

2014 Music Investigation Performance GA 2: Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

It is the intention of Music Investigation to provide students the opportunity to extend their musical knowledge within a specific area of performance focus that is of deep personal interest to them.

Towards the end of Unit 4, students are required to present a live performance that demonstrates their learning across all Areas of Study and knowledge gained throughout Units 3 and 4. Preparation for this performance should underpin all learning in this study. On the day of the performance, students are required to provide a Focus Statement outlining the performance focus that was undertaken throughout the year. At least one work in the performance program must be selected from either the Prescribed List of Group Works or the Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works, as published on the VCAA website. Where an appropriate or suitable work cannot be chosen from either prescribed list, an application for approval of an alternative work must be submitted to the VCAA.

Teachers are advised to carefully review and have readily available a copy of all Music Investigation advice provided to schools through VCAA bulletins and other VASS-generated documents. Copies of all relevant bulletins and advice provided throughout the year can be requested from VCE/VASS coordinators.

Students enrol as either a solo performer or as a member of a group. It is crucial the correct code be entered into VASS at the time of enrolment. Solo students will have a code unique to their chosen instrument (only one instrument can be selected), while all group students are entered as GR (Group) regardless of their chosen instrument(s) (group students may perform on more than one instrument during the examination). Teachers are advised to carefully check the final enrolment status of students **after** they have been entered into VASS.

A small number of students continue to present for the examination without the required VCAA paperwork. Students must have an Advice Slip that details the student's VCAA number, enrolled instrument, time/date and location of examination, and Music Investigation Program Sheet and Focus Statement documents (which must be typed). Two copies of the Music Investigation Program Sheet and Focus Statement are to be provided to the venue coordinator on the day of assessment. These document templates are available through the school's VASS coordinator.

Focus Statements are not to be handwritten. A number of students did not input text within the VCAA Focus Statement template but, rather, submitted a blank VCAA template followed by their own separate word-processed documents. This is not the intention of the study and is contrary to advice provided to schools through numerous VCAA bulletins.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

During the 2014 examination period an increasing number of students (in comparison to previous years) presented performance programs that evidenced substantial technical and stylistic depth in relation to the specific areas of performance focus nominated.

The highest-scoring students clearly articulated their performance focus within the Focus Statement. These students then produced evidence of their understanding of the area of music they had selected for study throughout the recital performance, demonstrating a high level of control and technical skill within the nominated stylistic setting. It was also clear that high-scoring students had selected and prepared their recital program in light of the examination criteria used by assessors.

Examinations that received lower scores were often limited in terms of evidence of an appropriate level of technical difficulty, were stylistically weak or disconnected in relation to the nominated performance focus, or did not suitably address the examination criteria used by assessors to score the performance.

Schools are advised to carefully consider the level of difficulty (technical **and** stylistic) of the selected performance programs chosen for Music Investigation. While specific levels of difficulty are not directly articulated within the examination criteria, the level of sophistication and complexity contained within a performance program directly contributes to the extent to which students can gain access to higher marks across the broader scoring structure.

Where performance programs evidenced a limited level of **technical** and/or **stylistic** difficulty, access to higher marks was reduced. In terms of program selection it is important to acknowledge that while virtually every performance style, genre or period may have the potential to provide access to the highest possible scores not every program selected within those styles, genres or period will.

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Schools are advised to carefully read (and regularly refer to throughout the year) the published Performance Examination Assessment Criteria. Careful attention should be paid to the use of the phrase ‘skill in...’ within the stem for many criteria. In many respects, ‘skill in...’ can be viewed as referring to the level of sophistication or deep understanding the student is able to demonstrate or provide evidence of during their performance. Assessors are trained to use these criteria to determine the **level** of depth and sophistication evidenced by the student throughout the performance.

The Focus Area and the Focus Statement

Teachers are advised to identify the fundamental difference between the broader Focus Area and the Focus Statement (which is provided on the day of the performance examination).

A student’s Focus Area relates to all work undertaken throughout the year (Outcome 1 – Investigation, Outcome 2 – Composition/Arrangement/Improvisation and Outcome 3 – Technical Work, and any secondary repertoire prepared for performance but not presented in the October external examination). Most of this work, identified as being within the broader Focus Area is **not** directly evidenced during the performance examination. The Focus Statement, which is provided to assessors on the day of the performance examination, should detail only information that is directly relevant to the performance about to occur. The Focus Statement should not include unnecessary historical content or references to repertoire/composers/techniques not included in the performance examination.

While the Focus Statement is not assessed, it provides a reference point for assessors with regard to the underlying intention of the program. Assessors seek to hear evidence (technical and stylistic) throughout the performance in keeping with the intention articulated in the Focus Statement.

Several Focus Statements identified issues that were not directly relevant to performance. This has continued to be an issue over several years despite numerous efforts to inform and remind schools of the specific role the Focus Statement plays on the day of the performance examination.

An appropriately written Focus Statement should outline core features of the performance assessors should expect to look/listen for in the examination. Having read the Focus Statement and subsequently listened to the performance, assessors determine what technical and/or stylistic opportunities were taken by the student, and to what level of depth they were evidenced. Assessors also seek to identify if any significant performance opportunities were not taken (in light of the Focus Statement provided).

It is recommended that students work to refine (and regularly document) their performance focus throughout the year, rather than attempt to retrospectively articulate a Focus Statement immediately prior to the performance examination. Refinement of the Focus Statement should occur alongside the developing practical work undertaken in the practice room (with input from the instrumental and classroom teachers). It was evident that some students had attempted to write about their performance focus retrospectively.

Beyond selecting a recital program that is appropriate to the provided Focus Statement, students and teachers should ensure the selected program supports accessing higher scores within the published examination criteria. As identified earlier, while it is expected virtually every performance style, genre or period may have the potential to provide access to the highest possible scores, not every program selected within those styles, genres or periods will. It was evident that several students had prepared performance programs without due consideration of the assessment criteria used by assessors. Each work in the program should be evaluated to identify opportunities for students to demonstrate skill in performing using complex techniques and relevant performance conventions.

Several students chose to introduce every item within their performance examination. This was rarely of benefit in terms of **gaining** marks awarded within Criterion 11 (there seems to be a mindset that assumes introducing items automatically results in **extra marks**). Those who spoke were often unable to convey a deep understanding for the stylistic content being performed; others appeared unclear, underprepared or were even non-factual when discussing the repertoire to be performed. Several students also used **introductions** as a vehicle to recite non-performance-related work completed within the broader study during the year.