GENERAL COMMENTS

Task summary
This task involves three outcomes, two in Unit 3 and the one in Unit 4. In Unit 3, students
undertake Outcome 2 – Media Production Skills, and Outcome 3 – a Media Production
Design. In Unit 4, students undertake Outcome 1 – Media Process, in which they complete
the product they designed in Unit 3. The assessment of the School-assessed Task is reviewed
by visitation and teachers should retain students’ Production exercises and ensure that
students maintain their Design Plans, work from them, and submit the plan with the
production as part of the assessment. Three of the seven assessment criteria for the School-
assessed Task relate directly to the Design Plan.

Format and general approaches
Media Production exercises
Each Media Production exercises should include:
• exploration/s of production design plan specifications appropriate to media product/s
• investigation/s of the capacities of technical equipment, applications and/or media
  processes appropriate to a media product
• evidence of the operation of technical equipment, use of applications and/or application of
  media processes to develop skills in areas identified in the production design plan
  specifications
• exploration/s of aesthetic and/or structural qualities and/ or characteristics of media
  products.
Teachers should design production exercises that allow students to demonstrate the dot points
above.
Each production exercise normally comprises three component parts:

Assessment
Most teachers had devised their own performance descriptors based on those suggested in the
VCE Dance Assessment Handbook. Key descriptor words as matched to weightings suggested
in the assessment handbook seemed to help teachers to form their judgments in the first year
of using performance descriptors rather than criteria.

1. Intention and specifications
• a description of the intention/s of the exercise and
• a description of the media production design plan specification/s to be explored and/or
  investigated

2. Evidence
• planning and/or productions work that demonstrates the use of technical equipment,
  application and/or processes

3. Realisation
• an explanation of how the completed exercise realises the intention/s of the exercise.
All components of each Production exercise are considered when assessing whether the
student has demonstrated the key knowledge and skills associated with this outcome.
Exercises should be clearly labelled as ‘Production exercise 1’ and ‘Production exercise 2’.
Production design plan

The Media production design plan is central to the completion of a successful production. It is an opportunity for students to visualise and document each aspect of the proposed production and by doing so to anticipate, consider and resolve potential issues and problems associated with the proposal. The plan allows students to plan for success given the resources, skills and time frame available to them.

The production design plan should be seen as much more than an overview of the proposed production, it is a detailed blueprint that will be used extensively throughout the production and postproduction stages to plan and undertake each step and to illustrate the student’s vision to others including the cast and crew. A design plan is considered complete when all relevant specifications are documented in sufficient written and visual detail that someone who knows about media production could visualise, interpret and potentially undertake the production.

Production

The media production is the culmination of an extended process of skill building, conceptualisation, consultation, planning, production and postproduction. It is a complex task for which sufficient time must be allocated in order for students to achieve their vision. The nature of media is such that productions are designed for an audience, students should keep the needs, experience and expectations of their audience in mind throughout the production process and be encouraged to screen or present their production to their audience at its completion. The notion of a real audience is a powerful motivator that will help students to focus on the many fine details demanding attention throughout the production process. Students enjoy sharing their Media productions with an audience where they can experience the pleasure of their engagement in the consumption process.

High-scoring work

Production exercises

High-scoring students:
• concentrated on one or two specifications in each exercise in order to demonstrate depth of knowledge and skill
• in the intention provided precise documentation of those aspects of each specification to be investigated
• provided a considered realisation of the learning achieved in the completion of the exercise
• used the language and codes and conventions of media with precision and confidence.

Production Design Plan and product

High-scoring students:
• conceived, designed and executed their product with their intention and audience clearly in mind
• produced a Design Plan that clearly and succinctly worked through all the specifications relevant to their medium
• approached each stage of the production process in a planned and organised manner
• produced a product that exhibited appropriate knowledge and use of the conventions of the medium
• produced a product with individual and distinctive qualities that engaged its designated audience
• produced a product that made best use of the equipment available to the student in relation to the task
• displayed a genuine connection between the Design Plan and the finished product, with deviations between the two clearly justified and annotated on the plan.
SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Criterion 1 – Use of media equipment, applications and/or processes to present ideas and/or achieve particular effects

Production exercises submitted for review demonstrated an extensive range of approaches to the task. Production exercises should inform students’ design plans and then the media production. Students who undertake exercises which explore specifications that will be important in their proposed media production are able to develop knowledge and skills that advantages them in design, production and postproduction stages of their School-assessed Task. For example, a student who is planning work on a horror theme might explore two and three point lighting techniques to compare the effect of high and low key lighting on the mise en scene.

It is important that work undertaken for this outcome does not form part of the student’s later production. Students cannot be marked twice for the same piece of work. The role of this outcome is to develop ideas and techniques that may be later employed in production, not to undertake aspects of the production itself. It is not appropriate, for example, for students to complete photographic shoots or design titles sequences that will later form part of the media production.

Documentation is an important part of this outcome. For each exercise students should submit an intention that clearly describes the specification/s they plan to explore and details those aspects of the specification/s they intend to investigate in terms of the capacities of technical equipment, applications and/or media processes appropriate to a media product. Design plan specifications should be clearly identified. Students should state what they are going to do during each exercise to achieve their intention.

On completion of each production exercise students must undertake a realisation that clearly explains, in some detail, what the student has achieved, the degree to which the exercise achieved the intention and what the student has learned about how the designated specification/s may contribute to a media production design plan and/or production.

Each component of students’ production exercises must be clearly labelled. Students’ exercises should be stored individually. It is not appropriate to store production exercises on school computers or servers as they may be easily lost.

It was apparent from the work presented for review that some schools continue to set mini productions for this outcome. This approach is not appropriate as such a practice does not allow students to devote sufficient attention to a limited number of specifications. Students may be confused, misunderstand the intent of the task or use ideas that might better form part of their production.

Teachers should use the language of the study design when teaching this outcome; terms such as ‘minor production’ or ‘production 1’ mislead students as to the scope and intent of the task. Better production exercises included:

• an exercise in the visual possibilities and limitations of the video available cameras in terms of camera framing, positions and movement. Voice over explanations of each shot detailed how it was achieved and how it might be used in a production
• an exploration of storyboarding techniques which compared the aesthetic and structural capacities of a range of storyboarding techniques including hand drawn, digitally photographed and software based technologies
• an exercise that explored compositional elements through control over aperture and shutter speed for the chosen subject
• an exploration of the effects that can be achieved with the printers available to the student using different paper stocks and finishes.
Criterion 2 – Development of a media production design plan

The Review identified that media production design plans continue to improve in terms of attention to the required elements, the use of media specific language and media planning conventions. The design plans submitted for review generally demonstrated increased control over the important specifications of audience and intention. Better plans contained strong and detailed characterisations of the proposed audience linking this to how the production was designed to appeal to the audience.

Media production design plans should be complete at the conclusion of Unit 3. No further additions to or decoration of the plan is required after this time. Students should not include detailed records of the production process in their design plan. Such additions do not contribute to the assessment of this outcome. Teachers are advised to mark the design plan at the conclusion of Unit 3 to discourage students from including unnecessary process work such as screen shots of the editing process, thumbnails or test prints when the plan is resubmitted at the conclusion of the production. Students should be strongly encouraged to view the design plan as a working document that is an integral part of the production process.

It is expected that in their plans students will provide detailed and complete visual representations of their proposed production. Attention to this important aspect of the visualisation process will help students anticipate and resolve potential issues related to their productions and encourage the planning of productions that can be realised given the student’s skills and the time and resources available.

In the works presented for review visual representations in the areas of print and photography were generally weaker than those for video productions. Students undertaking print based production design plans should present detailed mock-ups of each page and/or image including, as appropriate, details of lighting, composition, location, props, typology, the principles of page design and style, the use of colour and graphic elements appropriate to the proposed production, audience and intention. Readers of the design plan should have a strong sense of what the completed production will look like from the visual representations.

Reviewers were pleased to note students making more focussed use of material included in the research/investigation of ideas section of their design plans. Whilst too many plans continue to contain an excessive number of cut and paste images, those students who annotated their research with relevant comments that demonstrated how the student has drawn inspiration from the material were advantaged in their ability to conceive and discuss matters related to aesthetics, technology and ideas.

Criterion 3 – Understanding of media form/s, conventions and style/s appropriate to the media product

This criterion is assessed on both the design plan and media product. Students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of the media form/s, conventions and style/s in which they are working through referencing these in their plan and product through written and/or visual representations of elements including, as appropriate, genre and/or style, the conventions of layout for particular audiences and intentions, mise en scene, the selection and use of lighting or typography conventional to the style of the product. For example, students creating a drama may discuss in writing or diagrammatic form how their multilayered sound design will enhance the ambient sound of their locations to build tension in an audience. This design will be evident in the completed production.

Criterion 4 – Development of an individual and/or distinctive product

Individuality and/or distinctiveness may be evident in many aspects of a student’s production. An assured product is the result of both technical expertise and a deep understanding of the ways in which ideas and themes may be developed in media productions. Teachers can develop this understanding through the materials they introduce to students during the design process. Exposure to a range of media forms and texts will help students develop and control individuality and/or distinctiveness in their productions.
It was evident in the work presented for review that some students had planned productions that were overly ambitious or complex given their skills and/or the resources available to them. It is important that students be counselled to work to their strengths and to the possibilities and limitations of the equipment to which they have access. It is not appropriate, for example, for students to attempt to produce a glossy magazine if they do not have access to a printer capable of printing high gloss images that are bled to the edge. Students should be encouraged to consider the possibilities and limitations of printers and paper stock early in the design stage and to plan appropriately.

Students who scored well for this criterion were able to maintain consistency across the breadth of their productions. In photography and print this took the form of a high level of stylistic continuity and technical consistency between pages or images. Video productions demonstrated a high level of control over the development and resolution of the ideas supported by assured and skilful direction and execution throughout the work.

**Criterion 5 – Skill in the use of production equipment and/or facilities**

This criterion is assessed on the skill and use of production equipment and facilities at each stage of the production process. As technology advances and students come to Media with skills developed over longer periods, software programs are being used with a greater understanding of the possibilities and limitations afforded by digital technologies, thus facilitating levels of creativity that advance every year. However, no amount of skill in postproduction will overcome problems arising from a lack of control of video and sound recording equipment in production.

For many video and photographic productions lighting continues to be inconsistent and poorly controlled. The solution lies at the design stage. Lighting designs should take into account the lighting available to the student, whether natural or artificial. Students should be encouraged to consider such matters in their media production design plans.

Sound is also an issue with wind and ambient noise often muffling dialogue. Where possible students should monitor sound recording using headphones. If this is not possible students should listen to each take to ensure that the sound is adequate. Simple measures such as the use of a wind sock or if available an external microphone, careful positioning of the camera and recording several takes of every shot will provide the student with clean sound.

The review demonstrated that students are increasingly making use of the audio and colour correction features of editing software. This practise is encouraged. Teachers may wish to cover these postproduction techniques in their teaching of media production skills.

**Criterion 6 – Understanding the management and organisation of the production process**

This criterion is assessed entirely on the completed media production in which an understanding of the management and organisation of the production process at each stage of production should be evident. The results of thorough preproduction planning, effectively managed direction and control of photographic and video shoots and considered postproduction processes will be apparent in the completed production. Again, the key lies in planning. Students who complete and make effective use of a production schedule or timeline generally produce work that demonstrates this criterion at a higher level. This schedule should work back from the due date and include a realistic timeframe for lengthy processes such as printing, mounting and burning to DVD. It is especially important for students to build some ‘wiggle room’ into planning for these late postproduction tasks because adjustment to equipment or settings and several test prints are frequently required in order to achieve the desired results, especially when equipment is shared by many in the class.
Criterion 7 – Realisation of the production Design Plan in the media product

This criterion is assessed on the relationship between the media production design plan and the completed media production. Process documentation such as screen shots, realisation statements or reflections on the process are not necessary or required and are not assessable. Differences between the design plan and the production, if evident, should be explained in the form of brief notes or annotations to the design plan itself and be clearly differentiated from it. These notes will explain the technical, stylistic or developmental reasons for changes between plan and product. Sticky notes or a different coloured pen are suggested as the most effective method of making such annotations.

Students are not assessed on the neatness or surface decoration of their design plan. It is expected that the design plan will display evidence of its extensive use as an integral part of the production and post-production process.