



2010 Music Performance Group GA 2: Group Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students who presented for the Music Group Performance Examination performed with a diverse range of instruments, including voice, in the context of many different types of groups and ensembles. Students' ability to address the criteria varied and was influenced by their performance skills, understanding of the music styles being performed and experience in performing in a group context.

Students who attained high marks confidently exhibited a high level of musical, technical and interpretative skills and displayed excellent interaction with the other members of the group.

Students should be conscious of maximising their marks in criteria that relate to group interaction and balance of the musical instruments. In many cases, students seemed to have focused on instrumental skills and had neglected to develop their skill at performing as a member of a group. Many students would benefit from consciously listening to and acknowledging the other group members and adjusting their musical contribution to enhance the overall group sound.

In some cases, the role (where appropriate for the group style) of introducing each item could have been shared more equitably in relation to the criteria of presentation. Students should allow time between items to check their tuning. A student may, in fact, improve their results if they can demonstrate their ability to adapt positively to unforeseen situations; for example, if another band member forgets their part or breaks a string.

Students need to make decisions about the group composition and program that will be advantageous to the group as a whole. For example, it may be preferable to have two vocalists perform in separate examinations even though the rest of the assessed band will play for both singers. In this case, the instrumentalists will be assessed in the first examination leaving them free to accompany the second vocalist in the second examination. Some of the songs from the first program can be repeated, along with additional songs suited to the second singer. As a result, the two vocalists avoid direct comparison and allow for programs more suited to both of them.

It is important that groups choose keys for songs that are suited to the vocalists as well as the instrumentalists. The focus should be on selecting songs that support each student to maximise their possible score. Students should consider transposing the songs themselves to find more appropriate keys. Students should be careful when using transcriptions from the Internet; it is worth checking the original recordings for accuracy.

Students consistently met the requirement to perform two musical items from the Prescribed list of group works. A number of students performed additional works from the Prescribed list, which is permissible. It can be difficult for groups with two or more assessed performers to address criteria at the highest level if they only select two works from the list. In this case, students should consider performing more than two prescribed works to allow all of the assessed performers to meet the criteria.

On a number of occasions students did not play with the rest of the group during the chosen Prescribed list items. As a result, a penalty was applied using Criterion 1, which covers compliance issues. Students must perform two works from the Prescribed list. Students are assessed as individuals performing in a group context. Each criterion is applied to the individual student's performance across the program.

This year, there were few instances of teachers or other non-student performers performing inappropriately as a member of the group. Examples of this include a teacher doubling a musical part, counting in a song or obviously leading a student. Such behaviour is distracting and does not ultimately assist the assessed students. The performance examination conditions for the study specifically preclude this behaviour. All non-assessed performers must read and follow the conditions applicable to them that are listed in the study design.

Teachers and students should also be careful to ensure that they put together the strongest possible program for the assessed students when they are performing an entire program of items from the Prescribed list. When determining the musical program for the examination, students should be careful about selecting a majority of original compositions; they need to consider their selections in relation to the criteria, especially regarding a range of musical styles.



SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Prescribed List

Students must include two works from the 'Prescribed List of Arrangements for Music: Group Performance' in their end-of-year performance examination program. This is available on the VCAA website.

Assessment Criteria

The criteria for awarding grades are applied to the whole program, not to individual works. There are 11 criteria covering all instruments and the performance of all works in the program. The document that lists the criteria also includes annotations about each criterion to help unpack general criteria into components more relevant to particular instruments.

Selection of Instrument

The term 'instrument', as used in the study design, includes voice. Students may choose to perform on more than one instrument in their performance examination; however, students should consider the likelihood of scoring well in the assessment criteria when making this decision. For example, students may not maximise their marks if they try to assist the balance of their group by playing an instrument that they are not particularly competent with for a considerable part of the program. The student should be careful not to compromise the amount of time spent performing to their strengths.

An opposite example might be where the student is a strong performer on more than one instrument. In this situation, there are certain criteria in which the student may benefit from performing on more than one instrument, such as 'skill in performing a range of techniques' and 'skill in performing as a member of a group'.

The Examination

Assessed students perform as members of a group or ensemble, and are assessed in this context. The level of ability of other members of the group does not directly affect the assessed student's results. The assessors concentrate on the performance of the student being assessed and on how well they meet the criteria for assessment.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that the assessed performer's ability to maximise their results is contingent on the context within which each individual performs. For example, a drummer who keeps irregular time or rhythm will affect the assessed performer's ability to maintain an even tempo and accurately interpret rhythm patterns, and will therefore indirectly influence the assessed student's ability to obtain their highest score.

Composition of the Group

A group is defined as two or more students enrolled in a secondary school. Although students can be assessed as individuals (that is, as the only assessed performer in a group), they should be aware that this does not guarantee better marks. Page 60 of the study design states, 'Where a group comprises two performers only, that group may not have a non-student performer...as a member. The musical parts should be arranged so that each performer is equally able to take a leading role during the performance.'

The assessed performer(s) can vary the composition of the group during their performance as they wish, which may enhance the ability of the assessed performer(s) to demonstrate a variety of styles and techniques. Students must decide how best to organise their group context(s) in a program to help them give their best performance.

Students should also be aware that non-students may only assist as part of the group within certain guidelines, as outlined on page 60 of the study design. Teachers are advised that their role, if participating, should not distract from, or limit the ability of, the assessed performer(s) presenting a program that will maximise their marks.

Assessed student performers should perform in a way that allows them to maximise their results in all criteria. Hence, non-assessed performers should not count in, conduct, tune, adjust instruments and equipment, lead or otherwise play a dominant or distracting role during the performance examination. This will only lessen the opportunities for the assessed students to address all of the assessment criteria.

Program Selection

The program should contain at least four contrasting works, including two works from the Prescribed list of group works.

The program selected by the student(s) is the foundation for achieving their best results. It is strongly recommended that the student(s) carefully considers the selection of works or songs for their program, on the basis that each work contributes to a program that meets the assessment criteria.



All assessed performers should ensure that they participate significantly in presenting all of the works or songs in their program. Assessed performers should present the works selected from the Prescribed list at a standard that is consistent with the rest of the program. This may involve arranging works to create appropriate parts and/or allowing opportunities for improvisation, as appropriate to the style.

For works in Section A, or similar music styles, although performers do not necessarily need to present accurate note for note transcriptions, it is essential that the original integrity of the music be retained. Chord progressions and the main melody should be faithful to the original. Variations from this requirement may have occurred for a number of reasons, including where students have sourced transcriptions via the Internet. While the Internet can be a great resource, students must be aware that many transcriptions sourced from it are overly simplified or inaccurate.

Students should avoid only performing works from styles that they are most familiar with, as this may limit their ability to perform in a variety of styles. The assessed performer's primary focus should be on performing a program that it is diverse in style and mood.

However, it is acceptable to present a program that has a range of styles within a particular type of group, as contrasting styles can exist within particular genres, such as rock or jazz. Groups can perform music that has contrasts in styles; for example, a jazz group could perform swing, bebop, west coast and/or fusion. Students should not necessarily perform styles that are not associated with the type of group that they represent.

As well as scoring highly in the criteria assessing their ability to perform a variety of styles, assessed performers who present a diverse program can also score higher marks in other criteria. For example, by performing a diverse program stylistically, the assessed performer(s) could also score more highly in the 'skill in using a range of performing techniques' criterion.

Students should demonstrate their ability to use a range of performance techniques. Each instrument is capable of producing different timbres, dynamics and effects, and has an inherent potential to allow the performer to apply a range of performance techniques. Students should be able to demonstrate their awareness of this in their performance. A guitarist, for example, could use plectrum, finger style, sliding, bends, double stopping, tapping and/or alternative tunings.

The assessed performer(s) should also avoid performing material that merely repeats material previously presented.

Time Limits

The time allowed for the examination varies according to the number of assessed performers in a group.

- groups of one assessed performer: 25 minutes maximum
- groups of two or three assessed performers: 30 minutes maximum
- groups of four assessed performers: 35 minutes maximum
- groups of five or six assessed performers: 40 minutes maximum

Assessed students are advised to make full use of the time available. Specifically, students should make sure changeovers between performances are well rehearsed to ensure they make the most of their time. It is recommended that the prescribed works be performed early in the program to ensure that Criterion 1 is met within the time limit.

Performance Program Information Sheet

Prior to the examination, students will receive their individual VCAA Examination Slip and a Performance Program Information Sheet. The examination slip states the student's ID number, the date, time and the address of the examination venue. The Performance Program Information Sheet should be completed prior to, and presented at, the examination. The works selected should be written in order of performance and the selections from the Prescribed list should be identified. The VCAA Examination Slip and Performance Program Information Sheet are sent to schools electronically through VASS, usually in August each year.

Setting up at the Examination Venue

Students are advised to check their equipment carefully before leaving for the examination. They must remember to pack all the required equipment, including replacement strings where appropriate. They should also bring extra power boards and extension leads so that their planned set-up is not compromised by the placement of electrical switches at the venue.

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Students are advised to arrive at the examination centre at least 30 minutes before their start time. Students will have access to the examination room at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the examination and should use this time to set up and adjust equipment, tune their instruments and warm up. Non-assessed students may assist in adjusting the equipment before the examination; however, once it has started, only the assessed performers may adjust their instruments and equipment. When setting up, the students may need to restrict their volume if another examination is underway in a nearby room. All examination performances must be presented at safe volume levels.

During the year, students should practise in a variety of rooms in order accustom themselves to different performance spaces with varying qualities of acoustics and volume requirements.

Groups should plan how they will sit or stand during the performance. Assessed performers must ensure that assessors can observe all performance techniques and technical skills. This may mean setting music stands so that finger movement and breathing techniques are visible. The seating plan or group organisation may be varied across the program to achieve the best performance environment for each work in the program.