

# VHR Criterion and Threshold Guidelines 2022

## Summary of changes

1 December 2022

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The Heritage Council of Victoria's Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines (the Guidelines) are a key document for guiding the assessment and determination of the cultural heritage significance of places and objects under the *Heritage Act 2017*.

To ensure the Guidelines continue to be an effective tool, they are regularly reviewed. This document provides a summary of the main revisions that have occurred as part of the most recent review.

The revisions have been made to provide greater clarity in how the Guidelines are to be used and the Criteria are to be applied. The Criteria themselves have not changed.

The updated Guidelines were adopted by the Heritage Council of Victoria on 1 December 2022. They apply to all new recommendations made by the Executive Director AFTER 1 December 2022 and to all nominations.

### THE VHR CRITERIA AND THRESHOLD GUIDELINES – WHAT IS THE SAME?

1. The Guidelines still begin with introductory material that explains major concepts, definitions of terms used and how the Guidelines should be used.
2. The Heritage Assessment Criteria still align with the 2008 HERCON Criteria.
3. The three-step process is still being followed for 1) satisfying the Criterion, 2) determining state-level significance and 3) exclusion guidelines.
4. Short illustrative examples continue to be provided for each Criterion.
5. Reference tools are still provided in some Criteria to assist in the application.

### THE VHR CRITERIA AND THRESHOLD GUIDELINES – WHAT HAS CHANGED?

#### Introductory Section

1. **New two-column structure** – The introductory material has been reorganised into a two-column format so readers can more easily distinguish core content (left column) from additional explanatory information (right column).
2. **New sections** – All introductory material in the Guidelines has been revised and updated. New sections have included on the following topics to provide additional practical guidance to those unfamiliar with heritage conventions:
  - What is the Victorian Heritage Register?
  - Establishing cultural heritage significance
  - Evidence of cultural heritage significance
  - Extent of registration.
3. **New definitions** – All existing terms and definitions have been revised to facilitate an improved understanding of key terms, and the following new terms and definitions have been included:
  - Aesthetic (moved from the Reference tool in Criterion E and revised)
  - Attachment (moved from the Criterion G page)
  - Community (moved from the Criterion G page)
  - Rare (new term – to assist in the application of Criterion B)
  - Social value (moved from the Criterion G page).

The definition of 'intactness' has been removed because to be '*a highly intact example*' is no longer part of what it means to be 'a notable example of a class' for Criterion D (see under Criterion D revisions). The term is referred to in the definition of 'Integrity'.

## Criteria Structure

4. The two main changes to the structure of each Criterion are:
  - the addition of a 'coding system' (e.g. A1, SA1, XA1) in each of the steps to assist in their discussion in assessments and hearings
  - the removal of the capitalisation or bolding of different words in the steps and exclusion criteria.

There has also been more consistent cross-referencing to the Definitions in the relevant criteria.

## Criterion A

1. **Step 1 Test order** – The order has been changed to better reflect the sequential application of the tests.
2. **Step 1 Test amendment** – The previous Step 1 Test '*The association if the place/object to the event, phase etc. is evident in the physical fabric ... and/or in documentary resources or oral history*' (now Step 1, A3) has been amended to enable a broader understanding of 'evidence' as described in the two new introductory sections 'Establishing cultural heritage significance' and 'Evidence of cultural heritage significance'.
3. **Exclusion guidelines** – Small revisions have been made to improve clarity.
4. **Illustrative examples** – Two of the existing examples have been replaced with newer examples from more recent registrations.

## Criterion B

1. **Step 1 Test amendments** –
  - The previous Step 1 Test '*The association if the place/object to the event, phase etc. is evident in the physical fabric ... and/or in documentary resources or oral history*' (now Step 1, B2) has been amended to enable a broader understanding of 'evidence' as described in the two new introductory sections 'Establishing cultural heritage significance' and 'Evidence of cultural heritage significance'.
  - The third Step 1 Test has been transposed with the text from the Step 2 Test to better support the sequential application of the tests and remove duplication.
2. **Exclusion guidelines** – A new exclusion guideline '*XB5 – Uniqueness rather than rarity is claimed*' has been added in response to a recurring misinterpretation of places/objects that may be understood as being 'rare' by default.
3. **Illustrative examples** – Two of the existing examples have been replaced with newer examples from more recent registrations.

## Criterion C

1. **Step 1 and 2 Test amendments** – The previous second Step 2 text relating to '*information that is not already well documented or readily available from other sources*' has been moved to Step 1, C1, and slightly amended as this test better relates to whether the Criterion has been met, rather than acting as a threshold test for state-level significance.
2. **'Note' amendment** – The previous 'Note' has been expanded to provide additional clarity about the application of this Criterion and ensure it is understood that it can also apply to non-archaeological deposits (and two illustrative examples remain to demonstrate this).
3. **Illustrative examples** – Three of the examples have been replaced with newer examples from more recent registrations.

## Criterion D

1. **Reference Tool D amendment** – The explanation for what constitutes '*a notable example of a class*' in the Reference tool has been restructured to improve clarity. This includes the removal of '*a highly intact example*' from being an appropriate test.
2. **Illustrative examples** – Two of the examples have been replaced with newer examples from more recent registrations.

## Criterion E

1. **Step 2 amendment** – The Step 2 Test has been revised to include ‘*evidence from within the relevant discipline*’ in response to the perceived limitations of the existing tests being solely reliant on public acclaim or views expressed by award-giving bodies.
2. **Reference Tool E amendment** – The definition of ‘Aesthetic’ that was previously the subject of the Reference Tool has been revised and moved to the Definitions in the Introductory section of the Guidelines. It has been replaced by an extract from the Burra Charter Practice Note, which will assist Guideline users in considering the aesthetic characteristics of a place or object in relation to this Criterion.
3. **Illustrative examples** – Two new examples have been added, increasing the total number from four to six.

## Criterion F

1. **Step 2 amendment** – The Step 2 Test has been revised to include ‘*evidence from within the relevant creative or technological discipline...*’ in response to the perceived limitations of the existing tests being solely reliant on public acclaim or views expressed by award-giving bodies.
2. **Illustrative examples** – One of the examples has been replaced with a newer example from more recent registrations.

## Criterion G

1. **Structural changes** – The structural organisation and design of the content in the Criterion has been revised so that it aligns with that of the other Criteria. This has necessitated:
  - moving the discussion of ‘What is social value’, and the test descriptions relating to ‘What is the community or cultural group?’ and ‘What is the intensity of the attachment?’ to the Definitions
  - moving the test on ‘What is the time depth of the attachment?’ into ‘Reference Tool G – Step 1’
  - revising the wording of Step 1, G1, to take into account the above two changes and include cross references to the Definitions and the new ‘Reference Tool G – Step 1’
  - moving the tests for Step 2 into the new ‘Reference Tool G – Step 2’ and slightly revising the wording of Step 2 SG1 to account for this.
2. **Illustrative examples** – One of the examples has been replaced with a newer example from more recent registrations.

## Criterion H

1. **Step 1 amendment** – The first test (H1) has been revised to remove ‘to the course of Victorian history’ and replace it with ‘in their field of endeavour’. This is to resolve concerns that the requirement to demonstrate that a person has contributed to the course Victoria’s history is a claim that can only credibly be made for a handful of people (and so is overly limiting).
2. **Step 2 amendment** – An additional threshold test has been included ‘*SH1) The life or works of the person/persons is important to Victoria’s history*’.
3. **Illustrative examples** – Two of the examples have been replaced with newer examples from more recent registrations

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