VCE Theatre Studies (2019–2024)

School-based Assessment Report

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

This report provides advice for the first year of implementation of the [*VCE Theatre Studies Study Design 2019–2024*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/theatre/2019TheatreStudiesSD.pdf). The [VCE Theatre Studies *Advice for teachers*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/theatrestudies/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 Theatre Studies study webpage](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/theatrestudies/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 Theatre Studies. 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 found that schools were implementing most of the requirements of the reaccredited *VCE Theatre Studies Study Design* in line with the VCE assessment principles.

**Assessment is valid**

This principle requires assessment to be fair and reasonable. School-assessed Coursework (SAC) tasks need to provide clear instructions and be consistent with guidelines provided in the VCE study design. In general, this principle was upheld by schools audited for Units 3 and 4. On occasions, terminology from previous study designs was used in place of current terminology (e.g. playscript/script, stagecraft areas/work in production roles, performance style/theatre style). Some schools failed to incorporate some of the new aspects of the study design into Units 3 and 4 SAC tasks: for example, dramaturgy, safe and ethical work practices, elements of theatre composition and theatre technologies. It is expected that these components are integrated into practical and theoretical work across the study.

**Assessment is equitable**

This principle requires assessment to be accessible to all students, regardless of gender, culture, linguistic background, physical disability, socioeconomic status or geographic location. This principle was upheld by schools audited for Units 3 and 4 VCE Theatre Studies.

**Assessment is balanced**

This principle requires assessment to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate knowledge, skills, understanding and capacities in different contexts and modes. A range of learning modes is built into Units 3 and 4, and therefore this principle was overwhelmingly upheld by audited schools. This assessment principle also requires tasks to be assessed using suitable criteria and rubrics. In general, the VCAA performance descriptors in the *Advice for teachers* were used to assess Units 3 and 4 outcomes.

**Assessment is efficient**

This principle requires assessment to balance the demands of precision with those of efficiency. Assessment should not generate workload and/or stress that unduly diminishes the performance of a student under fair and reasonable circumstances. The audit found that some schools were compromising this assessment principle by over-assessing particular outcomes. When planning assessment for Unit 3, schools should consider if expectations regarding Outcome 1 are in line with this VCE assessment principle. For Unit 3 Outcomes 2   
and 3, and Unit 4 Outcome 3, a time allocation of between 45–60 minutes per task would help schools to avoid over-assessing.

**Task design and conditions**

When designing tasks for students of VCE Theatre Studies, schools should aim for a balance between coverage and depth. Schools should provide students with opportunities to demonstrate key knowledge and key skills while avoiding over-assessment. Tasks should mainly be completed in class to assist with authentication. Where work is not done under direct teacher supervision, it is advisable that students supply supporting documentation to assist with authentication. Students should be provided with clear information about the conditions under which they will be assessed, such as date, time available and place of assessment, as well as any materials they are able to bring to the assessment. Assessment details, such as criteria, rubrics and/or a marking scheme, should be provided to students to assist them to understand the basis on which their work will be assessed.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Unit 3: Producing theatre

Outcome 1

Interpret a script across the stages of the production process through creative, imaginative and collaborative work undertaken in two production roles.

Task types

*Task 1*

*Ongoing developmental contributions to creative interpretation of a script across all three stages of the production process through collaborative work in two production roles.*

*AND*

*Task 2*

*Analysis and evaluation, supported by relevant documentation, of ongoing developmental contributions across all three stages of the production process in two or more of the following formats:*

* *oral*
* *written*
* *visual*
* *multimedia.*

**Task 1**

Students are required to work in two production roles across the three stages of the production process to creatively interpret a script. Scripts for this task were often linked to an in-depth study of one or more particular theatre styles, which supported students’ understanding of the foundational knowledge for VCE Theatre Studies. A growing number of schools audited for Unit 3 chose to produce one-act plays, abridged plays or excerpts from plays to meet the requirements for this task.

Scripts were often selected with particular audiences in mind (for example, the school community or primary school audiences). Schools varied in the ways in which marks for this task were allocated. Some schools allocated 15 marks per production stage (planning, development and presentation), whereas other schools arrived at a global mark using accumulated evidence from observation, documentation and formal meetings/audits.

A number of schools provided clear instructions to students to scaffold their learning across this outcome. In these cases, students were usually provided with checklists and job descriptions that were particular to their work in each production role. Given the size of this outcome, it is important that students are given clear guidance throughout the process to assist them with the completion of their tasks.

On-going, systematic observation of student contributions to the practical work is required for balanced and accurate assessment of this task. In a small number of cases, Unit 3 audits revealed that assessment of student contributions was based heavily on evidence provided in Task 2 of this outcome.

**Task 2**

Students are required to analyse and evaluate their contributions to the imaginative and creative interpretation of a script across the three stages of the production process. The modes for documenting the analysis and evaluation of their contributions needed to be presented in two or more of the formats listed previously.

In line with the expectations set out in the reaccredited study design, the majority of schools incorporated the process of evaluation into class activities and documentation tasks across the three stages of the production process. Some schools allocated five marks per stage of the production process, while other schools arrived at a global mark at the conclusion of the process.

A variety of documentation strategies was used by audited schools to assist with authentication requirements, including process journals, and digital and multimedia options. Some schools required students to use a combination of documentation strategies, such as written, visual, multimedia, social media and digital recording. A small number of schools mandated that students maintain and submit a folio for formal assessment at the conclusion of Outcome 1. While a folio can be a useful way to organise resources, schools should be aware that folios have not been a mandated task in VCE Theatre Studies for several years.

A number of schools overlooked the requirement for students to use more than one format when analysing and evaluating their contributions to the development of the production. The requirement for students to present their analytical and evaluative work in multiple formats provides students with opportunities to use diverse skills and learning styles.

The ‘Developing a program’ sectionof the VCAA’s *Advice for teachers* provides guidance on selecting scripts for study.

Assessment

Unit 3 assessment includes all three outcomes, and it is important that students are made aware of all requirements and the way they will be assessed.

The selection of the script should be made with the student cohort and the specific audience in mind for Task 1, Outcome 1, and students should be given the opportunity to contribute and collaborate across two production roles. It is important that Task 2 entails two or more of the available formats.

Outcome 2

Outline concepts and ideas for a creative interpretation of excerpts from a script and explain how these could be realised in a theatre production.

Task type option/s

*Documentation that outlines the concepts and ideas for a creative interpretation of excerpts from a script and provides an explanation of how these could be realised in a theatre production in any one or a combination of the following formats:*

* *an essay*
* *responses to structured questions.*

This task assesses the key knowledge and key skills learnt and developed as part of the work undertaken in Outcome 1. Plays chosen for this task were often selected to enhance and deepen students’ understanding of a particular theatre style. A number of schools used ideas from previous VCAA examinations as the basis for developing coursework and assessment for this outcome.

SAC tasks for Unit 3 Outcome 2 were often structured to examine the key knowledge and key skills relating to the three stages of the production process. Planning questions focused on initial concepts, possibilities, research and initial designs/sketches. Development questions focused on experimentation, and trial and error. Presentation questions focused on activities typically undertaken during ‘bump-in’, performance to an audience, and ‘bump-out’.

A number of tasks submitted as part of the audit process neglected to include some of the innovative aspects of the reaccredited study design, such as:

* safe and ethical work practices
* dramaturgy
* theatre technologies
* elements of theatre composition.

An important consideration for schools when setting this task is to ensure that there is variation in question complexity. Typically, questions that ask students to ‘describe’ or ‘explain’ are more accessible than questions that ask students to ‘analyse’ or ‘evaluate’. Variation in question complexity allows schools to discern between low, medium and high level responses.

In general, schools used the VCAA performance descriptors to assess this task.

Assessment

Unit 3 assessment includes all three outcomes, and it is important that students are made aware of all requirements and the way they will be assessed.

The Outcome 2 task is an opportunity for students to demonstrate a range of key knowledge and key skills, and to rank students effectively as these should vary in complexity.

Outcome 3

Analyse and evaluate the creative and imaginative interpretation of a written script in production to an audience.

Task type option/s

*An analysis and evaluation of a creative and imaginative interpretation of a prescribed script in any one or a combination of the following formats:*

* *an analytical essay*
* *responses to structured questions.*

The most common task type for assessing Outcome 3 was short and medium length responses to structured questions. Questions were usually either based on a specific point of key knowledge, or they were a blend of two or more points. Most tasks submitted for the Unit 3 audit included references to elements of theatre composition in one or more questions.

Schools provided students with opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking skills within one or more of the questions set for this task, particularly when questions specifically required analysis and/or evaluation. When students *analyse* a performance, they are being asked to identify the significance or meaning of a creative choice. When students *evaluate* a performance, they are being asked to make a judgment on the value of a creative choice.

This outcome requires students to reference both the written script and a performance of that script. Preparation for this outcome typically included close study of the script prior to attending the performance. This preparation took various forms, including scene work, dramaturgical research and text analysis. As part of the SAC task, some schools provided students with extracts from the script.

In order to ensure that SAC tasks comply with the VCE assessment principle of efficiency, it was recommended to a number of schools that the time allocated for this task be between 45–60 minutes.

Assessment

Unit 3 assessment includes all three outcomes, and it is important that students are made aware of all requirements and the way they will be assessed.

Referencing both the written script and the performance, the task for Outcome 3 should also give opportunities for students to demonstrate the higher order skills of analysing and evaluating.

Unit 4: Presenting an interpretation

Outcome 1

Describe and justify a creative and imaginative interpretation of a monologue and its prescribed scene.

Task types

*Task 1*

*A written report that describes and justifies dramaturgical decisions for a creative and imaginative interpretation of a monologue and its prescribed scene.*

*The report may be in any one or a combination of the following formats:*

* *an essay*
* *responses to structured questions.*

*AND*

*Task 2*

*An oral presentation about the possibilities, intentions and vision for an interpretation of a monologue and its prescribed scene, including responding to question/s.*

The two tasks that form Unit 4 Outcome 1 assist students to develop an understanding of a monologue from the VCE Theatre Studies monologue examination list, which is published each year on the VCE Theatre Studies study webpage on the VCAA website. Dramaturgical research into the complete play and its contexts, as well as theatre style/s, and influences on the playwright/s is used to assist students in developing a creative and imaginative interpretation of their chosen monologue.

Some schools required students to develop and maintain journals (digital and/or hard copy) that documented research, initial concepts, creative possibilities, images, annotations, progress, decisions, feedback, evidence and justifications. These journals were often used to support assessment for Task 1 and/or Task 2 for this outcome. Work undertaken for this outcome was often used as the basis of developing the Interpretation Statement that is delivered during the end-of-year monologue examination.

Most of the key knowledge and key skills for this outcome were satisfactorily covered by audited schools: in particular, elements of theatre composition and contexts of the period in which the script was set. Dramaturgy undertaken for this outcome should aim to enhance students’ understanding of the whole script. This, in turn, may assist students to make informed creative and imaginative interpretive decisions when developing their chosen monologue.

Assessment

The *VCE Theatre Studies Study Design* requires Task 1 to be completed as a written report (for example, an essay or responses to structured questions). Some schools allowed students to use authenticated notes to support the completion of this task, while other schools assessed this task under test conditions. In general, the time provided to complete Task 2 was between 5–10 minutes (including time for responding to question/s).

Most audited schools used VCAA performance descriptors to assess the two tasks for Unit 4   
Outcome 1.

Outcome 3

Analyse and evaluate acting, direction and design in a production.

Task type option/s

*An analysis and evaluation of acting, direction and design and their interrelationship in a production from the prescribed playlist, in any one or a combination of the following formats:*

* *an analytical essay*
* *responses to structured questions.*

Many audited schools incorporated the new additions to the reaccredited study design into their   
Unit 4 Outcome 3 tasks: particularly, elements of theatre composition, theatre technologies, function and purpose, and objectives and traits.

Typically, audited schools crafted questions that covered all of the criteria for this outcome. Schools are reminded that it is a valid option to set questions that cover most, but not all, of the key knowledge and key skills in the study design. However, in these circumstances it is advisable to cover all content during the preparations for the assessment of the outcome.

In general, this task was assessed using responses to structured questions rather than an analytical essay. Students were usually provided with clear task conditions and instructions, outlining details such as date, time and location of assessment, as well as permissible materials (for example, production program, pens, highlighters, etc.).

In contrast to Unit 3 Outcome 3, students are **not** required to study the script for this outcome in   
Unit 4. However, a number of audited schools used the script (or script excerpts) to support the study of the production that was selected as the basis of assessment for this outcome.

Assessment

Tasks should be designed to elicit a range of responses from a group of students, allowing for differentiation between levels of student performance. Questions that cover lower, medium and higher order thinking will provide students with opportunities to achieve results that accurately reflect their capacity. Schools should consider incorporating a range of command terms (such as describe, analyse and evaluate) when designing the task/s for this outcome, which in turn will assist with differentiation and ranking.

VCAA performance descriptors were used by the majority of audited schools for this outcome.