

VCE VET: Community Services GA 2: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

This examination was designed to assess students' understanding of the underpinning knowledge relating to the set units of competence. As the students' workplace experience is in one of three possible areas of community services, the questions were designed to be generic. The major weighting of questions was given to the underpinning knowledge for *Implement a community development strategy*, which has an allocation of 70 nominal hours as against 20 for each of the other units of competence. Generally, questions on community development were not well answered. Overall however, students tackled the 2002 examination questions well, and in a number of areas the responses were better than the previous year.

In some instances, students had focused so specifically on learning some set pieces that they were eager to use the information in the paper even when it was not required or appropriate (examples include detailing the steps of a conflict resolution process and a model of the stages of group development). These elaborate responses may have been triggered by the recognition of a key word in the question. More time in reading and reflecting on the question being asked would have led to a more appropriate response.

In reading the specific comments on the examination questions, it will be noted that some questions were not well handled. Teachers and trainers should review the report on the 2001 examination for additional comments related to topics which were also covered in the 2002 examination.

Electives

Similar to last year, students were required to answer questions relating to two of the electives. Some students study all three electives, but in the examination they only need to select two. However, as in 2001 (although to a lesser extent), some students attempted to answer all three, often did not complete all three, and usually did not do well. Quality, not quantity, is the desired outcome of the students' efforts. Where sections of the paper were completed as requested, students handled the electives well, indicating a sense of confidence, and in the elective *Advocate for clients* the average mark was higher than in 2001.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Short answer

Question	Marks	%	Response
Question 1 and 2	<p>In the students' answers to Questions 1 and 2, the examiners were looking for an appreciation that community services work is guided by the aim of empowerment; that it relates to both community development and casework, and involves working with individuals, families, groups and communities. Empowerment is a core concept within community services work, and an understanding of empowerment is the foundation of appropriate advocacy.</p> <p>The quality of responses indicated only partial understanding of the meaning of empowerment; this partial understanding may have contributed to the difficulties for some students who chose to answer the elective 'Advocate for Clients'.</p>		
a	0/2 1/2 2/2 (Average mark 0.81)	29 61 10	<p>In Question 1a, appropriate responses reflected some of the following points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a process • helping/allowing a person/people to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify their needs or options - act on their own behalf - understand their rights • not taking over a person's responsibility • not doing for people what they can do for themselves • supporting people to support them. <p>In addition to these, recognition of empowerment as relating to individuals and to communities warranted full marks.</p>
b	0/4 1/4 2/4 3/4 4/4 (Average mark 1.16)	29 36 25 8 2	<p>Where an answer referred to the significance of empowerment for a group/community and for the individual (thus seeing the concept as relating to community development and to casework) full marks were given.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community services aims to help people be independent • community services tries to build independence • community services tries to promote independence • empowerment is rights-based • people can otherwise feel powerless.

	<p>Q2</p> <p>0/3 27 1/3 28 2/3 22 3/3 13 (Average mark 1.21)</p>	<p>This question proved difficult for many students. This and the following question on casework sought an understanding of some practical processes for empowerment.</p> <p>Community development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is facilitative • is working with groups of people in a community to improve their lives and their surroundings • deals with issues • relates to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - groups - community - developmental activity - improvement - empowerment - advocacy - social justice - rights - respect - research - analysing - identifying - networking - inclusiveness - information - transparency
<p>Question 3</p>	<p>a</p> <p>0/3 14 1/3 44 2/3 32 3/3 9 (Average mark 1.35)</p>	<p>In contrast to the previous question on community development, more students were able to explain relevant aspects of casework. A well-developed answer indicated an understanding of the process involved in casework. The examiners were looking for a recognition that casework could focus on individuals, on more than one person and on family groups. Some students were able to place casework within the framework of empowerment, pointing out that the desired outcome is enhanced independence.</p> <p>Case work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is working with individuals and families to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support them - resolve any problems or conflicts - improve their welfare - prevent more problems. • is a framework for service delivery (includes client plan, case manager) • is client-centred, client-focused.
	<p>b</p> <p>0/2 18 1/2 41 2/2 41 (Average mark 1.22)</p>	<p>A large number of students did not attempt this question. Of those who answered the question, half were unable to offer an explanation of the word <i>empathy</i>. The question was posed in order to draw out the different mind-sets or approaches in community services work, as is evident for example in debates about ‘charity’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - having rapport with someone - understanding how people feel or see things. • Sympathy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feeling pity for someone - feeling sorry for someone.
<p>Question 4</p>	<p>0/1 39 1/1 61 (Average mark 0.61)</p>	<p>The correct answer was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • duty of care. <p>The 2001 examination asked for a definition of duty of care, which many students found difficult (0.93/2). This year many students were not able to identify this description as relating to duty of care, with others not even attempting to answer the question.</p>
<p>Question 5</p>	<p>0/2 10 1/2 49 2/2 41 (Average mark 1.3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a safe workplace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - free from preventable injury or harm - free from danger. <p>Responses often included coverage of visitors and clients in their response whereas the Act has a narrower focus on workers, more specifically providing ‘guidance for the purpose of assisting employers self-employed persons and employees to maintain appropriate standards of occupational health safety and welfare’ (8.1.e of <i>Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985 – Version .052, 12 December 2001</i>).</p>

Question 6	0/2 1/2 2/2 (Average mark 0.84)	37 41 22	Preferred responses included: service user, resident, patient, child, customer, consumer, participant, victim, tenant.
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Section B – Scenario

Question 1	0/3 1/3 2/3 3/3 (Average mark 1.13)	37 26 23 13	A number of responses gave descriptions or definitions of <i>social justice</i> and <i>empowerment</i> , showing that many students either did not read or did not understand the question being asked. On the other hand, some students showed an excellent appreciation of strategies for finding out this information. Full marks were possible where students recognised that indicators include both the actions and views of people, and documents and policies. Appropriate responses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their ways of working • their behaviour • documents they have produced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mission statement - policies • the way they talk about people and their work.
Question 2	0/3 1/3 2/3 3/3 (Average mark 1.53)	16 33 32 18	This question drew a very narrow range of responses which reflected the student's narrow exposure to commonplace risks within their workplace experience. Many referred only to spills and infection. Accepted answers were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overwork • stress • driving and travelling • manual handling/lifting • abusive clients • equipment faults • needlestick injuries • infection/sickness • bad practices • chemical spills • computer use • passive smoking • assault.
Question 3	0/3 1/3 2/3 3/3 (Average mark 0.66)	54 29 12 4	This was not answered well and to some extent reflected the problem of partially reading the question. On seeing the phrase <i>occupational health and safety</i> , many students proceeded to nominate policies and procedures which were specific aspects of occupational health and safety. Preferred responses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • terms of appointment • job description • the relevant industry award • grievance procedures • the way the team operates – the communication framework/procedures • operational procedures like the telephone, mail • instructions on using equipment • emergency procedures • legislation (the following general terms were accepted) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - equal opportunity - anti-discrimination - mission statement.
Question 4	0/2 1/2 2/2 (Average mark 1.13)	16 55 30	The most successful answers developed a recognition of the contribution a strategic approach makes to the achievement and/or quality of outcome. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • best/efficient/effective use of time • best/efficient/effective use of resources • effectiveness • efficiency • achievement of goals • quality outcome • enable enlisting of support • for monitoring/measuring of progress and/or process • minimise the stress an unorganised workload may bring.

Question 5	0/2 25 1/2 55 2/2 19 (Average mark 0.94)	<p>A common response (and sometimes the only response) was ‘so that people would know who is working’, especially if there was a fire and evacuation was necessary. Unless there is a time card to be punched or a timesheet to be filled out on starting and finishing, experience indicates that timesheets more often are filled out in retrospect. The preferred answers point to other more significant reasons for the timesheets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify overtime • so management can work out staffing needs/rosters • record of time-in-lieu • identifying working hours for insurance purposes • working out who was on duty (for whatever reason) • Work Cover • work out holiday pay, sick leave, long service leave. 								
Question 6	0/10 1 1/10 2 2/10 2 3/10 5 4/10 8 5/10 11 6/10 15 7/10 20 8/10 16 9/10 12 10/10 9 (Average mark 6.6)	<p>Strategies 1, 2 and 3 were generally well answered while 4 and 5 proved more challenging. Some students were unable to resist the temptation to paraphrase the strength and identify it as a possible weakness.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="635 719 1492 1189"> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="635 719 1492 786"> Strategy 1 An open public meeting </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="635 786 1062 1189"> Strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inclusive • can identify key leaders and issues • everyone gets the opportunity/chance to attend, to have their say • can hear a range of ideas • gives information to people • time efficient • can put things to a vote. </td> <td data-bbox="1062 786 1492 1189"> Weakness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be intimidating • not everyone gets to have a say • time constraints limit what can be said and heard • time will not suit everyone • may be captured by some people who are ‘pushing a barrow’ • could exclude some people if there are no interpreters present. </td> </tr> </table> <table border="1" data-bbox="635 1223 1492 1693"> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="635 1223 1492 1290"> Strategy 2 Meetings of special interest groups </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="635 1290 1062 1693"> Strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more focused information on aspects of the community or issue • efficient for clarity and agreement • can indicate support or preferences • people more likely to attend with people they know • people more likely to speak up with people they know. </td> <td data-bbox="1062 1290 1492 1693"> Weakness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only one side of the story • can become a pressure group • time consuming • the group could think that they (and/or their views) have preference. </td> </tr> </table>	Strategy 1 An open public meeting		Strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inclusive • can identify key leaders and issues • everyone gets the opportunity/chance to attend, to have their say • can hear a range of ideas • gives information to people • time efficient • can put things to a vote. 	Weakness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be intimidating • not everyone gets to have a say • time constraints limit what can be said and heard • time will not suit everyone • may be captured by some people who are ‘pushing a barrow’ • could exclude some people if there are no interpreters present. 	Strategy 2 Meetings of special interest groups		Strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more focused information on aspects of the community or issue • efficient for clarity and agreement • can indicate support or preferences • people more likely to attend with people they know • people more likely to speak up with people they know. 	Weakness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only one side of the story • can become a pressure group • time consuming • the group could think that they (and/or their views) have preference.
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<p>Question 7</p>	<p>0/6 13 1/6 11 2/6 24 3/6 22 4/6 19 5/6 10 6/6 1 (Average mark 2.57)</p>	<p>In reading this question it seems most students took as their starting point the word <i>information</i> and proceeded to list various sub-sets within statistical or demographic information as a significant part of their answer.</p> <p>Categories/types of information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statistical information • demographic information • geographic information • existing services/unmet needs • social issues • the interests and abilities of people. <p>Sub-set detail</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>- age profile</td> <td>- crime rate</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- family types</td> <td>- layout of the suburb or area</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- income levels</td> <td>- access to transport</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- employment and unemployment</td> <td>- existing recreation facilities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- housing types and ownership</td> <td>- existing community groups</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- ethnic groupings</td> <td>- facilities.</td> </tr> </table>	- age profile	- crime rate	- family types	- layout of the suburb or area	- income levels	- access to transport	- employment and unemployment	- existing recreation facilities	- housing types and ownership	- existing community groups	- ethnic groupings	- facilities.
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Question 8	0/1 69 1/1 31 (Average mark 0.31)	Most students did not receive the mark for this question (usually not attempting an answer). The question was asked as a prelude to the scenario which followed. Assessors were surprised by the low level of recall of the name and significance of the legislation. The required response was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • privacy legislation.
Question 9	0/2 18 1/2 64 2/2 18 (Average mark 1.0)	This question was about accessing, and not primarily about reading the file. Where students were aware of the difference between the principle of confidentiality and the legal requirements of the privacy legislation, this question was well answered. Accepted answers were related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • privacy • confidentiality • the right to access information is based on the 'need to know' (i.e. what I need to know takes precedence over what I'd like to know).
Question 10	0/1 26 1/1 74 (Average mark 0.74)	Students were much more confident in responding to this question. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none
Question 11	0/4 19 1/4 28 2/4 35 3/4 14 4/4 4 (Average mark 1.55)	This question sought to reinforce the responsibilities which accompany a delegated task. Some students were distracted by aspects such as seeing the need to exercise good manners and thank the client, by explaining matters to the client, or by being so focused on security that the form itself was placed back in the file (and so not mailed). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • photocopy the form • mail the form • make a note for the file • make a note for the manager • make sure everything is back in the file • replace the file.
Question 12	a 0/5 4 1/5 11 2/5 31 3/5 33 4/4 18 5/5 3 (Average mark 2.57)	As indicated by the <i>quality</i> answers sought below, the purpose of this question was to draw out from the students a sense of the relationship between the worker and the committee. On the one hand there is accountability to the committee, but there is also the committee as a possible source of support and assistance. <p>Accountability for funding was the focus of a number of students' responses, perhaps reflecting the often pressured if not parlous state of the sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to highlight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - progress to date - problems and suggestions - goals and timelines being achieved - resource and budget/additional resources required - worker's issues: coping, skills, resource needs • enlist committee help • promote/reinforce the committee's ownership of project. <p>The most successful answers recognised the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide key information • maintain the support of the committee • could allow the committee to give guidance • draw out further ideas from management committee.
	b 0/10 19 1/10 5 2/10 8 3/10 8 4/10 11 5/10 11 6/10 14	The marks for this question were equally divided between the headings and the rationale. From the suggested responses for the rationale or explanation section, there was the hope that students could take an overall view of the progress report and its headings, and so build on the answer given in Question 12a. However, responses were much more concrete and the rationale for headings often did little more than repeat the heading a little more expansively (for example, Introduction – this says what the report is about; Funding – they would know how much money was left).

	7/10 8 8/10 11 9/10 3 10/10 3 (Average mark 4.23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work to date • meetings held • people consulted • information gathered • issues (including staffing issues) • options • finance/budget/possible funding sources • community support • work planned • recommendations. <p>Acceptable alternative format of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purpose • background • issues • (risks) • recommendations. <p>Re Explanation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide key information • maintain the support of the committee • enable most appropriate decision • organise my thinking • provide a structure for the information • could draw out further ideas from the management committee • could allow the committee to give guidance.
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Section C – Elective 1 Support group activities

Question 1	a	0/4 5 1/4 16 2/4 39 3/4 31 4/4 9 (Average mark 2.22)	<p>This question gave students the opportunity to appreciate the significance of formal processes. Appropriate responses included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • controllable conflict • time management • clear rules • agenda • equal time for all sides who want to have a say • more likely that people will be heard • notes get taken (for use of worker and/or others) • information and ideas can be distributed.
	b	0/3 24 1/3 38 2/3 32 3/3 7 (Average mark 1.21)	<p>Few students were able to supply three options, possibly because consensus and collaborative decision-making were paramount in their thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • votes (of any type) • consensus • decision by one person • not making a final decision, but asking for volunteers to form a working group and to report back later.
	c	0/5 3 1/5 15 2/5 27 3/5 30 4/4 18 5/5 6 (Average mark 2.62)	<p>The context for answering this question, as with the preceding two questions, was the scenario at the beginning of Section C. Where this question was well answered, it was evident that the context had been the starting point for the student. Some answers just detailed the steps in a conflict resolution process and, where this occurred, maximum marks were not awarded since the steps comprise one strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anticipation/research of possible issues before the meeting • an agenda/clear purpose for the meeting • circulate information before the meeting • set up the venue in a way to improve group communication • independent chair for the meeting • give people time to think and talk • allow time for discussion

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rule that there be no personal abuse • keep people apart if there is conflict • establish procedures (e.g. one person at a time for and against) • use a strategy like the ‘6 thinking hats’ • listen, summarise, synthesise • seek a win-win solution • enable different ways of looking at the situation • advocate for minority and absent views • ‘brainstorm’ to get all the suggestions • work with community leaders • involve other workers who may act as intermediaries • advocacy/negotiation/mediation/consensus.
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Section C – Elective 2 Participate in policy development

Question 2	a	As in previous sections, the scenario provided essential information to assist the student in answering the questions but some students answered the questions as if the scenarios did not exist. The response ‘they provide guidelines’ was not sufficient for full marks. Preferred answers included:
	0/2 8	
	1/2 76	
	2/2 16 (Average mark 1.07)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to allow everyone and anyone (management, workers, clients, the public) to be clear about what the organisation intends to do • they are a statement of intent • to ensure consistency • to interpret legislation • for the protection of staff and clients.
b	In assessing the responses, 2 marks were allocated to the <i>who</i> and 2 marks to the <i>why</i> . The committee, clients and government did not enter the consideration of those students who focused on the workers. Desired responses covered:	
0/4 6		
1/4 31		
2/4 45		
3/4 10		
4/4 8 (Average mark 1.84)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Committee or Board – because they have responsibility for the organisation and the way it operates • management – because they have a position of responsibility and have to implement the policy • the workers – because they are affected and have to implement the policy • the clients of the organisation – because the policy is about their personal information and they are affected • the government, by passing legislation on privacy. 	
c	The scenario clearly indicated that there is not an existing policy. Where it was recognised that no policy exists, full marks were given for three steps. An answer which stated ‘review the old one’ usually short-circuited the process of development, thus lessening the marks given.	
0/3 42		
1/3 35		
2/3 15		
3/3 8 (Average mark 0.89)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the problem • find out if the government has any policy • find out if there is any legislation about it • have a meeting of the staff and sharing ideas • devise ways to ensure confidentiality • talk to other groups about their policy • talk to clients/service users about their views • set up a small working group to report back. 	
d	The profile of government in this process was not high. Government requirements:	
0/3 10		
1/3 30		
2/3 33		
3/3 27 (Average mark 1.76)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changed situations • new situations • client and/or staff feedback • change of focus in the organisation • the present policy is time-limited, about to expire. 	

Section C – Elective 3 Advocate for clients

Question 3	3a		The thought that people would be left out generated strong answers, with a good number of students giving two reasons with well-developed explanations relating to rights and social justice.
	0/4	7	
	1/4	16	
	2/4	42	
	3/4	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> part of the community could be left out of the decision-making process right of people to have their say people would be disempowered this is against anti-discrimination legislation the people who are excluded may have ideas which other groups have not thought about.
	4/4	15	
	(Average mark 2.21)		
	b		Recognition of the two groups of people – those who lacked confidence and those with poor command of the English language – was evident in a good number of answers and indicated a close reading of the scenario.
	0/2	10	
	1/2	33	
	2/2	56	
	(Average mark 1.45)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> translators to produce printed information in the appropriate languages interpreters to be present in any conversations or meetings pictures or other graphic communication techniques 'plain English' documents one-on-one approach anonymous survey – input.
	c		The response sought included:
	0/2	22	
	1/2	61	
	2/2	17	
	(Average mark 0.95)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if they were unable or unwilling to speak for themselves if they have requested someone else to speak for them.
	d		Some students succumbed to saying 'empower them' without being specific about how this might be attempted or accomplished. Other students presented well-developed answers which included a 'rights' focus.
	0/4	4	
	1/4	28	
	2/4	43	
	3/4	20	
	4/4	5	
	(Average mark 1.94)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and develop leaders encourage them provide support raise their awareness of their rights develop their public speaking skills prepare them beforehand (by helping them develop their thoughts or a presentation) give options for action if a group, encourage them to build mutual support/sit them together.