



2008 School-assessed Task Report

Media GA 2

GENERAL COMMENTS

Task summary

This task involves three outcomes, two in Unit 3 and the third 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 production design plans, work from them, and submit the production design plan with the production as part of the assessment. Three of the seven assessment criteria for the School-assessed Task relate directly to the production design plan.

Format and general approaches

Media Production Exercises

In 2008 the scope of task specified that students undertake two production exercises. The scope of the task is unchanged for 2009. School-assessed Task advice is published in February each year. The 2009 *VCAA School Assessment Bulletin Supplement* is available at: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/studies/media/mediaindex.html

Teachers are urged to consider this advice when planning for and teaching Media Production Skills and when planning the assessment task.

Media Production Exercises should be differentiated from the teaching and learning phase of this area of study. This differentiation should be evident to all students.

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:

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'.

Teachers should pay particular attention to the relative weighting of the Production exercises in the assessment of the School-assessed Task. It is not appropriate for students to undertake a completed production for this outcome. In the work reviewed in 2008, there was again evidence that students were asked or allowed to complete productions. The Production design plans and productions of these students were adversely affected in a number of ways; it appeared students lost momentum, perhaps used their best ideas for this outcome or were overwhelmed by the task and subsequently were unable to devote sufficient energy to their production design plan and production.

It is important that Production Exercises be stored securely by the school together with each student's completed production and, after it has been used in the production process, the production design plan. Students cannot be scored for work that is not presented for assessment or review if required. Lost, stolen or damaged work should be reported to the VCAA by the principal using the appropriate form:
www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/schooladmin/forms/vce/lcd.pdf

Production design plan

While there is no designated way to complete a production design plan it is expected that students will use industry conventions in the layout and presentation of their design. Students should provide organised and specific references to all specifications relevant to the medium in which they are working. 'Intention and audience' is one specification common to all production formats, and should be explored in some detail. Other specifications refer more precisely to particular media forms. A comprehensive summary of production design plan specifications can be found on pages 25–27 of the study design. Students are strongly encouraged to use these specifications as part of their production design plan language.

Media production design plans must be assessed by the teacher as S or N (satisfactory or not satisfactory) before students begin their productions. It is not appropriate for the production design plan to be completed retrospectively nor can students be given credit for work done on the production design plan once it has been submitted and assessed as satisfactory during Unit 3. One approach to avoid retrospective 'planning' is to initial and/or date stamp each page of the plan. Authentication records for School-assessed Tasks can also be used to monitor the student's work in progress. Authentication forms are found in the VCE and VCAL Administrative handbook p.217 at:
www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/schooladmin/handbook/2009/vce-vcsl-handbook09.pdf

There must be a strong relationship between the production design plan and the final product. Departures from or developments of some specific intentions are acceptable, as this mirrors professional practice. When these changes occur the plan should be annotated, detailing the reasons for the intended departure from the plan. Evaluative 'statements of outcome' are not part of this task, should not be included and are not subject to assessment.

Production

Information regarding the formats in which the Media production may be completed and the scope of task appropriate to each media form (including durations, number of pages and number of images) can be found on pages 24 and 35 of the *Media VCE Study Design* and in the *VCAA Bulletin*, Supplement 1, February 2009
www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/correspondence/bulletins/2009/bulletin2009.html#H3N10064

The designated formats and scopes of task designated in the study design must be complied with.

The length of the task is sufficient in each form to allow a student to complete an excellent production within a realistic timeframe. The tasks have been designed for equity of workload between media forms and in recognition of professional media practice where practitioners rarely choose the scope of their productions. In 2008, the review process again revealed some pieces of work that were overly long and others that were too brief. Reviewers commented that works that exceeded the scope of task would invariably have been of higher quality with; for example, tighter editing or greater attention given to the development of fewer pages or images.

It should be noted that several works were submitted for Top Screen and Top Designs which exceeded the scope of task and could not be included in the selection process. It is regrettable that each of these works would have been improved had attention to scope of task been part of the teaching and learning of the pre production and production process. Works that exceed the scope of task cannot score very high in criterion 6, management of the production process. Teachers should make the parameters of the scope of task very clear to students at the production design phase and during production.

The convergence of digital photography and print layout evident in recent years has continued with students using convergent techniques effectively in the design and construction of productions that met their intentions for their designated audience. Students are encouraged to make firm decisions about the media form in which they intend to work early in the design process. The choice should be informed by the choice of topic or subject matter, the availability of appropriate equipment and the student's level of familiarity with the various media formats under consideration.

Students should design and produce a production that can be realised given the equipment, applications and processes available. Development of an understanding and practical experience of the possibilities and limitations of equipment, applications and processes they will use in their production are fundamental to the teaching of Unit 3 outcome 2. Such knowledge and skills informs the development of the media production design plan and ultimately the completion of the production at the highest level possible. Students should be encouraged to think about what is and is not possible given the combination of the scope of task, available equipment and processes, their skills and the time allocated for the task. Teaching strategies including, as appropriate, undertaking test prints using different paper stocks and the available printers, directing short sequences of actors, developing special effects in the edit suite, budgeting for production and developing realistic timelines that accommodate the requirements of all students in the class will help students design and produce a production that authentically deals with the possibilities and limitations within which they must work. Such practices will enable students to maximise the former and mitigate against the latter to complete productions of the highest standard.

High-scoring work

Production exercises

High-scoring production exercises demonstrated a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of the task in two clearly delineated production exercises and were able to demonstrate skill in the completion of each exercise together with a sound grasp of the production design plan specifications explored and/or applied. There was clear evidence of the skills the student had employed to complete each exercise, together with evidence of the student's understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the equipment, applications and/or processes used. Documentation was well organised, clear and comprehensive for both exercises, and the evaluation was honest in its explanation of the extent to which the exercise realised the stated intention/s.

Production design plan and product

High-scoring students:

- conceived, designed and executed their product with their intention and audience clearly in mind
- produced a production 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 being undertaken
- displayed a genuine connection between the production design plan and the finished product, with deviations between the two clearly justified and annotated on the plan.

The subjects and themes of student productions were varied. Students are encouraged to choose subject matter, themes or situations with which they are familiar and then to approach these in creative and individual ways, choosing the media format that in their opinion best suits their exploration of the topic. High-quality student work was exhibited in each of the media formats and across a variety of genres or styles of presentation. Radio or audio was once again a little used stand alone media form but the continued development of increasingly controlled, original and sophisticated soundtracks was pleasing.

Students generally made appropriate use of advances in technology without losing sight of the need for technical proficiency to be matched by appropriate levels of individuality, management and organisation of the production process.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

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

Production exercises presented for review revealed that students who had been given simple and clear instructions to complete smaller tasks which were clearly differentiated from teaching and learning activities were generally more successful than those students who were asked to make 'mini productions'. These students were better able to understand the purpose of the exercise, their documentation at all three stages of each exercise was of a higher quality and their learning clearly evident. Mini productions or overly long tasks do not focus students' attention on the requirements of the task nor allow them to concentrate on specific production design plan specifications in sufficient detail. Shorter specific tasks help students attend to the requirements of the task more effectively.

It is very important that separate, well differentiated and clearly labelled documentation be provided for each exercise, including those completed as planning tasks. The documentation for such tasks could include, for example, an intention to determine how the conventions of visual representations such as storyboards or photographic mock-ups can convey information and be used to anticipate and solve production problems. Students could use and evaluate several different storyboard or mock-up processes noting and proposing solutions to the limitations of each.

Realisation documentation is an opportunity for students to evaluate the extent to which the practical part of the exercise conveyed the intended ideas, explored the Production design plan specifications noted in the intention and, as appropriate, the possibilities and limitations of the equipment, applications and/or processes used. This documentation should not be seen as an opportunity for a discussion about or apology for the student's lack of ability but how

the intention was realised given the available equipment and processes. Successful documentation is the result of clear instructions and well understood tasks.

Criterion 2: Development of a media production design plan

Production design plans presented for review once again varied in the manner in which they were completed. Production design plans generally reflected professional media production design conventions, variations reflected factors including media form, intention, budget and time constraints.

There is no single correct method of designing a media production. An effective production design plan should convey a full understanding of what the finished work will be like. It should contain both visual and written material that is directly relevant to the production. One test that might be applied to determine the efficacy of the plan is to ask ‘Could this production design plan be used by someone other than its creator to complete the production?’ Aspects of some media productions may be planned in greater detail than others – students should make use of industry practice in these cases. For example, while it may not be possible to fully storyboard a documentary, it is possible to storyboard aspects of the production and to create a timeline that illustrates the various aspects of the topic that will be included in the final production. Similarly, interview questions and possible camera positions can be planned.

Some production design plans continue to be presented in the form of workbooks or visual diaries that contain all of the student’s work for the semester. This is not recommended practice as students may experience difficulty in differentiating the relative importance of the specific production design plan specifications from teaching, learning and initial brainstorming activities.

A number of production design plans contained an excessive number of pages devoted to ‘influences’ with little or no annotation or relevance to the proposed production. These pages tended to comprise many cut and pasted images from magazines or of equipment and lacked real purpose or focus, contributed little to the students’ intention and were included too often at the expense of discussion of production design plan specifications as required by the study design. It should be noted that the term ‘influence’ does not appear in the key knowledge and skills associated with this outcome. Students should instead be considering the ‘techniques used in preparing for the design of a production’. The language of the study design will help students focus their understanding of this area. Pages of, for example, photocopied fonts or instructions for the use of equipment or software on their own do not constitute such techniques and would better form part of the teaching and learning of this outcome. Students should be encouraged to annotate any material included in their Production design plan to explain the purpose of its inclusion. Statements such as ‘I like this font’ are less useful than ‘The weight of this font suggests ...’

Production design plans should not be altered (except by way of annotation, see Criterion 7 below) after their submission. To satisfy criterion 2 students are assessed on the production design plan as submitted to pass Unit 3. Material generated after the conclusion of Unit 3 including reprinted, tidied up or decorated production design plans, stills taken during the production process or of the finished production, contact sheets or test prints should not be included in the production design plan and will not be assessed. Students should be clearly advised about the requirements of the task as described in the knowledge and skills and performance descriptors for this outcome.

An increasing number of teachers are date stamping or signing each page of the production design plan and/or assessing it at the conclusion of Unit 3. Such practice serves as incentive for students to ensure that the plan is fully formulated by this time and as a disincentive to edit or tidy it up for later assessment. For discussion of appropriate annotations, see Criterion 7.

It was pleasing to note that the production design plans presented for review in 2008 exhibited fewer examples of students who planned for productions that they would not be able to realise for various reasons, including time, the resources available to them and a clear lack of appreciation of their skill level. These included designs for productions with very large casts by students whose production exercises indicated that they did not have the management skills required to realise such a proposal and students attempting computer animation techniques for the first time.

The productions presented for review in 2008 revealed fewer instances of Production design plans that involved dangerous activities. It is a school's responsibility to ensure that duty of care is exercised in relation to the health and safety of all students undertaking this study. This duty of care extends to guiding students with appropriate subject matter and activities proposed in production design plans. When appropriate the Production design plan should contain details of how health and safety considerations will be handled during production. Students may not design or produce works that put themselves, their cast or crew in danger.

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

Production design plans and productions submitted for assessment in 2008 continued to demonstrate students' increasing understanding of form, conventions and style appropriate to the intention of the production. This was evident in image and shot construction and the selection of appropriate soundtrack, lighting, editing styles and rhythm. Understanding and control of the conventions of design and layout appropriate to print genres are similarly developing although print productions that attempted to reproduce particular genres including fashion or sporting magazines without access to the necessary resources such as lighting, long lenses and appropriate paper stock and printing techniques were generally not able to demonstrate a good grasp of the form, conventions and style appropriate to the product. The key to success in this criterion often lies in the ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned during Unit 3, Outcome 2.

It was pleasing to note students' appreciation of the importance of age appropriate casting for video, sound photographic and print production works. Depending on the intention of the work, casting classmates in adult roles may not lend authenticity to the final production. In situations where students are unable to source appropriate actors they may be better advised to consider changing their topic at the Production design plan stage. Appropriate casting is integral to the design process and may impact on this and other criteria.

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

Individuality and distinctiveness may be measured in many ways. Work that scored well on this criterion was highly accomplished and demonstrated effective communication throughout all aspects of the production. In these works concept, ideas, structure and skills came together to create a production that was an effective realisation of the design for the specified audience. These works may have dealt with original concepts or been distinctive in the ways in which they utilised existing concepts, text types, styles or genres. Better works were distinguished by the depth and breadth of thought brought to each aspect of the production. The works revealed control and discipline in the execution of ideas and intention. Teachers and students looking for exemplars of individuality and distinctiveness will see these in the Top Designs and Top Screen exhibitions.

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

This criterion refers to the production equipment and/or facilities available to the student and, while it is assessed on the production alone, the ability to make effective use of such equipment and/or facilities begins in preproduction. It is important that students plan for a production that can be realised given the equipment and/or facilities available to them.

Productions submitted for review demonstrated increasing assuredness in the use of production equipment and facilities, especially in the areas of sound recording, audio mixing and colour matching. Better works demonstrated a sound grasp of the possibilities and limitations of equipment and/or facilities, often pushing the equipment to the maximum, yet not asking anything more than it was capable of. For example, video productions that were edited in a manner that did not draw attention to the technology but supported the plot and mood of the piece with the selection of effective transitions, therefore demonstrating appropriate rhythm and pace, scored better than those works which showed rough or ill timed editing, or contained unusual and distracting transitions.

2008 once again saw an increase in the number of print productions presented for review. This media form has demonstrated considerable growth in both popularity and skill development in recent years. Students are demonstrating an understanding of design considerations appropriate to the genre of their production and making more effective use of the software available to them. Of particular note was the considered attention given to the selection of paper stock although more thought needs to be directed to the possibilities and limitations of available printers.

The decline in the popularity of silver gelatin photography has been accompanied by a decline in the skill base evident in the productions presented for review. Few productions were submitted in this medium and were often marred by poor darkroom practice. Digital photography continues to grow in popularity but productions too often reflected a lack of understanding of the impact of printer and paper stock on which the finished work will be produced. Students should be encouraged to consider what the available equipment and/or facilities are capable of rather than focusing on a perceived lack of equipment or ignoring the strengths of what is available. The skills required for each stage of the production and the possibilities and limitations of all equipment and facilities to be used should be taught, as far as is possible, during Outcome 2 in Unit 3. Thereafter these skills can become the focus of homework and private study activities.

Some print and photographic productions submitted for review appeared to be professionally printed. It is important that students demonstrate their technical skill and competence in the use and/or operation of production equipment and/or facilities evident in the production to score well on this criterion. Students are expected to thoroughly understand and demonstrate the use of production and/or facilities. This cannot be achieved if the student outsources their printing. The scope of task outlined on page 24 of the study design and page 26 of the assessment guide are explicit on the requirement that students will print their own work. Students may not use printing bureaus, photo labs or DIY print stands in shops. There are particular skills involved in setting up digital images and print productions for a particular printer which is why the scope of task for these media forms requires students to print their own work. Teachers are expected to make notes regarding student printing on the Authentication record to verify the work is the student's own. Students may not outsource any aspect of the printing process, to do so necessarily impacts on their assessment in Criterion 5 and Criterion 6.

Criterion 6: Understanding the management and organisation of the production process

This criterion is assessed on the evidence in the finished product alone. Problems that occur early in the production tend to snowball at later stages. Students' skills vary at different stages and roles of media production and, to succeed in this criterion, students should be self aware and allow appropriate time for those stages where they anticipate they might have difficulties.

There were examples of productions for which the production design plans were detailed and thorough but where the production process was less successful than the student had hoped due to inadequate time management or lack of skills or equipment. The most accomplished works

were evidence of well developed individual production timelines that accounted for the availability of equipment at each stage of the production process.

Common problems evident in this criterion continue to include insufficient footage or negatives to complete a quality production and insufficient time allowed for image manipulation, colour correction, printing and presentation.

Students should be encouraged to undertake test shoots where possible, practise directing models and actors and allow time for shooting alternative camera angles, cut ins and cut aways. This extra material can be very useful in the edit suite or during image editing. Students working in photography and print should work to a strict timeline to allow for the same level of complexity and quality across all images and pages of their production. It is regrettable that some video productions submitted for review demonstrated sound control over titles sequences and one or two early scenes but deteriorated as the production progressed and as time overtook students' creative intentions resulting in rushed editing and poor resolution of ideas, technique and storyline. Print and photographic works were too often marred by greater attention to the first images in each production and hurried completion of later images or pages. It is suggested that students be encouraged to consider working in a non linear timeline organising their workflow in the order of complexity rather than the order in which audiences will view the production.

Students should be instructed to allow time for printing photographic or print productions, burning video productions to DVD or viewing multimedia productions on different computers where they have the opportunity to view and reflect on the finished product allowing time to make final adjustments to the production. Given the nature of equipment available to students it is vital that they do not assume that the burning, printing or publication process will proceed as they hope. Final checks are an important part of the post production process.

Criterion 7: Realisation of the production design plan in the media product

This criterion assesses the relationship between the production design plan, as completed in Unit 3, and the production completed in Unit 4. The product is a realisation of this plan and should reveal extensive use of the plan. Work that scored highly on this criterion demonstrated use of the production design plan as a working document. It is not necessary to exactly reproduce the plan to score highly, but students should demonstrate an effective realisation of the plan at all stages of the production process. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to decorate, rewrite, add to or reprint the production design plan for assessment or to include details of the production and post production stages, including, for example, stills from the production, images of the cast and crew at work, negatives and test strips or draft prints. Such work may be useful for teaching and learning but cannot contribute to a student's score for this criterion. The production design plan is not intended to be a demonstration of skills in presentation.

Teachers should caution students that production design plans must be completed during Unit 3 and that any additions completed after this time notwithstanding, cannot be scored for this criterion. There is clear evidence that retrospectively completed production design plans are invariably associated with products that would have been much improved had the time used to work on these 'plans' been employed during Outcome 3 in Unit 3 rather than at the conclusion of Outcome 1 in Unit 4. There are many strategies that can be employed to avoid students unnecessarily reworking their production design plan. These include signing and/or dating each page on receipt of the plan, photocopying and retaining a copy of the plan or separating the teaching and learning workbook or visual diary from the production design plan, thus making the plan a smaller and more focussed document. Students should be reminded that there is no criterion for decoration, the production design plan models industry practice and should be used extensively during production and post production stages. Teachers are often fearful that if they allow students to retain their

production design plans they may be lost; however, if the production design plan is used as a working document essential for the completion of production and post production, then its loss is far less common than teachers imagine.

It is a rare Media production that exactly reproduces the production design plan as a great deal of learning occurs throughout the production process. The production design plan should be clearly annotated in a manner that differentiates the annotations from the original plan. Annotations are intended to document any changes to the plan and the reasons for these changes. Such annotation should be brief and may take the form of, for example notes in the margin, post it notes, stickers or point form lists. The annotations should demonstrate development of students' skills and knowledge during the production process. Well annotated production design plans usually allowed students to increase their score on this criterion.