



## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

Since the introduction of the current study design in 2010, much information has been provided on the marking of the Texts and Traditions examination. This information has been provided through the examination specifications and advice (on the VCAA website) and recent assessment reports. The assessment reports have noted how marking has changed since 2010, and both teachers and students should refer to these rather than to earlier assessment reports. The changes were implemented to reflect the changes in the revised study design and to ensure standardised marking across each of the four sections of the examination paper.

When completing practice examinations, students need to consider how they will manage their time in each part of the examination and the length of the response appropriate to the allocation of marks. Each part was worth 30 marks, with Part A divided into three 10-mark questions. To write three tightly written pages for a response in Part A and only one page for Part B shows poor examination practice. There are no recommended response lengths for particular answers: students must use their own judgment when deciding on the appropriate length of a response. However, if responses for Part B and Part C are worth thrice the marks of a response for Part A, it stands to reason that the former two will be substantially longer.

The key knowledge and skills developed over the year through the completion of course outcomes are assessed in the examination. Written expression is not assessed, and teachers should note that the extracts from student responses that have been cited in this assessment report vary in degree of syntactic complexity. The extracts have been included because they demonstrate sound approaches to examination questions and strong evidence of the use of appropriate knowledge and skills.

Students are expected to have a working knowledge of the set text as outlined in the study design. Both the themes for specific study and supplementary themes identify those themes relevant to the set text, and a range of questions across the parts of the paper may require reference to those themes. Essay questions in Part B are based on either the set text or passages for special study and are often based on themes.

Teachers should be aware that for 2013, besides listing set texts and passages for special study, the September 2012 edition of the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET* (pages 9–10) also listed themes that apply to each of the set texts. These have been divided into ‘Themes for special study’ and ‘Supplementary themes’. These lists have been provided in response to schools and teachers who have found it difficult to determine which themes to cover in Outcome 2 of Unit 4, and to reduce the workload for both students and teachers by setting a contained range of themes.

What will become apparent on reading extracts from student responses included in this assessment report is the precision with which some students are referencing their quotations from texts. Together with increasingly sophisticated ideas in answers, more capable students are citing exact scriptural references rather than simply paraphrasing a passage or referring generally to a chapter or surah. This is especially evident in Part B answers. While there is no requirement that students cite scriptural references by chapter and verse, by doing so, especially of the passages for special study, students may show a more detailed knowledge of their texts. Nevertheless, general reference to a text may well be appropriate in some answers and can be found in some responses scored as high.

Additionally, the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET* notice provides advice on examination specifications also found on the VCAA website and which also says that ‘in setting examination questions a range of scholarly terms’ may be used. Some of these terms apply only to particular themes, such as ‘divine retribution’ and ‘apostasy’; others are related to particular traditions, such as ‘evangelist’, ‘Infancy Narratives’ or ‘Last Discourse’; yet others are more generic, such as ‘exegesis’, ‘later tradition’ and ‘original community’. Thus, students are expected to understand basic scriptural and theological terms that are relevant to their tradition. It is pleasing to see more students making reference to the commentators that they have used for different areas of study and using scholarly terms with confidence.

## **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

**Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.**

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what the answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.



## Part A – Extended responses

Extended-response questions assess knowledge and allow students who know the ‘who’, ‘where’ or ‘what’ – simple identification of person, place, practice or concept – to score some marks, while students who can demonstrate that they know ‘how’ or ‘why’ these matters are used in the text, narrative or tradition score more highly. For example, it was easy for a student answering Question 2 of Section I to merely list the three aspects of the Festival of Booths, but that was not what the question asked.

The following extract from a student response shows not only knowledge of what is asked, picking up the end of the question, but also knowledge of the history, lexical and scriptural origins of, and an authoritative opinion on, the Festival of Booths. This response demonstrates detailed understanding and knowledge at a sophisticated level.

*... During the feast all people stayed in ‘booths’ or small tents made of palm branches to acknowledge that this was what Israelites had to do. In the Prologue, ‘the word’ or Jesus is said to have ‘dwelt amongst us’ through becoming ‘flesh’ in the incarnation. ‘Dwelt’ comes from the Greek word ‘skene’ which means ‘tent’. This has ‘rich overtones’ as Lindars suggests, as it recalls Sirach 24:8 which among other Old Testament passages alludes to the presence of God in the Tabernacle. Thus in using this word to describe how Jesus now lives with the people it suggests that God’s glory and holy presence contained within the tabernacle is now with Jesus.*

In Question 1 of Sections I and III, which asked similar questions of two of the traditions, the range of knowledge regarding who Elijah was was widely disparate, with some students barely knowing that Elijah was ‘a person in the Old Testament’, let alone a prophet. Others knew that he ministered beyond Israel or noted that Elijah had eschatological significance. Better answers explained why these aspects were important to that Gospel. When providing examples, students should be guided by the instructions in the question.

Many students misunderstood Question 4b.

## Part B – Essay

Essay questions aim to elicit discussion, understanding and/or interpretation of ideas, themes, literary structures and/or individuals. Students, therefore, are rewarded for how well they manage the topic, using the various parts of the question to support their interpretation or argument. Part B requires students to demonstrate the key skills they have developed during the year and their ability to bring together, or synthesise, key knowledge, while showing an awareness of academic debate or interpretations relating to that topic. While key knowledge forms the basis of textual detail and clearly provides the evidence that is significant to the discussion, argument or interpretation provided, the knowledge a student displays addresses only part of the criteria. The response to an essay question must be supported by detailed knowledge and this includes scriptural precision.

Consider the accuracy of this student when responding to the invitation to ‘explain the ways in which the Holy Spirit is presented and developed within the gospel’ in Question 6 of Section III, Part B. Not only did the student present an interpretation, but they also provided detailed and precise scriptural evidence to support their view. The student quoted from the Infancy Narratives of the Gospel according to Luke with accuracy, but more importantly with significant appropriateness. Also, having presented a topic sentence in which the prompt is engaged and having provided evidence to support that interpretation, the student develops, first for the example of Elizabeth and then for Zechariah, explanations to support their view using the correct technical, scriptural (i.e. ‘*Benedictus*’) and theological (i.e. ‘salvific plan’) terminology that is relevant to the discussion. This applies the final criterion, as published, for assessing the essay: use of scriptural and theological terminology appropriate to the topic and textual passages used.

*In the Infancy Narratives, when Luke describes the events surrounding John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ births, many of the characters are enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth, John’s mother, because she ‘was filled with the Holy Spirit’ (Lk 1:41) recognized that Mary was ‘mother of [the] Lord’ (1:43) and blessed Mary for believing. In this event, Luke shows that it was the Spirit that enabled Elizabeth to recognize that Mary’s child was the Messiah. Luke also presents the Spirit as the one that enables people to prophesy as well as praise God. Zechariah filled with the Holy Spirit is able to praise God through the *Benedictus*. In it he also recognizes that John will play a big role in God’s salvific plan. He says, ‘you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways’ (Lk 1:76). This is indeed John’s role as he fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah and becomes Jesus’ forerunner. Luke develops the idea of the Holy Spirit being the reason for such reactions, as without the Holy Spirit, Zechariah doubted in what the Angel Gabriel told him and became mute for some time. However, when his mouth is opened he is able to praise God instead. This is carried through the Infancy Narratives, as Simeon guided by the Spirit came into the Temple when Mary and Joseph brought in Jesus. Filled with the Holy Spirit he was able to prophesy that ‘this child is destined for the rising and the falling of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed’ (Lk 2:34).*



An alternative approach is presented in the following student response to Question 5 of Section III. This student's approach to discussing the topic was quite different from the theological discussion above: it was a literary analysis. However, by using the criteria of the marking schedule, where no one approach is expected, both students were able to achieve the same grade for the two essays. Note again the detailed use of scripture – both as direct quotations and as paraphrases – together with theological terminology that is appropriate to the Holy Spirit.

*The Evangelist makes use of various literary techniques to assert to his readers the importance of the events that are yet to unfold within his narrative. In Chapters 1 and 2, the author of the Gospel makes use of images of God to illustrate his empowering action. In Chapter 1, the Angel Gabriel appears twice: once to Zechariah to foretell John's birth and the other time to Mary to proclaim her miraculous conception of the 'Son of the Most High' (1:32). The presence of angels, also seen in Chapter 2 with the appearance of the angels to the shepherds (2:10-16) is used as a craft element to highlight the 'God moment' within human history.*

*The pervasive pneumatology of these chapters also indicates the significance of what is to unfold; as the Holy Spirit was known to be the empowering agent of God, as seen in the prophets of the Old Testament. It was known to the Lukan audience that the Holy Spirit enabled prophets to become instruments of God's will.*

This extract clearly addresses one of the essay criteria: the understanding of sociocultural, religious and historical influences on the foundational text and/or significance to original community.

As a final example of an essay that strongly uses scripture, consider this extract from a response to Question 5 in Section IV.

*Sadaqa (charity) is superogatory amongst all Muslims. Unlike zakat, it is optional for every Muslim. Zakat includes paying annually, while sadaka is at any time. Almsgiving is a fixed percentage of one's wealth, while charity depends on the willingness of an individual. Allah Ta'ala depicted many ayahs in the Qur'an to depict the strong like of practising charity: 'Give, O son of Adam, and I shall give to you'. The latter proves that those who give charity for the sake of Alla Ta'ala will receive rewards from Himself.*

*Moreover, Allah Ta'ala puts forth an example depicting the great rewards one receives: 'the parable of those who spend in the way of Allah is like a grain which has seven ears, each bearing one hundred grains each. Allah gives manifold increase to whom he will' (Baqarah\*). The parable explores the great nature of Allah Ta'ala where He increases one's rewards many times more.*

\*For those unfamiliar with the Qur'an, Al-Baqarah is the Arabic title of Sûrah 2, one of the set texts in 2012.

Students should be familiar with the five criteria relating to the essay prior to the examination. This is to ensure that they cover all aspects in their response. It is particularly important because the study design does not mandate that students write essays during the year, which means familiarisation with these criteria could easily be overlooked.

## **Part C – Exegetical response**

While one technique for addressing the criteria of the exegetical response is to use the criteria as headings, teachers and students should be aware that since the requirement to complete only one exegetical response was introduced in 2010, the degree of sophistication with which students complete this task has increased. The length and quality of the exegetical responses are often astounding, with students demonstrating a more complex understanding of the interrelated qualities of the criteria and writing much more than when the requirement was two exegetical responses were required.

Consider how the following student commented on literary form and techniques in response to Question 9 in Section IV, Part C. The extract below does not merely name techniques, which is what some students do, but offers a full discussion and explanation of the significance of those techniques. The student has combined a discussion of literary forms and techniques – explaining not just what they are but how they affect the believer (or original community) – with their impact on an overall understanding of the given passage, while at the same time demonstrating knowledge of scholarly opinions. Moreover, in engaging all three exegetical techniques, the student integrated two of the five highlighted phrases.

*The Qur'an combines word, sound, meaning and order to achieve its eloquent communicative goal with rhetorical features and sublimity. It is not poetry and not prose either. According to Taha Husayn, an acknowledged scholar, 'The Qur'an is not poetry and not of verse either. It is rather Qur'an and cannot be called by any other name but this'. However, a minority of scholars often compare the scriptures to the Arabic literary form 'saj' which defines the equality of rhyme within literature. However, the consistent digression from first person 'We' to third person 'He' and constant fluctuation of tenses contradicts the concept of saj ...*



*By taking the literary forms and techniques into account, one notices a plethora of devices that contribute to the understanding of the passage. The surah begins with glorification of Allah (swt), 'Glory be to Him'. This statement allows the believer to seek and understand that sole magnitude and praise is due to Allah (swt). In addition, the attributes mentioned 'the Hearer, the Observer', enable the believer to visualise God's power due to the hyperbole applied. Furthermore, symbolism is conveyed when Allah (swt) states 'the Book' as a guide. The symbolic importance of the scripture exhorts believers to show how important the scripture is and make it a guide to be granted success. This enjoins a Believer to turn to the Book more often. Additionally, the parables of the 'Children of Israel' ...*

While passages for the exegetical response can be taken only from the passages for special study as gazetted in the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET*, the passages should be considered within the set texts that are mandated for study. High-scoring responses showed an awareness of the relationship between the passages for special study and the whole set text. Consider the two responses that follow. The first is an exegetical response on Ezekiel 36:1–15 (Question 10 in Section II, Part C), in which the student, in developing the context of the passage, relates the passage to other parts of the set text from Ezekiel both by reference and careful quotation of earlier passages.

*The prophet is called the 'son of man', a title consistent throughout the book which stresses his mortality. Contrasting with chapter 35 which stated 'prophesy against Mount Seir', this passage opens with 'prophesy to the mountains of Israel', reflecting the scholarly opinion that these chapters are inextricably linked. The oracle is addressed to the future of the 'mountains ... streams', the physical rejuvenation of the land.*

*The first part of the passage denounces the 'enemy', surrounding nations, that attempted to claim 'possession' of 'these two nations and these two countries' (Ch. 35 – Israel and Judah). Most notable is 'Edom' the nation inhabiting Mout Seir – the descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin. This cherished 'perpetual enmity' (Ch. 35) would be the cause of their 'desolate wastes'. The prophet's proclamation that 'because it suffered the reproach of nations ... [the nations] shall themselves suffer reproach', stresses the nature of Divine retribution, 'Measure for Measure'.*

Similarly, it can be seen how, picking up the highlighted phrase in the middle of John 21:1–14 (Question 10 in Section I, Part C), a student can relate aspects of a passage for an exegetical response to other aspects of the larger set text. There is no need for the student to paraphrase Peter's denials at the charcoal fire in the High Priest's courtyard (John 18:17–27) or the division of Jesus' garments on Calvary (John 19:23) because it is obvious from the precision of the scriptural references exactly what aspects of the passage are being contrasted. The theological significance of those comparisons, together with the effect of this literary device providing meaning for the original community, is clear. Note, too, how the highlighted phrase for discussion, 'disciple whom Jesus loved', has been handled within an integrated and sophisticated explication of context, literary style, knowledge of the significance of this 'person', the Beloved Disciple, and its theological significance for the original community. By discussing the highlighted words and phrases, firstly and as directed, within the context of the passage and, secondly, within a well-structured exegetical response, students are able to achieve significantly higher scores than those who attach a brief statement on each of the highlighted words or phrases, as if an appendix, after seemingly completing their response.

*In verse 7 the Beloved Disciple is referred to and in keeping with the Johannine literary style he is not named. The Beloved Disciple appears many times throughout John's gospel and presents the reader with an example of perfect faith, as shown in Ch 13 at the last supper, at Ch 19 at the foot of the cross, and at the empty tomb of Jesus (Ch 20). Again the Beloved Disciple is the first one to recognise Jesus, but here he must first see Jesus; inconsistency with the events in Ch 20 are present. The actions of the Beloved Disciple and Peter in this passage (21:7–8) mirror the events at the empty tomb where the Beloved Disciple gets to the tomb before Peter and is the first to believe without needing to enter the tomb.*

*When the disciples have gone on shore they gather around the charcoal fire, contrasting the events of 18:17–27. Peter brings the fish to shore where it is revealed that the net has not been torn despite there being 153 fish in it. The unbroken net, like 19:23, symbolises the Christian community and the unbreaking unity associated with it.*

The following examples are not prescriptive, and students provided a number of ways of discussing these words or phrases. It appears that most students are approaching the passages using the highlighted words or phrases that have been set, rather than commenting on other equally important words or phrases that they would have liked to have highlighted. While these phrases have been listed in dot-point format for ease of use within this report, it is not recommended that students do this in the examination. What is important is that discussion of the words and phrases is integrated within the exegesis.

- **Judean town in the hill country** – allowed reference to the politico-geography of the region (even suggesting that it was Ain Karim), or to the town's closeness to Jerusalem for Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, to work as a priest in the Temple

# 2012 Assessment Report



- **mother of my Lord** – could have been used to show Elizabeth’s understanding of the title, or the (Messianic) meaning this had for the original community
- **rejoices in God my Saviour** – allowed explanation of Messianic expectations, or to explore the idea of rejoicing, or referral to Habakkuk 3:18 or 1 Samuel 2:1
- **He has shown strength with his arm** – clearly allowed reference to the literary device of allusion, in this case to the Hebrew scriptures using Psalm 89:10, or discussion of the theme of Messianic expectations
- **lifted up the lowly** – offered students the chance to discuss references to the Hebrew scriptures, including 1 Samuel 2:7–8 and the whole parallelism of Luke’s Infancy Narratives with the story of Samuel, or Jesus’ own proclamation or ministry, or to themes within the whole Gospel