



## 2007 MEDIA GA 2: School-assessed Task

### 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 2007 the scope of task specified that students undertake two production exercises. Whilst the scope of the task is unchanged for 2008 the updated 2008 School-assessed Task advice located in the February VCAA Bulletin contains some changes regarding the 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 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 2007, there was again 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 important that Production exercises be stored securely by the school together with each student's Design Plan and production. When subject to review students cannot be scored for work that is not presented for assessment. Lost, stolen or damaged work should be reported to the VCAA by the Principal using the appropriate form <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/schooladmin/forms/vce/lsd.pdf>

#### 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 in the Design Plan to all specifications relevant to the selected medium. '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 a strong relationship between the 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. Media 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 Design Plan to be completed retrospectively nor can students be given credit for work done on the 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. 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 on page 17 *VCAA Bulletin*, Supplement 1, February 2008

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<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/correspondence/bulletins/2008/february/2008FEBSUP1.pdf>.

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 2007, 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 in the pre production and production process. Works that exceed the scope of task cannot score a 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 in recent years has continued to be popular 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 forms in which they intend to work early in the design process. The choice should be informed to support the selection 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 in the school environment. The development of an understanding of and practical experience in the possibilities and limitations of equipment, applications and processes to be employed in production are fundamental to the teaching of Unit 3 outcome 2. Such knowledge and skills then 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 available. 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 students 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 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).

### 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 and themes 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, selecting 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 and styles of presentation. Radio or audio sequences were once again little used as a 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 Design Plan specifications in sufficient detail. Shorter more focussed 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 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 available to the student. Successful documentation is the result of attention to clear instructions and well understood tasks.

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

Design Plans presented for review once again varied in the manner in which they were completed. Generally these production design plans reflected professional media production design conventions. The plans differ according to factors including media form, intention, budget and time constraints.

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 continue to be presented 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. Once again some Design Plans contained an excessive number of pages that were devoted to ‘influences’ with little or no annotation and no relevance to the proposed production. These pages tended to comprise many cut and pasted images from magazines or downloaded images and tutorials for equipment that lacked real purpose or focus. They contributed little to the students’ intention and were included too often at the expense of Design Plan specifications required by the Study Design. It should be noted that the term ‘influence’ does not appear in the key

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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. For example pages of photocopied fonts or instructions for the use of equipment or software do not, on their own constitute such techniques and would better form part of the teaching and learning of this outcome.

Design Plans should not be altered (except by way of annotation, see Criterion 7 below) after their submission. For outcome 2 students are assessed on the design plan as submitted to satisfy Unit 3. Material including reprinted, tidied up or decorated design plans, stills taken during the production process or the finished production and contact sheets or test prints should not form part of the Design Plan and will not be assessed. Students should be clearly advised about the requirements of the task detailed in both the knowledge and skills and the performance descriptors of this outcome. An increasing number of teachers are date stamping or signing each page of the Design Plan and/or assessing it at the conclusion of Unit 3. Such practice serves as an 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 Design Plans presented for review in 2007 exhibited fewer examples of students who planned for productions that they would not be able to realise for reasons including the time and resources available or a clear lack of appreciation of their skill level. Problem Design Plans included proposals 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 students attempting computer animation techniques for the first time. Reviewers were also pleased to report fewer instances of Design Plans for productions involving representations of dangerous activities including the use of moving vehicles, weapons, illicit substances or other health and safety management issues. As a result works continue to improve in quality as students are required to consider such matters and propose solutions to difficult representational issues. 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**

Design Plans and productions submitted for assessment in 2007 continued to demonstrate students' increasing understanding of form, conventions and style appropriate to the intention of the production. This understanding 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.

Attention is drawn to the need to advise students about 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 modifying their intention at the 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 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 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 again demonstrated increasing assuredness in the use of production equipment and facilities. This 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.

2007 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 area of silver gelatin and digital photography continues to reveal the need for more skill development. 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. Negatives were clearly not protected from scratches and dust. Works demonstrated a lack of control over tone. Poor darkroom hygiene saw many works deteriorating due to adulterated chemicals and insufficient washing. Digital photography continues to grow in popularity but 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 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.

**It is unacceptable to note that some productions submitted for review were professionally printed. The study design and assessment guide are very clear on the requirement that students should print their own work. Refer to page 24 of the study design under Media Product description; "...8-12 pages or layouts should be printed by the student." 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. These specific pre press skills must be able to be authenticated as student directed and controlled. Students may not outsource any aspect of the printing process, to do so necessarily impacts on their assessment in criteria 5 and 6.**

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

This criterion is assessed on evidence in the finished product of management and organisation at each stage of the production process. 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 they should be self aware, planning appropriate time for those stages where they anticipate 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. The best works were evidence of well developed individual production timelines that take into account 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 darkroom. 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 in 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



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the production progressed and time overtook students' creative intentions. This often resulted 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 a non linear timeline, working on scenes, pages or images in order of complexity rather than the order in which audiences will view the production.

It is important that students be instructed to allow time for printing photographic or print productions, burning video productions to DVD or viewing multimedia productions on different computers. Such practice provides the opportunity to reflect on the finished product with time to make final adjustments as required. 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 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 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 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.

Sadly in some of the work presented for review a degree of retrospectivity is still 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 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. As detailed above there are many strategies that can be employed to avoid students unnecessarily reworking their Design Plan. These strategies 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 Design Plan, thus making the plan a smaller and more focussed document. Students should be reminded that there is no criterion for decoration, the 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 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.