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## DFAT Management Responses to Vietnam Australia Centre Review

December 2025

In June 2025, DFAT Hanoi commissioned an independent review of the Vietnam Australia Centre (VAC) to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Centre after three years of operation (June 2022 – May 2025). The review aimed to provide accountability to DFAT and Vietnamese partners and identify actionable recommendations for enhancing relevance and effectiveness and inform the future direction of the VAC.

### Key findings

#### 1. Relevance

- The VAC has demonstrated robust alignment with Australia's strategic interests and Vietnam's development goals contributing to the elevation of the Vietnam - Australia relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, positioning the VAC as a flagship initiative under the partnership.
- VAC design and activities are strategically aligned with Vietnam's development priorities to 2035 and its vision to 2045
- VAC's activities have significantly contributed to supporting Vietnam's future leadership to address national and international challenges and strengthened bilateral ties with Australia
- Remarkable adaptability of VAC's activities in response to the changing context has enabled VAC to dynamically adjust content delivery to address new and emerging priorities from both Vietnam and Australia. Better strategic use of the VAC's position and its three pillars to address emerging needs and priorities is suggested
- VAC's types of current courses and activities across its three pillars are fit for purpose and should continue in the next phase with some new focus, for example, the detailed contents of the four main policies (4 Resolutions) should be unpacked and tailored for each target beneficiary group.

#### 2. Effectiveness

- VAC has achieved significant output-level targets and created a strong foundation of trust and good relationships with Vietnamese partners, serving as an entry point for Australian collaboration with top Vietnamese officials.
- VAC's delivery approaches were widely seen by the interviewed participants as innovative and responsive.
- EOPOs remain broadly valid but require sharper articulation and better MEL systems to track long-term capacity change. In addition, current MEL tools only support monitoring but are not adequate for outcome evaluation.
- Progress on GEDSI has been encouraging, particularly through the success of the WILJ program and the development of the Research on Gender Equality Index. However, several ongoing gaps remain.

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- The Project Steering Committee/ Executive Committee model functioned well with supporting services provided by the managing contractors

**Summary of management responses**

No	Recommendations	Response	Explanation
1	The VAC's strategic position gained so far should be maximised by deepening bilateral policy dialogue, strengthening local leadership and governance capacity, and advancing inclusive initiatives, particularly in gender equality, social inclusion, and public sector innovation. VAC should also continue to facilitate high-level exchanges and collaborative research to inform policy and extend its regional collaboration efforts by sharing best practices with neighbouring countries.	Agree	The Embassy will work closely with the Managing Contractor of the Aus4Skills Phase 3, especially during the inception phase to ensure the strategic directions for the activities of the VAC in Phase 3 are clearly stated in the VAC Strategy 2027 – 2035.
2	To maintain ongoing strategic alignment with Vietnam's evolving priorities amid significant political shifts, it is recommended that DFAT and the MC include regular policy scans and structured stakeholder dialogue into the MEL framework. By systematically reviewing policy developments and engaging key stakeholders, the program will remain responsive and adaptable, ensuring that activities continue to reflect both Australia's and Vietnam's mutual interests. This approach will enhance agility and reinforce bilateral cooperation in a dynamic context.	Agree	Current governance mechanisms of the VAC, including bi-monthly Executive Committee meetings and bi-annually Project Steering Committee meetings are effective platforms for the VAC to discuss the priorities of Vietnam and Australia and ensure the VAC's activities are aligned with these and can adapt rapidly to evolving requirements and context. The Embassy will look to enhance the delivery and strengthen the effectiveness of these meetings.
3	VAC should strengthen targeted leadership development by integrating regular capacity needs assessments and comprehensive resource mapping into the MEL framework. This will enable a more effective response to local and sector-specific leadership needs and ensure that activities remain	Agree	The core offerings of the VAC will be reviewed as part of the strategy development for the VAC's next phase. This process will consider needs assessment of partner organisations, including whether there should be more

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	relevant and impactful. In addition to prioritising gender-balanced participation and deepening academic-government partnerships, VAC should actively mobilise the expertise and contributions of peers not only within the public sector, but also across academic networks and the private sector.		tailored courses and mobilisation of different expertise and sectors, while ensuring the strategic coherence of the activities.
4	VAC should refine its prioritisation processes to focus on activities aligned with its mission while retaining flexibility and foster greater integration among its three strategic pillars. Targeted support should be developed for Vietnam's reform agenda, incorporating the four pillars of reform, and participant selection processes should be strengthened to include new stakeholders. Regular collection and use of stakeholder feedback will enhance program relevance, while shifting from general education to targeted capacity-building will ensure sustainable, high-impact outcomes in an evolving context.	Agree	<p>DFAT agrees that greater integration among VAC's three pillars should be enhanced. DFAT recognises the ongoing development of Vietnam's reform agenda and will ensure the continued alignment of VAC activities with these priorities.</p> <p>DFAT will discuss with the EC how to refine the selection processes to ensure the right participants are selected for specific activities, such as courses and knowledge exchanges.</p> <p>DFAT will incorporate stakeholder feedback to inform decisions about the VAC's offering.</p>
5	To ensure VAC's courses and activities remain dynamic and relevant in the next phase, a strategic approach is recommended: prioritise targeted capacity-building initiatives aligned with Vietnam's reform agenda, tailor content to reform pillars and specific stakeholder groups, and improve participant selection for long-term benefits. Post-course support and flagship offerings should embed learning outcomes, while strengthening policy-practice linkages through research-driven, interactive engagement across pillars will foster sustainable change. Expanding reach to provincial and sectoral leaders,	Agree	<p>DFAT acknowledges the importance of ensuring VAC's activities align with Vietnam's priorities and reform agenda, included targeted initiatives.</p> <p>DFAT agrees post-course engagement with alumni is needed for sustainability, as is strengthening policy-practice linkages through research-driven engagement across pillars</p> <p>Expanding VAC's support to provincial leaders and leveraging partnerships is also the</p>

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	cultivating alumni engagement, and leveraging international partnerships will broaden systemic impact		<p>intention of the Centre to respond to emerging priorities.</p> <p>Any change or expansion of activities will need to be balanced with program budget constraints.</p>
6	To enhance VAC's effectiveness, it is essential to prioritise early and active stakeholder engagement, so program activities closely reflect local needs. Fostering co-design and mentorship between external experts and local actors will enable a progressive transfer of capacity	Agree	<p>DFAT recognises the importance of fostering early and active stakeholder engagement to inform and support the development of activities. This ensures VAC activities are responsive, inclusive and builds lasting capacity. Locally led development is a focus of the VAC and the broader Aus4Skills program.</p>
7	Establishing a structured Advisory Council will strengthen technical guidance and strategic oversight, and providing targeted support to foundational partners during proposal development will ensure alignment with VAC's objectives. Relevant experts identified by the Foundational Partners and contracted service providers could be members of the Advisory Council. The MC should determine the strategic/technical needs of an Advisory Council and how it could best support the VAC	Partially agree	<p>DFAT agrees that activities need to align with VAC's overall objectives. and will consider the best mechanism to do so, in light of current budget constraints.</p>
8	Systematic investment in a range of capacities to strengthen VAC's role as a bilateral hub. Such investments could include: partnership brokering, facilitation of knowledge exchange; robust systems for research-policy integration; digital infrastructure to support networking and collaboration across countries; and institutional frameworks that enable ongoing	Agree	<p>DFAT will work with the Managing contractor to ensure the VAC is able to engage strategically bilaterally and across the VAC's 3 pillars, within available resources and in alignment with the VAC strategy for its next phase.</p>

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	engagement with diverse stakeholders. Investment in these capacities and resources will allow the VAC to more effectively drive research-policy integration and foster institutional partnerships, amplifying its impact across the sector		
9	<p>To ensure the VAC's ongoing impact and strategic relevance, it is recommended to further develop a robust MEL system with targeted indicators aligned to core outcomes. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership metrics: Define and track indicators for joint research, policy initiatives, and co-developed projects, measuring both direct outputs and broader impacts on collaboration.</li> <li>• Policy and institutional growth: Monitor progress in policy development and institutional capacity building, focusing on measurable improvements driven by VAC partnerships.</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement: Collect and analyse feedback on the relevance, inclusivity, and effectiveness of VAC services, ensuring stakeholder satisfaction and knowledge exchange.</li> <li>• Adaptive learning: Incorporate regular reviews to enable agile response, helping the VAC and partners refine strategies and targets based on MEL findings</li> </ul>	Agree	<p>The Aus4Skills Mid-Term Review report also recommended strengthening the Monitoring Evaluation Framework, including the outcome level indicators. DFAT will work closely with the MC particularly during the inception phase to make sure the VAC Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework is enhanced further to ensure the VAC activities are on track to meet the EOPOs. Feedback loops to effectively incorporate analysis and review for adaptive learning and improvement of the program will be key.</p>

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10	To strengthen GEDSI outcomes, the VAC should establish clear participation targets for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities, conduct joint studies for inclusion policy development, implement targeted outreach and support strategies to engage provincial and marginalised groups, integrate comprehensive GEDSI indicators and disaggregated data collection into all monitoring and evaluation frameworks, provide training and resources on inclusive and accessible practices to local partners, and institute regular review mechanisms to assess progress and adjust approaches as needed	Agree	Promoting GEDSI is one of Australia's development priorities. DFAT and the VAC will continue to adopt a twin-track approach to GEDSI, including mainstreaming and targeted initiatives to further strengthen this work in the coming years.
11	To enhance future impact, opportunities include embedding climate change modules in training, fostering multi-sectoral policy dialogues, partnering with research institutes and international organisations, piloting provincial climate initiatives, building climate-focused networks, and leveraging digital platforms for wider dissemination. These steps would strengthen VAC's role in mainstreaming climate action and supporting Vietnam's transition to a climate-resilient future	Agree	Climate action is one of Australia's development priorities. DFAT and the VAC will mainstream and strengthen this work in the coming years.
12	Aus4Skills Phase 3 undertake further exploration of possible approaches to ensure the VAC has financial and operational sustainability beyond current programming to 2035 and delivers lasting impact.	Do not agree	This recommendation is beyond the scope of Aus4Skills Phase 3.

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	<p>The VAC is encouraged to broaden its funding sources beyond current ODA dependencies by cultivating partnerships with academic institutions, local governments, and the private sector. These collaborations can support joint research projects, co-hosted training, and shared service delivery, thereby driving both innovation and resource mobilisation</p>		