



2013 Music Performance GA 3: Aural and written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the 2013 Music Performance paper was consistent with the guidelines in the sample examination material on the VCAA website. The examination comprised two sections that were worth a total of 100 marks. Students had to answer 17 questions.

It was encouraging that more students attempted the entire paper. The standard of results was similar to previous years. However, the overall level of literacy and music aural perception was inconsistent throughout the cohort.

Students are advised to use a sharp pencil, rather than a pen, for Section A, especially for transcription tasks such as melodic and rhythmic questions.

Positives from the 2013 paper included

- more students were able to identify written intervals
- many students were able to write intervals in the bass clef
- many students identified the blues scale written and aurally
- many students correctly identified the harmonic recognition as alternative D
- many students identified the melodic recognition as alternative D
- many students correctly identified the rhythmic recognition.

As in other years, the most common areas of weakness included

- a lack of basic theoretical knowledge, especially regarding the correct names and numbers for intervals and the correct terminology used for intervals and chords
- limited aural skills, including difficulty identifying tonalities (scale forms) and intervals, even though options were given
- limited ability to use the other (not-to-be-transcribed) parts of the printed score in transcription questions in order to optimise the likelihood of responding correctly
- confusion about or misunderstanding of basic terminology that was taken directly from the study design, such as expressive outcomes and expressive elements.

It was concerning that some students

- did not attempt to answer some of the questions, especially in Section A
- did not appear to read and fully understand all of the questions
- wrote prose answers that were very hard to decipher, often due to illegible writing, used extremely blunt pencils and/or did not express responses to Section B questions clearly. Students are reminded of the importance of writing clearly and correctly.

Advice

- Students need to be aware of the requirements of various question types and should practise answering similar questions.
- Students should use the 15 minutes of reading time productively and ensure that they have read each question carefully, including information that can assist them to answer these questions, such as the other parts in melodic transcription questions. It is important not to make assumptions about questions they **expect** to see.
- Students should write as clearly as possible, especially when notating on a staff. When notating music, students should use a sharp pencil (and an eraser if necessary) rather than a pen.
- When undertaking transcription questions, students are advised to do their rough work on the blank manuscript paper provided and then transfer a neat, legible copy of their final response to the space provided for the answer.
- If students do their rough rhythmic transcription work using 'stick' notation (stems and flags without note heads) or slashes across lines representing rhythmic subdivisions/segments of each beat, they need to be very careful when they transfer their work across from the 'rough work' page to the answer space.
- Where possible, students should have access to appropriate aural training software and a computer music 'sequencer', especially to program rhythms, chords and chord progressions for aural practice.
- Overall, more work is required in aural perception. This includes singing intervals, scales, chords, listening and aurally identifying intervals, chords, progressions and melodic and rhythmic transitions.



SPECIFIC INFORMATION

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding errors resulting in a total less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Theory and aural comprehension

Part 1: Intervals

Question 1 – Identify intervals presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	16	24	16	40	2.7

1. perfect 5th
2. augmented 4th/diminished 5th/tritone
3. perfect 4th
4. major 3rd

Students were generally successful when responding to this question. The most commonly correct interval was the augmented 4th/diminished 5th/tritone. Some students mixed up the perfect 4th and the perfect 5th. Some students wrote intervals that were not on the given list.

Students need to sing and play more of these intervals in class. Such an activity may give this component a more practical meaning.

Students should avoid using ‘M’ and ‘m’ as it is often difficult for assessors to determine the student’s intended response.

Question 2 – Identify written intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	7	13	23	54	3.2

1. minor 7th
2. minor 6th
3. augmented 4th
4. major 6th

Overall, students found identifying intervals easier than aurally recognising them. However, some students still had difficulty counting the number of steps correctly.

Question 3 – Write intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	4	9	12	13	22	37	4.5



Most students did well on this question, although many correctly wrote the bass clef intervals but not those in treble clef ones. Some common errors included

- thinking it was an ‘either/or’ question and missing the bass clef intervals
- changing the given note then trying to write the correct interval
- not reading the instruction to write the interval above or below the given note.



Part 2: Scales and modes

Question 4 – Identify scales/modes presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	9	16	26	46	3.1

1. blues
2. Dorian mode
3. harmonic minor
4. mixolydian

Many students confused the Dorian mode.

Question 5 – Identify written scales/modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	7	10	22	53	3.1

1. melodic minor
2. major pentatonic
3. blues scale
4. major

Minor was not accepted for melodic minor as there are three types of minor scales examinable in the current study design, and pentatonic was not accepted for major pentatonic as there are two types of pentatonic scales examinable.

Some students incorrectly used chord types in response to this scale or mode question. It was also disappointing that some students used scale and mode names that are not in the current study design.

Question 6 – Write scales/modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	11	8	11	6	18	6	40	3.9

dorian mode one octave ascending



minor pentatonic scale one octave descending



Common errors included not using the rhythmic value given and giving incorrect stem directions.

Students must learn the structure and formation of all scales in the study design. A useful practice is to sing and play all scale and mode types to understand the structure and formation of each.

Part 3: Chords and chord progressions

Question 7 – Identify written chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	6	7	13	66	3.3

1. C minor 7
2. E major
3. D augmented
4. B diminished

2013 Examination Report



Some students wrote interval names as chord types. The most common problem was reading the clefs incorrectly.

Question 8 – Write chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	17	13	15	20	35	2.5



Vii diminished
(leading note)
in A major

iv minor7
(subdominant)
in E minor

V major
(dominant)
in E \flat major

I minor
(tonic)
in G minor

The third chord was problematic; many students assumed it was a dominant 7 chord and added the seventh. Some students tried to add the upper tonic but missed and wrote a seventh instead. Some students wrote tonic chords for all chords.

Question 9 – Identify chords presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	9	20	31	38	3

1. suspended 4
2. minor 7
3. dominant 7
4. augmented

Many students identified the augmented chord as diminished. Again, students should be singing all set chords to aurally recognise them when played.

Question 10 – Harmonic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	20	0	80	1.6

D

Students performed very well on this question. A useful strategy might be for students to circle or highlight the differences in each chord progression, which will help them identify the correct answer.

Question 11 – Harmonic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	11	15	18	11	8	6	5	7	7	7	5	3.9

1. C major 7 2. F major 7 3. G 7 4. A minor 5. D minor 7 6. G major

OR

1. I major 7 2. IV major 7 3. V 7 4. vi minor 5. Ii minor 7 6. V major

OR

Harmonic grid	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Bass note	C	F	G	A	D	G
Quality	major 7	major 7	Dom 7	minor	minor 7	major

Students must learn and be able to recognise all common cadences. Students must also know the available chords in both major and minor chord progressions; however, many students did not seem to know or understand the qualities of chords in a major key.

- C major, D minor, E minor, F major, G major, A minor, B diminished
- C major 7, D minor 7, E minor 7, F major 7, G 7, A minor 7, B half diminished

2013 Examination Report



Other common errors included

- assuming that the progression would finish on the tonic
- using Roman numerals incorrectly
- not hearing the difference between major and minor chords
- missing the D minor 7 chord.

Part 4: Melody

Question 12 – Melodic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	31	0	69	1.4

D

Students should try to identify the differences in each melody during reading time to make it easier to distinguish the correct response.

Question 13 – Melodic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	3	5	9	11	12	11	9	7	5	5	5	7	12	6.1



Common errors included

- notating the rhythm incorrectly even though it was given
- making up a rhythm
- writing chords rather than a melody
- not observing the conventional use of stem directions.

Bar 1 – B – C – D – G

- This was a triad of G major used with a passing note between B and D.
- Many students wrote an A on the third beat. It may be enlightening to play that bar with an A and hear how dissonant it sounds with the provided accompaniment.

Bar 2 – E – F# – G – C

- This was a sequence of a 4th from the first bar.
- All main notes were from the C major chord, with a passing note from E to G.
- Many students missed the F# even though there was one in the piano part.
- Again, students and teachers should play this example without the F# and hear how undiatonic it sounds.

Bar 3 – B – C – A – G – A

- This was the most difficult bar and tended to be the discriminator.
- This bar had the only accented passing note resolving to a C.
- Otherwise, it was very harmonic.

Bar 4 – B – D – G

- Many students did not hear that the melody finished on the tonic, which is strange as all other notes had been used to complete this tune.
- Students must use the given accompaniment for reference of the tonal centre.



Part 5: Rhythm

Question 14 – Rhythmic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	33	0	67	1.4

A

The more successful students circled the differences in the score, which is a good technique to adopt. Students need to practice this type of question more; teachers may wish to create their own examples using a music software program.

Question 15 – Rhythmic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	13	12	11	9	8	6	6	5	5	5	4	3	11	4.9



Many students could not group the rhythm in compound duple time, and many students did not have the correct number of beats in each bar. Some students had difficulty with understanding how to notate a duplet. Those students who did not have a strategy to work systematically through a rhythmic dictation question generally struggled with this question.

Section B – Analysis of pre-recorded works

Generally, students managed their time better and produced answers of a higher standard than in previous years. It is acceptable to use dot points to answer these questions, which may assist students who feel that they are running out of time.

Students must have a clear understanding of all key knowledge and skills for both Units 3 and 4 of the *VCE Music Performance Study Design*. This includes understanding what expressive elements of music are and how they are used in music performances.

Many students wrote a commentary or listening guide rather than answering the question. Such responses could not score highly.

Question 16

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	2	8	15	19	19	16	11	9	4.8

Answers included, but were not limited to, the following.

- diction (articulation) – can understand the words (tells a story); some use of joining notes (slurring) to make the stanza sound smooth to assist with the interpretation or understanding of the particular sentence
- use of harmony – constant, mainly 3rds and 6ths; most likely decided by ear (not written down) so it was easy to listen to
- use of unison singing compared to use of harmony
- use of controlled vibrato – end of phrases
- male voice – middle range, some use of vibrato; this adds to the story telling aspect
- female voice – middle range (more high than low), some use of vibrato
- use of ornaments at the ends of phrases (like a turn)
- dropping off the note (pitch) at the ends of phrases
- use of melisma
- choices made by the vocalists as to who takes each solo in different sections – varied tone/timbre emphasises this

2013 Examination Report



Question 17

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	1	1	4	5	8	10	13	16	13	9	8	5	7	7.1

There were many varied responses to this question; however, most students were able to make a reasonable attempt at describing the range of dynamics presented in the work. Articulation was handled reasonably well, with a number of students correctly using terms such as tremolo; for example, *Tremolos by strings in the high register create an icy cold tone colour*. Students tended to describe the contrast between the high-register violins, describing the tone as harsh/scratchy/strident with the dark tone of the very low register of the double basses. Not many students described the glissandi in the brass and violins.

Answers included, but were not limited to, the following.

- tone colour – brass – changes tone through use of mutes; use of an E \flat clarinet. The tone colour changes in each instrument including the use of tessitura, especially in the upper woodwinds. The percussion instruments are able to create different tone colours.
- blend of instruments – At the start of the strings, brass, woodwind and percussion create an atmosphere of anticipation (despite playing in unison); this occurs a lot in the first 30 seconds of the work. The expressive elements focus on the blend of instruments and how it is achieved by going through all sections of the orchestra.
- articulation – strings – arco, pizzicato and different styles of bowing used; brass – hits (or stabs), staccato notes usually as quavers; woodwinds – use of double and triple tonguing in the upper winds
- dynamics – could be interpreted in two ways
 - composer indicates a dynamic marking and the performer and conductor interprets it.
- in the loud (strong) passages the entire orchestra is playing (tutti) compared to the quieter sounds when only one or two instruments are playing. Individual parts used crescendos and diminuendos.