



2010

Music Solo Performance GA 2: Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The comments provided in this report are specifically in relation to the 2010 assessment and are based on the corresponding criteria and examination conditions. From 2011, Music Solo Performance and Music Group Performance will be merged into the one study: Music Performance. Further information can be found on the VCAA website on the VCE Music Performance study page.

The performance examination was the major focus of VCE Music Solo Performance and contributed 50 per cent to the study score. The standard of performance in 2010 was very high. Statistics from this examination show that many students who take this study are extremely committed to a disciplined practice regime and reflect that many students have 10 or more years experience on their instrument. As with all criteria-based exams, performances that gained the highest marks fully exploited the assessment criteria within the 25 minutes allowed. Sometimes the most competent students failed to fully exploit the criteria for assessment. Program selection is an important factor in allowing students to perform the widest range of styles, genre, tonal effects, structures and techniques, as demanded by the criteria.

Students and teachers are reminded of the importance of fully complying with the requirements of the examination task. This is reflected in criterion 1. In 2010, numerous mistakes were made, from leaving out a required category, to performing only one work from a set of two (as with many of the vocalises in Contemporary Popular Voice), to performing one work short of the minimum required. The statistics clearly demonstrate that there is a more significant problem with compliance from students playing contemporary instruments than from students playing traditional classical instruments.

An area of concern is the use of tablature notation by guitar students, and the use of downloaded scores and/or backing tracks from the Internet. This often leads to students performing the wrong editions of works or incorrect accompaniments, which can mean the program is at least partly non-compliant. A different edition of a work to the one listed is often a different arrangement and will not be assessed as it is not on the current Prescribed List of Works.

Another area to be aware of, particularly for wind, brass and vocal students, is the careful selection of a program that will not only best fulfil the criteria, but that also takes into account the stamina the student needs to deliver that program. Students' physical development needs to be considered carefully. Some students are able to play each of their chosen works quite well, but they do not have sufficient stamina to perform all the works under examination conditions within the 25-minute time limit. Some students who have enough stamina to perform for 25 minutes sometimes play too hard in their warm-up, therefore diminishing their energy in the examination. Prior to the examination, students are advised to run through their entire performance, including an appropriate warm-up routine, on as many occasions as they can.

Most students are required to perform with an accompanist or recorded backing. The importance of this role cannot be stressed too highly. The highest-scoring students chose to work with highly competent, supportive and professional accompanists. They demonstrated exhaustive rehearsal of their programs through precise synchronisation, sensitive balance of the musical material, and the ability to each lead or follow as appropriate. Some of the problems for students who did not gain a high score were caused by choosing an accompanist who continually dominated the musical texture or failed to allow the student to lead the performance as required. While the accompanist is not assessed, the student's ability to interact with accompaniment was assessed in criterion 8. Students and teachers are advised to use accompanists who are able to work with the student's interpretive decisions, and to start rehearsals early in the year.

VASS Coordinators and classroom music teachers should ensure that students are correctly enrolled in this subject, especially that the correct instrument is identified. If a student is enrolled in voice, for example, the code could be VP or VO (Voice Contemporary Popular or Voice Classical). These are different instruments with different repertoire, techniques and styles. Scheduling of examinations is based on this information. To ensure the examinations run smoothly, students must be correctly enrolled.

The 2011 *Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works* is available on the VCAA website and is the only list that should be used in 2011. Students and teachers should ensure that they consult this list for any changes from the previous list(s). Changes are highlighted in red text.



SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Criteria

1. Compliance with the requirement of the task

As mentioned, many students failed to fully comply with the requirements of the task. Just over 90 per cent of students performed a fully compliant program, which means that around 10 per cent of students were not fully compliant. Some of the main issues included:

- poorly timed programs where a required work was not performed within the 25-minute time allocation
- performing an accompanied work without accompaniment (or omitting an unaccompanied work)
- selecting a piece not on the current list of works (a different arrangement to the one specified or a different opus/catalogue number to the one specified)
- omitting a required movement or section (for example, where two movements are specified ‘to be counted as one work’)
- presenting fewer than the minimum number of required works
- singers using sheet music when memory was required
- playback equipment not brought to the assessment or not tested with the student’s CD
- Percussion – performing four works where five was the minimum required
- Guitar Contemporary – leaving out the chordal piece or not performing with appropriate backing tracks
- Voice Contemporary – performing only one of a set of two vocalises by George/Vertigan
- Voice – classical singers omitting the required recitative and performing only the aria
- use of a backing CD that was not the one prescribed (some contemporary popular instruments have a specific backing that is required).

If a student is performing a twentieth or twenty-first century work where two movements are to count as one work, this will not count as two works from the twentieth or twenty-first century. To meet this requirement two complete works, as per list requirements, must be performed within the 25 minutes allowed.

2. Differentiation of a range of styles and characters in the program

Generally, students selected programs that reflected the range of styles in the prescribed list. Many students who did not achieve a high mark in this criterion failed to adequately explore the range of styles in the list. This, at times, was equally detrimental to both stronger and weaker students. Some students who presented only ‘virtuosic’ works, relying for example on speed and bravura, could have achieved higher marks in this criterion by demonstrating more stylistic variety; for example, a reflective work demonstrating sustained control. In other cases, either because of technical limitations or simply due to poor choice of repertoire, students’ programs failed to explore a wide enough range of styles. Some of these programs were constructed of simple pieces all in a similar style. Students who achieved the highest marks performed programs that were extremely well thought out. Each piece had a different style for the performer to explore (for example, polyphonic, lyrical, extended form such as a sonata movement, jazz or contemporary, or avant-garde).

Some students chose works of varying styles, but performed them all in a similar style (for example, all in a ‘romantic’ style, or in a very dry and clinical manner). Apart from having the most varied programs, students who achieved the highest marks in this criterion also approached each piece in a unique way. These performers obviously had a keen aural awareness of different styles, perhaps through listening extensively to both live and recorded performances. They approached each work in a unique manner, using a range of different performance techniques to demonstrate their ability to play in different styles.

3. Accuracy and clarity in performance of the works as notated

Accuracy and clarity of the performance is a very important criterion, which also affects other criteria. Students who performed with the highest accuracy and clarity tended to also perform well in many of the other criteria. There was a wide range of marks in this criteria ranging from some students who performed with exceptional accuracy to others who performed quite inaccurately. Accuracy did not seem to be related to performing from memory.

Students who scored highest in this criterion showed evidence of having learnt works thoroughly. One of the best ways for students to overcome performance nerves is for them to be so thoroughly prepared that even when they are very nervous the mechanics of their playing are not affected.



4. Fluency and control in a range of performance techniques

This criterion focuses on both fluency in performance and fluency of technique demonstrated through technical control over all musical elements. The students who scored most highly chose varied programs in which they demonstrated numerous performing techniques at the highest level. At the same time, many of these programs also demonstrated a good range of styles, tonal colours and structures. Students needed to control passages at a strict tempo and with a uniform articulation, and to control tempo changes, articulation, dynamics and subtle pitch adjustments. Some students chose pieces that explored contemporary techniques, such as multiphonics (reed instruments), a range of distortions (electric instruments), contemporary bowing techniques (string instruments) or several vocal effects and techniques (voice). Others explored a wide range of traditional techniques, including virtuosic, lyrical and various stylistic period techniques.

Students who did not gain high marks for this criterion failed to display a wide range of performance techniques as their performance programs were limited. Some also displayed much hesitation in their performance. Others, while maintaining basic fluency, clearly lacked fluent technical resources and control in their performance. This became particularly evident in attempts to alter tempi to create tension or release, resulting in unevenness in the playing. Poor fluency in technique was also reflected in the limited range of dynamics used, as well as performances that were clearly under tempo.

5. Characteristic tone, artistic variation of tone and expressiveness in tone

One of the most important aspects of this criterion is the student's ability to perform using a wide range of tonal effects reflective of the works in the prescribed list. The starting point for the best use of a range of tonal devices is the program itself. For example, a voice program that consists of a diverse range of styles, genres, tempi, keys, periods and locations will create opportunities for a singer to use many tonal effects. For a drum kit player, a program of rock, jazz, Latin and blues will enable the performer to use many more tonal effects than a program with only one genre represented. The effective use of distortion pedals within a Contemporary Popular Guitar program and the use of an acoustic guitar for one work would enable a student to demonstrate a wide variety of tonal effects more fully. Sample programs published with the prescribed list provide a guide to choosing an appropriate range of works. Students who performed best in this criterion performed programs that consisted of a wide variety of styles. They also considered the appropriate use of a range of tonal effects.

The other aspect of the best use of tone involves the performer having a refined technique that enables them to create the best tone possible across a variety of different tonal effects. Examples include:

- string players – controlled largely in the bowing
- pianists – to do with a key's speed of attack and its relationship to the rest of the keys played
- wind and brass players – the embouchure with relation to breath control as well as appropriate use of vibrato
- percussion – created through absolute control in mallet or stick technique.

Students who most fully satisfied this criterion were able to control the tone of their instrument to the highest level and create the greatest diversity of tonal effects. Their skill was evident through a disciplined and thoughtful use of tonal effects throughout the performance. This discipline was so integrated into these students' performances that, with a finely developed aural sensitivity, students were able to adjust to the performance conditions. For example, the most successful drum kit students performed with many different tonal effects that were at a level appropriate to the performance space while using tonal effects at all dynamic levels. They did this without creating harshness at the loudest levels, and maintained sonority at the softest levels. Maintaining control and sonority at the softest levels was often the defining aspect of students' best practice in the use of tone for all instruments.

6. Skill in shaping and expressively communicating music ideas, as appropriate to the style of each work in the program

The most captivating performances were the ones that communicated an understanding of or emotional response to the work. Students who achieved this expressively created shape in phrases in much the same way as a good orator tells a story. Tension and release were created through a variety of elements such as changes in dynamics, articulation and tempi, as well as the use of elements such as silence, surprise and predictability. These performances were dramatic, poignant, moving, disturbing, challenging and whimsical. Students were able to take the notated score and make it their own, while still maintaining its integrity. In some cases, communication beyond the notation of the work included enhancing notated dynamics or tempo changes to build tension. In other cases, it involved particularly effective use of rubato or accent. Best practice in the use of these elements involved enhancing the score within stylistic conventions.

Students who failed to score high marks in this criterion often played without much expression or nuance. Musical phrases lacked direction or a point of climax. Phrasing is one of the most basic concepts of pronunciation in a language



and should not be overlooked within the language of music. Some students performed as if they were afraid of using any variation. Without an aural awareness of the musical styles being performed, they failed to engage in the task of communication and expression. The importance of listening and evaluating other interpretations of the work cannot be overemphasised as a fundamental requirement when preparing for this examination.

7. Differentiation of the parts of the structure and characteristics of each work

Students who effectively demonstrated a sense of structure in their performance seemed to have a clear understanding of the structures based on analysis and study independent of actually playing the work. They were able to follow themes and motifs with sensitivity and consistency. They also created a clear sense of the major climax(es) within a work using dynamics, forward motion and/or variation. Different types of musical structures create different challenges for the performer. The programs performed by the highest-scoring students consisted of a wide variety of different types of musical structures, giving them the maximum opportunity to demonstrate each of these challenges.

Students who did not achieve high marks in this criterion generally had difficulty demonstrating their ability to differentiate the parts and structures in their works. Important themes were not particularly highlighted and there was little attempt to create adequate tension and release in the performance. These students also tended to have little structural variety in their performance programs, often choosing the shortest works from the list, omitting any extended work(s) in which they might have the opportunity to demonstrate an ability to develop a sense of structure in a lengthy work. Similarly, students who performed only large structures failed to demonstrate their ability to structure the performance of a short work adequately.

8. Artistic interaction, balance and coordination between the parts, the solo and the accompaniment, and between the main melody and accompaniment, as appropriate to the instrument and style of each work

With instruments that require accompaniment, the ensemble created by two musicians is an exciting form of music making. Students who demonstrated the tightest ensemble with their accompanists gained the highest scores in this criterion. In strong performances, the role of each performer at any given point in the work was clear, the players created excellent balance for the main theme whether in the solo or the accompaniment, and the accompanist was highly competent and played a supportive but not dominant role in the ensemble.

Students who did not perform highly in this criterion typically used accompanists who did not provide adequate support or who had not rehearsed with them enough. This meant that the ensemble was not properly synchronised or balanced. While the accompanist is not assessed, they can either support or confuse the performance. It is very difficult for a student to perform at their best if the accompanist is struggling with fluency or stylistic elements.

With instruments such as the pianoforte or classical guitar (as well as voice and single line instruments where unaccompanied performances are required) there are parts of all works that are less important or more important within the texture. At times, a piece may include a false melody that a student needs to understand and project. In a piano or classical guitar work, there may be melody and accompaniment (sometimes even three or more textures across a complete work), which needs to be treated as if in an ensemble situation, with appropriate voicing of each texture. Students who were awarded high marks in this criterion had sufficient technical control and musical understanding to create an appropriate balance between melody and accompaniment, and between the parts and structures of the score. They were able to ‘orchestrate’ the various musical textures and demonstrate their understanding of the complexity of the parts and structures. Students who gained low marks often did not perform this complex ‘orchestration’ of a score, and thus created a performance that was confusing and difficult for the listener to understand.

9. Skill in historical and/or authentic interpretation in performance and use of contemporary conventions in interpretation

Students who performed best in this criterion had obviously spent time studying the style of the works in their program; for example, by listening to recordings not only of the works they performed, but also of other works in the styles presented. This preparation was evident through an adherence to stylistic conventions in the performance of each work presented and the performance conventions they both mimicked and borrowed from. These students also demonstrated their ability to perform works from a variety of different styles and geographical locations.

Students who did not achieve high marks often presented programs of works in a similar style. Some students presented a narrow range of styles, failing to explore the variety in the prescribed lists. Students who performed only the minimum number of works required sometimes failed to explore an adequate range of styles representative of the list. Where two of these works were of a similar style, students had even less opportunity to demonstrate an adequate range of historical styles. While there is no minimum time specified for the performance examination, students have up to 25



minutes to demonstrate the extent to which they fulfil each criterion. Students should use this time to meet each criterion fully.

10. Skill in personal interpretation and projection of musical intentions in performance

In this criterion, students were invited to give something of themselves in their performance. Any performer who knows the work they are presenting with absolute confidence and security will apply their own interpretation to a performance, either deliberately or accidentally. Students who gained the highest marks in this criterion successfully maintained the tension of performing within strict guidelines of accuracy and stylistic conventions while also using their performance as a means of personal expression. Through resolving this conflict, these students were best able to project their musical intentions in their performance. There was a correlation between performances that lacked clear projection of musical intention and performances that lacked security of notation and other expressive elements.

It is vital that students understand this criterion in relation to the others. Some students who performed with a very personal interpretation were off task in many of the other criteria, where their interpretations made little reference to the original notation. The emphasis the criterion places on ‘skill’ must not be overlooked when a student prepares their program.

11. Presentation techniques appropriate to the styles represented in the works and to the conventions of performance in a formal recital

The best performances demonstrated great poise and focus. They flowed well from one work to the next, and presented the material as recitals. This was true for classical and contemporary popular instruments. The most successful students not only faced their audience, but also, and more importantly, musically addressed their audience in performance. These students used appropriate and varied volume levels (particularly pertinent for drum kit and amplified instruments), and they incorporated excellent performance techniques throughout their assessment. In some instances, this involved a thoughtful programming order to create and maintain maximum variety and interest.

Where a lot of equipment was used (such as amplifiers, drum kits and percussion equipment), it was prepared prior to the performance time. Recorded backings were tested and the logistics of their use was well rehearsed (for example, starting, stopping and tracking recorded backings). Often these students also dressed appropriately, which assisted them in creating a sense of ‘occasion’ for the performance. These students arrived at the performance venue with plenty of time to spare and, in some instances, arranged for equipment to be delivered to the venue ahead of time.

Students who performed poorly in this criterion were often not well prepared, failing to have the correct equipment, backings and appropriate leads or connections. Many students used MP3 players as their playback media, which certainly made the performance run smoothly. Many students could have benefited by running their performance in a variety of venues (different sizes and acoustics). These dry runs can eliminate many problems of equipment setup that can occur when the student is in a stressful examination environment.

When preparing for their performance, students are advised to attend live performances so they can gain the best understanding of how to present their works in a program that has flow and purpose. Problems encountered in this criterion included students who:

- faced away from the audience
- took excessive breaks (or no breaks) between performances
- used inappropriate gestures when they made mistakes
- failed to tune or retune instruments
- constantly played licks between works
- lacked of control over nerves (perhaps through a lack of performing experience)
- poorly rehearsed page turns
- set inappropriate levels for CD backings
- used loose photocopies of music (that blew off the music stand)
- played into the music stand, causing a physical barrier between the student and the audience.

It is worth mentioning something about the physical space around the performer. Some performers brought an array of items into the examination, including sheet music, CDs, water bottles, towels, spare strings, extra cables and playback equipment. Although these items may be necessary, it can diminish a students’ presentation if they are strewn around the floor untidily. Excessive slurping from water bottles can also detract from a performance. Best practice in a professional performance would be to move slightly out of the main performance space and have a sip from a cup after a bracket of pieces.



Comments on particular instruments

The following information provides guidance on preparing successful programs for particular instruments. These comments are made in relation to specific instruments but many may also be applicable to other instruments.

Contemporary popular guitar and drum kit

- Students and teachers should check the *Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works* on the VCAA website and read it carefully to establish that the requirements have been met. The arrangement/edition used is critical, as arrangements other than the ones listed may constitute a different piece to the one prescribed, and thus incur a penalty. Some guitar students who have downloaded tablature from the Internet may not have the correct edition or arrangement.
- Many students performed very similar programs, with the assessors hearing about eight or so works for each instrument. Individual programs should be planned to reflect the students' strengths and weaknesses.
- As students are allocated 25 minutes to fulfil the criteria, one or two more works more than the minimum number required could be prepared to allow students to more comprehensively meet the requirements of the criteria.
- Students should ensure that volume levels are appropriate for the performance space and that the volume of backing tracks is appropriately balanced. Students must not perform at unsafe volume levels. Additional warm-up/set-up time is allocated and students must use this time to ensure that safe volume levels are used.
- Where possible, students might consider using some 'live' backing accompaniments to demonstrate artistic interaction with the accompaniment.
- Drum kit students could aim to demonstrate a wider range of dynamic control and stylistic variation. They could include Latin, funk and odd metre works.
- Ensure that the rudiments of students' instruments are adequately prepared, such as snare and brush pieces.
- Students should ensure that the CD backing(s) are used as specified on the prescribed list.
- Students should make sure that they have thoroughly rehearsed their performance as a whole, rather than just playing a compilation of pieces without consideration for the movement from one piece to another.
- If using a music stand, it is recommended that students position it discreetly so that it does not form a barrier between performer and audience.
- Some guitar students were not as well synchronised in their use of effects pedals (on and off).
- The most successful students were able to synchronise with backing track fade-outs.
- Guitarists who used the best presentation techniques tended to perform standing up in a confident manner.
- The most successful students used repeated passages as an opportunity for self-expression, by using improvisation and variation on the repeat.
- Some students lost marks by talking too much in between pieces, under the guise of announcing the works. If a student decides to talk in the performance, it should enhance, not detract from the performance.

Electric bass

- The minimum number of works required is six. Students should check the list carefully and ensure that they have met all areas of compliance.
- Refer to the points for contemporary popular guitar and drum kit (above).
- Students are to provide all equipment.

Voice – contemporary popular

- Students and teachers should check the *Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works* on the VCAA website carefully to establish that they have met all requirements. Some works in the vocalise category require performing both in a set of two vocalises. Some students very effectively made connections between the two vocalises being formed as one work.
- The vocalise should be sung as an expressive song. Many students seemed to go through the motions, singing the vocalise without much interest or expression then went on to perform the rest of the program with much flair. This was the weakest part of the examination for many students, and lacked thorough preparation or thought.
- Students must make sure that the 'variety of styles' is addressed in the choice of program as well as in the delivery of each song. Students should try to avoid just singing their favourite songs; instead they should consider what is being looked for in the assessment criteria.
- Appropriate keys need to be chosen to best suit the vocal range or '*fach*' of the student.

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- The accompanist should provide a stylistic backing – making sure that the melody line is not present in the accompaniment. The accompanist must play to the vocal capabilities of the student. Accompanists should avoid playing too loudly. Appropriate tempi are very much related to style.
- If a CD accompaniment is used, students should ensure that burnt CDs are tested in the CD player they intend to use. Also, with the vocals, they must ensure that the correct track is used for the backing. Where a CD has both an accompaniment only, and a melody and accompaniment, as provided with the sheet music, the correct track must be used for the performance examination.
- Students must not exceed the number of recorded backings allowed (a maximum of three).
- There was a tendency to use backing tracks that were too quiet for the performance space. This made it hard for the singer or audience to hear the backing, and it was impossible for the student to demonstrate any kind of interaction with the accompaniment.
- When considering using a backing track, students should ensure they can demonstrate interaction with the accompaniment. They might consider keeping backing tracks to a minimum.
- The best balance was often achieved with an acoustic guitar backing.
- Some students were not careful in their choice of the unaccompanied song, and failed to maintain a pitch centre. At times, students failed to maintain an appropriate rhythmical pulse. If these are problems for a singer, it would be best to choose a shorter unaccompanied work to perform.
- Students should consider their vocal health. To avoid forcing their voice, students should choose their program wisely. The keys and technical demands on the young voice should be considered as well as changing keys to suit a particular student's abilities.
- When choosing an outfit for the performance, students should consider their posture. High stiletto shoes are not good for a singer's posture.
- If using hand or body gestures, students should make them appropriate to the text.
- Students must be aware that the examination is a 'recital', not a sing-along.
- Students should try to avoid holding a water bottle or remote control while singing.

Voice – classical

- Teachers should ensure that different styles are clearly understood; for example, students need to avoid scooping in baroque or classical work.
- Students who select a large number of works from the ballads, music theatre and jazz/pop categories should consider choosing Voice – Contemporary Popular rather than Voice – Classical as their instrument.
- Teachers should ensure that the student can meet the demands of the program; particularly in regards to the program length (some students became fatigued before their last song).
- If using hand or body gestures, they should be appropriate to the text.
- Students should choose their accompanist wisely. Students need to be able to create an 'ensemble' in which the accompanist plays a supportive rather than a dominant role.
- The highest-achieving students ensured that their vocalise and unaccompanied folksong had as much attention to detail as the other works on their program.
- The highest achieving students chose a wide variety of interesting repertoire suited to their voice, rather than performing 'standard' pieces. Students and teachers should try to explore the wide range available in every category on the list rather than staying with the most popular pieces. Teachers are encouraged to become acquainted with pieces with which they are unfamiliar to help create interesting programs and highlight their students' abilities.
- The highest-achieving students included different languages in their programs. The words were pronounced with clarity and fluency and the performer knew the meaning of each word and how to highlight important syllables, words, phrases or ideas. Including a work sung in a language other than English is not a requirement of the examination, but can be a way of broadening the range of styles and characteristics evident in the program.
- Some pieces tend to be more demanding in terms of intonation than others are. These should be selected carefully.

Piano – contemporary popular

- Students and teachers should check the *Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works* on the VCAA website and read it carefully to establish that they have met the requirements. Using the correct arrangement/edition is critical, as using arrangements other than the ones listed may constitute playing a different piece to the one prescribed.
- The works on this list are technically comparable with works on the pianoforte list. The complexity of syncopated rhythms can be extremely challenging, so students need to have disciplined approach to learning the works.

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- Accompaniments are not accepted for any works in this list (no CD backing is allowed).
- Five works are required, with four categories to be represented.
- A steady beat is essential, with a clear understanding and differentiation between a swung and straight feel.
- Many students need to develop a refined pedalling technique further.
- A wider range of tonal effects needs to be explored; many students seem to want to 'bash' the piano.

Pianoforte

- Students should ensure continuity of performance when turning pages. Assessors can assist with page turning if required.
- Although the prescribed list of works is comprehensive, the range of works selected by many students was often limited. Students who wish to display their capabilities might do well to explore the lesser-known works on the list.
- Students should perform within their capabilities and avoid taking on programs that are too demanding for them. They should explore a range of styles, techniques and genres that are within their capabilities.
- Students are advised to practise performing on different pianos and in different environments. Students who may be considering performing their program on a grand piano are advised to practise playing on a grand piano as much as possible throughout their examination preparation. Prepare the program both with and without a middle sostenuto pedal.
- Maintaining a disciplined practice regime throughout the whole year will enable students to maximise their potential and to be able to walk into the examination room with a confident attitude.

Wind instruments

- Students and teachers should ensure that the program can be performed within 25 minutes.
- Where the total playing time is calculated to exceed 20 minutes, it could be useful to consider placing all of the required works early in the program.
- A students' physical stamina needs to be balanced with the need to fulfil the criteria to the highest level.
- Students should have a strong understanding of the whole work, not just the solo part.
- Students should try to get as much practice performing in public as possible.
- Ensure that attention is given to concise and stylistically appropriate articulation and phrasing.
- Consider placement in relation to the accompanist. Placement needs to allow for communication with the accompanist and for the performance to address the audience.
- Nerves need to be handled in an artistically appropriate manner. Often sipping of water is used to assist in calming the nerves, but doing so between each piece (particularly in huge gulps and slurs) can detract from the overall poise and presentation of the performance.

Brass instruments

- Many of the issues for students in this section are similar to issues for wind instruments, especially regarding the stamina needed to complete the performance effectively.
- Students must demonstrate thorough preparation with the accompanist.
- If performing a work which uses a backing track, students must ensure that the correct track is used in the correct way; for example, if the backing has the solo doubled on one channel, this channel must be turned off in the performance.
- Students should always check that the correct editions are used for performance.

String instruments

- Students who choose repertoire that is too difficult for them, or that does not explore a range of performing techniques, often fail to maximise their score. Students should perform a range of techniques well, and ensure that all works chosen are within their technical facility.
- Students who perform very long programs are advised to include all required works early in the program.
- Students should be prepared for contingencies; for example, by carrying spare strings, rosin and so on.
- Students should practise performing in a range of acoustic environments from flat to very bright. They should become accustomed to performing in different temperatures. This will make it easier for students to adjust to performance conditions.
- Cellists and double bass players should be prepared for either a hard or soft floor surface by bringing either a cello board or equivalent to ensure the instrument will not slip.