The 2009–10 reporting period was a period of consolidation of our existing programs in both curriculum and assessment and increasing participation in the development of the Australian Curriculum for the VCAA. The Victorian Auditor-General’s office conducted a major performance audit of the administration of the VCE and the report was tabled in Parliament on 9 June 2010.

The report concluded that ‘The VCAA is effectively administering the VCE, providing a high level of assurance that the results students received are accurate and have been marked consistently and accurately. It has established strong processes and quality controls, and has developed clear and comprehensive guidance to assist schools to administer school-based assessments’.

The report’s six recommendations for improvements have been accepted in principle and will be implemented as resourcing allows. This level of endorsement from the statutory body charged with monitoring and assessing the performance of government operations is most welcome and reassuring.

NAPLAN testing
NAPLAN tests were conducted between 11 and 13 May 2010 and staff from across the organisation contributed to their successful delivery to more than 240,000 Victorian students. I take this opportunity to thank the teachers and principals throughout Victoria for their support in ensuring the successful implementation of this national program. The information available to parents, schools, systems and the VCAA is invaluable in planning further teaching and learning programs. We are continuing to develop our support services to assist schools to use these data to improve student learning through statewide professional development and new reports in the NAPLAN Data Service.

On Demand Assessment program
During the past year, work commenced on enhancing the On Demand Assessment program with new tests and reporting features. Development is well underway on new Computer Adaptive Tests in English and mathematics for Years 9 and 10, and these are due for delivery to schools in Term 4, 2010. These tests will extend the program for students working beyond Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) Standard Level 6. A new diagnostic report has also been developed for the Computer Adaptive Tests that will provide teachers with more detailed item-level data about individual students.

Over the last year, 25,461 English and mathematics tests were downloaded by 1149 schools, demonstrating the continued commitment of Victorian schools to an evidence-based approach to student learning. The VCAA continues to work with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to enhance online assessment for schools.
Victorian Certificate of Education

The VCE continues to be a highly valued end-of-school certificate that is accepted internationally as the basis for selection into university study. The VCE is offered in China, the Middle East and Vanuatu by schools working in partnership with Victorian schools. This report notes the vast number of examinations taken by VCE students in all the subjects we offer.

The security and integrity of VCE examinations is crucial to the VCAA. The examinations were conducted and marked successfully and in a timely manner.

Online marking of VCE examinations was introduced in June 2010. This initiative will lead to further enhancements in our quality assurance processes, allowing more monitoring of marking to ensure accuracy and timeliness. As we develop online marking, teachers and other professionally qualified people from around Victoria will have a greater capacity to participate in this important work.

Accurate results for all students were reported and distributed on schedule. This achievement requires a huge effort from staff. Our examination setters, chief assessors, markers and numerous casual staff operate a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week program from October to early December to ensure that students receive their results mid-December. This provides students with time to receive feedback, advice and counselling before finalising their tertiary entrance applications.

In relation to the 2009 end-of-year VCE examinations, the VCAA Review Committee penalised five serious breaches of examination rules with reductions of one to four grades in the subjects in which the breach of rules occurred.

Victorian Essential Learning Standards

The focus of the year has been on enabling Victorian teachers and educators to engage effectively in the national curriculum consultation process and to begin planning for the implementation of the national curriculum, in particular the transition period from the implementation of the first four subjects through to the implementation of the new curriculum in all learning areas.

On-going support for the current curriculum, however, has not been neglected. Two forums for teacher graduates and one for teacher educators were successfully held. The VELS website was redesigned to make it more accessible and user-friendly.

A particularly important activity throughout this year has been the development of the Sample Assessment Project (SAP). The aim of this project, which is managed in partnership with DEECD, is to develop innovative resources that enable the accurate assessment of areas of the curriculum that have not been traditionally the focus of strong assessment programs. These areas include health and physical education and thinking skills. This is ground-breaking work that is attracting national interest.

Another highlight of the year was the award of a Collaborative Internet Innovation Fund (CIIF) grant from the Department of Industry, Innovation and Regional Development to develop online resources to support the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages. This, too, has attracted interest from stakeholders in other states and territories who are working in the area of the reclamation and revival of Aboriginal languages. The VCAA is pleased to be making a contribution to the ongoing work of national reconciliation through this project.
Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

During the reporting period, significant progress has been made towards full implementation of the VEYLDF for children aged from birth to 8 years.

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development released the draft Victorian framework on 6 August 2009.

The VCAA conducted a trial and validation process of the draft document throughout the state from August to October 2009. Empirical data was gathered from this process to revise and strengthen the draft framework and identify the support required for effective implementation of the VEYLDF from 2010.

A range of data-gathering techniques was employed. Interviews and surveys were conducted at 42 early years sites, 238 online responses were received, 63 participants contributed to focus group discussions, including families, playgroup coordinators and supported playgroup coordinators, maternal and child health coordinators and representatives from Victorian cultural organisations, and 39 children participated in individual interviews or small group consultations. Thirty-three statewide information sessions were attended by 2500 early childhood professionals.

The VEYLDF was released by the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, the Hon Maxine Morand on 27 November 2009 for statewide implementation in 2010. The Victorian framework is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and links to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) in the early years of school.

The VEYLDF is being implemented in partnership by DEECD and the VCAA. A number of implementation activities and projects are underway to implement the VEYLDF.

The VCAA has maintained its consultative relationship with the Learning and Development Advisory Group and its Practitioner Advisory Group. The VCAA has developed a range of resources to support implementation, including a monthly online publication, the Early Years Exchange, and electronic links between early years learning and development outcomes and the VELS. A dedicated email address has also been established for communication with early childhood professionals.

The VCAA has initiated inquiry-based projects with a new group of practitioners who work with children from birth to age 8, as well as with a group who work with children from birth to 3 years of age.

The VCAA has commenced a key project on developing a framework for assessment and reporting on children's learning from birth to 8 years of age.

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

The VCAL continues to grow in both number of enrolments and number of providers. In 2009, there were 17,699 enrolments with 430 providers. In 2011, eight new VCAL providers will deliver the VCAL for the first time. The On-Track destination data for Intermediate and Senior VCAL students indicated that 26 per cent of the 2009 VCAL students continued with further education or training, and 60 per cent commenced an apprenticeship, traineeship or employment. This means that 86 per cent of VCAL students had a pathway to further education, training or work.

During the year, the VCAL Senior Extension (Folio Enhancement) program was reviewed and revised. The VCAL Unit has also developed a new unit, Skills for Further Study. The new unit will support students who are planning to continue with further studies after their Senior VCAL.
Australian Curriculum

The VCAA has contributed strongly to the development of the Australian Curriculum. Senior staff members Lynn Redley, Ian Nichol and Maria James have been seconded to ACARA to support curriculum development for extended periods.

The VCAA History Manager, Pat Hincks, is one of the writers of the history curriculum. The Mathematics Manager, David Leigh-Lancaster, and Science Manager, Maria James, are members of the Reference Groups for Mathematics and Science respectively. The English Manager, Marion White, is an active participant in the national and state forums.

The VCAA Board National Curriculum Steering Committee has been expanded to include members of teacher unions and principal associations. It has continued to monitor national curriculum developments and to oversee consultation with Victorian stakeholders. Consultation has included an online survey, a major consultation conference jointly hosted by the VCAA and ACARA for over 150 educators on March 17, 15 regional forums, special interest forums for tertiary educators and union members, and forums with a particular focus on students with additional learning needs, students with English as an additional language and mature-age and returning-to-study students.

The consultation process has been used to provide substantial advice to ACARA on the draft documents produced for Phase One of the national curriculum, that is English, Mathematics, Science and History.

The VCAA published an important Memorandum on 4 December 2009 that set out an expected timeline for implementation of the national curriculum. This Memorandum represented a joint approach to implementation by the VCAA and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Catholic Education Commission Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria.

Victoria was the first of the states and territories to issue such a statement and Victoria’s approach has informed the approach taken by a number of other states.

A priority for all sectors is to continue to adopt a common cross-sectoral approach to support the effective implementation of the national curriculum.

The implementation of Phase One of the national curriculum, the on-going development of Phases Two and Three and the provision of effective professional development and associated resources will represent an important and increasing focus of the VCAA’s work in 2010–11, in particular the provision of advice to schools that will enable teachers to work from a single curriculum source during the transition to full implementation of the national curriculum.
Board membership

In August 2009, Professor Peter McPhee completed his term of service as VCAA Chair. His leadership over three years was exemplary. He was an active member of numerous Board committees and working parties, with a strong commitment to the full range of the VCAA’s work.

Board member and Audit Committee Chair, John Maddock, served as Acting Chair from September to December 2009, after which Professor Adam Shoemaker was appointed as Chair for a period of three years.

Both Tony Larkin and Polly Flanagan's terms expired in June 2010, and both were reappointed by the Minister for another three-year term.

I would like to thank Adam, John and Peter for their respective stints as Chairs during the year – they each provided sterling leadership to the board. All Board members continue to show high levels of commitment and expertise. It is a privilege to work with them and with co-opted members of the various Board Committees and Working Parties.

Finally I thank the staff for their terrific work. There is a real sense of shared purpose and commitment to improving the learning of all young Victorians.

John Firth