**Janine McKenzie** - Hello and welcome to this video. My name is Janine McKenzie and I'll be taking you through Unit 4 of the 2025 Theatre Studies Study Design. As we look at the specifics of this study design, feel free at any point to pause the recording and take a closer look at the information on each slide. The study design may be adjusted from time to time during the next four years, and so it is worth remembering that the VCAA Bulletin will publish changes and advice as required.

Here are the three areas of study for Unit 4 Theatre Studies. They remain largely unchanged, say for the addition of dramaturgical research that has been added to the title of the first area of study. Unit 4 is titled Presenting an Interpretation, and the unit overview includes a few small changes that you can see highlighted in green on the right of the slide. The second paragraph of the preamble, as we can see here, includes some minor changes with the implementation of the 2025 study design. There is the addition of evaluation in the first sentence.

Historically, the VCE playlists set certain plays for Unit 3 and a different set of plays for Unit 4. This delineation was removed in response to the need for greater flexibility during the past few years. In the new study design, we see the stipulation that students must study different productions for their Outcome 3 assessments in Units 3 and 4. The final sentence in the Unit 4 Overview adds the phrases inclusive and sustainable to the overall approach to planning and creating theatre.

First area of study is titled Dramaturgical Research and Presenting Theatrical Possibilities. The preamble to this first area of study remains largely the same as in the previous study design with the additional references to the world of the audience and possible recontextualizations, as we can see from the second paragraph. The final introductory statements for this first area of study differ only with the addition of inclusive and sustainable where possible environmentally sustainable in relation to theatre practises.

Looking now at the first outcome for Unit 4, we notice that the opening statement now requires students to describe and justify their interpretation of a monologue and its prescribed scene within the world of the play. There are several additions to the key knowledge for this outcome. These are the addition of possible recontextualizations in the second criteria that references contexts and the expansion of the criterion addressing influences on the playwright or playwrights, including historical, cultural, social, and political.

Finally, we have on this slide the addition of audiences and audience culture as a new criterion. When comparing the two study designs, we can see that some of the criteria have been expanded or separated in the 2025 study design. Students will need to know how to communicate meaning and intention of a script. They will need to know which conventions of theatre styles and theatre technologies can be applied to their interpretation of a monologue. They should know how to work inclusively and sustainably, along with understanding how to work safely and ethically. And finally, there is an expansion of the final criterion which identifies that students should know relevant theatre terminology that relates to their chosen production roles.

Note that students are no longer required to justify creative and imaginative interpretive decisions as a separate criterion in the 2025 study design. Describing and justifying an interpretation of a monologue is, however, a central part of the overall aim of this area of study, as we can see outlined in the outcome for this area of study.

Looking now at the key skills criteria of Area of Study 1, we have the overarching aim that students consider the monologue not only within its prescribed scene, but also within the world of the play. There are a few minor differences between the use of command terms or active verbs, but otherwise these key skills remain unchanged in the 2025 study design. We are looking here at a few, the final few key skills criteria for Outcome 1. We can see that a number of the 2019 criteria have been split into various criteria in the 2025 criteria with a few additional elements added.

From 2025, students need to show skills in describing the interrelationship of production roles. They need to justify both orally and in writing the proposed application of styles, elements of theatre composition, and theatre technologies in their interpretation. They need to demonstrate and describe how their interpretation is informed by an understanding of audience and audience culture, and they need to work in inclusive and sustainable ways.

Students will also need to show skills in applying terminology that pertains to the two chosen production roles of this task. Unit 4 Outcome 1 is made up of two tasks. On the penultimate page of the 2025 study design, we see that Task 1 is worth 20 out of the 30 marks available for Outcome 1, and Task 2 is worth 10 marks. We also note that Task 1 needs to be a written response in the format of either an essay report or responses to structured questions, while Task 2 needs to be completed as an oral presentation. On this slide are some possibilities for approaching Unit 4 Outcome 1. Please feel free to pause the presentation and read through the Teaching and Learning example.

Task 1 can be completed under test conditions or as an ongoing assessment. The example provided for Unit 4 Outcome 1 Task 1 takes the option of responses to structured questions. Note that the command terms are low and medium level complexity: summarise, explain, discuss, identify. Ranking of students would be achieved by considering the level of detail in the responses along with the student's capacity to use technical language accurately. This is the second of the tasks set for Unit 4 Outcome 1. The study design requires Task 2 to be an oral presentation which discusses the possibilities, intentions, and vision for an interpretation of a monologue and its prescribed scene.

As a starting point, this task could take its lead from the information provided each year on the monologue exam interpretation statement template, which asks students to discuss influences on their interpretation, such as elements of theatre composition, dramaturgical research, the interrelationship of production roles, contexts and intended meanings of the monologue scene and script, conventions of the theatre style or styles, theatrical possibilities, intended audience and audience culture. The example provided for Unit 4 Outcome 1 Task 2 provides students with class time and a range of topics to address in their oral presentation. Students could use information from this task as the basis for the monologue interpretation statement that is presented as part of the monologue exam.

Looking now at Unit 4 Area of Study 2, we see that the overview remains largely the same with the addition of looking into intended meanings found in the third paragraph of this slide. There are two changes to the final sentences of the Area of Study 2 introduction, namely the removal of references to the exam room and the addition of the work practises considerations. We can see here that there is very little change to the first few key knowledge criteria for Unit 4 Area of Study 2. The 2025 study design has added the criterion, "Ways in which an interpretation is informed by dramaturgy." As we continue to look at the key knowledge criteria for Area of Study 2, we see that students will learn about intended audience and audience culture, along with the interrelationship of production roles when completing an interpretation of a monologue. In developing the monologue, students should also understand contemporary theatre practises.

In this first slide that outlines the key skills criteria associated with Unit 4 Area of Study 2, we see the addition of the word conventions in the fourth criterion. Application of elements of theatre composition appears as its own criterion on the next slide. The changes we see here include the addition of identify intended audiences and describe audience culture and describe the interrelationship of production roles. Students also need to demonstrate the skill of justifying interpretive decisions both orally and in writing. Many teachers will have preferred ways of approaching the monologue task, and these approaches will often be informed by the educational context within which they work.

Here is an example of how a school could introduce the current year's monologue options, which begins with workshop activities designed to allow students and teachers to explore the texts. Workshops could provide students with opportunities to apply acting, directing, and design ideas to small sections of the monologue, which may assist students to narrow down their options and focus on two or three monologues that not only interests them, but for which they have discovered they have good ideas that could be sustained and developed over time.

After making a decision, students would then undertake dramaturgical research in earnest. The dramaturgy would then be incorporated into a rough draught of a monologue interpretation through further practical activities. As the interpretation takes shape, students could then have showings of their work for the purposes of evaluating their progress and better understanding their interpretation from the point of view of audiences. In the final stages of the process, students would aim to bring all elements together, including the monologue interpretation statement. in preparation for presenting their work for assessment.

To satisfactorily complete this outcome, students will need to interpret and present a monologue, applying two production roles, and orally justify and explaining their interpretative decisions. There are many ways that this can be achieved and it is worth considering the educational context when determining how students will be assessed to achieve a satisfactory completion of this area of study from their home school.

Now we turn our focus to Unit 4 Area of Study 3, Analysing and Evaluating a Performance. We can see that the 2025 study design has added that students consider character or characters in the play, how the actor or actors interpreted them on stage, and the contribution of the director directors and designer designers to the interpretation and intended meaning or meanings to the introduction of this area of study. The longstanding focus on acting for Unit 4 Outcome 3 is further clarified in the 2025 study design. We can see from this slide that the acting skills listed in the previous study design have been removed. They're now listed at the beginning of the study design under the heading Terms Used in this Study on page 14.

Similarly, in that same section, we see that the elements of theatre composition are integral to all areas of study. While the terms artistic vision, focus, verbal, and nonverbal language have been removed from this section of the 2025 study design, they remain useful and valid terms when discussing contributions made by individuals and teams working in production roles.

Looking now at the first five criteria of Area of Study 3 key knowledge, there is no change from the previous study design. We see a couple of minor changes in two of the criteria for Area of Study 3. The addition of and/or manipulation when discussing the actor-audience relationship and the addition of audiences and audience culture to the bank of knowledge required to satisfactorily complete this area of study. The 2025 study design simplifies the key skills criteria for Area of Study 3 and removes references to aspects of acting that are covered on page 14 of the new study design. Changes to note in the last few criteria for Area of Study 3 are the addition of and/or manipulation of the actor-audience relationship, the requirement to evaluate as well as analyse the interrelationships between acting, direction, design, and theatre styles, and the expectation that students will develop skills in analysing audience culture in relation to the selected performance.

Scaffolding learning for this outcome can begin before students attend the performance of the Unit 4 playlisted play. It is an option to read all or parts of the script, which can allow students to have some sense of the plot, characters, and style of the play. There may be the opportunity to do some practical scene work, which can provide students with insights into the motivation, objective, function, and purpose of some characters, along with an opportunity to explore directorial and design possibilities. Another option prior to seeing a performance is to gather information from the theatre company's websites, including education packs if they are available, and also the opportunity to read a range of reviews on the production.

After seeing the play, discussion of the performance, either in real life or through a digital platform, can provide students with clearer insights and strong examples of how the creative team interpreted the script. Classroom activities prior to formal assessment can be done individually or in small groups and can accommodate various learning styles, including kinesthetic, visual, verbal, and written. The penultimate page of the study design provides an overview of Unit 4 outcomes. This task can be assessed either as an analytical essay or as responses to structured questions or as a combination of the two. The command terms or active verbs we see in this outcome are analyse and evaluate, which are two higher order thinking skills. When setting assessment for this outcome, it is important that schools set one or more tasks that allow students to demonstrate their level of ability, while at the same time providing teachers with an opportunity of fairly and accurately ranking the student cohort. That concludes our look at Unit 4 Theatre Studies.

For additional information about VCE Theatre Studies, please contact the curriculum manager for the Performing Arts Ryan Bowler.

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