Frequently asked questions – Cornish College and the VCE

Dear Parents

The Year 10 students at Cornish College are being introduced to the Victorian Certificate of Education this year through their study of Australian and Global Politics (VCE Units 1 and 2). In doing this, they are learning about the specific requirements and policies of VCE studies.

We are also currently working with the students on planning their pathways through their senior school years and beyond secondary school. This follows from the career counselling obtained last year where students discovered possible career paths relating to their skills and areas of interest. From this information and further career counselling this year, we will develop a program for each student for Year 11, 2014 and Year 12 in 2015.

There will be a VCE Information Evening at the College on Thursday 23 May for students currently in Year 10 and their parents. The purpose of this evening is to provide information about specific requirements of the VCE and the structure of the subject selection process at Cornish College.

To assist you in understanding the structure and requirements of the VCE, following here are some answers to anticipated questions. Further clarification may be sought through discussions with teachers. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

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Useful acronyms:

VCE Victorian Certificate of Education
VCAL Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VET Vocational Education and Training
SAC School Assessed Coursework
ATAR Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
VCAA Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
1. What pathways are offered for Years 11 and 12?
The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is one of the main courses offered for senior levels of secondary education in Victoria, others being the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program. The VCE can also incorporate VET (Vocational Education and Training) subjects. At Cornish College, students will be able to undertake the VCE and they may also incorporate VET studies which are undertaken at another location (usually Chisholm Institute of TAFE).

2. How is the VCE structured?
The VCE is designed to be completed over two years (Years 11 and 12). Unit 1 and 2 studies are usually completed in Year 11 and Unit 3 and 4 studies are usually completed in Year 12. A Unit of Study is generally equivalent to a semester of study. Many schools offer Year 10 students the option of completing a Unit 1 and 2 study.

3. Can Year 10 students do a VCE subject at Cornish?
This year, all of our Year 10 students are undertaking VCE Units 1 and 2 in Australian and Global Politics. This VCE course is very similar to the Global Sustainability subject that continues from Year 9. By adapting this study to the VCE level, the students are given an opportunity to satisfy some Unit requirements of the VCE now. Some students are also currently doing Units 1 and 2 Foundation English and Units 1 and 2 Foundation Mathematics. Exposing the students to the requirements and language of the VCE this year assists in the transition to the full VCE programme in Year 11, 2014.

4. Do students have to continue a subject throughout the whole year?
Units 1 and 2 can be completed as separate subjects, so a student doing Unit 1 of a study may change mid-year to select a different Unit 2, depending on availability. However, some Unit 2 studies require Unit 1 completion as a prerequisite (such as some mathematics, some sciences and languages). It is different with Units 3 and 4 – they must be taken as a sequence, so no changes can be made mid-year.

5. What is needed for successful completion of VCE?
To qualify for the VCE, students are required to successfully complete a minimum of 16 Units overall – this includes a minimum of four Unit 3 and 4 sequences (which equates to 8 units at this level) and one of these sequences must be English.

6. How is the VCE assessed?
Each Unit of study has a set of outcomes that students must achieve. These outcomes are made known to the students at the start of the Unit. The teacher will set a series of tasks that the students must complete to a satisfactory standard. If the student’s work is not completed to the specified satisfactory standard, the student will be given the opportunity to resubmit the task or sit a new but similar task. In addition to this standard, students are required to attend a minimum of 80% of classes. Overall results for each study are given as ‘S’ for satisfactory completion of all tasks or ‘N’ for non-satisfactory completion of all tasks. These ‘S’ or ‘N’ results are reported to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

7. What are SACs?
‘SAC’ refers to School Assessed Coursework. These tasks are set and assessed by the teacher of the subject. Many of these are completed in class, often under test conditions. For Units 1 and 2, these scores are internal to the school and are not reported to VCAA. For Units 3 and 4 they are reported to VCAA and contribute to the student’s study score for the subject and their overall ATAR.

8. What are Study Scores and the ATAR?
Only a Unit 3 and 4 sequence (usually completed in Year 12) will attract a study score. Each sequence attracts a study score out of 50 based on course work and the final examination(s). Combined scaled study scores are translated into an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). The ATAR is ranking of the aggregate scores of students. The aggregate study score is calculated by adding the scaled study scores of English and the next best three subjects, plus 10% of any fifth and/or sixth scaled subject score that is available (again, only Unit 3 and 4 studies count for this). The ATAR is used for admission into courses at a tertiary institution.
9. Will a VCE Unit 1 and 2 study completed at Year 10 contribute to a student’s ATAR?
No, Unit 1 and 2 studies do not directly contribute to a student’s ATAR as these studies do not attract a study score. All assessment in Unit 1 and 2 studies is school based. This assessment can be used to help a student choose the best subjects to maximise opportunities in further studies.

10. What happens if a student misses a SAC?
It is essential that all students meet the deadlines set by their teachers for all work in VCE. If a student is unwell and so is absent for a SAC, they must provide a doctor’s certificate and see the relevant teacher to arrange an alternative time or task. The VCE requirements for meeting deadlines must be adhered to and failure to do so can result in the student receiving ‘N’ for that task, and ultimately ‘N’ for the whole Unit.

11. How many subjects are students expected to do in Years 11 and 12?
At Cornish College, it is expected that students will generally complete six subjects in Year 11 which may consist of five Unit 1 and 2 studies and one Unit 3 and 4 sequence. In Year 12 students will complete five Unit 3 and 4 studies. Remember, four study scores plus 10 per cent of another two study scores can contribute to the ATAR, but this only relates to Unit 3 and 4 studies.

12. Do students have to complete a Unit 1 and 2 study in order to complete Units 3 and 4?
No. There are some Unit 3 and 4 studies that do not require Units 1 and 2 to be completed as a pre-requisite. When making these choices, the student’s ability in the related subject area will be considered.

13. Can students achieve the VCE without getting an ATAR score?
Yes, satisfactory completion of the VCE is based on satisfactory completion of the specified outcomes and not on study scores. Assessment is used to calculate the ATAR, which is only needed for tertiary entrance.

14. Do all tertiary institutions select students based on their ATAR?
Many tertiary institutions used to select students based entirely on their final score at the end of Year 12 but many now use a combination of the ATAR, an interview and/or a portfolio. It is important to research a particular course and institution to identify their requirements for acceptance.

15. How can I get more information about the VCE?
If you require more information you may find the VCAA website useful: [www.vcaa.vic.edu.au](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au)

You may also contact:
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