VCE Drama (2019–2024)

School-based Assessment Report

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

This report provides advice for the first year of implementation of the [*VCE Drama Study Design 2019–2024*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/drama/2019DramaSD.pdf). The [VCE Drama *Advice for teachers*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/drama/advice-for-teachers/Pages/Index.aspx) provides teaching and learning advice for Units 1 to 4, and assessment advice for school-based assessment in Units 3 and 4. Other support materials for the study can be found on the [VCE Drama study webpage](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/Drama/Pages/Index.aspx) on the VCAA website.

This report is based on the findings from the 2019 School-based Assessment Audit for Units 3 and 4 VCE Drama. Schools providing the VCE must deliver the course to the standards established by the VCAA, ensure the integrity of student assessments and ensure compliance with the requirements of the VCAA for the relevant assessment program. For school-based assessment, the standards and requirements are stated in the assessment specifications set out in the relevant VCE study design and the [VCE assessment principles](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/VCE_assessment_principles.docx). The School-based Assessment Audit checks that the standards and requirements set out in study designs are being followed and that assessment is being carried out in line with the VCE assessment principles.

The 2019 School-based Assessment Audit showed that schools were generally well prepared for the implementation of the reaccredited VCE Drama Study Design.

Common results of the audit indicated that the majority of issues that arose with assessment were aligned to the VCE assessment principle of validity. Such issues included:

* referencing content from the previous study design
* using language/terminology from the previous study design
* not addressing all key knowledge and key skills across the assessment
* using unmodified tasks from previous years
* referring to timelines that fell outside the requirements of the study design.

One of the most common concerns identified was consistent reference to terminology from the previous study design/s: specifically, a high number of schools still referring to ‘theatrical conventions’ instead of ‘conventions’; ‘stagecraft elements’ instead of ‘production areas’; and ‘non-naturalism’ and ‘non-naturalistic style’.

Schools are reminded that students are required to create work that goes beyond reality. The work may reflect a specific performance style or one that draws on multiple performance styles and is therefore eclectic in nature.

Most schools audited were found to have assessment practices that were equitable; however, schools should note that for each School-assessed Coursework (SAC) task, students should be given a clear and accurate statement of:

* the outcome being assessed
* the task type and date of completion
* time allowed for the task
* allocation of marks
* the requirements and conditions of the task
* contribution of the task to the final outcome score
* opportunity for redemption.

Some schools were found to have assessment practices that were not balanced. This was due to the following reasons:

* no variation of the assessment being offered to students
* many SACs structured in the same format of short-answer questions
* marking guide/criteria not adding up (or dividing into) the set score.

School-based assessment was generally found to be efficient in terms of the minimum number of tasks being set, and students not being over-assessed or put under undue stress.

Schools generally reported adequate moderation processes in the teaching of VCE Drama, indicating consistency through departmental discussion and cross-marking. Schools satisfactorily demonstrated how they moderate student work when there are multiple classes, and had established policies and procedures to deal with this.

Schools that were audited indicated that they used a range of resources to develop tasks for the unit. These included the *Advice for teachers*, textbooks, networks and relevant subject associations such as Drama Victoria.

Schools are reminded that useful information relating to the *VCE Drama Study Design 2019–2024* can be found within the ‘Teaching and learning activities’and ‘Sample approaches to developing an assessment task’ sections of the VCAA’s *Advice for teachers* resource.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Unit 3: Devised ensemble performance

Outcome 1

Develop and present characters within a devised ensemble performance that goes beyond a representation of real life as it is lived.

Task type

*Development and presentation of characters within a devised ensemble performance. Each student should have approximately 5 to 8 minutes of primary focus performance time in the work.*

Most schools chose to complete this task in a formal performance setting, either during the school day or at night with an audience. This allowed students the opportunity to practise their performance techniques as well as demonstrating the performance skills required.

Schools established their ensemble performances using a wide range of themes and topics, which is commendable. The variety of themes/topics – which included contemporary, historical, social and political issues – allowed students to explore their ensembles in a wide range of ways. Popular themes/topics included natural disasters, home, the modern woman, Greek mythology, fairytales, happiness, fear, consumerism, the media, and teenage life.

Most schools audited assessed all of the key knowledge and key skills appropriately. Generally, Outcome 1 demonstrated that teachers had read the *VCE Drama Study Design* closely and created tasks that addressed the key knowledge and key skills required for the outcome. The strongest responses clearly demonstrated how students could find interesting and engaging ways to use play-making techniques to extract dramatic potential from the stimulus material within Outcome 1. It also allowed for students to choose or work within a range of performance styles. This not only allowed them to take the performance work beyond a representation of life as it is lived but also allowed them to learn, explore and create work that was truly eclectic in nature.

Most schools allocated students a long period in which to devise and develop their ensemble performances for Outcome 1. A task of this size can unduly add to students’ and teachers’ workloads, and the strongest work was demonstrated by schools that set out a clear structure for how students should approach this task, often relating back to the play-making techniques.

Most schools indicated that they were using student journals/workbooks, one-on-one interviews or class discussions as a way of monitoring progress during the often lengthy development stage for Outcome 1. These strategies effectively allow teachers to authenticate each student’s contribution to the development of the ensemble.

Assessment

The majority of schools indicated that they scheduled their Outcome 1 assessment within   
Weeks 3–6 of Term 2.

Most schools indicated that they used the VCAA performance descriptors or modified the descriptors in order to allocate marks to the task. The weightings that were applied were appropriate in reflecting the depth, complexity and detail required.

Outcome 2

Analyse the use of processes, techniques and skills to create and present a devised ensemble performance.

Task type option/s

*Analysis of the development and performance of characters from the ensemble work developed for Outcome 1. The analysis and evaluation may be presented in one or both of the following formats:*

* *an oral presentation*
* *written responses to structured questions.*

Written responses to structured questions was the most common task type used to assess this outcome. Some schools also utilised the option for students to present using an oral presentation, often in combination with the structured questions.

Schools are reminded that the mark allocations for the task should sufficiently indicate the differences between higher and lower order questions and that marks should be allocated accordingly. There should be a balance between short and extended questions, and these questions should ensure that a range of difficulty is evident. Schools should be mindful not to make the task too onerous for students by asking them to respond to more key knowledge areas than are covered by the marking scheme. Some tasks also needed to consider increasing the marks allocated for higher order questions and perhaps omit other questions so that students could have an appropriate amount of time to respond to the questions with detail and finesse.

Assessment

The majority of schools scheduled their Outcome 2 assessment closely following their Outcome 1 performance assessment. In most cases this was completed within 1–2 weeks after the performance.

Most schools used the published VCAA performance descriptors to design their marking schemes for this task. As with Outcome 1, it is important that schools publish the actual weightings and marking schemes for any task and provide these to students.

Outcome 3

Analyse and evaluate a professional drama performance.

Task type

*An analysis and evaluation of a play selected from the Unit 3 Playlist. The analysis and evaluation will be presented as written responses to structured questions.*

The best SAC tasks modelled their structured questions directly on the key knowledge and key skills.

As was the case in Outcome 2, schools are reminded that the mark allocations for the Outcome 3 task should sufficiently indicate the differences between higher and lower order questions and that marks should be allocated accordingly.

Many schools were extremely generous with the time allocated to these tasks. Schools are reminded to think carefully regarding the time constraints, particularly in terms of the time permitted in the end-of-year written examination. Being mindful of the time permitted to complete the tasks may assist in minimising the stress to students in terms of their workload.

Assessment

Given that the five plays in the Unit 3 Drama Playlist are all staged at different times throughout the semester, schools generally completed this Outcome within 1–2 weeks post-performance. This provided schools enough time to suitably analyse and evaluate the play prior to assessment.

Most schools used the published VCAA performance descriptors to design their marking schemes for this task. As with Outcomes 1 and 2, it is important that schools publish the actual weightings and marking schemes for any task and provide these to students.

Unit 4: Devised solo performance

Outcome 1

Demonstrate, in response to given stimulus material, application of symbol and transformation of character, time and place, and describe the techniques used.

Task types

*A one- to two-minute presentation of a solo demonstration devised from given stimulus material.*

*AND*

*A short oral or written statement, which describes techniques used in the demonstration.*

Most schools chose to complete this task in an informal performance setting, either during the school day in class or after school with students from the class attending as the audience. This offers students the opportunity to refine their performance skills while also emphasising the need to demonstrate a response to their given stimulus material as well as the application of symbol and transformation of character, time and place.

Schools established their Outcome 1 solo performances using a wide range of themes, topics and stimuli, which is commendable. The variety of themes/topics – which included contemporary, historical, social and political issues – allowed students to explore their solos in a wide range of ways. Most schools provided stimulus material appropriate to the size of the task. Popular themes/topics included superstitions, famous pieces of artwork and literature, celebrity figures, Greek mythology, social media, climate change, YouTube clips, and Australiana. All schools provided stimulus material that was different from the stimulus material used to develop the solo performance and its analysis and evaluation for Outcome 3.

Most schools audited assessed all of the key knowledge and key skills appropriately. Generally, Outcome 1 demonstrated that teachers had read the *VCE Drama Study Design* closely and created tasks that addressed the key knowledge and key skills required for the outcome. It also demonstrated that teachers were aware that the focus of this outcome was on students demonstrating that they had explored, experimented with and trialled the processes they would continue to employ in developing their extended solo performance for Outcome 2 rather than getting students to present a polished and highly refined performance.

The strongest responses clearly demonstrated how students could use interesting and engaging ways to use play-making techniques to extract dramatic potential from the stimulus material within Outcome 1. They allowed students opportunities to develop their understanding of the newly added convention, application of symbol, as well as the more familiar conventions of transformation of character, time and place.

Most audit responses also demonstrated an excellent understanding of the second part of this outcome: having students develop a short statement that identifies the techniques used for their performance. The assessment task allows the student to present their short statement as an oral or as a written statement, and most schools were able to outline a very clear structure for how students should approach this task and avoid creating workload issues for students.

Assessment

The majority of schools indicated that they scheduled their Outcome 1 assessment within the final weeks of Term 2 or the first two weeks of Term 3. Outcome 1 is intended to prepare students for the task of developing their extended solo performance by exploring, experimenting and trialling the processes required for Outcome 2. Schools should therefore complete Outcome 1 prior to starting the preparation of Outcome 2.

Most schools indicated that they used the VCAA performance descriptors or modified the descriptors in order to allocate marks to the task. The weightings that were applied were appropriate in reflecting the depth, complexity and detail required.

Outcome 3

Analyse and evaluate the creation, development and presentation of a solo performance devised in response to a prescribed structure.

Task type option/s

*Analysis and evaluation of the solo performance devised in Outcome 2. The analysis and evaluation may be presented in one or both of the following formats:*

* *an oral presentation*
* *written responses to structured questions.*

Written responses to structured questions was the most common task type used to assess this outcome. Some schools also utilised the option for students to present using an oral presentation, often in combination with the structured questions.

Schools are reminded that the mark allocations for the task should sufficiently indicate the differences between higher and lower order questions and that marks should be allocated accordingly. There should be a balance between short and extended questions, and these questions should ensure that a range of difficulty is evident. Schools should be mindful not to make the task too onerous for students by asking them to respond to more key knowledge areas than are covered by the marking scheme. Some tasks also needed to consider increasing the marks allocated for higher order questions and omit other questions so that students could have an appropriate amount of time to respond to the questions in-depth.

Assessment

The majority of schools scheduled their Outcome 3 assessment shortly after their Outcome 2 Devising a solo performance assessment, or in some cases, just prior to this.

Most schools used the published VCAA performance descriptors to design their marking schemes for this task. As with Outcome 1, it is important that schools publish the actual weightings and marking schemes for any task and provide these to students.