

2014 Music Performance GA 3: Aural and written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the 2014 Music Performance examination was consistent with examination specifications and sample material on the VCAA website. The examination comprised two sections and was worth a total of 100 marks.

It is always advisable for students to use a sharp pencil for Section A, especially for transcription tasks such as melodic and rhythmic questions. It is easier for students to notate more clearly, under stressful examination conditions, using a pencil.

Students were able to:

- identify aural and written intervals
- write intervals in both treble and bass clefs
- identify the major scale presented aurally
- use correct stems and stem direction in the write scales/mode questions
- correctly identify the harmonic recognition as D
- identify the melodic recognition as B
- correctly identify the rhythmic recognition as C.

Students should read questions carefully in order to fully understand what is being asked.

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 to identify intervals and chords
- limited aural skills, including difficulty identifying tonalities (scale forms) and intervals
- limited ability to use the other given 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 is taken directly from the study design, such as expressive outcomes and expressive elements.

Other concerns included the following.

- Some students did not attempt to answer some of the questions, especially in Section A.
- Many students wrote prose answers that were very hard to decipher, due to the writing and/or extremely blunt pencils. 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. They should not make assumptions.
- 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 answer 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 regular practice in singing intervals, scales and chords, and 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 resulting in a total more or 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	5	Average
%	9	13	17	15	19	26	3

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

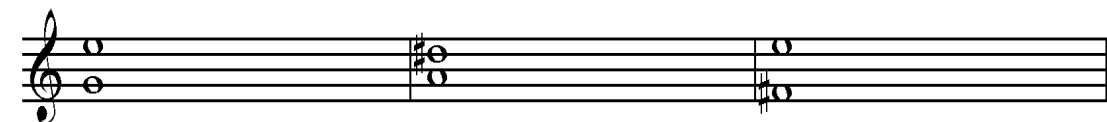
This question was generally answered correctly. The most commonly correct interval was the perfect 4th.

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 not just teach to the examination question types but also music skills that will make students better musicians.

Responses that use ‘M’ and ‘m’ are often difficult to read, so their use should be avoided. The response was marked as being incorrect if the interval was not clearly identified.

Question 2 – Write intervals

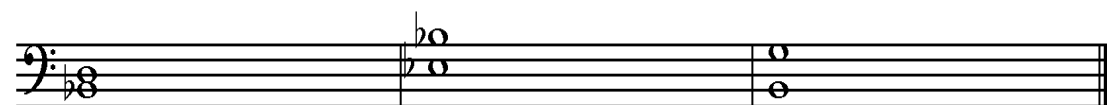
Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	2	7	13	15	22	38	4.6



major 6th
above

augmented 4th
below

minor 7th
below



major 3rd
below

perfect 5th
above

minor 6th
above

Some students assumed that this was an ‘or’ question (for example, ‘write in treble or bass’) and consequently only identified three of the six intervals. The question stated that the student should write each of the following intervals.

A large number of students changed the given note – in particular, interval 3 to an E \flat . It is unclear why this happened. Students should not change the given notes.

Some students did not read the clefs correctly; for example, for interval 4, many students missed the B \flat in the bass clef, assuming it was a G in treble clef. Students could highlight the clefs in a particular colour to assist with clef reading.

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Part 2: Scales and modes

Question 3 – Identify intervals and tonality in a melody presented aurally

3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	44	39	17	0.8

- Opening interval: perfect 5th
- Closing interval: major 3rd

Some students identified the intervals as being around the other way.

3b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	45	55	0.6

Melodic minor

Some students did not circle a response.

Question 4 – Identify scales and/or modes presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	11	17	26	43	3

1. major scale
2. minor pentatonic scale
3. mixolydian mode
4. aeolin mode/natural minor scale

Students must identify pentatonic and minor with further information. This includes major or minor pentatonic, and harmonic, melodic or natural minor. Marks were not rewarded for incomplete answers.

Question 5 – Identify written scales or modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	7	9	13	63	3.2

1. dorian mode
2. harmonic minor scale
3. mixolydian mode
4. minor pentatonic scale

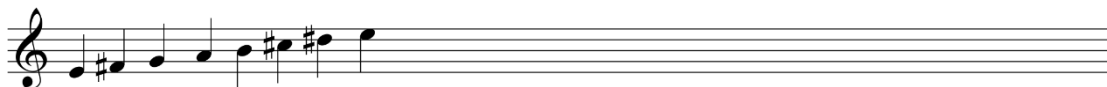
Some students used scale and mode names that were not in the current study design. ‘Minor’ was not accepted for harmonic minor, as there are three types of minor scales examinable in the current study design. ‘Pentatonic’ was not accepted for minor pentatonic as there are two types of pentatonic scales examinable in the current study design.

Some students incorrectly used chord types as a response to this scale or mode question.

Question 6 – Write scales

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	7	4	10	4	19	4	52	4.5

melodic minor scale one octave ascending



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major scale one octave descending



Many students answered this question correctly. More students accurately wrote a major in the bass clef than a melodic minor in the treble clef.

Common errors included:

- not including the C# in that major scale
- not using the rhythmic value given
- stem directions were not always correct.

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 they understand the structure and formation of each.

Part 3: Chords and chord progressions

Question 7 – Identify written chords

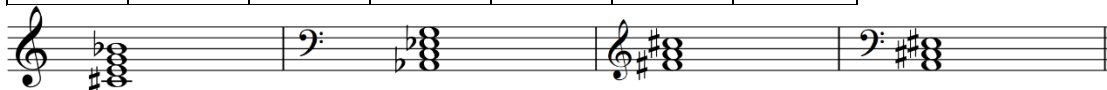
Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	12	9	12	23	44	2.8

1. Note name: B, Quality: dominant 7
2. Note name: C, Quality: minor 7
3. Note name: A, Quality: diminished
4. Note name: G#, Quality: diminished 7

Some students wrote interval names as chord types, but the most common problem was reading the clefs incorrectly. Some students missed the G# as the note name in interval 4.

Question 8 – Write chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	13	11	16	22	39	2.6



C# diminished7

A b major7

F# minor

A augmented

Some common issues and errors in responses included the following.

- Some students wrote tonic chords for all chords.
- 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.

Question 9 – Identify chords presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	18	21	27	23	2.3

1. suspended 4
2. major 7
3. major
4. half diminished

Again, students should be singing all set chords so they can better aurally recognise them when played. Many students were able to identify the major chord.

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Question 10 – Harmonic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	22	0	78	1.6

Correct response: D

It may help students if they circle or highlight the differences in each chord progression during the time available to study the alternative responses.

Question 11 – Harmonic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	8	15	15	13	9	7	7	7	7	9	4.8

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

or

1. I major 2. ii minor 7 3. V major 4. iii minor 5. vi minor 6. V (dom)7

or

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

bass note	F	G	C	A	D	C
quality	major	minor 7	major	minor	minor	(dom)7

Some common issues and errors in responses included the following.

- Many students assumed the progression would finish on the tonic.
- Students must learn and be able to recognise all common cadences.
- Many students did not know or understand the qualities of chords in a major key.

F major g minor a minor B ♭ major C major d minor e diminished

F major 7 g minor 7 a minor 7 B ♭ major 7 C 7 d minor 7 e half diminished

- Students who attempted using Roman numerals generally wrote them incorrectly.
- Some students could not identify the difference between major and minor chords.
- 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
%	10	0	90	1.8

Correct answer: B

Students should highlight differences in the given alternatives, to make it easier to distinguish the correct response.

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Question 13 – Melodic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	3	7	7	7	9	9	10	10	10	8	7	6	8	6.3

The rhythm was given, but some students still notated it incorrectly. Students should use the given harmony to assist them with the melody.

Common errors included:

- making up their own rhythms
- writing chords and not a melody
- not observing the conventional use of stem directions.

Bar 1 – C – B – C – D – E ♭

- C was given. The first chord was clearly c minor.
- B was an auxiliary note between the two Cs (stepwise movement).
- C was a note of the A ♭ major chord (stepwise movement).
- D was a passing note between the C and E ♭ (stepwise movement).
- E ♭ – most students did not add the flat even though it is part of the chord
- Note, all notes in bar 1 were in stepwise movement.

Bar 2 – E ♭ – F – D – C – D

- E ♭ was the same note from the last bar. The note E ♭ was from the given chord of A ♭ major.
- The F was a step up from the E ♭, and the same note as the bass.
- D is a minor third from the F. This was both a note of the chord and an accented passing note of f minor.
- C was both the resolution from the accented passing note and an auxiliary note between the two Ds.
- D was stepwise from the C and a note of the chord.

Bar 3 – B – A – B – C – D

- B was a note of the chord.
- A was an auxiliary note between the two Bs.
- B was a note of the chord.
- C was a passing note between the B and D.
- D was a note of the chord.
- Note, this bar was in stepwise movement.
- The only accented passing note resolved to a C.

Bar 4 – C – B ♭ – A ♭ – F – G – C

- C was a note of the chord.
- B ♭ was a passing note between the C and A ♭.
- A ♭ was a note of the chord.
- F was a changing note.
- G was a note of the chord.
- C was the tonic of the chord and the tonic of the work.
- Many students were unable to determine the key was c melodic minor. The hints were that the first and last chord were c minor. The second hint is that the study design states if the melody is in a minor key it will be in the melodic minor form only. Thus, many students did not write the B ♭ and A ♭ in this bar.

- Students must use the given accompaniment for reference of the tonal centre.

Part 5: Rhythm

Question 14 – Rhythmic recognition

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	20	0	80	1.6

Correct answer: C

Students need to practise this type of question. The better students circled the differences in the score; this is a good technique to adapt.

Question 15 – Rhythmic transcription

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



Some common issues and errors in responses included the following.

- Many students could not group the rhythm correctly in compound duple time.
- Many students did not have the correct number of beats in each bar.
- Those students who did not have a strategy to work on rhythmic dictation struggled with this question.
- Some students did not know how to notate a duplet.
- Some students were not able to notate the tie between bars 5 and 6.

Section B – Analysis of pre-recorded works

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 are.

Many students wrote a commentary or listening guide rather than answering the question. Students may use dot points to answer these questions.

Question 16

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	0	1	3	9	18	20	20	16	13	5.4

The dot points below are a summary of features of the music that students identified in their responses. High-scoring responses linked this type of information to insightful comments about how the performances had used expressive elements of music and specific performance techniques.

- The sombre/thoughtful/melancholic/regretful/resigned/helpless/slightly eerie mood of the excerpt is set up by the sparse texture in the introduction of the voice and organ. Combined with the slow, slightly rubato tempo, this creates character in the excerpt.
- The organ part supports and highlights the delicate vocal part by playing a gentle/simple accompaniment of sustained (with rotary-type effect) three-chord pattern in a simple two-bar rhythmic pattern.
- The emotional, introspective (soul-baring/long) effect of the vocal line delivery is conveyed through the use of the vocalist's expressive and natural tone, using devices such as variation of attack, notes held softly at the end of phrases, and mouth and throat sounds.
- It is sung in a closed microphone-restrained fashion, which gives the performance an intimate and vulnerable feel. The impression is of the performer being 'in the room' with the listener.
- The instrument parts – guitar, bass and drums – enter in the next section. Dynamically this section 'appears' louder and the vocal line more attacked (building up) with a lot of 'throat' sounds conveying the sense of raw emotion.
- The angst and restlessness/turmoil of the narrative is driven by the unsettled, shifting rhythmic feel played predominantly on the bass drum, low toms and hi-hats (rather than the snare-drum-driven steady rock beat more typical of this genre).
- The bass guitar is playing a simple anchoring part (with an octave leap) in the 2/4 section and is sparse in the 3/4 section.

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- The electric guitar plays a wistful repetitive motif of a few notes, incorporating delay across the time signature changes.
- In the next section, the tension and unsettled feeling created by the shifting time signatures and delayed guitar in the previous section are replaced by a driving straight 4/4 feel of the drums and sustained slightly distorted chordal rhythm guitar and block chords on the keyboard. The unsettled effect returns in bars 3 and 4 with an extended syncopated drum fill and otherwise sparse texture.
- The dynamics ‘appear’ to build a little more in this section and the vocal part appears more attacked, less introspective.
- The shifting unsettled feeling returns in the short instrumental section that follows with a return to the shifting time signatures. Combined with the vocalised melodic theme played in unison with a guitar and sustained distorted chords of another guitar part the effect is introspective/melancholic/yearning.

Question 17

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	1	1	5	9	13	14	14	14	11	6	6	3	2	6.1

There were many varied responses to this question. The question was derived from the key knowledge and skills detailed in the study design.

There was concern that many students did not read the question correctly. The question asked students to refer to two of the given expressive elements of music in their responses. However, many students wrote on all four elements.

It is advised that students underline or highlight the important words in each question.

Characteristics of the music that students could refer to in their responses included, but were not limited to, the following.

Tone colour

- each instrument has a different tone colour in each register:
 - solo violin
 - lower strings – cello and double basses
 - brass – horns and trumpets
- the use of different articulations, such as arco and pizz, in the string instruments creates different tone colours
- the use of double and triple stopping in solo violin

Blend of instrumental voices

- imitation in the solo violin and string section; each has its own quality and it creates character when the instruments use this imitation technique
- doubling of instruments and melody – this creates different tone qualities.
- you can hear different sounds when the solo violin uses pizz and the other strings use arco bowing and the horns are playing legato

Dynamic range and shape

- opening solo violin then to increased string instruments adds depth to the sound
- the more instruments, the louder it is; the less instruments, the softer it is
- the use of brass instruments such as the horn builds up the sound and shapes the phrase
- the use of solo violin sound to tutti blocked chords in the orchestra
- the solo violin plays the theme and the tutti strings slowly increases its volume to add tension to the performance

Tempo

- use of polyrhythms gives the excerpt a sense of changing time
- the steadiness of the tempo occurs through the use of rhythmic ostinato
- when the time is not changing, it gives us a feeling of steadiness and calmness
- a-rhythmic playing adds to sense of free spirits