained informed consent before activities are undertaken. The relevant safety guidelines in Victoria are:

- The Department of Education Excursion and Adventure Activity Guidelines
- The Australian Adventure Activity Standards

In addition, you must follow all relevant legislation (road safety, workplace health and safety, etc.) along with other school policies when planning outdoor experiences.

Outdoor Experience Outcomes

When planning outdoor experiences in your VCE OES curriculum, you should do so with all outcomes in mind. As discussed in Chapter 10, AoS 3 is the mechanism within the study design that articulates the types of outdoor experiences that might be relevant to your curriculum. In units 1 and 2, the AoS 3 KK/KS are inherently practical. As shown in the case studies and examples below, you should plan for these KK/KS along with the other KK/KS from the other outcomes within the unit taught. Unit 4, AoS 3 differs here in that it is a vessel for students to be assessed on their investigation of at least two outdoor environments visited. Although you will need to have this forefront of mind when planning your unit 3 and 4 outdoor experiences, Unit 4, AoS 3, is fundamentally a mechanism of assessing students' knowledge of outdoor experiences. Accordingly, we address this in the following chapter (11).

10.2 Selecting Outdoor Environments

Within your VCE OES course, students should have an opportunity to experience various outdoor environments suited to their studies. The term outdoor environment is used within the course, as it refers to "a wide variety of outdoor environments … ranging from those that have experienced minimal human influence, through to those that have undergone significant human intervention" (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, p. 10). Thus, anywhere from your local park or school grounds to more remote places in Victoria, such as the Alpine area, can be included. The term outdoor environment is used in the study design as it encapsulates a diversity of environments. It also avoids using the term 'nature' as a problematic term (Quay & Jensen, 2018).

Outdoor environments form the basis of your VCE OES course. Most of the KK/KS is delivered through outdoor experiences and coursework that revolve around examples from the environment visited and studied. This helps students contextualise their learning about the relevant KK/KS whilst providing them with tangible examples to use within their assessment tasks (both school-assessed and external). Each outcome studied needs to relate fully to one outdoor environment within your program. You may also choose to relate all of a particular unit to one outdoor environment. In particular, towards the end of year 12, having students undertake outdoor experiences can be increasingly difficult to manage while managing competing school priorities. Accordingly, in unit 4, teaching both outcomes using one outdoor environment or by utilising local experiences, can be wise.

The following checklist is designed to assist you in thinking about and assessing outdoor environments suitable to teach the various outcomes.

1. Location: Is it accessible? How far away is it?
2. Transport: How can you get there? Are there any public transport options?
3. Cost: Are there any costs associated with visiting?
4. Activities: What activities are permitted? Do they suit the outcome being taught?
5. Suitable Case Studies: What can be taught in line with the chosen KK/KS?
6. Resources: What resources are available to help teach the KK/KS?
7. Locals: Can you build a relationship with any local educators or contacts?
8. Camping (if overnight): What camping or other accommodation is available?
9. Safety: Does the environment comply with your relevant policies and procedures?

Activity 10.1 – Choosing an Outdoor Environment for an Outcome

- Choose an outcome from the VCE OES curriculum that you will teach soon or are interested in teaching.
- Identify two possible outdoor environments that you could use to teach this environment.
- Complete the questions from the checklist above for both outdoor environments.
- After completing the checklist, compare the suitability of each environment and recommend which you would use to teach your chosen outcome.

10.3 Types of Outdoor Experiences

Within your VCE OES program, you should embed a range of different types of outdoor experiences. The VCAA defines outdoor experiences in the passage below from the 'scope of study' section within the study design. This section unpacks examples of different outdoor experiences to help you think about the experiences you might include in your VCE OES curriculum. When reading the examples below, you should remember that, as shown above (Table 10.1), your VCE OES program will likely end up encompassing a range of different types of outdoor experiences across a unit or the year.

Outdoor experiences suited to this study are a range of guided activities in areas such as farms, mining/logging sites, interpretation centres, coastal areas, rivers, mountains, bushlands, forests, urban parks, cultural and historical sites, and state or national parks. Activities undertaken could include bushwalking, cross-country skiing, canoe touring, cycle touring, conservation and restoration activities, marine exploration, and participation in community projects. Outdoor experiences that use weapons or motorised devices to replace human effort are not suitable for this study. The duration of activities undertaken should include a range of multi-day/journey-based activities, half/whole-day activities and class-time activities on school campus grounds, or in the nearby local environment.

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, p. 4. Reproduced with permission.)

Multi-day – Journey-Based

Journey-based outdoor experiences involve students travelling through an outdoor environment with their own effort. This can be done using a variety of activities, including bushwalking, ski touring, canoeing, kayaking, and bike touring, combined with overnight camping using various equipment and sites. Wattchow & Brown (2011) state that "the journey or expedition has long been part of the staple diet of pedagogic approaches to outdoor education" (p. 137). The same can be said about VCE OES trips. Previous versions of the study design specified that most outdoor experiences would be conducted using a journey. Many VCE OES courses still use journeys as a staple in their program of outdoor experiences.

Jukes (personal communication, 27 July 2023) explains, "Journeys are conventionally defined as travel from a point to point. However, in outdoor education, the adage of 'it's the journey rather than the destination' is often quoted." He goes on to state, "This points to the fact that it is the journeying rather than the end destination that bring about meaningful experiences that have educative potential. This can happen in multiple formats". In VCE OES, these potentials are typically explored via the explicit planning of experiences that align with the teaching of the specified KK/KS as part of the outdoor experience.

Journey-based programs more generally range as short as an overnight experience in a local outdoor environment to more extended multiple-week expeditions that sometimes feature in years 9 and 10 of outdoor education programs. Given the nature of the recommended hours in VCE OES, journeys are typically between 2-5 days. An example overview of an VCE OES journey-based outdoor experience that aligns with 2.1 & 2.3 is shown below for a snowshoe/cross-country ski tour on the Bogong High Plains.

Case Study 10.2 – Journey Based Outdoor Experience – Bogong High Plains Ski Tour

Table 10.2 *Sample journey based outdoor experience – Bogong High Plains Ski Tour*, **by Josh Ambrosy, CC BY NC 4.0**

Route	Day 1 – Windy Corner to Cope Hut Day 2 – Cope Hut to Fitzgeralds Hut Day 3 – Fitzgeralds Hut to Windy Corner
Campground	Cope Hut Fitzgeralds Hut
KK	2.1.1 scientific understandings of a range of outdoor environments including: • the interrelationships between biotic and abiotic components • the effects of natural and human-induced changes on a range of outdoor environments, such as day to night, seasons, tides, flood, drought, fire, migration and climate change 2.1.3 understandings of vocational perspectives of outdoor environments, including at least two of the following: • outdoor leading and guiding • environmental research and policy 2.3.1 how to conduct safe and sustainable peer-led outdoor activities, involving minimal impact strategies for groups, route planning, food and equipment planning, risk management planning and transport planning 2.3.2 how to plan and adapt outdoor experiences due to weather, including weather patterns and extreme weather 2.3.3 how to monitor observations of own and other groups' impacts on the outdoor environment during an outdoor experience
Key Teaching Activities	• Pre-trip – Gear preparation for a winter alpine season • Peer co-leading during sleeping times • Peer teaching of a cooking circle – 2 students to lead each meal • Snow depth measuring activity • Day-night observation • Minimal impact strategies throughout • Cloud/weather observations

Note: The above assumes students have done an introductory cross-country ski day on the day before the journey starts or before the trip. Distances and campsites may need to be varied depending on student ability, conditions, etc.

Journey-based programs offer VCE OES students the opportunity to live and work in a small community of peers. As part of this, students and teachers often remark about the personal and social development such a trip offers them. Such development opportunities are likely what Marsh & Willis (1999) would label VCE OES's 'hidden' curriculum. Part of this hidden curriculum comes from the structure, in that students need to become responsible for their

own needs (shelter, food, warmth, entertainment) and, through doing so, build additional personal skills outside of the VCE OES curriculum.

Case Study 10.3 – Peer Leading in 2.3

In outcome 2.3, students peer-lead aspects of an outdoor experience to demonstrate the outcome satisfactorily. Journey-based programs provide many opportunities for peer leadership. Peer leadership does not mean that students are required to conduct their own trips, nor does it mean that the normal burden of supervision from staff changes. The above case study demonstrates two possible ideas for student peer leadership during a cross-country ski touring trip. Further ideas for peer leadership are shown in the table below.

Table 10.3 Peer Leadership in 2.3 by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0

Type of Peer Leadership	Examples
Navigation	Navigation can become a peer leadership task, either for the whole group working in leadership pairs, or if safe to do so, by setting students off in pairs or threes for a particular section of the track.
Camp Set Up	Students can be designated to be in change of camp set up, including group shelter, tent site selection, toilet set up, etc.
Cooking Circles	Students can lead a cooking circle sharing a recipe with peers and monitoring for safety such as fuel bottle position.
Snow-sleeping	During snow sleeping, buddy systems are common. Students work in peers to monitor tent buddies for thermal comfort and any early warning signs of hypothermia.
Peer Welfare	Peer welfare roles oversee their peers' physical and emotional welfare. They might assist in monitoring the groups' hydration, sunscreen use, hats, etc.
Logistics Officers	Group logistics roles can include managing equipment distribution, checking weather forecasts and communicating them to the leaders or group, and communicating with 24/7 contacts supervised by the teacher.

Multi-day – Base Camping

Multi-day base camping trips allow various outdoor experiences that complement the VCE OES curriculum to be taught in one outdoor environment. Base camping can be less physically demanding than journey-based programs, depending on the design of the outdoor experience. Base camping may involve students sleeping in tents or cabins at various sties, including dispersed camping, formal campgrounds, caravan parks and other prescribed accommodation

(e.g., Scout Camps). For students with little or no prior outdoor experiences in their schooling, a base camp can also be a good way to build skills and scaffold their learning before a journey-based experience.

Base camping can still allow students to engage in personal development (the hidden curriculum of VCE OES) mentioned above. This can be done through structuring trips, whether they are at a formal site, an informal base, or even a residential facility, to enable such a program. A good way to do this is to have students take responsibility for their needs. In particular, cooking and sharing meals can help build community and responsibility within your VCE OES program. When designing programs that use a base camp for your trip, careful attention is required to ensure the program still 'looks' and 'feels' like an OES trip. For this reason, tents and temporary sheets are normally preferred over permanent structures, and portable camping equipment (Trangia stoves, etc.) for meal preparation is encouraged.

A sample itinerary for a base camp is shown below that aligns with the 1.1 and 1.3 VCE OES curriculum. The itinerary is written so that groups could leave at lunchtime from closer by (Melbourne, Ballarat, Geelong) schools to minimise the impact on students learning in other subjects.

Case Study 10.4 – Base Camp – Anglesea and Surf Coast

Table 10.4 *Sample Base Camp- Anglesea and Surf Coast*, **by Josh Ambrosy, CC BY NC 4.0**

Day	Itinerary and KK Link
Day 1	Depart School Drive to Pt Addis 1.1.1 En route – Students are to map using Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing (symbols, pictures) the journey to Pt Addis in their Logbook 1.1.1 Student-led Acknowledgment of Country 1.1.1, 1.1.4 Point Addis Koori Cultural Walk 1.1.3 Bells Beach Walk 1.1.3 Night Beach Walk – Indigenous peoples' Way Finding – Constellations 1.1.1, 1.1.4
Day 2	Beach Sunrise Yoga 1.1.2, 1.1.4 Surf Session Go Ride a Wave 1.1.2, 1.1.3 Estuary Walk – Impacts of Urbanisation 1.1.2 Alcoa Former Mine Visit 1.1.4 Bare Foot Lawn Bowls, Anglesea Bowling Club 1.1.1, 1.1.3
Day 3	SUP Session – Cosy Corner 1.1.1-2 Anglesea Heathland Biome Walk 1.1.2

Day Excursions – Outdoor Activity Focus

Outdoor activities allow students to experience first-hand how different groups of people participate in outdoor environments as described in the study design. Outdoor activities suitable for VCE OES are listed in the above excerpt from the VCAA (see 10.3). Your chosen activities should align with the teaching of selected KK/KS.

The use of day activities can help students to stay motivated within the VCE OES course. Although no formal research to date has looked at students' motivations for choosing to study VCE OES, many teachers would state that based on their experiences, students often choose this course due to the practical nature, then become more environmentally focused as a result of learning the KK/KS within the course. In addition, many of the KK/KS included in the VCE OES can be taught directly through an activity rather than a more passive outdoor experience (lecture, talk, etc.).

Case Study 10.5 – Possible Activity Focused Day Excursions

KK: 4.1.4 the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individual physical and emotional wellbeing, and for society now and into the future

KS: justify the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individuals and society

Outdoor Environment: Buninyong Township/Mount Buninyong

Activity: Students participate in a strenuous 5.5km walk from the Botanical Gardens in Buninyong to the Summit of Mount Buninyong following the Goldfields Trail. At the top, they discuss why people might regularly participate in this type of activity and the importance of retaining the walking trail for locals' and visitors' health.
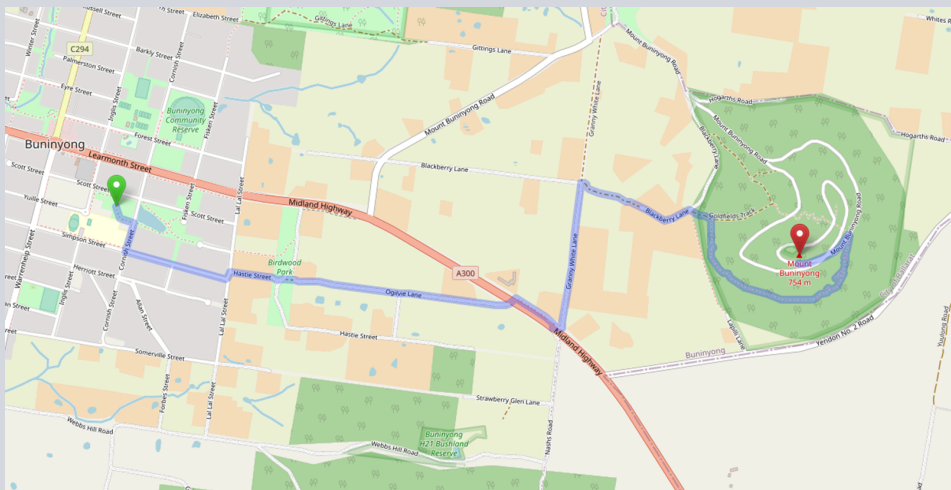

Fig10.1 *Map showing walking directions from the Buninyong Botanical Gardens to the top of Mount Buninyong via the Goldfields Trail.* (Image Source: OpenStreetMap.org. CC BY-SA 2.0)

Activity 10.1 – Planning Day Excursions

- Identify the location of a school you would like to teach at or already work at.
- Search on Google Maps or similar for the location of the school.
- Create a list of possible outdoor environments within a 30 min drive of your school.
- Choose three outdoor environments from your list and identify an outdoor activity that you could visit with an OES class the relevant KK/KS you would teach from the study design.

Day Trip – Guest Speaker/External Organisation/Visit

Your teaching of the VCE OES course can be enhanced by providing opportunities for students to hear from or work with a range of people and groups through their course of OES studies. Using other people within your VCE OES course can teach different perspectives and help engage your students in learning by having a variety of voices delivering the course. Guest speakers and groups often come from the ongoing relationships you build in the outdoor environments you visit and teach as part of your VCE OES course. When approaching people and asking them to contribute to your VCE OES course, it is important to consider the benefits to them in doing so. This is particularly important when asking volunteers to be part of your course. Some ideas for guest speakers and organisations include:

- Historical Societies
- Friends of... Groups
- Regenerative Farmers
- Trust for Nature Landowners
- Education Rangers
- Museums
- Visitors Centres

10.4 Logbooks for VCE OES

Logbooks are a common tool within the outdoor sector and for outdoor enthusiasts to help document relevant experiences within outdoor activities. In the 2024 onward study design, the VCAA introduced a logbook as a compulsory assessment to help determine a student's satisfactory completion of units 1-4 of VCE OES. Students are required to complete a logbook that documents all aspects of outdoor experiences that they're participating in during their VCE

OES course. In the next chapter, we discuss the two types of assessment tasks related to the logbook, those assessments tied to AoS 3 in units 1, 2 and 4.

Logbooks as part of the VCE OES curriculum, should be approached by teachers as a holistic tool, not simply an assessment task. Although similar to the highly structured logbooks that many outdoor educators are familiar with the VCE OES logbook should contain additional information that students record during outdoor experiences based on the KK/KS they engage in during an outdoor experience. When planning and conducting outdoor experiences as part of your VCE OES curriculum, you should consider how students will capture primary and secondary data about their experience within their logbook. Student logbooks should contain a variety of information within their entries. These include:

- location
- environment type
- flora and fauna
- outdoor activity(ies) undertaken
- sustainability measures
- observation of key knowledge relevant to the experience chosen by the teacher
- observation of key skills.

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, p. 13. Reproduced with permission.)

Students can use a variety of techniques to make entries in their logbooks. This might include written entries (shorter and longer forms), pictures, drawings, diagrams and other sources. Teachers are responsible for the authentication of the logbook entries. In addition, as they relate directly to the outdoor experiences they participate in and the outdoor environments visited, it is practical that students complete most entries during outdoor experiences. For this reason, hardcopy logbooks are preferred and should be included on booklists. Students can also use their logbooks to collate photos and other material collected on a trip, including handouts and completed worksheets. If you plan for students to collate a large number of documents in their logbook, an A5 display folder may be a good inclusion on your booklist. To assist with authentication, tamper-proof stickers can seal pages once completed. Based on the above activity case study 10.5, a sample student logbook entry is below. This template has been pre-filled with the KK/KS to assist students with their logbook entry.

Case Study 10.6 – Sample Student Logbook Entry

Time and Dates	*26/7/24 – 1200-1600*
Location	*Buninyong and Mount Buninyong*
Environment Type Visited	*Urban and Managed Park*
Flora and Fauna Identified	*Koala* *Eucalyptus – Native Peppermint* *Eucalyptus – Messmate* *Acacia – Prickly Mosses*
Description of Outdoor Activity	*Walk for personal fitness from Buninyong Botanical Gardens to Summit via the Goldfields Track*
Observations of KK/KS	KK: the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individual physical and emotional wellbeing, and for society now and into the future KS: justify the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individuals and society *– The Goldfields Track heading up Mount Buninyong weaves from urban parkland through farmland then finally to the top of Mount Buninyong an old Volcano.* *– The track is steep and challenging, but by undertaking this walk, locals and visitors can participate in active outdoor recreation which has both health and emotional benefits (positives).* *– The track is rough in some sections, meaning it is not universally accessible. You also have to cross the Midland Hwy, which could put some off, but this can be done safely in small groups and with patience to wait for gaps in the traffic (negatives).* *– The track should be maintained as it helps current and future society stay emotionally and physically healthy (justify).*
Minimal Impact Strategies	*– Stay on the defined path.* *– Walk through wet sections rather than widening the path.* *– Be aware of Flora/Fauna and minimise disruption.* *– Remove all Rubbish.*

Photos	Image 10.2 Goldfields Track at the Gong. Photograph by Josh Ambrosy CC BY-NC 4.0
Justify the health of your chosen outdoor environment for individuals now and into the future (4 marks).	*The health of the Goldfields Track at Mount Buninyong is important for the people of Buninyong and its surroundings now and into the future, as it is a key enabler of movement-based activities. By locals participating in walking up this steep track through a range of environments, they will feel more connected to the environment and, in turn, take steps to protect it. For example, through a connection to the place, the local teachers might take their year 6 class walking up the track, which will, in turn, build the future generations' connection to the place. If the track were to become overgrown with weeds (like blackberries seen on nearby farmland), it might mean that the track is unpassable, leading to people not using it and not developing a connection to the place either now or in the future. Ultimately, the health of this environment will promote a healthy population in Buninyong for generations to come.*

10.5 Advocating for Outdoor Experiences

The VCE OES curriculum requires students to spend time away from school to deliver outdoor experiences. As a teacher, you will sometimes be called upon to provide arguments as to the need for these experiences. Often, the scrutiny from leadership that necessitates these comes from the additional costs (both financial and human) to safely and effectively run your outdoor experiences. As this chapter has shown, there are a variety of local experiences that can help complement your VCE OES program. However, these should be in addition to broader multi-day experiences in various outdoor environments. School leadership are sometimes also concerned about the perceived impact of VCE OES experiences on students' overall attainment within the VCE. Although no direct research found to date has explicitly studied

the impact of students undertaking VCE OES outdoor experiences, several empirical studies, as summarised in the table below, demonstrate positive outcomes for students undertaking outdoor experiences as part of their schooling.

Table 10.2 – *Summary of Selected Literature* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Study	Summary
Fägerstam (2014)	This longitudinal study examined teachers' perceptions of an outdoor learning program in a secondary school setting. One finding is that teachers identified following learning outdoors, that students were more motivated, engaged in school and had better communication skills.
Mygind (2007)	This study examined students' physical activities when learning outside. They found that students doubled their physical activity levels on scheduled days of outdoor instruction.
Ritchie (2018)	This study found that participation in co-curricular activities as part of secondary schooling positively affected students' overall academic achievement.

The letter below is a template you could adopt when writing to your school leadership to advocate for VCE OES's continuation, expansion or inception. *Outdoors Victoria* has published this template, the peak body for outdoor education, which can also assist in advocating for your program.

Sample Advocacy Letter

Example advocacy letter to principals – VCE OES programs.
Instructions. Please update all [fields] marked by square brackets.

Dear [Name],

Re: Proposed changes to year VCE OES outdoor experiences

[I/we] write regarding the decision to [reduce outdoor experiences/cease offering VCE OES due to outdoor experiences]. [I/We] take the firm stance that VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies (OES) should proceed in its entirety for the following reasons.

- VCE OES is a world-leading curriculum through which students learn about their own and others' relationships with the outdoors. Through this, they directly engage in contemporary political and global issues to consider how human lifestyles must change for a sustainable future.
- VCE OES [in our school/in many schools] sees students achieve excellence in the VCE through consistently high study scores.
- VCE OES is a course that assists to keep many students engaged and connected to schooling. This has been a significant challenge for us and others since returning from the remote learning

- necessitated by COVID-19.
- The revised VCE OES curriculum has a renewed and significant focus on teaching about Indigenous peoples' culture and issues. This should be a matter of priority for all our graduating students to learn about, given the current political issues of reconciliation, closing the gap and the voice.
- The revised VCE OES study design recommends 25-50 hours of outdoor experience per unit of study, excluding time sleeping or traveling. This roughly equates to 3 days and 2 nights per unit. These figures have been accepted by the VCAA board as they recognise the importance and benefits of outdoor experiences for students.

In addition, access to the types of experiences undertaken through VCE OES should be open to all students, regardless of cultural and socioeconomic background.

- The Department of Education recognises the significant benefits of outdoor learning. This has been evidenced through the recent $80m investment in the positive start program and policy guidance regarding outdoor education schools.
- Teacher Time in Lieu should not be a barrier to student learning, given the recent announcement of funding for government schools. In addition, many schools have found amicable and creative solutions when they value and prioritise student learning through the outdoors.
- Finally, no research or evidence suggests that students undertaking curriculum-based outdoor experiences harms their overall academic achievement or other curriculum-based activities. On the contrary, several publications have linked time out of school experiences to an increase in overall achievement.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the CEO, Andrew Knight and his team at Outdoors Victoria. Andrew would be more than happy to be provided with further information about the benefits of outdoor experiences as part of the VCE OES curriculum. You can contact him via info@outdoorsvictoria.org.au or stay up to date with outdoor education and recreation news by subscribing to Outdoors Victoria's Newsletter.

We await your timely and hopefully positive response soon,

Regards, [Your teams name(s) here]

Chapter Summary

This chapter examines the role of outdoor experiences in the VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies (OES) curriculum, highlighting how they enhance student learning by providing real-world applications of key knowledge and skills. It explores strategies for planning and conducting outdoor experiences, ensuring they align with curriculum outcomes while fostering engagement and critical thinking. The chapter emphasises the importance of selecting appropriate outdoor environments, considering factors such as accessibility, environmental

impact, and relevance to assessment tasks. It also discusses risk management, logistics, and how to integrate outdoor experiences into structured learning sequences. Additionally, the chapter provides guidance on linking outdoor experiences to assessment, including the collection of primary data, field reports, and reflective tasks. Practical examples and case studies illustrate how to maximise the educational value of outdoor experiences, ensuring they contribute meaningfully to student success in VCE OES.

Reflection Questions

- Why should you include outdoor experiences in your VCE OES curriculum?
- What outdoor environments and types of learning experiences are suitable for the VCE OES curriculum?
- What would a student include in a logbook?
- Where could you get support in advocating for your VCE OES program? What arguments might help convince school leaders about the need for your students to be out of school?

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CHAPTER 11: ASSESSMENT IN VCE OES

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the role of assessment in the VCE OES course
- Design formative and summative assessment tasks
- Explain the use of marking schemes, performance descriptors and rubrics for marking VCE OES tasks
- Analyse the use of commercial tasks and the teacher requirements when using commercial tasks
- Evaluate quality summative tasks

11.1 Assessment in VCE OES

Assessment in VCE is a complex set of processes through which you as the teacher, and other teachers acting as assessors, determine a student's overall attainment level within their chosen study. In our context, the VCE OES curriculum. As Collins (2011) states, "Assessment tends to drive curriculum, to decide what teachers and students will emphasise and choose to study, and to define what scope of freedom schools might have in their day-to-day activities" (p. 200). This statement is often correct within the VCE and individual subjects like VCE OES. Accordingly, when developing an assessment program as part of your VCE OES course, it is important that you do so intentionally and with a holistic view that balances how much time is spent on assessment tasks with other aspects of teaching and learning in your VCE OES course.

When teaching VCE OES, it is vital that you align your assessment practices to both the requirements of the study design and the mandatory processes around assessment from the (VCAA) Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The VCAA, publishes a handbook (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2022) which provides advice for teachers and VCE coordinators about implementing assessment within the VCE. In particular, the sections within the handbook about authentication, moderation, equity and the satisfactory completion of outcomes can be invaluable to you as an VCE OES teacher.

This chapter provides advice to you as an OES teacher based on both the handbook and the

study design. In addition to reading this, you should also take the time to familiarise yourself with the handbook and the assessment sections of the study design and regularly refer to both when designing and deploying assessment tasks in the VCE OES classroom.

11.2 Types and Functions of Assessment in VCE OES

Assessment in VCE OES can be grouped into three categories. Formative assessment tasks, school-assessed coursework (SAC), and externally set examinations are part of unit 3 and 4 courses. Chapter 13 addresses the VCE OES exam, including strategies for preparing students to complete this assessment. As a teacher of VCE OES, you are required to use a range of assessment processes and practices to determine your students' completion of the VCE OES course. This differs between units 1 and 2, and units 3 and 4 of the course. Table 12.1 outlines the types of assessment tasks typical in an VCE OES course. Some of these are mandated by the study design (SAC), whilst others are commonplace.

Table 11.1 *Types of VCE OES Assessment* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Units Studied	Typical Assessment Tasks

Units 1 and 2	• A variety of formative assessment tasks
	
	• At least one SAC from the specified list of tasks to assess 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2.
	  • A logbook of outdoor experiences to assess 1.3 and 2.3
	  • A school-set examination at the end of each unit

Units 3 and 4	• A variety of formative assessment tasks
	
	• A logbook of outdoor experiences
	  • At least one SAC from the specified list of tasks to assess 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.3*
	  • A written report on outdoor experiences to assess 4.1 (see 11.6)*
	  • An externally set examination

Assessment results from your VCE OES course must be reported to the VCAA in two formats, being: the satisfactory or not-satisfactory completion of each of the outcomes from units 1-4; and the reporting of scores based on school-assessed coursework for all assessed outcomes in units 3 and 4 (shown in Table 11.1 as marked with a *).

For a student to be assessed as satisfactory you as the teacher are required to certify they have "produced work that demonstrates achievement of the outcomes (and) submitted work that is clearly their own" (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2022, p. 89). Furthermore, the handbook clarifies that a student will receive an unsatisfactory grade as follows.

The student will receive an N (not satisfactory) for the unit when one or more of the following occurs:

- the work does not demonstrate achievement of the outcomes
- the student has failed to meet a school deadline for the assessment task (which can include time granted through an extension for any reason or a special provision or both)
- the work cannot be authenticated, for example, through lack of attendance
- there has been a substantial breach of the VCAA's rules and the school's rules and procedures.

(Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2022, p. 90. Reproduced with permission.)

You should note that the above criteria does not mean that the completion of SACs or a certain level of attainment within a SAC (e.g., above 50%) is required to receive a satisfactory result. Although SACs can and often do, contribute to you being able to determine a student as having satisfied the requirement of a particular outcome. In addition, the handbook specifies that students who do not demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of an outcome through a SAC should be given additional opportunities to demonstrate their learning (either through previously completed tasks or additional ones). SACs are also used in units 3 and 4 to determine a student's level of attainment, which contributes to their VCE OES study score. If a student is given an additional task to demonstrate the satisfactory completion of an outcome, this must not allow them to gain additional marks; rather further tasks can be used to deem a student as having a satisfactory understanding of the outcome.

Formative assessment should be a regular part of your VCE OES course. You should aim to use various types of assessment tasks to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge of the course in different mediums. Regardless of your chosen type of task, assessing both the KK/KS as articulated within the study design is important. Additionally, using a variety of mechanisms to provide feedback (teacher feedback, student feedback, peer feedback, etc.) to students can assist in the overall teaching and learning processes within your VCE OES classroom. Possible types of formative assessment include:

- Practice structured (exam) questions
- Online quizzes
- Class discussions
- Worksheets
- Student made infographics, posters, etc.
- Annotated photos
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Participation in activities such as Padlets and other online collaboration tools.

When using tools that enable collaboration and are open-book, these tasks may not meet the requirements for authentication to be used toward an S/N grade. However, they can be useful tools to assist you in measuring the level of student attainment of a KK/KS to help guide your teaching.

Over-assessing is commonplace in education, including in the VCE OES classroom more specifically—this is partly due to the current influence of large-scale standardised testing, which drives many aspects of education (Reid, 2020). You should be aware of the phenomenon of over-assessing in your course and ensure that your formative and summative assessments are balanced in frequency and scale so they do not overtly dominate your classroom. The sample unit planner (see Appendix 2.1) demonstrates a possible assessment map for 3.1.

11.3 Developing Quality SAC Tasks

Developing quality assessment tasks is a skill that you will be continuously working on as a VCE teacher. Developing tasks that meet the requirements set out in the VCAA handbook and the study design is pivotal to ensuring that your course complies with the VCAA requirements and that your SACs adequately prepare your students to complete their externally set examination. When developing SACs, you should consider the following principles of quality assessment tasks.

Alignment to Key Knowledge and Skills

When developing SACs, you must ensure you align your tasks to the KK/KS as displayed in the study design. SACs should use command terms that align with the key skills you are assessing. The VCAA publishes a glossary of command terms, which can be found online. In addition, there are subject-specific meanings of each command term, as shown in Table 11.3 below. This list has been collaborated on by expert teachers over many years.

Table 11.3 *VCE OES Task Words* **(A. Hipwell, personal communication. November 28, 2023 Reproduced with permission.)**

Term	Meaning
Identify	Simply list the required information. No elaboration required
Outline	A brief description with the essential elements detailed
Describe	Give information displaying what you know about something
Explain	Give information and tell the examiner why, how, etc. *"because of this, this is happening"*
Discuss	Go into detail with information displaying what you know about something
Compare	show the similarities and differences, must use comparative language e.g., *"whereas, however, compared to, in comparison"*
Predict	Make a prediction based on information at hand
Analyse	Give information as to why something is happening. Can be considered cause + effect e.g., *"therefore, as a result, thus"*
Assess	Make a judgement call about the value, quality, outcome of something
Justify	provide reasons or evidence to support a given position
Evaluate	Discussion surrounding positives, negatives and summarise with a value adding overall judgement call
Propose	Recommend a well-considered solution, idea, or plan, supported by reasons

You can assess students based on the task word listed in the study design or up to that cognitive level. For example, if you were creating a set of structured questions to assess 4.1.2 you could ask students questions that align to any cognitive level up to and including evaluate. As shown in the example below, it is common in VCE OES for multiple-part questions to work through various cognitive levels. Additionally, as you will observe in the example below, the prompts used in the question are concise and easy to follow; they also mimic the style of questions and language used in the end-of-year VCAA set exams.

Example of A Multiple-Part Question

KK: 4.1.2 observable characteristics to assess the health of outdoor environments, including:

- quality of water, air and soil
- species and ecosystem biodiversity

KS: evaluate the health of outdoor environments and create possible solutions to improve environmental health

Question 1 (12 marks)

- a. Outline two observable characteristics that can be used to assess the health of outdoor environments (2 marks).
- b. Describe how you could observe the health of an outdoor environment using the two characteristics outlined in **part a.** (4 marks).
- c. Evaluate the health of an outdoor environment you have visited or studied this year using the two processes outlined in **part b.** (6 marks).

Establish a Marking Scheme

When developing tasks, you should develop a marking scheme for each task. To assist with this in units 3 and 4, the VCAA publishes a set of sample performance descriptors. These are an excellent starting point when developing different types of marking schemes. Marking schemes can be broken down question by question, or in some cases, through a rubric. The type of marking scheme used is likely dependent on the type of task being assessed. For example, structured questions, a case study, or other written formats will often use a marking scheme that breaks down the marks for each question. In comparison, SACs such as multimedia tasks, oral presentations, and concept maps may use a rubric to assess the task. In addition, rubrics may be used for certain questions within a marking scheme such as an extended response included in a case study or structured questions task.

All marking schemes, regardless of the type, should:

1. break down how the task is to be marked, including the distribution;
2. be established and used for all students in the same manner;
3. guide you to look for key terminology and other key points; and
4. include a sample student answer.

The following is an example of a possible marking scheme that could be used to assess part c. from the above response.

Table 11.4 *Example of a possible marking scheme* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Question 1c.
Evaluate the health of an outdoor environment you have visited or studied this year using the two processes outlined in **part b.** (6 marks).

Marking breakdown: (4 marks)
 	
2 x 2 marks for a discussion of the positives/negatives of environmental health based on two observable characteristics
    1 mark for an overall judgment about the health of the named outdoor environment
    1 mark is awarded for a specific link to an outdoor environment

Key points/terminology:
 	
Possible characteristics include quality of water, air and soil, species and ecosystem biodiversity
    Responses must use two different characteristics
    Responses must link to the environment not just name it
    Re-entry is allowed; students do not have to use their characteristics from part a/b.

Possible Student Response: *Along the Yarrowee River in Ballarat, the water quality is poor. The water is turbid and often has a foul odour which indicates that the water is not healthy as you cannot see the bottom. There are also stagnate pools which would have low levels of oxygen in the water, meaning it would be hard for native fish to live there. The species diversity along the Yarrowee's banks contains many monocrops of introduced grasses and other species, such as pine trees. There are some areas where revegetation of native flora and fauna such as Silver and Black Wattles have been planted, which are native species to the area. Overall, the health of the Yarrowee is poor, as indicated by the health of the water and the lack of species diversity.*

Holistic Marking

Some SAC tasks, or some sections of SAC tasks are better suited to the use of a holistic marking scheme. Such schemes are often formatted as a rubric, or other similar tool. Holistic marking is encouraged for tasks with creative elements, such as podcasts or visual representations of knowledge. In addition, the use of holistic marking can be used to help mark extended responses in different SAC types, including case studies and structured questions. To develop holistic marking schemes for tasks in units 3 and 4, the VCAA-published performance descriptors contained within the support materials can be of use. Although the VCAA does not publish unit 1 and 2 performance descriptors, the development of holistic marking schemes can be modelled from the unit 3 and 4 ones. Table 11.4 below shows an example of a holistic marking scheme for the 4.3 written report task contained in Appendix 2.2

Holistic Marking Rubric – Written Report on Outdoor Experience

Table 11.5 – *Holistic Marking Scheme.* **Adapted from Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (n.d.) with permission**

Prompt	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
3.1	Limited identification of characteristics associated with the beginnings of environmentalism	Identification of characteristics associated with the beginnings of environmentalism	Outline of environmentalism through reference to one of the prescribed historical campaigns	Description of the beginnings of environmentalism with specific references to one of the prescribed historical campaigns	Description of the beginnings of environmentalism and the resulting influence on political party policy, with specific references to one of the prescribed historical campaigns
3.2	Limited identification of the different relationships (conservation, recreation and economic) with Victorian outdoor environments	Identification of the different relationships (conservation, recreation and economic) with Victorian outdoor environments	Outline of the different relationships (conservation, recreation and economic) with Victorian outdoor environments	Description of the different relationships (conservation, recreation and economic) with Victorian outdoor environments	Compare the significance and implications of the different relationships (conservation, recreation and economic) with Victorian outdoor environments
4.1	Identification of the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individuals and society now and into the future	Outline the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individuals and society now and into the future	Explanation of the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individuals and society now and into the future	Analyse the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individuals and society now and into the future	Justify the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individuals and society now and into the future
4.1	Insufficient evidence of the impacts of threats to society and outdoor environments	Outline the impacts of threats to society and outdoor environments	Describe the impacts of threats to society and outdoor environments	Explain the threats and impacts to society and outdoor environments	Analysis of threats and impacts to society and outdoor environments
4.3	Insufficient evidence of references to primary and secondary data.	Limited references to primary and secondary data.	Multiple references to primary and secondary data authenticated by logbook.	Multiple references to primary and secondary data with selected key knowledge points authenticated by logbook.	Multiple references to primary and secondary data with selected key knowledge points with explicit links with two different environments authenticated by logbook.
4.3	Insufficient evidence of report structure; introduction, body and conclusion	Report has elements of appropriate; structure, introduction, body and conclusion including findings and implications	Report includes appropriate structure; introduction, body and conclusion including explanation of findings and implications	Report includes appropriate structure; introduction, body and conclusion including analysis of findings and implications	Report includes appropriate structure; introduction, body and conclusion including evaluation of findings and implications

KEY to marking scale based on the outcome contributing 40 marks

Very Low 1–8	Low 9–16	Medium 17–24	High 25–32	Very High 33–40

The 25/50/25 Rule

When developing a SAC you should ensure that a range of students can access the questions on the task. A rule of thumb that helps with this is the 25/50/25 rule. This refers to the overall breakdown of marks being distributed as follows:

– 25% of marks are low-order questions (identity, outline)

– 50% of marks are medium-order questions (describe, explain)

– 25% of marks are higher-order (analyse, evaluate)

When developing tasks, you should add up your proportion of low/medium/high order tasks to check the overall cognitive distribution of your task. It is important to note that questions can be varied in difficulty through their command words and what is being asked within the question.

11.4 Teacher Requirements

As a VCE OES teacher, there are several requirements to ensure that your assessment practice aligns to the processes set out by the VCAA. This section briefly introduces four key components of administering VCE OES assessments.

Equitable Tasks and Processes

When developing assessment programs for your VCE OES class, you must create fair, equitable, and balanced tasks. This ensures that all students can demonstrate their gained knowledge and skills within a particular part of the curriculum. Practices to ensure equitable assessment include:

– Using the same task for all students

– Having students work with the same set of conditions (time, use of logbooks, etc.)

– Adhering to any reasonable adjustments that some students have been granted by the school or the VCAA (additional time, a separate space, etc.)

Moderation

Moderation of assessment is vital to ensure that students are marked fairly and in line with the VCAA requirements. When you are new to marking for this study, moderation of your

SAC tasks must take place. Furthermore, suppose you are teaching at a school with multiple VCE OES classes. In that case, there are additional burdens on you as a teacher to ensure that tasks across the different classes are moderated and marked consistently across your cohort. It is common for a VCE OES teacher to work in isolation in your school. Accordingly, you may need to seek a moderation partner from a neighbouring school or through other networks. One person moderating the tasks should be experienced in teaching and assessing VCE OES. Ideally, the experienced marker will also have experience marking external VCAA examinations. Although many moderation methods exist, a sample of work will typically be marked by multiple teachers in the moderation meeting. Then, a discussion will follow to establish an agreed level of achievement for a particular task. The sample of moderated tasks normally consists of 10-20% of students work, but this will change depending on the size of the cohort.

Commercial Tasks

A range of commercially produced SAC tasks are available each year. These tasks vary in quality depending on the authorship and the organisation producing them. Regardless of whether you have purchased tasks or not, your obligations as a teacher remain unchanged. You are required to ensure that your tasks meet the VCE assessment principles of the VCAA. When working with commercial tasks to develop school assessed coursework (SAC) tasks, they must undergo significant change. Teachers are required to:

1. Ensure the task is compliant with the study design and VCE assessment principles of the VCAA; and
2. Modify the task so that it is unique, and if your students were to obtain a copy of the commercial task (for example, from peers at another school), they would not be advantaged in the SAC.

When working with commercial tasks, we recommend using them as an example and template to create your unique version. Commercial tasks can be used without modification as practice tasks.

VCAA Audit

The VCAA regularly audits the delivery of school-assessed coursework (SAC) used by schools that deliver the VCE. The audit focuses on assessment in units 3 and 4. The audit has multiple stages to ensure that you comply with the requirements within the study design and other assessment processes described here. If you are new to teaching VCE OES or new to a school, the audit can seem overwhelming. However, the audit should be approached as a mechanism of continuous improvement that will help both your individual and the broader collective practice of OES teachers.

It is recommended that you do not complete this task alone your first time completing the audit. Should your school not have other VCE OES teachers, drawing on the expertise of

experienced VCE teachers in the learning area (Health and Human Development and Physical Education) or your school's VCE coordinator can assist you in navigating the audit process.

11.5 Types of School-Assessed Coursework

Many types of SAC tasks can be used within your VCE OES course. These include:

- a case study
- an oral presentation which can include the use of multimedia and podcast
- data analysis
- a written response to an issue
- a visual presentation such as a graphic organiser, concept/mind map, annotated poster or presentation file
- structured questions

The study design outlines the type of task suitable for assessing each outcome. For example, structured questions are only to be used within unit 4. When choosing the types of SAC tasks that you will be using from the list within the study design, you should ensure a balanced approach is used, and a variety of tasks are selected. Regardless of the task type used, you are required to develop tasks with clearly established student instructions and marking criteria or rubrics. Appendix 3.2 contains some examples of SAC tasks to help you develop your own task.

Activity 11.1 – SAC Tasks

- Choose one of the SAC tasks contained within Appendix 3.2.
- Complete the task as if you were a student.
- Develop a marking scheme or rubric using the above advice and mark your work based on your marking scheme or rubric.
- Compare your marking scheme to the examples supplied in this chapter and Appendix 3.3.
- Ask a peer to moderate your marks and provide feedback on your marking scheme. In the below section, we further unpack how to assess the logbook.

11.6 Assessing Logbooks and the Written Report on

Outdoor Experiences

The logbook is a key mechanism to assess students' learning during outdoor experiences. The use of the logbook varies throughout the study. It is used to:

- Assess the students as satisfactory or not satisfactory for outcomes 1.3 and 2.3;
- As a way to gather visual media to assist in the completion of a SAC (for example, for unit 3 one assessment option is "a visual presentation such as a graphic organiser, concept/mind map, annotated poster that includes both text and still images collected through the outdoor experience logbook" (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023, p. 25); and
- To capture information relevant to completing the written report for 4.3.

Assessing S/N for 1.3 and 2.3

To assess students' satisfactory understanding of area of study three in both units 1 and 2, you are required to have students complete several logbook entries through which they demonstrate their understanding of the KK and KS from the respective outcome (1.3 and 2.3) being assessed. It is also likely that logbook entries for units 1 and 2 will also cover KK/KS from the other outcomes—these entries, focus on 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, and 2.2, can be used as both formative assessment tasks, and to help students develop their skills in completing logbook entries in preparation for the unit 3 and 4 logbook entries (in particular for the written report task). The below example shows how the logbook can be used to assess students' knowledge of the hazards and risks associated with surfing.

Case Study 11.1 – Pre-Activity Check Surfing

Activity: Surfing – Pt Leo
  Date: 10/3/2024
  Time of check: 0945
  RISK ASSESSMENT
  Risks relating to the following have been considered:

Table 11.6 Adapted from: Department of Education Pre-activity check (2023) CC BY 4.0

RISK	OBSERVATIONS AND CONTROLS
Conditions The current weather, warnings and forecast conditions	– Calm (9knot) onshore wind with a small 2ft swell – 24°C and Sunny, heading for a high of 29°C and a UV index of 8. All staff and students to apply sunscreen prior to entry in the water.
Fire Danger The fire danger rating and current fire conditions and warnings	– Low-moderate – No further action required.
Environment Conditions and nature of the environment in which the activity is being undertaken and the impact on the activity	– Rocks seen in the surf area, students and staff to wear booties provided by the surf school and be aware of own safety in the water. – Beach checked for glass and other hazards prior to use (clean and safe to walk with booties). – Small rip to the side of the surf area. Students shown the rip by surf instructors.
Participants The psychological and physical health and wellbeing of participants and staff on the activity	– All rested as it is a day activity. Staff and students are excited to surf.
Equipment Condition of the activity specific safety equipment being used in conducting the activity eg. helmets, life jackets, bikes This also includes communication equipment	– Leg ropes and helmets were checked and in good order prior to the session.

Collecting Data for the Written Report and Other SAC Tasks

The logbook is used to collect data in preparation for the written report used as the substantive assessment for 4.3, and similarly for other tasks at the teachers' discretion. Entries in the logbook can contain both primary and secondary data. Primary data is information that your students collect during outdoor experiences. This might include observations, photos, and numerical data related to the KK/KS being studied. Secondary data comes from research and other sources; this can be added during outdoor experiences through documents and other sources studied during the experience or afterwards through student-conducted research (see 9.4). You must authenticate logbooks as the teacher (see 10.4). Accordingly, secondary data should be gathered in class and within a fixed time period and with other parameters to ensure that the logbook is an equitable, fair and balanced part of the assessment process.

Students are required to take their logbook into the written report SAC task for 4.3. This could be certain pages or the entire book, depending on how detailed their entries are and the moderation processes used. Any material taken into a SAC must be authenticated by you to ensure they are original work. You may also permit students to take their logbook, or excerpts

from it, into other tasks. Using a logbook in a task is best reserved for tasks that require it, for example, when students need to refer to images and other data from their logbook. The logbook should be used sparingly as students need to practice writing SAC tasks without material with them to prepare for the external examination.

Written Report on Outdoor Experiences for 4.3

The written report on outdoor experiences is used to assess outcome 4.3. You will notice that there is no AoS 3 reported in unit 3. As discussed in section 8.4.3, 4.3 is a mechanism for assessing students' outdoor experiences across units 3 and 4. As part of this, you must select four KK points from units 3 and 4 to underpin a written report based on the students' outdoor experience. The four KK points selected are up to you as the teacher. They should relate explicitly to the two outdoor environments that your students have visited. Selecting your four KK points from the other outcomes surrounding a broad theme is advisable. These themes would likely come from the cross-study specifications of Indigenous peoples' relationships with outdoor environments, environmental citizenship, or sustainability. A possible selection of KK aligned to two outdoor environments is shown below. You will note that the selected KK points cover both units, but a focus on 4.1 is used. This allows the written report SAC to be delivered in early term 3 of the program.

Table 11.7 Example of KK/KS for 4.3 by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0

Outcome	Outdoor Environment	KK
3.1	Lal Lal	the beginnings of environmentalism and the resulting influence on political party policy, as observed in one of the following historical campaigns: • Little Desert
3.2	Lal Lal	conservation, recreation and economic relationships with outdoor environments
4.1	Falls Creek and Bogong High Plains	the importance of healthy outdoor environments for individual physical and emotional wellbeing, and for society now and into the future
4.1	Falls Creek and Bogong High Plains	the impact of threats on society and outdoor environments, including two of the following: • land degradation • introduced species • climate change • urbanisation • flood • fire

Students would make a series of entries into their logbooks during outdoor experiences in both of your chosen outdoor environments. These entries, once authenticated, would then be taken into the written report SAC task and used by the student to help develop their

written report. Due to the nature of this task, a holistic marking approach is required, a rubric developed based on the VCAA performance descriptors should be used. Appendix 3.2: Sample SAC Tasks, contains a sample written report task.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the essential role of assessment in the VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies (OES) curriculum, detailing the different types of assessment and how they contribute to student learning and achievement. It outlines the balance between formative and summative tasks, including school-assessed coursework (SACs) and externally set examinations. Key considerations for assessment design are discussed, such as alignment with the study design, use of task words, and the development of marking schemes, rubrics, and performance descriptors. The chapter also examines the importance of moderation, equitable assessment practices, and compliance with VCAA requirements. It provides guidance on using and adapting commercial tasks, ensuring authenticity, and avoiding over-assessment. Additionally, it highlights the significance of logbooks and the written report on outdoor experiences in capturing student learning, reinforcing the connection between outdoor experiences and formal assessment. Practical examples and case studies offer insights into effective assessment strategies that support student success in VCE OES.

Reflection Questions

- What is the role of assessment in the VCE OES course?
- What types of tasks might be suitable as formative and summative tasks?
- How would you establish a marking scheme?
- What do you need to remember when working with commercial tasks?
- How can you ensure your assessment practices are fair, balanced and equitable?

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CHAPTER 12: OES EXAMS

Josh Ambrosy and Sandy Allen-Craig

Learning Intentions

- Describe the role of examinations as part of the VCE OES course
- Explain the structure of the externally set VCAA exam
- Analyse the type of questions used in VCE OES exams
- Evaluate strategies to help prepare students for internal and external examinations, including the extended response

12.1 Exams in VCE OES

This chapter explores the current use of exams in the VCE OES curriculum, including strategies to assist you as a teacher in helping your students prepare for their exams. The role and place of examinations in VCE OES include: externally set examinations at the end of units 3 and 4; other school-set exams in units 1, 2 and 3; and preparation tasks that teachers embedded throughout the course. The inclusion of the externally set examination is largely due to the system of 'statistical moderation' processes that Victoria uses to derive overall study and tertiary entry scores (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, n.d.). This chapter explores the current use of exams in the VCE OES curriculum, including strategies to assist you as a teacher in helping your students prepare for their exams.

The impact of using examinations to determine student achievement has been widely critiqued in literature. For example, Cairns (2021), examined how VCE examinations disproportionately impacted History classrooms and shifted the focus from the overall learning and teaching of the subject to the ultimate examination of it. Although due importance to the preparation for examinations is important, this must be balanced with the overall teaching of the course and should not become the only purpose of the VCE OES curriculum. Two claims are worth noting to back this point. First, the latest VCE OES curriculum has moved away from structured questions as a school-assessed coursework (SAC) task within units 1-3 of the

OVCE ES course (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2023). This emphasises the need to accept different representations of key knowledge and key skills within VCE OES. Second, compared to other jurisdictions (interstate and overseas), Victoria's senior secondary outdoor education course has a much greater emphasis on examinations (Ambrosy, 2021). To summarise, although the VCE OES exam is a pivotal component of the VCE OES course, a substantial component of a student's overall study score is derived from it. A balanced approach to teaching and assessment should be taken throughout your program to ensure the student experience is not overly focused on examination results only.

It would be unusual for a school delivering the VCE not to have its own set of internally set and marked examinations. Typically, students will sit an exam at the end of units 1, 2 and 3. The school sets these exams, and are akin to other formative assessment tasks. These examinations are two-fold, to help prepare students for the end of unit 3 and 4 exams and assess students' satisfactory/not-satisfactory (S/N) completion of the VCE OES course. If you use internally set exams to assess the S/N grade, it is important not to assign a numerical value that constitutes satisfactory results (e.g., 50%). Rather, students should be assessed based on their response to the individual KK/KS throughout the paper.

The use of commercial tasks is commonplace for internally set examinations. Although, as a teacher, it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure that all assessment tasks align with the curriculum, using commercial tasks that have been audited but not necessarily adjusted is acceptable as they are not used to derive a numeric score that contributes to a study score. Although the burden of uniqueness is lessened in internal examinations, you should still try to make the task 'new' to the students like you would within a SAC task.

The VCAA sets an external examination at the end of units 3 and 4. This written examination contributes 50% to a student's overall study score in VCE OES. The examination is also used to statistically moderate the students' school-assessed coursework tasks to ensure they have been marked fairly and consistently.

12.2 The structure of VCE OES exams

VCE OES exams typically follow a standard structure. They contain a series of short answer questions and an extended response. Multiple choice questions requiring comprehension of the KK/KS (name or recall style questions) are not used within VCE OES exams. Questions with multiple parts are common within the VCE OES exam, and these questions often assess students' knowledge across multiple course outcomes. Likewise, the extended response will focus on multiple KK/KS and even multiple outcomes.

The externally set VCE OES exam will adhere to current specifications published by the VCAA. The externally set examination typically consists of short answer questions with multiple parts and an extended response. The total marks and time allocation are published in the specifications. You should check the specifications each year and prepare your students accordingly so they are aware of the structure of the exam.

Activity 12.1 – Current examination specifications

- Locate a copy of the current examination specifications on the VCAA VCE OES webpage
- Locate a copy of either last year's exam or the sample exam prepared by the VCAA
- Read the exam specifications alongside the exam and answer the following questions

  ◦ What types of questions are common in the VCE OES exam?
  ◦ What types of questions might require additional preparation by students?

12.3 Preparing students for exams

As a VCE OES teacher, it is imperative that you adequately prepare your students to undertake written examinations. As discussed above, this preparation should be done holistically and not overshadow the general teaching and learning within the VCE OES course. The following are examples of strategies that can be used to help your students prepare for their exams.

Managing time

Students in the VCE OES exam normally have 120 minutes to respond to 90 marks worth of questions. Additionally, students will need some time for planning responses, a toilet/handwriting/drink break, reviewing the paper at the end and adding additional information as required. Thus, students must be prepared to answer their exam at approximately a ratio—1 mark: 1 minute of writing time. To help students write at this pace, you should use a timer when your students undertake practice responses during class time. To help them work toward the 1 mark: 1-minute writing ratio, the following times can be used when completing practice questions:

Table 12.1 – *Adjusted times for practice questions across units 1-4.* **by Josh Ambrosy, 2024. CC BY-NC 4.0**

Unit	Mark: Minute
1	1 mark: 2 minutes
2	1 mark: 1 minute and 30 seconds
3	1 mark: 1 minute and 15 seconds
4	1 mark: 1 minute

Unpacking examiners reports

The VCAA publishes an examiner's report each year that unpacks how questions from the previous year's examinations have been answered. This report gives a high-level overview of the examination process and a question-by-question breakdown. As a teacher, the high-level overview is imperative for you to read, reflect upon and act within your VCE OES teaching. The question-by-question breakdown is useful for both teachers and students.

For each question, the report provides:

- The distribution of student marks for the question.
- A qualitative description of how the question was responded to and any common errors observed.
- A sample of a high-scoring student's response for each question

Case Study 12.1 – A sequence of learning to unpack the examiners' reports

A possible sequence for unpacking a question(s) from the examiners' report is as follows:

1. Select a question from a past VCAA exam and have the students attempt it within a set timeframe.
2. Discuss the following prompts as a class:

   - What was the question asking?

- What key knowledge was being examined?
- What key skill is being assessed?
- What type of language is needed based on the key skill?
- What outdoor environment that we have studied would you use to answer this question?

3. Read the examiners report as a class and focus on:

- Where marks would be allocated for the question.
- Common mistakes to avoid.
- The strategies used and the strength of the sample response.

4. In pairs, have students mark their own, and then each other's work. While marking, have students offer suggestions to improve their and their peers' work.
5. Discuss, as a class, the suggestions offered to improve their own and others' work.

DIY Questions

Having students develop their own exam-style questions can help them understand how various KK/KS might be assessed in an VCE OES exam. This can happen using one of two strategies.

Case Study 12.2 – DIY Questions

Strategy 1: From KK/KS

1. Assign students in groups of three a KK/KS from the outcome you are studying.
2. Have students work as a group to develop.

- A multiple part question that aligns to the KK/KS assigned.
- A marking break down for each question.

    ◦ A sample high-scoring student response to their question.

3. Have two groups work together to peer review the question/marking scheme/response.
4. Based on the peer review feedback, have students refine their work.
5. Collect, edit and collate the students' questions into a practice task.
6. Set the student-developed questions as a revision task.

Strategy 2: From a sample response

1. Students are given a sample response to an identified KK/KS.

    ◦ The following response relates to 3.1.1
    ◦ *Biological isolation has helped shape the fauna of many Australian outdoor environments. For example, the Koala population that is found on French Island. Thousands of years ago, the ancient ancestors of Koalas were ground-dwelling marsupials that fed on the abundant flora of the time due to a much wetter climate and more vegetation. As Australia dried out, Koalas filled a feeding niche by climbing trees and eating eucalyptus leaves. This has resulted in Koalas having very small brains, despite their heads being the size of humans.*
    ◦ Have students develop a possible question and a marking break down based on the provided answer.
    ◦ Question: *Explain how fauna was influenced by a characteristic of Australian outdoor environments before humans arrived using an example from an outdoor environment you have visited or studied (3 marks)*
    ◦ Marking break down:

        ▪ 2 marks are awarded for explaining how an example of fauna was influenced by biological isolation, geological stability and climatic variations before human arrival.
        ▪ 1 mark for a specific example of fauna from an outdoor environment visited or studies

12.4 Extended responses

The extended response is a prominent feature of VCE OES exams, both internally set and those run by the VCAA. Extended response questions have a significant mark allocation (circa 15% of total paper marks). Accordingly, students who do not attempt or are not adequately prepared to undertake these questions are unlikely to do well in their exams. Thus, it is imperative to the success of your VCE OES students when completing both school-set and externally set examinations that you spend time preparing your students to undertake these tasks.

This section aims to help you better understand the types of extended responses that could

be used for VCE OES and introduce strategies to help you develop your students' abilities to complete these tasks.

Understanding the extended response

The extended response assesses a student's ability to respond to a selected number of key knowledge and key skills drawn from across the curriculum. Such responses can come in many forms, for example, asking students to write a report, develop a timeline, or discuss a broader issue. Students may need to respond to stimulus material or other prompts within the VCE OES extended response. An extended response in VCE OES will often set students a meta task (write a report, etc.) and provide them with a series of prompts they should include as part of their response. Extended responses can be marked using either a holistic marking scheme or a marking guide; these are normally formatted in the same way as discussed in Chapter 11 (see 11.3). The below case study demonstrates the style of question that could be included in as an VCE OES extended response.

Case Study 12.3 – Sample extended response question

Question 10 (15 marks)

Outdoor environments in Victoria vary from those with minimal human interaction to those significantly impacted since the arrival of humans. All environments have been impacted to a degree since the arrival of Australia's first people thousands of years ago.

You are required to construct a timeline of events that details how two outdoor environments you have visited or studied have been and could be impacted by changing human relationships now and into the future.

In your timeline:

- describe the changing relationship with one of your outdoor environments held by a specific Indigenous peoples' community before and after European Colonisation
- compare Indigenous peoples' custodianship of one of your outdoor environments with another relationship with your outdoor environment during the last decade
- describe how one Indigenous people's and one non-indigenous people's management strategy could be used to manage the health of both of your outdoor environments
- propose how changing an act or convention could help manage both outdoor environments' ongoing sustainability.

Strategies for answering the extended response

When teaching students about the extended response, there are several strategies that you can teach them to help them be successful in their exams.

Planning for the extended response

Clear and concise writing skills are essential to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. In the case of an exam, students who write clear and well-structured responses can better convey their knowledge of the key skills being assessed. In particular, through a planning phase, a student can ensure that their response addresses all components of the question. Planning the extended response can be a good strategy for students to employ in the last part of the reading time. The following checklist can be used to help plan an extended response.

1. Read and re-read the question.
2. What KK/KS is the question asking about?
3. Where are the marks distributed?
4. Is there a stimulus? How will you respond to it?
5. What outdoor environment(s) will you base your response on?
6. What key examples (names, dates, places) will you use in your response?

Activity 12.2 – Planning an extended response

- Use the above planning checklist to make a mental plan for the extended response above (case study 12.3). You should do this in your head as if you are a student completing this at the end of reading time.
- Based on your mental planning, jot down 4-5 dot points to help you remember your plan.
- Write out a response to the above using your plan.
- Reflect on how your plan helped you structure your response.

12.5 Strategies of high-scoring VCE OES students

Students who write high-scoring responses in their VCE OES exams commonly use the following strategies. These strategies can be used in both the extended response questions and in other VCE OES exam questions.

Signposting and subheadings

Signposting and subheadings help students demonstrate how their longer responses address different parts of the required criteria. Signposting is the process of underlining key terms or components of an answer to demonstrate their importance. Students should be taught to use a ruled line under certain words. Although signposting can be an effective strategy, a less is more approach should be used to avoid overcrowding the page. Subheadings help break up a longer task. Again, these should be used sparingly and to signal to the person marking the paper where certain components of a response are.

Legibility

Most students handwrite exams, other than those deemed to require an adjustment to use a computer. To ensure that a response is examinable, students should pay attention to the legibility of their response. To help students write legible responses, they should experiment with different pens and find a type that suits their handwriting. In addition, students should be coached to use sufficient space between words to not overcrowd the page. Additional pages at the rear of the exam book or additional booklets should be used for students with larger fonts or additional ideas to respond to. Students must ensure all responses are clearly labelled when using additional pages and booklets.

Proofreading

Students should be taught to re-read their responses and ensure all criteria have been addressed. When re-reading, they may want to use the expanded dot points of inclusions as a checklist to ensure all KK/KS in the question have been responded to. Students can add further details during this time or re-write if time permits and they are not happy with parts of a response.

Chapter summary

This chapter examines the role of examinations in the VCE Outdoor and Environmental Studies (OES) curriculum, including both externally set and school-based assessments. It discusses the significance of the final VCE OES examination in determining student study scores and outlines the broader use of school-set exams for formative assessment and preparation.

The structure of the VCAA exam is detailed, highlighting the predominance of short-answer questions, multiple-part questions, and an extended response, with no multiple-choice items. The chapter provides strategies for teachers to prepare students for exams, such as managing time effectively, using examiner reports for feedback, and incorporating student-created exam questions. It also explores the importance of extended response questions, offering guidance on structuring responses, using signposting and subheadings, and improving legibility. Practical strategies used by high-scoring students, including proofreading techniques and planning approaches, are also outlined to help maximise student success in both internal and external assessments.

Reflection questions

- Where are exams used as part of the VCE OES curriculum?
- How do exams constitute to a student's marks and overall completion of the course?
- How is the VCAA exam structured? What types of questions does it contain?
- What strategies can you use to help students prepare for internal an external exams?
- Which strategies would be the most effective and why?

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NOTE ON APPENDICES

A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum: Victorian Edition has been written as an eBook and is available through the CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians) OER (Open Educational Resource) Collective. Due to the formatting of the appendices, they are only available via the online version available: **https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/teachers-guide-outdoor-ed-vic**

REVIEW STATEMENT

A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum: Victorian Edition was produced by Federation University and Australian Catholic University through the Council of Australian University Libraries (CAUL) Open Access Collective. As part of this process, the book went through a review process with expert reviewers. As part of this process, reviewers were provided with extensive review criteria to ensure the accuracy of information and suitability of the text for the intended audience of Initial Teacher Education Students and Teachers' of Outdoor Education.

A Teachers Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum: Victorian Edition was reviewed by:

Adriana Pinder, Project Specialist, ACHPER Victoria.

Dan Hurrell, Lecturer Outdoor Education, La Trobe University.

VERSIONING HISTORY

This page provides a record of changes made to this textbook. Each set of edits is acknowledged with a 0.01 increase in the version number. The exported files for this toolkit reflect the most recent version.

If you find an error, please contact libinfo@federation.edu.au

Version	Date	Change	Details
1.01	Jan 2024	Chapters 1,9,10,11,12 & 13 published	
1.02	Feb 2025	Appendices number changes	3.1, 3.2 & 3.3 changed to 2.1, 2.2 & 2.3
1.03	April 2025	Full book released aligning with Victorian Curriculum in Outdoor Education.	Chapters 2-7 published. Chapter number changes: Chapter originally published as 9, Introduction to the VCE OES is now 8, 10 – Planning for Learning is now 9, 11 – Outdoor experiences is now 10, 12 – Assessment is now 11 and 13 – Exams is now 12