

English as an Additional Language (EAL): information for parents and carers

All government schools in Victoria teach the Victorian Curriculum F-10. The curriculum sets out what every child should learn from Foundation to Year 10.

In the Victorian Curriculum F–10, the English curriculum includes two learning areas: English, and English as an Additional Language (EAL).

EAL is for students who speak another language at home and need to learn the English language to succeed at school. In EAL, students learn about English, and use English to learn the content and topics covered in other learning areas. They have different learning needs from students who speak English at home and as their first language.

EAL curriculum pathways

The EAL curriculum describes three pathways of learning for EAL learners, relating to their age and year level:

- Pathway A for students in Foundation to Year 2
- Pathway B for students in Years 2 to 8
- Pathway C for students in Year 7 to 10.

Each of these pathways describes what the student can do at different levels, such as ‘Follow simple written instructions and questions.’ Students progress along and between these pathways as they learn the English language.

How long does it take?

There is no set or required amount of time that a student should be learning or stop learning EAL. Research shows that it can take between 5 and 7 years, and sometimes up to 10 years, for a student to learn the academic language they need in secondary school. There are many factors, such as how old a student was when they started to learn English, that determine if EAL or English is the best choice for the student. Older students who are beginning to learn English will need more time to reach the same academic language level as students who speak English as a first language.

Learning EAL provides students with a strong foundation in English that helps them succeed in all learning areas. When your child’s teacher assesses that your child is ready to move from EAL to English, they will discuss this with you. Together you can decide on the best way for your child to continue learning English.

Career pathways

The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Study Design for Year 11 and 12 also offers both EAL and English. Students who complete VCE EAL have the same opportunities to go to university in Australia or choose another study or career pathway as those who complete VCE English.

EAL student reports

In June and December each year, you will receive a report about your child’s progress along their curriculum pathway. The EAL report includes an assessment for three language modes: Speaking and Listening, Reading and Viewing, and Writing. The format is like the English report. The report may provide extra information, for example, about things your child is doing well and areas they need extra help with.