**VCE Visual Communication Design (2018–2023)**

School-based assessment report

GENERAL COMMENTS

This report provides advice for the first year of implementation of the [*VCE Visual Communication Design Study Design 2018–2023*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/visualcomm/VisualCommunicationDesignSD_2018.pdf). The [VCE Visual Communication Design *Advice for teachers*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/adviceforteachers/visualcomm/introduction.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 Visual Communication Design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/studies/visualcomm/vcommindex.aspx) study page on the VCAA website.

Unit 3

Unit 3 Visual Communication Design is made up of School-assessed Coursework (SAC) tasks and a School-assessed Task (SAT). When designing a course, teachers should use the study design, Advice for teachers and refer to the *Administrative information for School-based Assessment - Visual Communication Design*, specifically for the SAT.

The School-based Assessment Audit process revealed a variety of approaches undertaken for the SAC tasks in Unit 3, Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. Tasks need to be designed using the key knowledge and key skills of the study design. Although all key knowledge and key skills are required to be addressed by students to achieve S for the unit, teachers can devise a range of learning activities and select those for formative or summative assessment depending on their approach to Unit 3 Area of Study 1 and 2. Teachers should select SAC tasks from the study design and refer to the Advice for teachers on how outcomes might be addressed, taking into consideration the needs and abilities of their students. Teachers are encouraged to design SAC tasks that are flexible and can be navigated individually by the student and tailored towards their skill and interest. SAC tasks should be designed to be rigorous enough to elicit responses that obtain a spread of results. When preparing SAC tasks for students, information and instructions should be clear in regards to what is expected with clear advice on mark allocation, assessment criteria and due dates.

It was evident through the audit that a range of approaches are taken by schools, specifically when delivering content for Area of Study 1 and 2. The task/s and support information provided for audit by teachers met requirements in most cases. Schools are drawing on a range of sources including the *Advice for teachers*, textbooks, seminar and conference resources.

Unit 3, Area of Study 3 is the commencement of the SAT. The majority of schools demonstrated that they had provided their students with the necessary information to commence the SAT and that they had addressed authentication procedures using both the Authentication Record Form and Teacher Additional Comment sheet that form part of the *Administrative information for School-based Assessment - Visual Communication Design* available on the VCE Visual Communication Design study page. Work was completed in class time or sighted and acknowledged if completed outside of class. Schools are providing students with information about their VCE policies including the submission of work and redemption. Student work was cross-marked within the school or with another school to ensure fair and accurate application of the assessment criteria.

Unit 4

The evidence submitted in Unit 4 for the audit showed that the majority of schools met VCAA assessment standards and requirements for the SAT for Area of Study 1 and 2. Students complete two separate design processes, a pitch and two separate final presentations that meet the client needs of the brief written in Unit 3, Outcome 3. The level of detail provided by schools assisted with providing the audit panel a clear picture of the implementation of the revised VCE study design.

Schools are reminded that written information needs to be provided to students outlining the conditions of the SAT. This written information should include important dates related to the SAT, the task type and format, assessment criteria and the conditions under which the task will be undertaken. Schools that provided unclear timeframes or timeframes that weren’t in line with the *VCE Visual Communication Design: Administrative information for School-based Assessment* were asked to submit further evidence to the audit.

Schools must ensure that all student work on the SAT is authenticated and the Authentication Record Form is completed. The Authentication Record Form is published annually in the Administration information for School-based Assessment on the VCE Visual Communication Design study page. Schools are reminded that once submitted all SATs should be stored in a locked cupboard or designated area. The VCAA publishes the date for release of student work in the Important Administrative Dates. In the case where work is lost, stolen or damaged, schools should refer to the *VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*.

The audit indicated that not all teachers were aware of the processes for students to redeem an ‘S’ for an outcome. Students may submit further work, or resubmit the SAT folio, for reconsideration to redeem an ‘S’ for the outcome, students cannot resubmit work for a better grade. The Authentication Record Form and the Teacher Additional Comment sheet provided by the VCAA may be used to assist with lost, stolen or damaged work and in the case where students are redeeming an ‘S’. These documents must be filled out in Units 3 and 4 to provide feedback to the student on their SAT.

The Unit 4 audit indicated that some schools are allowing students to undertake a fashion-based folio that included the construction of a garment. Please be aware that garment construction or fashion are no longer considered as a presentation in Visual Communication Design. The presentations for Design Fields are outlined on page 12 in the Cross-study specifications of the *VCE Visual Communication Study Design 2018–2023*. Students interested in fashion design completed folios demonstrating fashion illustration and themes based on theatre design that successfully incorporated fashion illustration into final presentations including posters and program designs.

Student handouts and resources submitted as part of the audit indicated that study specific terminology and changes to key knowledge and key skills were updated to reflect the 2018–2023 study design.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Unit 3: Visual communication design practices

Outcome 1

*Create visual communications for specific contexts, purposes and audiences that are informed by their analysis of existing visual communications in the three design fields.*

**Task type**

* In response to given stimulus material, create three visual communications designs for different contexts, purposes and audiences. These visual communications will include evidence of:
  + two- or three-dimensional presentation drawing
  + use of manual and digital methods.

AND

* An analysis of the connections between the three visual communications and the stimulus material using one of the following forms:
  + annotated visual communications
  + written or oral report supported by visual evidence.

While many schools chose to work with a theme-based approach that linked tasks, others focused on unique topics for each of the three design fields. Exemplary examples included all key knowledge and key skills being addressed across a range of tasks that were both formative and summative and used time efficiently. For example, some schools designed and delivered tasks as exercises combined with final presentations to ensure that all of the required content was being covered.

All three design fields must be addressed and students should have the opportunity to complete SAC tasks within each design field. Teachers should refer to the Cross-study specifications in the study design as all of this content is examinable and should be addressed in the teaching and learning plan. The Cross-study specifications provide information on the drawing methods and conventions (including conventions associated with type, grids and layout) associated with each of the three design fields. For example, planometric and perspective drawing should be addressed when covering 3D drawing in environmental design.

Approaches to Outcome 1 that were in line with the study design and the VCE assessment principles provided the students with the opportunity to understand the difference between the three design fields. Care was taken to select stimulus material that was initially analysed and then used as a starting point for the practical component. One approach was to ask students to redesign the stimulus material (the visual communication) for a different purpose, context or target audience. Another approach was to split the key knowledge and key skills across all three design fields. For example, covering design thinking in communication design and covering perspective drawing in environmental design. Some teachers chose to look at a different purpose, context and target audience for each field. It is important that all methods and conventions appropriate to each of the design fields are covered to prepare students for the SAT and the end-of-year examination. Successful practical tasks allowed students to demonstrate specific technical drawings required for environmental and industrial design. Type conventions, grids and layout are clearly defined in the study design and teachers need to ensure that this area of key knowledge and key skills is addressed in Communication Design.

Schools are advised that the following approaches were not in line with the requirements of the study design or the VCE assessment principles. Appropriate or relevant stimulus material was not always chosen for specific design fields. For example, packaging templates are suitable for Communication Design not Industrial Design. The examples selected by students to analyse should relate to the specific fields. Analysing posters or photographs of industrial design products or buildings will not allow students to easily analyse the use of methods. Not choosing visual communications from the specific design field will limit student opportunities to analyse a range of methods, media, contexts and target audiences. Instructions given to students when completing the analysis task need to be clear and require students to address the use of materials, media, methods and elements and principles in visual communications produced by others and not their own work.

In Outcome 1 students are not required to complete a design process, write a brief or produce three folios. For some schools, the number of tasks and the lessons devoted to Unit 3, Outcome 1 could be managed more effectively. When preparing a teaching and learning plan, teachers should keep in mind the weightings and mark allocation of Outcome 1 and refer to the advice for teachers for the suggested time allocation. Students should complete Outcome 1 and 2 prior to commencing the SAT as the knowledge and skills are scaffolded for Outcome 3.

Assessment

When creating assessment criteria and rubrics for the SAC tasks for Outcome 1, teachers should refer to the VCE Visual Communication Design performance descriptors located in the advice for teachers. Utilising these performance descriptors ensures that assessment is in line with the study design and accurately assesses the varied levels of performance and achievement. At times it was difficult to see how the suggested weightings and mark allocation to specific tasks were aligned. Schools should consider how to implement the performance descriptors and key knowledge and key skills to develop criteria specific to the tasks designed, including creating assessment rubrics referring to the performance descriptors. When allocating marks to specific tasks, consideration should be given to the level of difficulty for each part of the task. Assessment should be aligned with key knowledge and key skills, and clearly linked to the practical and written tasks students are required to demonstrate.

Outcome 2

*Discuss the practices of a contemporary designer from each of the design fields and explain factors that influence these practices.*

**Task type options**

Any one or a combination of the following tasks:

* a written report
* short and extended responses
* structured questions
* an annotated visual report.

The most popular types selected for Unit 3, Outcome 2 were short and extended responses where students looked at examples of well-known international or local designers. Many schools asked students to complete questions under examination conditions. Questions were often modelled on examples from past examinations. SAC tasks should not be recycled from one academic year to the next without significant modification. If students are undertaking a report rather than short and extended questions, teachers should provide some direction and requirements for the task. Instructions should adequately and appropriately cover key knowledge and key skills to allow students to independently demonstrate their knowledge and skills required for the outcome.

A designer from all three design fields needs to be addressed for this outcome. The SAC task must be designed to ensure students have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of practices, techniques and processes used by designers from each of the three design fields. The audit found that copyright and legal obligations were addressed well; however, students must relate this content to all three fields of design, specifically industrial and environmental design.The audit panel found that appropriate use is made of commercial resources (textbooks, subject association materials and online videos) by schools with most adapting these resources to suit their students’ needs, ensuring they meet the requirements of the current VCE study design and ensuring significant modifications are made to authenticate student work. Other approaches include inviting designers into their classrooms or making use of the Top Designs forum to listen to a designer speak.

Assessment

Schools referred to the performance descriptors in the *Advice for teachers* when creating marking guides and assessment rubrics. Some schools asked students to write three reports, one for each design field, and others used short and extended responses, therefore the marking guides and rubrics varied. Marking guides in line with the VCE study design and the VCE assessment principles clearly linked marks to specific parts of the performance descriptors.

Outcome 3

*Apply design thinking in preparing a brief with two communication needs for a client, undertaking research and generating a range of ideas relevant to the brief.*

**Task type: School-assessed Task (SAT)**

A brief that identifies the contexts, constraints, client’s needs and target audience, and a folio generating ideas relevant to the brief. The development folio for each must include evidence of:

* use of design process and design thinking strategies
* annotated research for information and inspiration
* observational and visualisation drawings
* generation of a wide range of design ideas.

Prior to commencing Outcome 3, students should have completed the SAC tasks in Outcome 1 and 2, the tasks completed will support the students with the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake their folio and make informed decisions about the design fields they will base their folio work on. For Outcome 3, students are required to prepare a brief prior to the commencement of their Unit 4 developmental work. Students are encouraged to seek copyright permission for the use of others’ material at this point in the process. This will include evidence of written correspondence confirming copyright permission. This permission can be recorded on the VCAA authentication form.

Schools should only allow one draft of the brief for detailed feedback before assessment. Feedback may include written notes or audio recorded feedback and should be noted on the SAT Authentication Record Form. The brief needs to be signed off prior to the development stage of the design process. Students can continue to generate ideas whilst resolving their brief as it is useful for students to undertake some research prior to writing the draft of their brief to clarify directions. Most students prepare their brief with subheadings that organised the content.

The study design requires students to undertake research and investigation that is synthesised and clearly directs the generation of ideas. Research skills should be explicitly taught as well as highlighting the benefits of using design thinking to clarify and direct the generation of ideas. Annotations at this stage should explain the research and discuss the future directions for exploration. The importance of clear and consistent referencing and citations of research cannot be overstated. Students are encouraged to undertake both primary and secondary research, looking at a range of resources. Examples of primary research might include interviews, site visits and collecting and analysing data. Several schools still referred to observational drawing as being part of the generation of ideas and not part of research. The observational drawing task is designed to be part of the research to specifically allow students to investigate form, structure and function of existing objects. Observational drawings can be used as starting points to generate ideas and can be completed manually or digitally such as drawing on a tablet with a stylus. Design thinking is a requirement of research and schools had applied different strategies in the research, including brainstorming, surveys and matrices.

The generation of ideas should respond directly to the research. Through visualisation drawing students generate a broad range of ideas for two final visual communications. Design thinking is used at this stage to create, analyse and evaluate ideas. Common approaches found in the audit included SCAMPER, Forced Associations and Blooms Action Verbs. The use of a variety of methods, media and materials is not a requirement of the study design at this stage of the design process. The use of visualisation drawings should be based on the student’s ability to generate a continuous flow of quality freehand drawings to record ideas. This could be done manually or digitally using appropriate software and hardware.

Assessment

The Visual Communication Design SAT is completed and assessed progressively over   
Units 3 and 4. The VCAA SAT criteria and descriptors for VCE Visual Communication Design are used for assessment. The criteria are published annually in the *Administrative information for School-based Assessment – Visual Communication Design*. The assessment criteria and descriptors must not be modified. Moderation and cross-marking procedures are important to result in a fair outcome for students and to ensure consistency amongst teachers where there is more than one class. Most schools had identified good moderation and cross-making procedures in the audit.

Conditions of assessment of learning outcomes including due dates must be provided to students in writing at the beginning of each unit. The audit process revealed that not all schools were aware of the annual VCAA Important Administrative Dates and Assessment Schedule. Several schools had teaching and learning timelines that had students working on Unit 3, Outcome 3 after the required entry of student scores into VASS or limited time was made available for cross-marking and redemption processes.

Unit 4: Visual communication design development, evaluation and presentation

Outcome 1

*Develop distinctly different concepts for each communication need and devise a pitch to present concepts to an audience, evaluating the extent to which these concepts meet the requirements of the brief.*

**Task type: *School-assessed Task***

A folio of conceptual developments for each need. The conceptual development folio for each need will include evidence of:

* use of design process and design thinking strategies
* application of manual and digital methods, media, materials, design elements, design principles, presentation formats
* development and refinement of concepts
* devise and deliver a pitch to an audience
* reasons for selection of preferred concepts for each need.

Schools were required to submit SAT scores for Unit 3, Outcome 3 in June. The audit panel found that some schools were not prepared for the submission of results, or did not leave enough time to adequately address all aspects of Unit 3, Outcome 3. Those schools that did update or adjust timelines indicated that students easily evolved into the next stage of the design process, the development of concepts, at the commencement of Unit 4.

Some schools had chosen to set a due date for Presentation 1 at the halfway point and then students moved onto Presentation 2, rather than working on both presentations simultaneously. This can be a successful strategy to ensure students have two separate design processes that are clearly going in different directions. In this case, some schools had their students complete two separate pitches. Either approach will ensure that students meet the requirements of the task.

Schools took different approaches to commencing Unit 4. For example, some schools required their students to choose concepts from the generation of ideas for each communication need in Unit 3, and then use a design thinking strategy to identify starting points for development, while other schools required the students to make these decisions at the end of Unit 3. Identification of concepts to be developed can assist with clarity of process in the folio. It is at this point that the students must separate their two design processes to have clear evidence of two distinctly different processes for developing and refining concepts to meet the communication needs for their brief.

Students should be supported to ensure that the final presentations are different in intent, purposes, context and presentation formats. Although a presentation board is an effective way to present final presentations, both final presentations should not be placed on the one board.The tasks for Unit 4, Outcome 1 should be designed to allow demonstration of a differentiation of knowledge and skills; including higher order thinking skills. Students must show their ability to analyse, evaluate, justify and make connections and evaluate their decisions throughout the design process, rather than simply identifying or describing their choices and decisions.

Each design field has its own set of drawing and dimensioning conventions. For further details, refer to the [Technical Drawing Specifications resource](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/adviceforteachers/visualcomm/VCE_TechnicalDrawingSpecs.pdf). Students undertaking Environmental Design folios need to address both two and three-dimensional drawing methods including floorplans, elevations, planometric and perspective drawing as part of their development and/or refinement stage. These drawings are not required for the final presentations; however they should be used to assist students in making design decisions, including refinement. The same approach should be undertaken for Industrial Design where students must have evidence of orthogonal, isometric or perspective drawings in the design process. In Communication Design students should be addressing type and associated conventions, composition and layout including the use of grids.

Students must use software programs that are available at school, to enable teachers to be able to support their learning, and to authenticate work. Stages of development and refinement should be demonstrated as screen dumps in the student folio, with annotations as a form of authentication. Every stage of the process does not need to be documented; only the key decisions throughout the process should be recorded.

The review of student handouts and resource materials during the audit process indicated that students are using a minimum of two methods (two and three-dimensional and digital and manual), and media and materials relevant to their communication needs. Schools are encouraged to use a variety of approaches to teach students how to develop and refine distinctly different concepts and final presentations. The design processes undertaken for Presentation 1 and 2 do not need to be of equal size; however, there needs to be clearly different directions explored and developed. Each presentation should entail the development of a range of at least two different concepts.

Design thinking strategies should continue to be used by students in the development and refinement stages, where students make considered decisions about implementing strategies appropriate to their needs. Class activities where all students complete the same design thinking strategy should be avoided and students should complete strategies appropriate to their design concepts. Gathering feedback to enable critical thinking can take the form of surveys, interviews, or routines such as POOCH or SWOT analysis. Students can use the client, target audience or peers as fellow designers to gather multiple viewpoints. Creative design thinking strategies are relevant in Unit 3 and 4 to demonstrate the generation and development of concepts for two different client needs.

The study design includes ‘the pitch’; completed in Unit 4, Outcome 1 for the SAT. The pitch must be completed prior to the student commencing the final presentations. Students should be well prepared for their pitch to ensure that they receive feedback and the opportunity to make changes from the feedback received in the refinement stage of the design process.

During the pitch, students present mock-ups that test the suitability of one concept for each presentation relevant to the brief which allows for feedback to make further refinements. As part of their planning and preparation, students design methods to gather and collect feedback and reflect on the feedback. After the pitch, the students need to document any decisions or changes that they are going to make in response to their feedback in their folio.

Many schools chose oral presentations to complete the pitch. The students pitched to a group and incorporated a visual presentation as support. Teachers also recorded their students’ pitches to assist with assessment and feedback. The length of student pitches was generally between five to ten minutes and the audience varied between small groups, the class and in some cases, students pitched to a small group of teachers or design professionals.

Regardless of task type, it is important that students are able to demonstrate the key skills, such as explaining the design thinking, and utilising criteria for the evaluation of the design process and quality of the final presentations. Providing clear guidelines to students regarding how their pitch will be assessed and a time range for an oral presentation assists with preparation.

The audit panel found that several schools were using commercially produced resources for the delivery of the pitch. As the tasks are commercial, there is some concern that students would be able to obtain completed tasks from other students and hence authentication issues could arise. Schools are required to adapt such resources to suit the needs of their students and to avoid authentication issues. It is also critical that commercial resources are checked against the requirements of the current VCE study design.

Outcome 2

*Produce a final visual communication presentation for each communication need that satisfies the requirements of the brief.*

**Task type: *School-assessed Task (SAT)***

* Two distinct final presentations in two separate presentation formats that fulfill the communication needs of the client as detailed in the brief developed in Unit 3.

AND

* Evaluate how each presentation satisfies the requirements of the brief and evaluate the design process used to produce final visual communications.

The audit highlighted the need for students to carefully consider the intention of each final presentation, to ensure they are discernibly different. For example, students should not select a presentation board for both final presentations. There can be some links between the two presentations, for example a logo may appear across both presentations; however, there must be two distinctly different presentations to meet the needs of the client. The presentations must meet the requirements established by the brief written and submitted for assessment in Unit 3. Students need to be mindful of set timelines, ensuring that they have enough time to make any changes that evolved from their pitch.

The final presentations should demonstrate a refinement of materials, methods, media, design elements and principles in each presentation and that the student has selected concepts that are appropriate to the brief written and submitted for assessment in Unit 3. Technical conventions appropriate to each design field must be refined and demonstrated in each final presentation. The steps of refinement should be demonstrated in the folio and assessed in the final presentations.

Assessment – Outcomes 1 and 2

Unit 4 Outcomes 1 and 2 forms part of the SAT folio, therefore the assessment criteria are determined by the VCAA and cannot be modified. The assessment of each criterion is conducted at the completion of the folio. The design process is iterative and cyclical; therefore, students may complete additional research and/or generate ideas during the development and refinement stages. Formative assessment or written feedback should be provided during the folio by using the VCAA Additional Comment/Feedback sheet.