



**2012 Music Performance GA 3: Aural and written examination**

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

The format of the 2012 Music Performance paper was consistent with the examination specifications and the sample examination material that can be found on the VCAA website. The examination comprised two sections that were worth a total of 100 marks. Students were required to answer 17 questions.

It was encouraging to note that most students attempted the entire paper and the overall standard of results was similar to results in previous years.

The levels of music literacy and aural perception of music were inconsistent throughout the cohort.

Students are advised to use a sharp pencil for Section A, especially for transcription tasks, as found in Part 4: Melody and Part 5: Rhythm.

**Strengths included**

- knowledge of identify and writing of intervals
- general understanding of chords and their structures
- responses for Question 17.

**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
- aural skills, including difficulty identifying tonalities (scale forms) and intervals
- 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.

**Other concerns included the following.**

- Some students did not attempt to answer some of the questions, especially in Section A.
- Many students wrote prose responses that were very hard to decipher, often due to illegible writing, extremely blunt pencils, and/or poor spelling and grammar. Students are reminded of the importance of writing clearly and correctly. Students will not be penalised for poor handwriting.

**Advice**

- Students need to be aware of the requirements of various question types and should practise responding to similar questions.
- Students should use the 15 minutes of reading time productively. They should ensure that they have read each question carefully and are familiar with the requirements of each question.
- Students should write as clearly as possible, especially when notating on a staff. When notating music, students should use a pencil rather than a pen.
- When responding to transcription questions, students are advised to do their rough work on the blank manuscript paper that is provided and then transfer a neat, legible copy of their final response to the space that is 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 to and aurally identifying intervals, chords, progressions and melodic and rhythmic transitions.



## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

### Section A – Theory and aural comprehension

#### Part 1: Intervals

##### Question 1 – Identify intervals presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	10	13	16	17	17	22	3.7

1. major 2nd
2. perfect 8ve
3. minor 3rd
4. perfect 4th
5. minor 7th
6. minor 3rd

Students need to sing and play more of these intervals in class. This could be an activity that makes this component have a more practical meaning, which is a part of the key knowledge and skills. Teachers should ensure that the learning program for this outcome includes practical activities that students can also apply in their performance work.

Students should avoid ‘M’ and ‘m’ as it is generally difficult to work out the quality from these.

Students were required to identify the quality and size of each interval. Therefore, octave was not correct; perfect octave was the only response accepted. Many students heard the last interval as a minor 2nd. (They may not have been expecting a repeated minor 3rd interval.)

##### Question 2a. – Identify written intervals

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	10	29	61	1.5

- opening interval: major 6th
- closing interval: minor 2nd

Most students could read the major 6th, but a number struggled with the minor 2nd. Some students may have read the intervals in treble clef, thus stating the answers as minor 6th and major 2nd.

##### Question 2b. – Identify written intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	4	9	19	68	2.5

1. perfect 5th
2. minor 3rd
3. minor 7th

Overall, students found identifying written intervals easier than recognising them aurally. Some students are still naming the perfect interval as a major 5th.

##### Question 3 – Write intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	7	15	23	51	3.1



Most students answered this question well. When asked to write either a major or minor second, students should write the note beside the given note, not on top. Some students did not read the question carefully enough, especially with



regard to writing above or below the given note. The use of accidentals was not always understood; for example, some students missed the Bb above the F to make a perfect 4th.

## Part 2: Scales and modes

### Question 4a. – Identify intervals and tonality in a melody presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	50	34	16	<b>0.7</b>

- opening interval: minor 6th
- closing interval: major 3rd

### Question 4b. – Identify intervals and tonality in a melody presented aurally

Marks	0	1	Average
%	50	50	<b>0.5</b>

Mixolydian

Some students did not hear the flat 7 and stated that it was a major in tonality.

### Question 5 – Identify written scales/modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	6	10	24	54	<b>3.2</b>

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

It was disappointing that students used scale and mode names that are not in the current study design. Minor was not accepted for natural minor as there are three types of minor scales that are examinable in the current study design. Pentatonic was not accepted for major pentatonic as there are two types of pentatonic scales that are examinable in the current study design.

Some students tried to respond to this question using terminology for identifying chords. Students also incorrectly responded with chord types to this scales/modes question. There was some indication of a lack of knowledge of the bass clef – a key part of the study design. Teachers are advised to use treble and bass clef examples on a regular basis in learning activities.

### Question 6 – Write scales/modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	11	7	9	7	18	8	39	<b>3.9</b>

harmonic minor one octave ascending



mixolydian mode one octave ascending



Again, many students did not read the question carefully. Many students assumed that the second scale/mode would be descending when both were ascending. Many students also did not use the rhythmic value that was given. Other issues of concern were

- stem directions were not always correct
- placement of accidentals. Students need to place the centre of the accidentals directly in front of the note head.



Students must learn the structure and formation of all scales in the study design. Students should be singing and playing all scale and mode types so that they 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
%	12	10	10	17	51	2.9

1. Bb major 7th
2. F# minor
3. E dominant 7
4. B diminished

The 7th chords seemed to confuse some students. The most common problem was reading the clefs incorrectly.

### Question 8 – Write chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	24	11	14	22	28	2.2



IV major  
in G major

iv minor 7  
in D minor

vi minor  
in Eb major

ii half diminished  
in F# minor

Some students wrote tonic chords for all chords. The fourth chord was problematic. Many students omitted the F sharp, which made it a full diminished 7 rather than half diminished.

### Question 9 – Identify chords presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	15	22	24	34	2.7

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

Again, students should be singing all set chords to aurally recognise them when played. Students did not always identify the 7 in the first chord. Some students confused the dominant 7 chord and the major 7 chord. Many students identified the diminished chord as augmented.

### Question 10 – Harmonic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	52	0	48	1

B

This question was generally well done. Some students identified A as the correct answer. It is suggested that students circle or highlight the differences in each chord progression.

### Question 11 – Harmonic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	5	9	12	14	13	11	8	9	10	7	3	4.7

1. A minor
2. B half dim
3. G# dim7
4. A minor
5. F major
6. E major

OR

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1. i minor 2. ii half dim 3. Vii dim7 4. I minor 5. VI major 6. V major

OR

Harmonic grid 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

bass note	A	B	G#	A	F	E
quality	minor	half dim	dim 7	minor	major	major

Most students heard the return to the tonic at Chord 4 – a minor. It was surprising how many students assumed the progression would finish on the tonic. Students must learn how to recognise all common cadences. Many students did not know or understand the qualities of chords in a minor key.

Other errors included the following.

- Students who attempted to use Roman numerals generally wrote them incorrectly.
- Of the students who attempted to use the bass note, some missed the G#, stating only the G (which was incorrect).
- Some students could not hear the difference between major and minor chords.
- Stronger students tended to miss the half diminished chord.

Students must know the available chords in both major and minor chord progressions.

## Part 4: Melody

### Question 12 – Melodic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	40	0	60	1.2

C

Students should be trying to identify the differences 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
%	4	4	5	6	8	8	9	9	10	9	11	7	9	6.9



Among the errors noted were the following.

- The rhythm was given and some students still notated it incorrectly.
- Many students did not see the hints that the pianoforte part was giving.
- Some students made up their own rhythms.
- Some students wrote chords and not a melody.
- Some students did not observe the conventional use of stem directions.

Bar 1 – A – B – C – D – A

- first four notes were stepwise followed by a perfect 4th
- on the fourth beat some students did not use the chord to place the A

Bar 2 – G# – A – B – C – B – A

- all stepwise movement
- many students missed writing in the G#

Bar 3 – F – E – D – E – E – F# – G#

- this was the most difficult bar

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- many students did not get the F, with many hearing a 4th (D)
- many students missed the melodic minor form, not placing in the F# and G# even though they are used in the pianoforte accompaniment

Bar 4 – A – G – F – A

- many students did not hear that the melody finished on the tonic
- students must use the given accompaniment for reference of tonal centre

## Part 5: Rhythm

### Question 14 – Rhythmic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	35	0	65	1.3

D

Students need to practise this type of question. The more successful students circled the differences in the score. This is a good technique to adopt.

Teachers are encouraged 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
%	9	12	12	11	9	8	6	6	6	6	5	5	6	4.9



Many students did not have the correct number of beats in each bar. Students who did not have a strategy to work through the process of transcribing a rhythm struggled with this question. Some students had difficulty with understanding how to notate triplets.

## Section B – Analysis of pre-recorded works

Students are advised to plan and manage their time carefully when completing the prose questions. As CDs run for only 80 minutes, more time is available now to complete this section.

Students must have a clear understanding of all of the key knowledge and skills for both Units 3 and 4. This includes an understanding of what expressive elements are. Many students wrote a commentary or listening guide rather than answering the question. Dot points may be used to answer the questions.

### Question 16a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	12	32	33	16	6	2.7

Responses included but were not limited to the following.

- use of falsetto
- deep resonating tone e.g. bass vocals
- use of one-syllable words, such as 'yeah', 'ooo' and 'naah', adds a lyrical character to the work
- thick layering of voices creates a rich sound
- repeated vocal lines with slight melodic variation adds interest
- relaxed diction adds to the laid-back character of the work
- close male vocal harmonies with the main melodic line, with harmonies in 3rds and 6ths softly in the background
- gentle vibrato at the ends of phrases helps to taper off the phrase and gives warmth to the vocal line, particularly during the harmonised lines

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- use of speech rhythms in the verses gives a relatively relaxed diction that adds to the relaxed character of the work
- verses sung in unison and in octaves contrast with previous sections, giving it more depth
- use of melisma adds an improvisational and relaxed quality to the work
- vocal tone varies from nasal to earthy, to pure and ethereal

## Question 16b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	12	29	33	17	5	2.7

Many students just commented on the instruments that were playing.

Responses included but were not limited to the following.

- shaker provides a semiquaver rhythm and gentle driving force to the acoustic song without domination
- steel-string acoustic guitar, finger-picked, provides a harmonic foundation and forward momentum, and adds a folk element to the work
- guitar part was quite syncopated, with emphasis just before the back beat
- guitarist's palm mutes the syncopated notes, giving extra punch to the accompaniment and acting in a percussive role as well as a harmonic role
- bongos work closely with guitar, providing a driving, syncopated rhythm, hitting the rim of the drum to emphasise particular words, such as 'rhythm of yesterday'
- bongos provide a high level of energy and forward momentum, while not dominating the singers
- synthesiser/flute sound provides some 'antiphony' in the 'ooo' section and the verse, and sustained harmonic line provides a contrasting timbre and stability amidst a busy vocal line and accompaniment.

## Question 17

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	0	1	4	6	11	14	19	19	14	7	5	6.1

There were many varied responses to this question. The question was derived from the key knowledge and key skills found in the *VCE Music Study Design*.

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 – '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.

Responses included but were not limited to the following.

- The performers used extremes in dynamics throughout, starting with the *mp* sinister double bass entry. Many crescendos and decrescendos create tension and release.
- Sudden sforzandos followed by subito piano then crescendo create a sense of tension and drama.
- The listener is jolted throughout by the sudden and unexpected changes in dynamics.
- The heavily accented string notes are always played fortissimo, creating a sense of drama.
- The tone colour includes low register in the sustained double bass drone, setting up a sinister undertone, and creating a sense of unease and anticipation.
- Bright, clear trumpet tone stands out against the low, dark bass tone.
- High-pitched strings, played tremolo, highlighting dissonant chords, creating an edgy and strident tone.
- The timpani has a full, booming tone, usually played fortissimo
- The snare drum adds contrasting tonal quality and a rigid military element to the music.
- Articulation in the double bass is generally legato and heavy contact with the string in the opening passage sets up a sinister undertone.
- In the strings there are heavily accented sections with repeated down bows where the performers use repeated crotchets. The strings also play glissandi, adding a slightly 'psycho' character.
- The tempo fundamentally stays the same throughout, being moderately fast, which is quite strict.