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SAMPLE QUESTIONS
One question from each section of this exam, with its marking scheme, so teachers can see what the full paper is like. Full exam and solutions: captivateeducation.com.au/trial-exams

Outdoor and Environmental Studies

Question and Answer Book

Practice examination 1 – 2027

- Reading time is 15 minutes
- Writing time is 2 hours

Materials supplied

- Question and Answer Book

Instructions

- Use the additional space at the end of this book if you need extra space to complete an answer.

Students are not permitted to bring mobile phones and/or any unauthorised electronic devices into the examination room.

Contents

Section A (12 questions, 75 marks)

Section B (1 question, 15 marks)

Practice material in the layout of the 2025 VCAA paper – generated 2027. Not a VCAA examination.

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Section A

Instructions

- Answer **all** questions in the spaces provided.
- Write your responses in English.

Sample – Question 1 of the 12 questions in this section.

Practice material generated on 4 November 2026; not a VCAA paper. Scenarios, places, organisations and data in this book are invented unless a Source is given.

Question 1 (4 marks)

Explain how geological stability **and** climatic variations shaped the characteristics of Australian outdoor environments before humans arrived. 4 marks

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Section B

Instructions

- Answer the question in the space provided.
- Write your response in English.

Sample – Question 1.

Question 1 (15 marks)

People value Victoria's outdoor environments in many ways: some visit for recreation, some depend on them for income and others work to conserve them. These relationships can support or reduce the health of an outdoor environment, and community groups across the state work to sustain that health for the future.

Consider **at least two** outdoor environments you have visited or studied.
With reference to these outdoor environments, write a response that:

- describes the conservation, recreation **and** economic relationships that people have had with these outdoor environments in the last decade
- evaluates the health of each outdoor environment using **two** observable characteristics
- analyses how effectively **one** community action has helped to sustain the health of these outdoor environments
- uses specific examples based on primary and secondary data collected from these outdoor environments.

15 marks

End of sample questions

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Marking scheme for the sample questions

Section A

Question 1. (4 marks)

*Explain how geological stability **and** climatic variations shaped the characteristics of Australian outdoor environments before humans arrived.*

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Explain how geological stability and climatic variations each shaped the characteristics of Australian outdoor environments before humans arrived, linking each cause to its effect.

Geological stability: an old landmass with little recent mountain building, volcanic activity or glaciation, so landforms were worn down over millions of years — low, flat landscapes and deeply weathered, nutrient-poor soils; plants such as eucalypts, banksias and acacias adapted to low nutrients (for example, proteoid roots and hard, long-lived leaves). Climatic variations: as Australia drifted north after separating from Gondwana the climate became drier and more variable, with alternating wetter and drier glacial cycles; rainforest contracted to refuges, while drought- and fire-tolerant sclerophyll forests, woodlands and grasslands spread and arid-adapted species evolved.

Common errors included: describing biological isolation only; describing the effects of Indigenous peoples' use of fire or the extinction of megafauna, which fall after humans arrived; listing plants and animals without explaining how stability or climate produced their characteristics.

Mark allocation: 1 mark for describing geological stability; 1 mark for its effect on landforms, soils or vegetation; 1 mark for describing climatic variations; 1 mark for their effect on vegetation or species.

Sample full-mark response

> Australia is one of the most geologically stable continents: for tens of millions of years it has had little mountain building, volcanic activity or glaciation. Without new rock being exposed, the land was slowly weathered and eroded into low, flat landscapes with old, leached soils that are very low in nutrients such as phosphorus. As a result, plants such as banksias and eucalypts evolved hard, long-lived leaves and specialised roots that let them survive on poor soils. At the same time, as the continent drifted north after separating from Gondwana, its climate became drier and more variable, swinging between wetter and drier periods. Rainforest that had covered much of the continent retreated to wet refuges, and drought- and fire-tolerant sclerophyll forests, woodlands and grasslands spread across most of the land.

Section B

Question 1. (15 marks)

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*Consider **at least two** outdoor environments you have visited or studied.*
With reference to these outdoor environments, write a response that:

- *describes the conservation, recreation **and** economic relationships that people have had with these outdoor environments in the last decade*
- *evaluates the health of each outdoor environment using **two** observable characteristics*
- *analyses how effectively **one** community action has helped to sustain the health of these outdoor environments*
- *uses specific examples based on primary and secondary data collected from these outdoor environments.*

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Write an extended response, with reference to at least two outdoor environments they had visited or studied, that described the conservation, recreation and economic relationships with these environments in the last decade; evaluated the health of each using two observable characteristics; analysed the effectiveness of one study-design community action; and used primary and secondary data throughout.

This question was marked holistically against the three criteria in the examination specifications. High-scoring responses addressed every bullet point in balance, with reference to **at least two** named outdoor environments.

Criterion 1 — outdoor and environmental knowledge and skills related to human relationships with outdoor environments (Unit 3) and/or the health and sustainable use of outdoor environments (Unit 4). High: accurate, specific knowledge of all three relationship types, of two observable characteristics named in the study design's terms and of a listed community action, in named places. Mid: generally accurate but uneven (one relationship type thin, 'water' rather than 'water quality'). Low: generic or inaccurate knowledge, or a community action not in the study design.

Criterion 2 — examination of outdoor and environmental knowledge and skills across more than one area of study. High: links Unit 3 relationships to Unit 4 health and community action in one argument (for example, how growth in recreation has reduced soil quality and how a 'Friends of …' group has responded). Mid: covers the areas of study in separate, unlinked sections. Low: one area of study only.

Criterion 3 — application of relevant outdoor and environmental knowledge and skills based on stimulus material provided in the extended-response question and/or data collection and observations from at least two outdoor environments visited or studied. High: two named environments developed throughout, with primary data (logbook observations, photographs, water-quality or transect readings) and secondary data (park reports, visitor statistics, published surveys) used as evidence for claims. Mid: one environment developed more fully, or data mentioned but not used. Low: one environment only, or no data.

Point bank. Relationships: conservation (a 'Friends of …' group, Parks Victoria management, a Traditional Owner corporation), recreation (walking, surfing, mountain biking, camping, visitor growth), economic (tourism businesses, fishing, farming on adjoining land, water supply). Health: water, air and soil quality; species and ecosystem biodiversity — with judgements (healthy, declining, recovering). Community action: regenerative farming, Trust for Nature, Landcare, 'Friends of …' groups — what was done, its strengths and limitations and an overall judgement for each environment.

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Structure advice. An introduction naming both environments and the community action; a paragraph per environment on relationships; a paragraph per environment evaluating health with data; an analysis of the community action across both environments; a conclusion that answers the question. Plan in the extra space so every bullet point is covered for both environments.

Score-band guide. 13–15: every bullet point addressed in depth and in balance, two named environments developed throughout, analysis and evaluation supported by specific primary and secondary data and accurate terminology. 10–12: all bullet points addressed with minor imbalance between environments or bullets; data used for most claims. 7–9: bullet points addressed unevenly; description outweighs analysis or evaluation; data general or from one environment. 4–6: one environment developed, or one bullet point omitted; general knowledge and little data. 1–3: generic statements with limited relevance; most bullet points not addressed. 0: no relevant response.

Common errors included: referring to only one outdoor environment; ‘evaluating’ health without a judgement; actions not in the study design or individual actions given as community actions; relationships from before the last decade; data named but not used as evidence.

Sample full-mark response

> This response examines the Merri Creek corridor at Coburg in Melbourne’s north and the Anglesea Heath on the Surf Coast. In the last decade both environments have supported conservation, recreation and economic relationships. At Merri Creek, the Friends of Merri Creek and the Merri Creek Management Committee hold a strong conservation relationship, running planting days along the banks; recreation has grown, with the Merri Creek Trail busy with walkers and cyclists, and the creek has an economic relationship with the surrounding suburbs as a drainage corridor that raises nearby property values. At Anglesea Heath, a former coal-mining lease beside the closed Anglesea power station, the relationship has shifted from economic to conservation since the power station closed in 2015 and the heath was added to the Great Otway National Park, while walkers and birdwatchers use its tracks for recreation.
>
> Using water quality and species biodiversity, Merri Creek is recovering but still in moderate health. On my field visit I measured turbidity of about 30 NTU below a stormwater drain at Coburg and recorded few pollution-sensitive macroinvertebrates, while Melbourne Water’s published monitoring describes the creek as affected by urban stormwater. However, I counted 14 native plant species in a revegetated bank quadrat compared with 5 in an unplanted one. Anglesea Heath is in good health: my logbook records more than 40 flowering plant species along a 500-metre section of track, including orchids, and published surveys identify the heath as one of Victoria’s richest areas of plant species biodiversity. Soil quality is good away from tracks, but I photographed sheet erosion on a steep fire track.
>
> ‘Friends of …’ groups have been effective in both places, but to different degrees. At Merri Creek, decades of planting by the Friends have rebuilt riparian vegetation, which my quadrat data shows has increased species biodiversity and which shades and filters the creek. However, volunteers cannot control stormwater entering from upstream suburbs, so water quality remains poor after rain. At Anglesea, the local community group ANGAIR, which works as a ‘Friends of …’ group for the heath, helps with weeding and plant surveys that inform Parks Victoria’s management, which is effective in protecting an already healthy heath but depends on a small, ageing group of volunteers

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> … Overall, the community action has been highly effective where the threat is local and visible, and less effective where the cause lies outside the area the volunteers can reach.

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