



## GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2010 Theatre Studies examination was based on the *VCE Theatre Studies Study Design 2007–2011*. The examination was presented in question and answer booklet format. The paper covered five areas of study from the study design; all Units 3 and 4 outcomes (except for Unit 4, Area of Study 1, which is assessed in the monologue performance examination) were assessed. A total of 50 marks was available for the paper.

In general, students who understood the underlying concepts of the *VCE Theatre Studies Study Design* handled the examination well. Most students answered all questions on the paper. Many started by answering Question 4, which was worth the most marks on the paper. This was deemed to be a judicious decision. Some students, however, were not guided by the number of marks per question in regard to the length and depth of their response.

Students were given the option to support any of their written answers with hand-drawn illustrations and many took advantage of this option. Some questions required students to annotate their hand-drawn illustrations and students generally complied with this requirement.

### Areas of strength and weakness

High-scoring papers demonstrated:

- sophisticated understanding and use of subject-specific language, terminology and expressions
- a high level of skill in explanation, analysis and evaluation
- a sound working knowledge of how one or more of the following areas of stagecraft can be applied through the stages of production (production planning, production development, production season): acting, direction, dramaturgy, stage management, set, costume, lighting, properties, make-up, sound, multimedia and promotion (including publicity)
- a high level of skill in developing images and/or ideas from playscripts using areas of stagecraft
- a high level of skill in developing images and/or ideas from stimulus material
- a sound knowledge of the ways in which theatrical style(s) can inform the intended meaning of a playscript
- a use of specific examples
- evidence of having studied the plays from the Unit 3 prescribed playlist
- a high level of understanding of the ways in which playscripts and contexts pertaining to them can be presented to an audience
- a high level of skill in applying practical and theoretical knowledge from the study to the stimulus material in the examination (*VCE Theatre Studies Study Design*, page 31).
- a good understanding of question requirements, and evidence that students had used the number of marks and number of lines provided on the examination paper as a guide to the amount of detail required in the response.

Low-scoring papers demonstrated:

- incorrect, little or no use of subject-specific language, terminology and expressions
- little or no understanding of the difference between an explanation, analysis or evaluation
- limited knowledge of areas of stagecraft, the stages of production, theatre style(s) and/or theatrical contexts
- limited application of practical and theoretical knowledge from the study
- limited evidence of having studied the plays from the Unit 3 prescribed playlist
- a lack of sophistication in developing images and/or ideas from playscripts using acting and/or other areas of stagecraft
- limited use of the marks allocated for each question as a guide for the depth of response required
- little or no understanding of how to annotate diagrams/illustrations
- little understanding of question requirements, and a lack of consideration of the number of marks and number of lines provided on the examination paper as a guide to the amount of detail required in the response
- a reiteration of the information provided in the stimulus material
- responses that were repetitive or did not address all aspects of the task.

### Advice for students

- Questions may be answered in any order.
- Students should attempt to answer all questions.



- Students should be guided by the number of marks allocated to each question when determining the length and/or detail of their response, particularly if the question implies that a short answer is required. Students should consider what is deemed an appropriate length of response for short answer questions and should use the question requirements, number of marks and number of lines provided on the examination paper as a guide to the amount of detail required in the response.
- Students should take note of the particular type of response required in each question, as indicated by words such as 'describe', 'evaluate', 'explain', 'discuss', 'compare', 'analyse' and 'identify', and respond accordingly. It seemed that some students did not understand the difference between an analysis and an evaluation. When writing an evaluation, students are reminded that an appraisal should accompany analytical responses.
- Students need to understand what is required when annotating diagrams/illustrations. Annotations should add explanatory comments to the diagrams/illustrations.
- Students should develop a working vocabulary based on theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

The 2010 examination paper did not stipulate that a particular form of written response was required. Students chose to write in essay form, point form, report form or a combination thereof. All were considered acceptable, as long as the student addressed the focus of the question and the response was appropriate to the type required; for example, an evaluation or an analysis. Where an explanation or analysis was required, most students chose to write their answer in a format other than dot-point format. The examination contained a detachable insert that provided stimulus materials pertaining to Question 4. When responding to this question, students were required to draw on the stimulus materials and the contextual background information provided.

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

**Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.**

For Question 1, an excerpt from a playscript was reproduced with accompanying questions. It was clearly noted on the examination paper that no prior knowledge of the plays, their contextual background or the stimulus material was required when answering Questions 1 and 4.

### Question 1

Students needed to draw on key knowledge and key skills pertaining to Unit 4, Area of Study 2, and interpret a scene by applying acting, stagecraft and Epic Theatre conventions to explore the intended meaning of the scene and the themes of the play. The contextual background for this question provided information about Epic Theatre and included a scene from *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht, with a synopsis, setting, themes and characters.

#### Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	0	2	18	39	41	3.2

Students were asked to explain how two expressive skills could be used to perform one of the characters from the scene.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- an excellent understanding of how expressive skills could be used to interpret character
- a practical explanation of how expressive skills in an interpretation of character could be used to emphasise the themes of the play
- the inclusion of pertinent example(s) from the script and/or other aspects of the contextual background, such as dialogue and/or stage directions from the scene, and other aspects of the contextual background such as the synopsis, style of the play, setting of the play, themes and characters
- appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A satisfactory (or mid-level) response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory understanding of how acting could be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- some explanation of how acting can be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- inclusion of pertinent example(s) from the script and/or other aspects of the contextual background, such as dialogue and/or stage directions from the scene, and other aspects of the contextual background such as the synopsis, style of the play, setting of the play, themes and characters
- some use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.



A low-level response was characterised by:

- little or no explanation of how acting can be used to emphasise the themes of a play
- little or no example(s) from the script and/or other aspects of the contextual background, such as dialogue and/or stage directions from the scene, other aspects of the contextual background such as the synopsis, the style of the play, the setting of the play, the themes and the characters
- little, incorrect or no use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

The following is an example of a high-level response.

*Character: The Governor's Wife*

*The Governor's Wife would be in a state of panic and my facial expressions would magnify what she was feeling. My eyes could be opened wide to show her state of shock and my eyebrows raised to show her state of confusion and terror. My eyes could race around the stage, through the audience and all around to show the audience The Governor's Wife's 'larger than life' state of panic. Use of stillness and silence could be embedded in my delivery of her lines to further add to the state of the character. For example I would pause and freeze when the character says 'bring the child' and then think before she says, 'No, first take the dresses to the carriage.' This would add to the character's state of mind, show her thinking and bring out the themes of greed vs. the responsibility of motherhood.*

**Question 1b.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	6	26	34	31	2.9

Students needed to discuss how an area of stagecraft could be applied to enhance the intended meaning of the scene.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- an insightful and creative discussion of how one area of stagecraft from the areas of direction, dramaturgy, multimedia properties or set could be used to enhance the meaning of the scene
- imaginative and sophisticated linking of the intended meaning of the scene to the stagecraft
- inclusion of pertinent example(s) to support the discussion
- appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions that enhanced the discussion.

A satisfactory (mid-level) response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory discussion of how one area of stagecraft from the areas of direction, dramaturgy, multimedia properties or set could be used to enhance the meaning of the scene
- the intended meaning of the scene being linked to the stagecraft
- examples used to support the discussion
- some use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions in discussion.

A low-level response was characterised by a:

- very limited discussion of how one area of stagecraft from the areas of direction, dramaturgy, multimedia properties or set could be used to enhance the meaning of the scene
- discussion that made few or oblique links between the scene and the stagecraft
- response that used little or no theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

The following is an example of a high-level response.

*Properties:*

*To enhance the intended meaning of this scene that the material things are more important to the Governor's Wife than her child, the use of properties could be applied. In this scene 'dresses' are not costumes but props used to symbolize her selfishness. A large amount of dresses of all patterns, fabrics, styles and colours could be sourced and placed in a chaotic mess all around the stage to show the greed of the wife and her love of clothes. She uses the dresses to mask the coming revolt; the dresses could look as though she is packing for a holiday. As she picks each dress up she could take each one more and more carefully, cradling it as if they are her 'babies', which is why it makes sense in this scene that as the Governor's Wife is being told 'Quick, Quick' she demands the dresses go in the carriage before the child.*

**Question 1c.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	2	11	23	25	19	13	3.7



Students needed to explain two ways that an Epic Theatre convention could be used to convey the themes of the play.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- a practical explanation of how one Epic Theatre convention could be used in two ways to convey the themes of the play
- inclusion of pertinent example(s)
- an appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

The following is an example of a high-level response.

*Theme: Greed and Social Class*

*Stylised Make-up:*

*Since the Governor's wife exhibits her 'greedy nature' in this scene her physique therefore should reflect this. Greed is commonly associated with 'largeness' so her make-up should have the purpose of making her look large. This could be achieved by using a model of a latex double chin as well as adding putty to the top of her cheeks to make her look 'puffy'. Her social class could be reflected through a classic 'up-do' hairstyle and deep rouge on her cheeks to symbolize greed. A beauty mark would also serve to symbolize class and wealth. The Adjutant's make-up could be pale with darkened hollows under the eyes and cheeks to create juxtaposition to the wealth of the Governor's Wife and the worthlessness she sees in them. That she has even taken their livelihood. They are pale and withered. This might encourage the audience to want to change the social order and contemplate the purpose of status in society.*

**Question 2**

Play chosen	none	<i>Richard III</i>	<i>Cosi</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	<i>Elizabeth – Almost by Chance a Woman</i>	<i>Jersey Boys, The story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons</i>
%	1	21	24	13	15	27

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	1	1	3	7	15	17	18	17	12	9	<b>5.8</b>

Students were asked to select one of the listed questions, each of which related specifically to one of the plays on the 2010 Unit 3 prescribed playlist. In accordance with Unit 3, Area of Study 3, all students were expected to have attended one of the plays from the 2010 Unit 3 prescribed playlist and have studied the corresponding written playscript. Students were expected to refer to both the play in performance and to the written playscript.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- a high level of understanding of the play in production and the written playscript from which it was derived
- inclusion of highly pertinent references to the written playscript and/or play in performance
- the use of appropriate theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

A satisfactory (or mid-level) response was characterised by:

- satisfactory understanding of the play in production and the written playscript from which it was derived
- inclusion of appropriate examples from the written playscript and/or play in performance
- use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- scant understanding of the play in production with little or no reference to the written playscript from which it was derived
- difficulty in identifying both strengths and weaknesses in a play in production
- limited use of examples from the written playscript and/or reference only to the play in performance
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions.

The following is an example of a high-level response that analyses directorial decision(s) and design decision(s) evident in the production.



*Elizabeth - Almost By Chance a Woman*

*In the Malthouse interpretation of 'Elizabeth-Almost By Chance a Woman', they made the decision to manipulate and adapt the production to suit modern Australian audiences. In Dario Fo's original play he focussed on mocking people in political power during the 1980's. (Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan)The Malthouse chose to highlight different themes in the play, the stripping of Elizabeth's power as she lives her last 24 hours on earth causing audience to pity her. Michael Kantor chose to maintain Commedia dell 'arte as the performance style used in the production. Commedia was inherent in all characters. An example of this was the character of Egerton. Egerton was a 'zanni' like character and would often stamp and slide his foot across the floor, like the horse that Elizabeth was so fond of. Commedia was inherent in the casting of the play. In casting Julie Forsyth as Elizabeth, the character was automatically mocked through her height, this helped diminish her status. Also Forsyth's use of vernacular, slang and low tone further diminished Elizabeth's status as a character. The design decisions fed into the concept that the play came from the perceptions of Elizabeth's sleep deprived and slightly insane mind. The costumes were flamboyant, colourful and very 'costumey' feeding into the concept that the characters were from a play in Elizabeth's mind. Elizabeth's flamboyant costumes helped mock her status, making her appear tiny. The costume colours helped the audience understand they were in the midst of Elizabeth's manipulated mind.*

**Question 3**

Play chosen	none	<i>Dead Man's Cell Phone</i>	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	<i>Driving Miss Daisy</i>	<i>The Threepenny Opera</i>
%	0	41	23	6	30

**Question 3a.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	11	31	56	2.4

**Question 3b.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	14	46	38	2.2

**Question 3c.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	2	16	38	44	2.2

Students were asked to answer each of the three parts of the question, making reference to one of the plays from the 2010 prescribed playlist for Unit 4. The three parts of the question involved analysing how one actor used expressive skills in the performance, evaluation of how one actor established and maintained an actor–audience relationship, and how one area of stagecraft from the list provided enhanced the acting in the play.

A high-level response was characterised by:

- a high level of understanding of the play and its contexts
- a high level of understanding of the actor's use of expressive skills
- a high level of understanding of actor–audience relationship within the play
- a high level of understanding of how stagecraft can enhance the acting within the play
- inclusion of highly pertinent examples from the play pertaining to acting and stagecraft
- an appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

A satisfactory (mid-level) response was characterised by:

- an acceptable understanding of the play and its contexts
- an acceptable understanding of the actor's use of expressive skills
- an understanding of actor–audience relationship within the play
- an acceptable understanding of how stagecraft can enhance the acting within the play
- inclusion of examples from the play pertaining to acting and stagecraft
- an appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

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A low-level response was characterised by:

- a low level of understanding of the play and its contexts
- some understanding of an actor's use of expressive skills
- no differentiation between a character and an actor
- little or no understanding of actor–audience relationship within the play
- little or no understanding of how stagecraft can enhance the acting within the play
- inclusion of scant examples from the play pertaining to acting and stagecraft
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology, expressions and/or concepts.

The following is an example of a high-level response.

### *Threepenny Opera*

3a. Eddie Perfect played the smooth criminal of Macheath manipulating his movements to make them slow and controlled to heighten his power as he had total control. His voice was slow and commanding when he first appeared in the darkness of the opening scene. However, his language was dirty and vile which suggested his low class. His facial expressions were serious but charming as he lived with Polly but there was a sense of 'bottled rage' behind his eyes. His gestures were filled with power and menace emphasising he could kill you within a second.

3b. Eddie Perfect established an actor-audience relationship by playing Macheath as a smooth criminal with sophistication and power. Mac's life of crime and style was intriguing and immediately charmed the audience appealing to their fascination with the glitz and glamour of a life of crime. However, the audience becomes slightly repulsed as the killings increase and as the play progresses Eddie Perfect reveals his menace. Now the audience's spell is broken as the anger and distortion of Mac is revealed, especially when he is a 'caged lion'. The audience no longer cares if he lives or dies as the attraction is gone and repulsion replaces it.

3c. Costume enhanced the acting of the play as it made each character larger than life and stereotypical. Mac's fur coat and cane painted him as a vaudeville criminal giving him the immediate charm, glitz and glamour of the underworld. This assisted Perfect's intention and enhanced the actor-audience relationship. Costume also emphasised the absurd nature of Mr and Mrs. Peachum, linking them together with colour despite the vile way they spoke and acted to each other. It also aided their facade as they were illustrated as 'clown-like' and 'motherly-like' which allowed the distinctive acting to create a complete contrast, highlighting Brecht's intentions of making a mockery of society.

#### Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	6	29	66	1.6

#### Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	15	32	29	17	2.4

#### Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	3	12	21	25	19	17	3.8

#### Question 4d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	7	17	26	23	11	7	3.1

Question 4 was based on Unit 3, Outcomes 1 and 2, and required students to draw on their knowledge and skills of how to apply stagecraft to interpret a playscript and analyse the application of stagecraft. Students were required to draw on two or more of the stimulus materials, as well as the contextual background provided in the examination booklet when responding to the question. The selected playscript was *West Side Story*. Students were not required to have prior knowledge of the playscript, the musical or the film, its contextual background or the stimulus material provided. They were able to change the original time and setting of the play to another appropriate context. Students could use illustrations to support their answers.

Students were required to select one of the stagecraft areas listed from acting, direction, stage management, dramaturgy, set, properties, costume, make-up, sound, lighting, multimedia and promotion (including publicity), to complete all parts of the question. In 4a., Production Planning, students needed to make reference to one or more images and ideas



from the plot of the play. In 4b., Production Planning, they needed to refer to the open-air venue in their interpretation. In 4c., Production Development, students needed to refer to the theatrical style of the play with specific reference to two of the stimulus materials from the detachable insert. In 4d., Production Season, students needed to describe how their chosen area of stagecraft would be affected by the work in another area of stagecraft. They needed to make reference to the contextual background, two stimulus materials and the venue of the play described in 4a.

A high-level of response was characterised by:

- a high level of understanding and application of the chosen area of stagecraft
- an insightful understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft in relation to the question and how it could be applied
- a sound understanding of the stages of production
- a relevant and perceptive demonstration of the relationship and influences between the context of the play and the stimulus material, and the way in which this informed the selected area of stagecraft
- highly pertinent examples
- annotated illustrations or designs
- an appropriate use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A satisfactory (mid-level) response was characterised by:

- a satisfactory level of understanding and application of the chosen area of stagecraft
- an appropriate level of understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft in relation to the question and how it could be applied in the context provided
- some understanding of the stages of production
- a demonstration of the relationship and influences between the contextual background of the play and the stimulus material, and the way in which this informed the selected area of stagecraft
- examples, diagrams and illustrations with some labeling
- use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

A low-level response was characterised by:

- a very limited understanding and application of the chosen area of stagecraft
- little or no understanding of the theatrical possibilities of the chosen area of stagecraft
- little or no understanding of the relationship between the play and/or stimulus material and/or context
- little or no understanding of the stages of production
- limited or no examples, diagrams and illustrations
- little or no use of theatrical language, terminology and expressions.

The following is an example of a high-level response.

*Question 4a.*

*Set*

*For this production I would consider placing the set in a site specific location under a highway over pass. This would link to the fight that takes place and also the grey, cold section of the neighbourhood the characters live in.*

*Question 4b.*

*By placing the set in a site-specific location (under a highway overpass), I would seek approval from the council to place it there. I would visit various overpasses and evaluate the safety of having a play there, also the potential for sound, costume props etc to work cooperatively in the particular location. I would work collaboratively with the actors and director to design a set they are comfortable within that setting.*

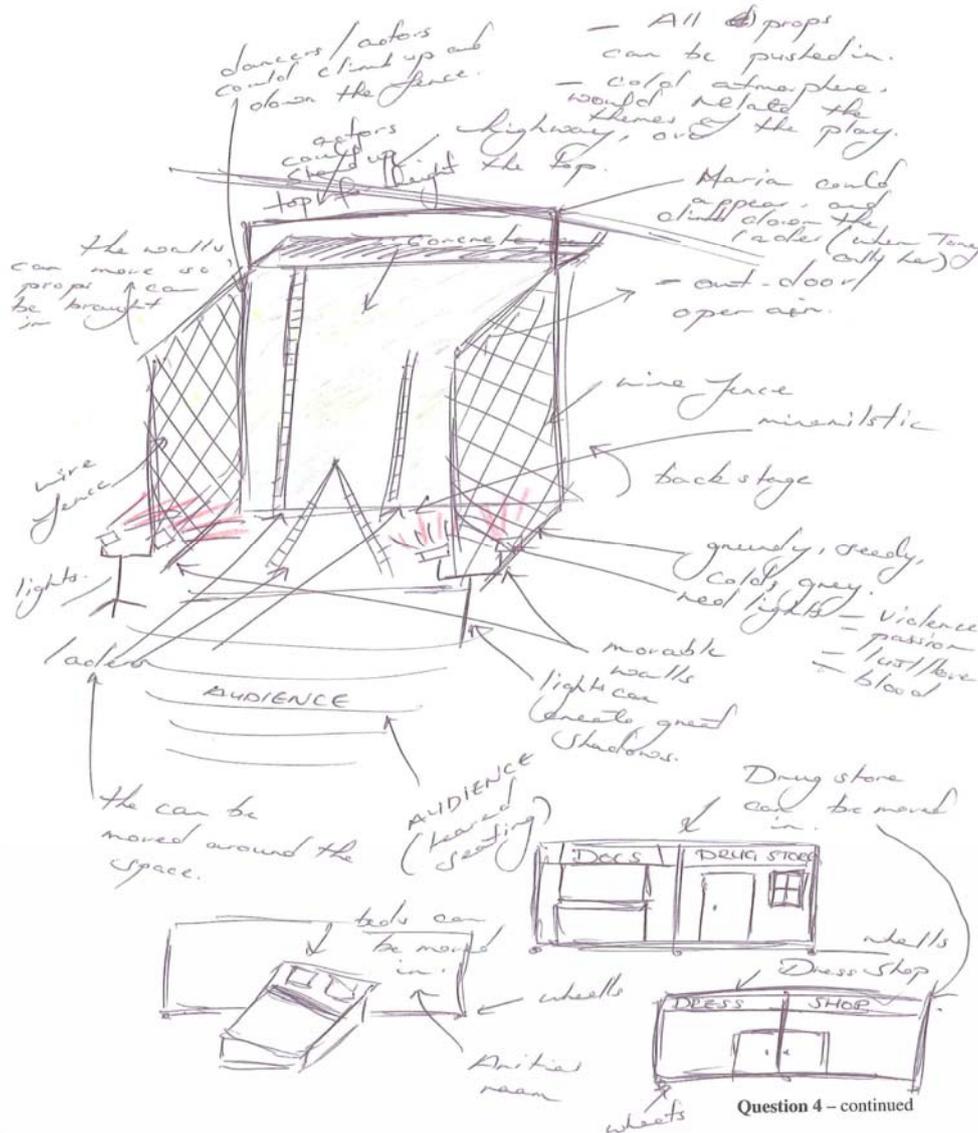
*Question 4c.*

*Set*

*One task I would undertake in the Production development stage to interpret 'West Side Story', would be the creation of moveable sets. I was inspired by Stimulus 1 and 3. Stimulus 1 depicts a grey and white atmosphere and also violence. I believe the play poses these themes and I aim to express them through my design. Stimulus 3 is quite a basic image with only a ladder. The minimalistic values of this image inspired me to stay small in my design. I would begin by creating black ladders as I believe*



the 'fire-escape' is a main symbol in the play. Ladders would be placed against walls and would enhance the music and dance aspect of this musical production through actors and dancers being able to create shapes with them. I would need to get the director to work with the cast in their use of the ladders and adapt my designs if needed. I would also begin by creating 'Doc's Drugstore' thorough making a simplistic outside that can be turned around to reveal the inside of the store.



Question 4d.

An area of stagecraft that would affect my set location would be lighting. The contextual background states that there would be lighting trees however they may interfere with the sight lines. I have attempted to take them into consideration in my designs but during the Production season there may need to be changes to accommodate late changes in blocking. In the stimulus, the images 1 and 2 illustrate where lighting has been used. In stimulus 2 it is clear that the lighting comes from above but this could make it difficult to establish natural light on the set. In stimulus 1 not much light is used and the grey of this image would work with the colour scheme. My concept to place the stage in a site specific location, to reveal the dark, gloomy, grungy neighbourhood the play would be set in, may create lighting difficulties. During the Production season there may be naturally occurring changes to the lighting which would affect the look of the set design, where shadows are cast etc. Regular meetings with the Production team to evaluate these issues would enable them to be dealt with.