COURSE WRITING GUIDELINES
Department of Education
1. **Scope (audience and applicability)**

These guidelines outline the steps, together with the roles and responsibilities of organisations and individuals in developing and submitting senior secondary courses for accreditation.

This document will be read in conjunction with:

- The Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Course Accreditation Procedure
- The Department of Education Years 11-12 Course Development Procedure
- The Department of Education Years 11-12 Course Consultation Guidelines
- The Department of Education Years 11-12 Communication Strategy

2. **Purpose**

This document outlines the Department of Education (Tasmania) course writing guidelines to ensure courses are of high quality and are suitable for delivery in senior secondary education.

3. **Definitions**

**Accreditation:** is a quality assurance process under which courses are evaluated to determine that required standards are met.

**The course document** sets guidelines and rules for the knowledge and skills that must or may be included in a course of study and that a learner must demonstrate to receive a particular result.

**Senior secondary course** means a course of study that is normally undertaken, or intended to be undertaken, during the final two years of secondary education, being the years of secondary education commonly known as years 11 and 12.

4. **Guideline Details**

Course development is a cyclical process that contains the following four elements:

**Phase 1: Research and Review:** Research and review of recent national development and practice, identifiable need for course, analysis of student enrolment data and review of existing course provision.

**Phase 2: Design and Plan:** Formation of a course development plan and course writing brief to take account of directions established in previous phase.

**Phase 3: Course Development/Writing:** Development and submission of course and development of course guide and resources

**Phase 4: Implement and Evaluate:** Course implementation, monitoring and evaluation informed by analysis of data: enrolment, assessment and attainment.

These guidelines outline the course writing process that would typically take place in Phases 1-3 of the course development process.
5. Course Development and Submission process

- Timeframe for course development established – Curriculum Services
- Key teachers approached to assist with course writing process
- Receipt of independent course analysis from TASC
- Pre Course Writing Consultation with subject teachers across sectors
- Submission of Notification of Intent to develop a Senior Secondary Course to TASC
- Draft course developed in consultation with key teachers and critical friends
- Examination Specifications negotiated with TASC
- Quality assurance of course
- LAG reviews and approves course for consultation
- Course revisions made
- Teacher consultation on Final Draft Course
- Consultation Report
- Minor revisions made
- Course Accreditation Submission prepared
- Final Course document and Accreditation Submission submitted to TASC.

6. Course writing processes and guidelines
The writing process as outlined below occurs in Phase 3 of the Course Development process. It details a recommended sequence for writing a course to ensure clear alignment between learning outcomes, assessment criteria and course content.

**Draft Writing Process**

1. Develop the subject rationale and aims
2. Develop the learning outcomes
3. Develop assessment criteria (titles) aligned with learning outcomes to ensure coherence
4. Develop the course organisation elements: access, pathways, resources, size complexity etc. as indicated on TASC Course Template
5. Develop curriculum content (ensuring coherence with learning outcomes and assessment criteria and performance standards)
6. Develop work requirements (size, coherence: mandatory, optional, sequence of delivery)
7. Develop course assessment (aligned with learning outcomes)
8. Develop the detail of the assessment criteria aligning with course content, learning outcomes and TASC levels of accredited courses
9. Liaise with TASC re Quality Assurance and External Assessment Specifications
10. Develop any additional TASC specifications referred to in TASC Course Accreditation Guidelines
11. Review check list to ensure TASC requirements: coherence, size, complexity, robustness, overlap, labelling and terminology, inclusive language are addressed.

**7. Course design guidelines**
Target Learners
When devising the course it is important to consider prospective learners for the course in terms of:

- prior learning
- career/study pathways
- access limitations – (e.g. the need for specific prior learning and group work, background checks etc).

8. Course level of complexity

Similarly it is necessary to:

- identify the level/complexity of the knowledge and skills required by the target learners
- ensure that course, aims, learning outcomes, content, standards and assessment methods are at a similar level of complexity.

TASC will formally assign the level of complexity to the course. Descriptions of the TASC levels of complexity are given in Appendix E.

9. Course Structure

Course structure concerns the component unit/s of the course and how they relate to each other.

A course may consist of:

- a single unit of mandated learning
- several units of learning with various relationships between them
- some compulsory core units and some electives: the number of such electives must not be so many that the cohesion and focus of the course is weakened
- electives chosen from units specified in the course or chosen for other related courses
- a mandated sequence for undertaking units with some forming pre-requisites for others.

Any ‘rules’ regarding the units to be undertaken and/or the sequence of learning need to be explicitly and clearly stated early in course documentation.

10. Writing the rationale

The rationale describes the nature of the subject in general terms and provide an outline of how learning in this course relates to the contemporary world and current practice.

It explains the place and purpose of the subject, how learning in the subject is valuable and how it contributes to meeting the national goals of schooling.

- It may be approximately 200 words in length
- If the course is part of the senior secondary Australian Curriculum the rationale needs to be consistent with the F–10 learning area rationale.

11. Writing Learning Outcomes

What are Learning Outcomes?
ACARA define Learning outcomes as describing in broad terms what a student is expected to have learned as a result of studying the specified content. Learning outcomes will describe the major dimensions of content, namely the knowledge, understanding and skills required by the subject. Moreover, learning outcomes must capture explicitly through demonstrable evidence what students know and are able to do as a result of completing a course.

Below are two differing representations of learning outcomes from differing jurisdictions:

Example 1. Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum English.

Students:

- create oral, written and multimodal texts appropriate for different audiences, purposes and contexts.

Example 2. VCE English/EAL Unit 1:

- On completion of this unit the student should be able to produce analytical and creative responses to texts. To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

**Number of learning outcomes**

The number of learning outcomes for a course is not fixed and depends on factors such as:

- the intentions of the course
- the size and level of the course
- the discipline specific or generic attributes to be developed.

However the optimum number of learning outcomes should be 4 – 8.

**12. Why are Learning Outcomes important?**

Statements of learning outcomes provide students and stakeholders with:

- a transparent course of study explicitly identifying what will be learned by successful completion
- a learning paradigm that supports autonomous learning.

When developing learning outcomes it is essential to consider:

- the type of knowledge and skills required
- the level of understanding that is desirable for students to achieve
- how the learning is to be demonstrated.

Learning outcomes need to be:

- achievable, assessable and understandable
- measurable, demonstrable and observable to allow for differentiation between differing degrees of achievement against performance standards.

**Relationship between learning outcomes, content and performance standards**

There will be clearly articulated links between:

- the content and the learning outcomes
- statements of performance standards (criteria and standards), the learning outcomes
(and the content statements).
Assessment will clearly relate to the learning outcomes and provide information about all major features of the learning outcomes.

**Designing Learning outcomes**

An effective way of writing outcomes is to:

- use phrases that describe how the learning will be demonstrated
- use active verbs indicating specifically what students will do - e.g. assess, analyse, compare, explain, describe, identify etc
- use future tense
- specify the desired level of performance
- specify the focus or object indicating the process, product or outcome of the action
- specify the context for demonstration- indicating the conditions that may apply.

‘One way to write each learning outcome is through the following format:

- active verb +
- object +
- context.

For example:

*The learner will be able to:*

- explain normal human structure and functions.

The outcomes in the example above are measurable, clear, distinctive and assessable.

Conversely, the example below is not measurable.

*The learner will be able to:*

- develop an understanding of aspects of human structure and functions.

The above example lacks clarity as to:

- what the end point is (e.g. ‘able to develop’)
- which aspects of human structure are involved - some, all, many, two
- and the verb ‘understand’ represents an inner state of mind which is not observable.’

**Choosing a suitable verb**

In learning outcome statements, verbs are a critical indicator of the nature of required student engagement. The taxonomies in Appendix C provide examples of cognitive activity and function with accompanying lists of verbs at various levels of complexity indicating what students will do.

**Adding the Context**

The context provides information about the circumstance in which students will demonstrate their learning and how well they must do so.

**Stems to Learning Outcomes**

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1 TASC Accreditation Guide for Developers of Senior Secondary Courses, Version 11- October 2014
Stems are leading statements written in the future tense, highlighting that the following actions listed are expected to be achieved by students by the end of the course. As learning outcomes are performance oriented, beginning with an active verb the stem most commonly used is, ‘On successful completion of this course learners will’.

13. Assessment criteria

What are criteria?

‘Criterion- a distinguishing property or characteristic of anything, by which its quality can be judged or estimated, or by which a decision or classification may be made.’ R Sadler 2005

In assessment it is necessary to distinguish criteria from standards. Criteria describe the aspects of performance that will be assessed and the standards describe the characteristics of performance of each criteria at each rating level.

Criteria must be meaningful to the particular course; and will not be so generic that they could apply to any course. A course will usually contain between 3 and 10 assessment criteria and these will be generally of equal importance.

Writing criteria

One way of writing assessment criteria is to:

- provide a brief description of the required performance starting with a verb. e.g. create a design brief that incorporates design process and principles.

Here are some examples of assessment criteria at different course levels:

Level 4 Chemistry
- identify and apply principles and theories of thermochemistry, kinetics and equilibrium

Level 3 German
- express ideas and information in written German

Level 2 Drama Foundation
- use basic drama skills, conventions, processes and technical production elements in drama works

Level 1 Everyday Maths
- demonstrate basic skills in constructing simple tables and graphs

14. Standards of performance

What are standards?

‘Standard: a definite level of excellence or attainment, or a definite degree of any quality viewed as a prescribed object of endeavour or as the recognised measure of what is adequate for some purpose, so established by authority, custom or consensus.’ R Sadler 2005

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That is, standards describe an ideal performance (depth of conceptual understanding and sophistication of skills) and expectations of a particular learning outcome.

Standards:
- must explicitly describe the level of excellence required and these levels must characterise achievable performance
- can be written for each learning outcome; for sets of learning outcomes; or for the course as a whole
- will be of a comparable level of difficulty with those used in accredited courses at the same level of complexity.

Standards have two dimensions:
1. a description of student performance either holistically or for each individual criterion (a requirement in external assessment)
2. levels of student performance; award levels of a course or a designated set of ratings used to calculate an award.

Writing Standards
An effective way of writing standards is to:
- clearly describe the features or characteristics of student performance required as evidence of attainment
- specifically describe how students will perform or demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding; e.g. both orally and in writing
- clearly identify what is to be measured
- be objective, clearly describing the actual performance expected
- limit the number of elements in each standard between 2-5 per criterion
- make the distinction between ratings as clear as possible.

Avoid:
- phrases that do not describe a particular performance
- subjective terms: e.g. good, adequate
- comparative terms: e.g. less, better.

Appendix D contains some sample lists of standards against C-A ratings.

Further information on standards is located in the TASC Accreditation Guide for Developers of Senior Secondary Courses.

15. Coherence

There will be clear and obvious alignment between the learning outcomes, the course content/what is learnt and demonstrated by learners, and the criteria and their performance standards. To construct a coherent course TASC recommend that writers develop a mapping tool as a way of checking that each learning outcome is addressed in course content and that both learning outcome and associated content are assessed in the criteria/standards. Mapping can also be included as an attachment to the Accreditation Submission materials.

16. Assessment and award requirements
It is the role of the course developer to provide advice on assessment indicating award requirements. The course developer selects assessment methods on the basis that they are:

- appropriate to the learning being assessed
- manageable
- comply with the principles of assessment (valid, reliable, flexible and fair)
- evidence of learner knowledge and skills on which assessment judgments are made must be sufficient, valid, authentic and current
- award structures can vary but will not include more than five (5) different awards
- the chosen structure must be appropriate to the assessment methodology employed in the proposed course.

Examples of currently used structures include:

PRELIMINARY ACHIEVEMENT
SATISFACTORY ACHIEVEMENT
COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENT
HIGH ACHIEVEMENT
EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

And:

PRELIMINARY ACHIEVEMENT
SATISFACTORY ACHIEVEMENT
EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

TASC may modify these in order to ensure comparability of awards between different courses.

Naming of courses

TASC advise that a course name will be no more than four words. It will:

- not include numbers or the qualification award
- not duplicate existing titles
- conform to naming conventions.

Use of inclusive language

Language used in the course will concur with the ‘Without Prejudice: Guidelines for Inclusive Language’ document (Department of Education, Tasmania).4

17. Roles and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Framework Advisory Group will:</th>
<th>• Provide advice on the principles and priorities of Years 11 and 12 curriculum provision and development.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide advice on course design and development and the suitability of courses, guidelines and resources.</td>
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<td>• Provide advice on the monitoring and review of senior secondary courses.</td>
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<td>• Through school and senior secondary principals, act as a conduit for staff from and to all sectors on curriculum development and related issues in Years 11 and 12.</td>
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4 TASC Accreditation Guide for Developers of Senior Secondary Courses, Version 11 - October 2014
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Services will:</th>
<th>The TASC Executive Officer will:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitate the formation and functions of cross sectoral Learning Area Groups (LAGs).</td>
<td>• Make a decision regarding the accreditation of a course, including the length of time for which the course is to be accredited.</td>
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<td>• Select and appoint key teachers and critical friends from across all sectors.</td>
<td>• Ensure that an analysis of a course against the accreditation criteria is undertaken prior to the accreditation of a course.</td>
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<td>• Inform TASC of its intention to develop or amend a course [via email of web form (to be developed)].</td>
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<td>• Develop a draft course document that aligns to the agreed structure and contains the agreed information.</td>
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<td>• Adhere to relevant curriculum procedures and guidelines.</td>
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<td>• Use the TASC developed course document template.</td>
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<td>• Follow the course writing guidelines with regard to course complexity, outcomes and standards, coherence and assessment and award requirements.</td>
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<td>• Ensure language used in course documentation is inclusive.</td>
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<td>• Develop and lead course consultation processes.</td>
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<td>• Consult with key stakeholders across all sectors.</td>
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<td>• Prepare consultation reports.</td>
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<td>• Prepare course accreditation submission.</td>
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<td>• Submit course and course accreditation submission to TASC.</td>
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<th>TASC will:</th>
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<td>• Provide Curriculum Services with independent analysis for expiring courses.</td>
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<td>• During the course development process work with Curriculum Services to develop External Examination Specifications.</td>
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<td>• Review course accreditation submissions against the course accreditation criteria in a timely way.</td>
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<td>• Notify course proponent of issues/concerns or any additional information that is required to facilitate accreditation.</td>
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<td>• Develop a briefing note for the Executive Officer to inform decision making regarding accreditation of a course(s) including evaluation of a proposed course against the course accreditation criteria.</td>
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<td>• Course developer notified in writing of accreditation decision within a week of decision made by TASC Executive Officer.</td>
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<td>• Maintain a publically available Register for the Accreditation of Courses that includes the course title, decision of the Executive Officer regarding the accreditation of a course, length of course accreditation.</td>
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<td>• Determine or validate proposed course quality assurance mechanisms.</td>
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<td><strong>PEO Curriculum and Standards will:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning Area Group will:</strong></td>
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| Publish accredited course details on the TASC website within in a timely manner.  
If accredited, course details appear on TASC course register usually within 2 weeks of the decision. | Quality assure final draft course prior to submission to TASC.  
Undertake research on current curriculum and course provision in the area.  
Provide expert analysis of the curriculum strategy, resources and materials needed for a learning area, from both a state and national perspective.  
Provide advice about the development of senior secondary courses and the nature of documents developed to support their implementation.  
Provide expert analysis of the curriculum requirements for the development or revision of a course. |

### 18. Risk Management

Risk management is the responsibility of the Director of Curriculum, Department of Education Tasmania.
Appendix A
Notification of Intent to Develop a Senior Secondary Course for TASC Accreditation Consideration

1. Date: 

2. Proposed date for submission of your course to TASC: 

3. Institution/organisation of course developers (if applicable) 

4. Names and contact details of course developers 

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<th>Name:</th>
<th>Email:</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
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5. Tell us about the course you are developing (e.g. working title, target learners, level of complexity, learning outcomes) 

__________________________________________________________________________

5 TASC Accreditation Guide for Developers of Senior Secondary Courses, Version 11 - October 2014
6. Why is this course needed?
Appendix B

Issues with Learning Outcomes

Firstly, the concept of 'understanding' presents difficulties in that it is not explicitly discernible. How can we measure it if we cannot see it? How is the level of understanding determined?

- A means of addressing this is to disaggregate what is to be understood into measurable identities, such as; describe, explain, analyse and evaluate etc.
- However does it follow that if a student achieves the disaggregated learning outcomes that they develop a holistic and integrated understanding?
- Disaggregation can result in a large number of learning outcomes, causing students to focus on coverage and details than the overall intention.

The NACCCE Report, 'Creative Education', Kenneth Robinson (Ed) 1998, set out a definition of 'creativity' for the purposes of clarification in the secondary sector. The report recognises four characteristics of creative processes:

- They always involve thinking and behaving imaginatively
- This imaginative activity is purposeful (directed to achieve an objective)
- These processes must ultimately generate something original
- The outcome must be of some value in relation to the objective.

Creativity is defined therefore as: Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value

These terms can be further qualified. 'Imagination' is to do with viewing the world from different perspectives. Acting imaginatively is to do with generating alternative solutions to a given problem or set of problems. Often this involves taking risks as far as the student is concerned. Risk-taking is considered by students and teachers as an important characteristic of design education. It is risk-taking which allows students to challenge their own conceptions of the subject they are studying.

'Originality' is considered in its different categories:

- Individual - A person’s work may be original in relation to their own previous work and output
- Relative - It may be original in relation to their peer group
- Historic - The work may be original in terms of anyone’s previous output in a particular field that is, it may be uniquely original.'6

Appendix C

Examples of Taxonomies

In learning outcomes statements, verbs are a critical indicator of the nature of the required student engagement. The taxonomy below describes cognitive activity and function and additionally provides a list of verbs at various levels of complexity indicating what students will do.

‘Knowledge:- demonstrating memory by showing use of terms, metalanguage, facts, rules and conventions, methods, principles or theories. A student would demonstrate knowledge if they were able to: define, describe, identify, label, list, match, name, outline, reproduce, select, state, recall, record, recognise, repeat, draw on, or recount.

Comprehension:- demonstrating understanding and that meaning has been made. Students could show understanding by translating what they have learned in a text into actual practice or by interpreting what is known in one context when used in another context. A student would demonstrate understanding if they are able to: convert, defend, distinguish, estimate, explain, extend, generalise, provide examples, infer, paraphrase, predict, rewrite, summarise, clarify, judge, restate, locate, recognise, express, review, or discuss.

Application:- demonstrating what has been learned in new or concrete situations by being able to: change, compute, demonstrate, discover, manipulate, modify, operate, predict, prepare, produce, relate, show, solve, use, schedule, employ, sketch, intervene, practise, or illustrate.

Analysis:- demonstrating the breakdown of material into its component parts so that its underlying structure can be understood. A student would demonstrate analysis when they are able to: breakdown, create a diagram, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, appraise, test, inspect, illustrate, infer, outline, relate, select, investigate, analyse, make an inventory, calculate, question, contrast, debate, compare, or criticise.

Synthesis:- demonstrating how to put parts together to form a new whole, produce something which is unique, creative, or showing a new pattern of events. Students synthesise when they are able to: categorise, combine, compose, arrange, plan, assemble, prepare, construct, propose, start, elaborate, invent, develop, devise, design, plan, rearrange, summarise, tell, revise, rewrite, write, modify, organise, produce, or synthesise.

Evaluation:- demonstrating judgement of the value of something for a given purpose, usually using criteria designed either by themselves or by others. This is usually seen as the highest domain in terms of cognitive learning because it requires students to use all the others activities already covered above. Students show they evaluate by being able to: appraise, compare, conclude, contrast, criticise, discriminate, judge, evaluate, choose, rate, revise, select, estimate, measure, justify, interpret, relate, value, or summarise.’

Create:- demonstrating imaginative activity shaped to produce outcomes that are both original and of value. Students create when they are able to formulate, compose, design, arrange, organise, propose, hypothesize, substitute, construct, invent, integrate, produce, role-play, adapt, assemble, collaborate, imagine, intervene, manage, negotiate, originate, schematize, speculate, validate, structure.\(^7\)

Bloom’s Taxonomy provides a list of verbs with increasing levels of complexity in cognitive activity and function. These can be used to specify the nature of student learning activity.

\(^7\) Carroll, J 2001, Writing learning outcomes; some suggestions Oxford Brookes University, accessed at: https://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsld/resources/writing_learning_outcomes.html on 29/1/2016
Verbs using Bloom’s Taxonomy

Knowledge recall, record, list, reproduce, arrange, memorise, define, outline, state, recognise, relate, describe, identify, show, examine, present, quote, name, duplicate, tabulate.

Comprehension restate, discuss, clarify, locate, recognise, classify, translate, explain, express, review, interpret, select, summarise, contrast, predict, associate, estimate, extend.

Application demonstrate, schedule, operate, dramatise, apply, employ, use, practise, illustrate, choose, solve, write, calculate, complete, show, examine, modify, relate, classify, experiment.

Analysis distinguish, differentiate, investigate, categorise, appraise, inspect, test, debate, compare, contrast, question, criticise, solve, analyse, separate, order, connect, explain, calculate, relate.

Synthesis compose, assemble, organise, plan, collect, propose, construct, design, create, formulate, arrange, devise, modify, derive, develop, integrate, rearrange, substitute, invent, generalise.

Evaluation judge, score, select, evaluate, choose, rate, assess, compare, estimate, value, measure, discriminate, argue, defend, support, recommend, conclude, summarise, appraise, revise.

The following are action verbs that can be used for various levels of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning. Concrete verbs such as “define,” “apply,” or “analyze” are more helpful for assessment than verbs such as “be exposed to,” “understand,” “know,” “be familiar with.”

Cognitive Learning.

| Knowledge - to recall or remember facts without necessarily understanding them | Action Verbs: arrange, define, duplicate, label list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, reproduce, list, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote |
| Comprehension – to understand and interpret learned information | classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend, translate, review, restate, locate, recognize, report |
| Application – to put ideas and concepts to work in solving problems | apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, calculate, complete, show, examine, modify, relate, change, experiment, discover |
| Analysis – to break information into its components to see interrelationships and ideas | analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test, separate, order, connect, classify, arrange, divide, infer |
| Synthesis – to use creativity to compose and design something original | arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, rewrite, integrate, create, design, generalize |

Affective Learning

| Affective Learning | Appreciate, accept, attempt, challenge, defend, dispute, join, judge, praise, question, share, support |

Psychomotor Learning

| Psychomotor Learning | Bend, grasp, handle, operate, reach, relax, shorten, stretch, differentiate (by touch), express (facially), perform (skillfully) |
Appendix D

Exemplar from TASC

Distinction using different verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘C’ rating</th>
<th>‘B’ rating</th>
<th>‘A’ rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>identifies</td>
<td>describes</td>
<td>discusses</td>
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<tr>
<td>follows</td>
<td>applies</td>
<td>applies a range of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collects</td>
<td>collects, organises and uses</td>
<td>collects, assesses and uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presents</td>
<td>structures and presents</td>
<td>organises, structures and communicates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use</td>
<td>modify</td>
<td>design</td>
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Distinction by quantum of response by the student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘C’ rating</th>
<th>‘B’ rating</th>
<th>‘A’ rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uses a limited range of ……</td>
<td>uses a range of ……</td>
<td>uses a wide range of ………</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locates a limited range</td>
<td>locates a range of ………</td>
<td>locates a wide range of ………</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic, few, limited, key</td>
<td>a number of……</td>
<td>comprehensive, extensive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distinction by quality of response by the student describing a performance or product

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘C’ rating</th>
<th>‘B’ rating</th>
<th>‘A’ rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>useable</td>
<td>finished</td>
<td>polished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear</td>
<td>clear</td>
<td>expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional</td>
<td>structurally sound</td>
<td>creative, innovative</td>
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Distinction in terms of complexity or sophistication of the task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘C’ rating</th>
<th>‘B’ rating</th>
<th>‘A’ rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>one-on-one</td>
<td>small groups</td>
<td>large groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brief notes</td>
<td>memos and letters</td>
<td>reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>using whole numbers</td>
<td>using whole numbers and fractions</td>
<td>using decimals, factions and percentages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis and evaluation are typical of Level 3 ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘C’ rating</th>
<th>‘B’ rating</th>
<th>‘A’ rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>explains</td>
<td>analyse</td>
<td>evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assesses</td>
<td>analyse</td>
<td>analyses and evaluates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>critically analyses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix E

TASC documentation

Course Size and Complexity

Determining course size

'The course size is an indication of the amount of learning in the course – that is, how big the course is. It is a measure of the quantum of learning required independent of the mode of delivery. While the course size cannot be a tightly measured construct, we can develop a reasonable concept of how big a course is. We are all fairly comfortable with the idea that a vehicle driving course is bigger than a using the internet course and both are smaller than a university physics course. TASC senior secondary courses are generally given the sizes of 5, 10 and 15 (small, medium and large).

The size value is assigned at the time of development and takes into account such factors as the number and range of:

• learning outcomes
• content to be covered
• assessment criteria.

As a general rule, the more of these and the greater the diversity, the bigger the course is. Generally a course with 8 learning outcomes is bigger than a course with 2; a course with 10 topics to be covered is bigger than a course with 4.

Course developers will draft the learning outcomes, content and some idea of what is to be assessed and then review the course in terms of whether it is a ‘small’, ‘medium’ or ‘large’ course. The size grows out of these features, not the other way around. Sometimes the course size will be part of what is specified for course development as the course is to replace an existing course of a particular size.

These sizes of 5, 10 and 15 are not completely new in that they have developed out of the concepts of A, B and C courses but without the reference to ‘design time’ which was an indication of delivery hours. The numbers of 5, 10 and 15 were chosen – rather than letters or words – as the size of the course is also used to assign TCE credit points for students who successfully complete TASC courses.

Course size is no longer a measure or even an indication of delivery time. Delivery time is influenced by an array of factors that the course document does not specify – mode of delivery, level of pre-existing knowledge and skills of the learners, outside class-time activities, individual learning tasks etc. Providers of courses determine delivery times and take into account the size of the course amongst other factors. It is quite conceivable that a course of a particular size can be assigned various delivery times.

Different sized courses in the same subject area

Historically there have been TASC accredited courses where a single course can be accredited at several size values. Often the only difference between the various ‘courses’ is the number of assessment criteria that have to be met – more for the larger course and fewer for the shorter course/s. This model does not clearly specify what the learning outcomes are for all the awards that may be issued – for some students they are one set of outcomes and for others a different set.
It doesn’t make sense if the specified outcomes of a small (size 5 course) are the same as those for a course 3 times the size – either the outcomes are so vague they have no clear meaning, or they are process oriented or one of the two courses is not giving a valid description of what it leads to. One of both of the courses is, in this case, not needed. Such courses will no longer be recommended for accreditation.

The size of the course is a characteristic of the course and cannot be more than one discrete size value. If we are talking about more than one size value, we are talking about more than one course, each with unique learning outcomes, content and criteria. The need for an array of courses at the same level in the same subject area but of different sizes is difficult to justify.

TASC accredited size 5 courses

- A small course will not simple be a part of a longer course.
- Small courses will have outcomes that are reasonable in terms of the size of the course.
- Small courses will meet all the requirements of any course – identified need, clear outcomes, relevant content, valid assessment.
- The learning must lend itself to be achieved in a small course, not just a subset of something else.
- The learning in a small course will usually be quite discrete and focussed and often specialised (e.g. create a particular type of artefact, use a particular piece of equipment, develop a particular technique).
- Small courses can be either completely stand-alone or form part of a family of courses. An example of a family of small courses might be something such as: use a computer, adapt particular software, create a particular product using particular computer software.
- Small courses can be at any TASC level.
- Small courses can be introductory (e.g. music enjoyment).
- Small courses provide opportunities for learners to mix and match.
- Small courses can act as tasters (e.g. ethics as a taster to philosophy, children’s play as a taster to working with children).
- Small courses can provide specialisation to complement other studies, e.g. video production as an add-on to media production.

Levels of Complexity

The TASC assigns a complexity level to TASC accredited courses, TASC recognised courses, and VET certificates and units of competency. TASC levels of complexity in senior secondary education range from level 1 to level 4. TASC accredited senior secondary level 4 and 3 courses contribute to the calculation of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

The level of a TASC accredited course reflects the complexity/difficulty of the learning embodied in the course. They are not descriptions of the ability of learners who might undertake them. For example, if very capable learners choose to do a level 1 course it does not mean that the course will be at a higher level. An example might be that there is a level 1 course in using the computer. If a very capable person has never used a computer before and needs those skills they may undertake the level 1 course. They may complete it in less time and with less effort than some other learners but it is still a level 1 course.

The level is not a factor of whether the course is introductory or not. An introductory course can be quite demanding and be at level 3 or higher; for example an introduction to physics or psychology. Nor is it a level of learner achievement – this is captured by the awards.

When developing courses, the learning outcomes, content and assessment criteria must be appropriate for the level. Where there is a suite of courses in the same subject area but at different
levels, each course must be clearly distinct. A level 1 course cannot be substantially the same as a related level 2 course and similarly, a level 2 course cannot be substantially the same as a level 3 course.

The nature of the learning must be applicable to the level. For example, learning to listen to and enjoy some aspects of music might be a level 1 experience whereas learning to compose music is not. Learning how to make basic use of a computer might be a level 1 experience whereas selecting and installing software might not be. Learning about the structure of government might be a level 2 experience whereas analysing and evaluating various government institutions might be more appropriate at level 3.

**The characteristics of learning at levels 1 – 4**

The relationship between the TASC levels of complexity and the AQF system may be represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASC Level</th>
<th>AQF Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Level IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Level III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Examples:**

**Level 1**

The learner is expected to carry out tasks and activities that draw on a limited range of knowledge and skills. The tasks and activities generally have a substantial repetitive aspect to them. Minimum judgement is needed as there are usually very clear rules, guidelines or procedures to be followed. VET competencies at this level are often those characteristic of an AQF Certificate I.

Characteristics of level 1 courses include:

- defined range of activities most of which may be routine and predictable often preparatory access and participation skills and broad-based induction skills
- basic knowledge and skills
- may be more to do with personal development than exposure to a discipline of knowledge
- greater emphasis on application rather than theory – learning through doing largely repetitive tasks
- learning grounded in the learners’ own experiences
- limited choice and judgement required
- demonstrate knowledge by recall in a narrow range of areas
- demonstrate basic practical skills, such as the use of relevant tools
- perform a sequence of routine tasks given clear direction.

Examples of learning outcomes at this level (from both TASC courses and VET Certificates I):

- develop an awareness of basic health and hygiene issues
- identify behaviours that impact positively on personal wellbeing
- apply personal and kitchen hygiene principles in practical food handling situations
- develop skills to safely use a range of nominated techniques in the completion of practical products
- develop work readiness skills and attributes
• develop a clear understanding of computing terms and concepts
• recall combinations of basic phrases and sequences
• develop kinaesthetic awareness and movement skills
• support gardening work
• assist in listing properties for lease
• clean hard surfaces
• operate portable audio recorder
• use the internet to access and modify music.

In post-year 10 studies, learners in level 1 courses may be less able students. Most level 1 courses are not designed for learners with special needs involving intellectual disabilities, whose needs may be met by courses at a level preliminary to level 1, though some level 1 courses may be suitable for some learners with special needs.

**Level 2**

The learner is expected to carry out tasks and activities that involve a range of knowledge and skills, including some basic theoretical and/or technical knowledge and skills. Limited judgement is required, such as making an appropriate selection from a range of given rules, guidelines or procedures. VET competencies at this level are often those characteristic of an AQF Certificate II.

The learning in level 2 courses is characterised by:
• clearly defined range of contexts in which the choice of actions required is
• usually clear
• limited complexity in the range of operations to be applied
• performance of a prescribed range of functions involving known routines and guidelines
• basic operational knowledge in a moderate range of areas
• defined range of skills
• known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
• some complex or non-routine activities involving individual judgement
• some responsibility for own outputs in work and learning.

Examples of learning outcomes at this level (from both TASC courses and VET Certificates II):
• consider issues and ideas in relation to own experiences
• participate in discussion, debate and enquiry
• follow established safety guidelines in a creative arts production
• environment
• use geometrical skills to solve simple real-world problems
• write clearly and accurately in a range of modes
• generate appropriate responses to specific design briefs
• set goals and outline a plan to achieve them
• form and maintain positive relationships
• produce simple word-processed documents
• organise and complete daily work activities
• work effectively with others in teams
• receive and dispatch equipment and tools
• communicate with children.
• perform CPR
• use hand and power tools.
Level 3

The learner is expected to acquire a combination of theoretical and/or technical and factual knowledge and skills and use judgement when varying procedures to deal with unusual or unexpected aspects that may arise. Some skills in organising self and others are expected. Level 3 is a standard suitable to prepare students for further study at the tertiary level. VET competencies at this level are often those characteristic of an AQF Certificate III.

The learning in level 3 courses is characterised by:

- some relevant theoretical knowledge
- a balance of theoretical and/or technical and factual knowledge
- a range of contexts with some unfamiliar or unpredictable aspects under general guidance only
- application of a range of well-developed skills
- application of known solutions to a variety of predictable problems
- interpretation of available information making judgements about relevance and applicability
- some judgement, planning and organisation of self and, in some circumstances, others
- selecting, adapting and transferring skills and knowledge to new environments
- making decisions about appropriate methods to resolve specified problems
- take responsibility for own outputs in work and learning
- application of knowledge and skills across a variety of contexts with some complexity in the extent and choice of options available.

Examples of learning outcomes at this level (from both TASC courses and VET Certificates III):

- work effectively with families to provide child care
- operate professional audio equipment
- prepare, install and test lighting equipment
- use a range of crafting/drafting & revision techniques to create texts of publication quality
- engage with, analyse and respond to a diverse range of texts
- use Japanese to communicate with others
- apply mathematical theory and principles to the analysis and control of processes in manufacturing
- demonstrate skills of organising ideas, critical thinking, building and evaluating arguments and comparing different ideas to each other
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theatre habits, etiquette and methods
- objectively analyse legal issues by identifying the arguments and counter arguments relating to the issues.¹⁰

Level 4

The learner is expected to apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and limited responsibility in known or changing contexts and within established parameters. In general, courses at this level provide theoretical and practical knowledge and skills for specialised and/or skilled work and/or further learning, requiring: Level 4 is a standard suitable to prepare students for further study at the tertiary level. VET competencies at this level are often those characteristic of an AQF Certificate IV.

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⁰ TASC Accreditation Guide for Developers of Senior Secondary Courses, Version 11 - October 2014

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The learning in level 4 courses is characterised by:

- broad factual, technical and some theoretical knowledge of a specific area or a broad field of work and learning
- a broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply a range of methods, tools, materials and information to:
  - complete routine and non-routine activities
  - provide and transmit solutions to a variety of predictable and sometimes unpredictable problems.

Examples of learning outcomes at this level (from both TASC courses and VET Certificates IV):

- use physics principles, outlined in the course content, to identify and predict physical phenomena
- applies principles to interpret complex problems, and makes reasoned, plausible predictions in unfamiliar, including real-world, contexts
- clearly describes and critically evaluates the tensions and connections between an issue and all significant relevant influences (ethical, political, cultural, social, economic)
- performs calculations associated with thermochemistry, kinetics and equilibrium (including acid-base equilibrium) and recognises their limitations
- predicts and explains variation in reaction rates using collision theory and the concepts of catalysis and the distribution of energy
- solves simultaneous equations and interprets the answer
- applies De Moivre's theorem to simplify difficult expressions
- evaluates the reliability and validity of the results and solutions to routine and non-routine problems in a variety of contexts
- perform clinic pathology procedures
- Plan, organise and deliver group based learning
- coordinate patient admission and discharge.