



## 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 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

In 2005 the scope of task specified that students undertake two production exercises. The scope of the task is unchanged for 2006. The 2006 School-assessed Task advice in the February VCAA Bulletin contains specific and detailed advice on the nature, scope and administration of the School-assessed Task. Teachers are urged to consider this advice when planning for and teaching this Area of Study as well as when planning the task. The Production exercises should be clearly differentiated from the teaching and learning phase of this Area of Study and from each other. Exercises should be clearly labelled as 'Production exercise 1' and 'Production exercise 2'. Each exercise should be accompanied by documentation that includes:

- a description of the intention(s) of the exercise
- a description of the media production design plan specification(s) to be explored and/or investigated
- an explanation of how the completed exercise realises the intention(s) of the exercise.

Teachers should note 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 2005, there was evidence that students who were asked to complete a production lost momentum. As a result, their Design Plan suffered in terms of depth and attention to the specifications required.

To facilitate their return to students and to simplify the review process, it is suggested that Production exercises be stored individually with each student's Design Plan and production.

### Design Plan

While there is no single, set way to complete a Design Plan, there were some features that were common to excellent plans. The most fundamental of these is a specific reference by the student to the Design Plan specifications relevant to the medium being used. '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 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 Design Plan language.

There must be an obvious development from the Design Plan through to 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. Media Design Plans must be assessed by the teacher as S or N (satisfactory or not satisfactory) before students begin their productions; it is inappropriate for the Design Plan to be completed retrospectively. One approach is to initial and/or date stamp each page of the plan. Evaluative 'statements of outcome' are not part of this task and should not be included.

### 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 on page 16 of Supplement 2 of the February VCAA Bulletin – the 2006 Advice for School Assessment. The designated formats and scopes of task 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 2005, the review process 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 fewer pages or images.

The convergence of digital photography and print layout in recent years has continued, and students used this convergence effectively in the design and construction of productions that met their intentions for their designated audience. Students are encouraged to make firm decisions about which medium in which they are working early in the design process. The chosen medium should be determined largely by the choice of topic or subject matter, with other considerations being the availability of appropriate equipment and the student's level of familiarity with the various media formats under consideration.

## High-scoring work

### Production exercises

High-scoring students showed a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of the task in both production exercises and were able to demonstrate skill in the completion of each exercise together with a sound grasp of the 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 clear and comprehensive, and the evaluation was honest in its explanation of the extent to which the exercise realised the stated intention(s).

### 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 being undertaken
- displayed a genuine connection between the Design Plan and the finished product, with deviations between the two clearly justified and annotated on the plan.

The subjects or topics of student productions were varied. Students are encouraged to choose topics, 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 (although sound production was not a common choice) and across a variety of genres or styles of presentation.

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 that were presented for review revealed that students who had been given simple and clear instructions to complete smaller tasks that 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 able to understand the purpose of the exercise and their documentation at all three stages of each exercise was of a higher quality.

Documentation should be provided for both exercises, including those completed as planning tasks. Students should be encouraged to consider, for example, how a storyboard can convey information and be used to anticipate and solve production problems. They could evaluate the limitations of the storyboard process and propose solutions to these limitations. Realisation documentation is not intended to be an opportunity for a discussion of the student's inability to draw, but rather of the extent to which the storyboard produced conveyed the intended ideas and story, and the possibilities and limitations of the equipment, applications and/or processes used.



### **Criterion 2 – Development of a media production design plan**

Professional media production design conventions vary according to factors including media form, intention, budget and time constraints. It was pleasing to see this variation in the Design Plans that were presented for review.

There is no single correct method of designing a media production. An effective 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 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 Design Plans were in the form of workbooks or visual diaries that contained all of the student’s work for the semester. This is not a recommended practice as students may experience difficulty in differentiating the relative importance of the specific Design Plan specifications from other teaching, learning and initial brainstorming activities. In particular it was noted that in some Design Plans many pages were devoted to research or influences but with little focus and at the expense of discussion of Design Plan specifications as required by the Study Design.

It is not necessary or desirable to alter Design Plans after their submission. Examples of unnecessary material include stills taken during the production process or the finished production and contact sheets or test prints. One way to overcome this temptation is to assess the Design Plan at the conclusion of Unit 3. This may serve as an incentive 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.

One concern revealed by the Design Plans presented for review in 2005 was the number of students who planned for productions that they would not be able to realise for various reasons, including time, resources, skills or health and safety. These included designs for productions with very large casts by students whose plan and exercises indicated that they did not have the management skills required to realise such a proposal, and those involving the use of moving vehicles or other health and safety management issues. Of particular concern were those productions involving representations of dangerous activities. Teachers are advised of their duty of care and, should such representations be deemed integral to the production, the Design Plans should contain details of how health and safety considerations will be handled during production. Teachers are advised to monitor the development of students’ Design Plans and guide them in planning for a production that can be realised given the resources available to them.

### **Criterion 3 – Understanding of media form(s), conventions and style(s) appropriate to the media product**

This is an aspect of the School-assessed Task in which students have demonstrated increasing control in recent years, with 2005 being no exception. A sound grasp of form, conventions and style were mostly apparent in both students’ Design Plans and in their productions. This was evident in image and shot construction, and the selection of appropriate soundtrack, lighting, editing styles and rhythm.

One aspect of this criterion that might be further improved is casting. The casting of teenagers as older homeless characters, for example, is not generally a convention of the medium and, depending on the intention of the work, may not lend authenticity to the final product. 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 coalesce to create a production that is an effective realisation of the design for the specified audience. These works may have dealt with original concepts or been very 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.

It was pleasing to note the continued improvement in skills that was evident in video productions, 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.

Greater skill development is needed in the area of photography and print production. The decline in the popularity of silver gelatin photography continued and was accompanied by a decline in the skill base evident in the productions. Prints were too often out of focus, lacked tonal control and were marred by poor darkroom hygiene. Digital photography and print works should be designed with a clear understanding of the 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 focussing 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.

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

This criterion is assessed on the evidence in the finished product of the student's management and organisation of each stage of the production process. Problems that occur early in the production tend to snowball at later stages. All 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 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. Teachers should work with students on individual production timelines that take into account the availability of equipment at each stage of the production process.

Common problems evident in this criterion included 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 darkroom. Students working in print should work to a strict timeline to allow for the same level of complexity and quality across all pages of their production.

### **Criterion 7 – Realisation of the production Design Plan in the media product**

This criterion assesses the relationship between the 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 Design Plan as a working document. It is not necessary to exactly reproduce the plan to score highly, but to effectively realise it at all stages of the production process. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to rewrite, add to or reprint the 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 Design Plan is a working document and is not intended to be a demonstration of skills in presentation.

In the work presented for review there was a degree of retrospectivity evident in some Design Plans. Teachers should caution students that Design Plans that are completed after the production cannot be scored for this criterion and are invariably associated with products that would have been much better 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 reworking their 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 from the Design Plan, thus making the plan a smaller and more focussed document. Teachers are often fearful that if

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they allow students to retain their Design Plans they may be lost; however, if the 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 Design Plan as a great deal of learning occurs throughout the production process. The 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 a point form list. The annotations should demonstrate development of students' skills and knowledge during the production process. Well annotated Design Plans usually allowed students to increase their score on this criterion.