

2017 VCE VET Music Industry: performance examination report

General comments

In the 2017 VCE VET Music Industry: performance examination, students were assessed in relation to the following units of competency:

- CUAMPF301 Develop technical skills in performance
- CUAMPF402 Develop and maintain stagecraft skills

Students were also assessed in relation to either of the following units of competency, depending on the elective they had undertaken:

- CUAMPF404 Perform music as part of a group
- CUAMPF406 Perform music as a soloist

The performance examination focused on an understanding of the performance and knowledge evidence, as described in the elements and performance criteria, and the assessment conditions set out in the assessment requirements document for each unit of competency.

Group/Solo performance

- Group performance: the contribution of each assessed performer needed to be clearly discernable. Vocalists in groups with more than one assessed vocalist who presented works with well-arranged and clear vocal parts (harmonies), and a good sense of ensemble work met the criteria at a higher level than vocalists who did not attempt harmony and/or who 'shared' songs by taking turns singing lines or parts of lines, which is an approach that lacks industry appropriateness.
- A number of students were identified as Solo; however, they performed their program with a group.

Areas of concern

- Use of equipment: a careful sound check before the examination should be undertaken to ensure balance of instruments. In particular, non-assessed performers should not perform at a volume that overpowers the assessed performers. Students who are using monitoring, especially in-ear monitoring, must take care to ensure that the front-of-house (FOH) speakers are not muted, especially if they are muting FOH between songs. It is important to ensure that the equipment set-up allows the performers to hear themselves and each other clearly, and also allows the assessors to hear the performance clearly. Ensuring that students have multiple opportunities to use and become familiar with equipment is a recommended strategy.
- Music stands obscuring the assessors' view of the students and detracting from the performance, especially in relation to criteria 8, 9 and 10: if music stands are required discreet use is recommended, especially in industry contexts where the use of scores/charts is not typical.
- Short programs: programs that were well short of the time allowance limited students' opportunities to address the criteria, especially where there was a lack of variety in the program.

- **Industry Statements:** these were frequently too broad, too brief, unnecessarily verbose, unclear or did not align with the performance presented. The importance of the Industry Statement with regard to the criteria, particularly 7, 8, 9 and 10, should be noted. Good statements provided clarity of performance context, including genre, venue and audience. Some students submitted Music Investigation and/or Music Performance forms/program sheets or wrote their information on a plain piece of paper.
- The option for assessed students to change instruments should not be interpreted as a recommended strategy. Students are advised to perform their programs on the instrument(s) that allow them to meet the criteria at the highest possible level and to prepare for the examination accordingly. This may differ from the approach taken to delivering their coursework. Thought should also be given to non-assessed performers unnecessarily changing instruments, causing disruption to the flow and cohesion of the program.
- **Use of non-assessed performers:** non-assessed performers must contribute in a supporting role only. Of particular concern this year were non-assessed performers who 'drowned out' assessed performers, making it difficult for assessors to hear the assessed performer(s); non-assessed performers, especially non-assessed vocalists in a group with assessed vocalists, who took a prominent role; and non-assessed guitar players, in a group with an assessed guitar player, who took extended solos. As has been previously noted, any direction from non-assessed performers, such as a teacher, including cueing, and adjusting an assessed performer's equipment, may potentially disadvantage the assessed performer. Non-assessed performers, such as teachers, should not address the assessment panel nor deliver commentary during the examination.
- The examination specifications state that the maximum number of teachers who can present as non-assessed performers is two per group. A number of examinations this year included more than two teachers in the group.

Specific information

Criteria

1. Compliance with the requirements of the examination

- Minimum of three works performed
- At least one work performed from memory
- Performance configurations (group or solo) and use of non-assessed accompanist(s)/group performers, when needed, are met
- Performance Program Sheet and Industry Statement Form completed and submitted prior to commencement of examination
- Program of works performed in accordance with information contained in the Performance Program Sheet and Industry Statement Form
- Work health and safety (WHS) principles applied appropriately in the performance

Most students complied in all areas and received full marks for this criterion.

A number of students had a music stand in front of them, which they appeared to look at for every musical item. Where sheet music/charts are used, students are advised to move the stand away or remove all sheets from the stand for at least one work.

2. Skill in performing with accuracy and control

- Accuracy and control of the rhythm, pitch, articulation, timing and phrasing, and tuning, as appropriate to the instrument/technology/voice and area of specialisation

In this criterion marks are awarded for accuracy and control, taking degree of difficulty into consideration. High marks cannot be awarded to students who perform a program with a low

degree of difficulty. Equally, students who perform challenging material with poor accuracy and control will not be awarded high marks.

In order to maximise their marks for this criterion, students are advised to select a program that provides significant opportunities to demonstrate accuracy and control at the highest level of which they are capable.

3. Skill in realising the expressiveness and versatility of instrument(s)/technology/voice throughout the program

- Use of performance techniques such as phrasing and shaping music, maintaining a strict tempo, and artistic use of accent, crescendo, diminuendo, staccato, silence, legato, tenuto, rubato, ritardando, accelerando, pitch bending and other techniques, as appropriate to the area of specialisation

Students who did not score highly in this criterion performed programs that demonstrated a limited range of performance techniques, especially where the degree of difficulty was low; for example, vocalists who used a similar approach to phrasing and articulation in every piece.

Care should be taken when selecting a program to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities to demonstrate a range of approaches to phrasing, articulation and use of expressive devices. This may present more of a challenge in some areas of specialisation than others.

Repetition of the techniques already demonstrated, at the expense of demonstrating further techniques, will limit the marks that can be awarded.

4. Ability to demonstrate variety in musical elements and conventions relevant to the area of specialisation

- Skill in using variety of duration (rhythm, meter, pattern) and/or melody and harmony (scales, chords, chord progressions), and music systems relevant to the area of specialisation

Students who scored well in this criterion presented a varied program of music by using, for example: different time signatures, including meter changes within pieces; presenting works in a variety of tempos; using a range of keys and/or modes; and using a range of approaches to rhythm, including variation in beat subdivision.

Students whose program consisted of a limited range of, for example, keys, tempos, metres, chord progressions, chord voicings and tonality, were unable to score well in this criterion. Care should be taken to select a program that demonstrates variety rather than selecting multiple pieces that demonstrate similar musical elements and conventions.

5. Ability to demonstrate originality and innovative approaches in interpretation within the performance configuration (solo or group)

- Skill in creativity and interpretation, and the ability to demonstrate appropriate musical nuance, an individual style of musical expression, and original and innovative approaches to stage performances relevant to the area of specialisation

Students who scored well in this criterion demonstrated a depth of personal engagement with the material presented that included effective and varied expression and convincing creative interpretive decisions. This included but was not limited to use of ornamentation, tone production and individual approaches to phrasing and articulation.

6a. Ability to listen critically to one's own performance and continuously adjust one's own performance to produce the required outcomes relevant to the area of specialisation (Solo performance)

OR

6b. Ability to listen critically to the performance of others and respond, interact and collaborate appropriately, adjusting the performance to achieve required outcomes relevant to the area of specialisation (Group performance)

Solo performers who made sophisticated adjustments and who demonstrated synchronisation with and responsiveness to accompaniment, met this criterion at a high level.

Group performance students who demonstrated the ability to synchronise their own playing with that of other performers, listen critically and adjust their playing and volume to achieve balance in dynamics and style with other players scored well, especially where they were able to demonstrate these skills at a high level. Examples included: the use of *accelerando*/*rallentando*, meter changes, stops and starts, rhythmic unison and *rubato*, and giving and responding to cues.

7. Skill in presenting a cohesive program of music

- Skill in presenting an authentic (in relation to the selected area of specialisation), dynamic and well-constructed program of music with appropriate sequencing of items and appropriate choice of repertoire

Care should be taken to ensure that the pieces selected for the program match the Industry Statement.

Students who scored well presented a convincing set in their nominated industry context and created a sense of movement and change through the selection and sequencing of items, which created interest and excitement.

Well-presented programs were also characterised by smooth transitions between musical items that appeared well planned.

Thought should be given to the use of backing tracks and the placement of playback equipment – repeatedly walking away from the performance space to stop and start backing tracks and/or stopping tracks abruptly before they are finished interrupts the presentation.

Criteria 8, 9 and 10 relate specifically to CUAMPF402 Develop and maintain stagecraft skills. The key concept to consider is communication and audience engagement.

8. Ability to observe and maintain protocols appropriate to the area of specialisation

- Skill in communicating effectively through original and innovative approaches to personal stagecraft, expressing appropriate dramatic nuance, while taking venue and style performance into account

Dramatic nuance includes demonstrating the ability to adjust and react during the performance, therefore thought should be given to the presentation of the performance to ensure that there are opportunities to do this. Although the use of performance space is assessed in criterion 10, students who remain in one position for the entire performance may find it difficult to demonstrate this ability.

Original and innovative approaches are required to access the higher marks.

Industry statements that clearly defined a performance style and venue enabled students to demonstrate understanding of this criterion, particularly where the space had been set up appropriately.

9. Skill in presenting a confident performance through consistent focus and energy, and with pacing appropriate to the area of specialisation

- Skill in applying a range of personal stagecraft skills to engage audiences while performing a suitably paced and focused performance

Students who scored highly in this criterion delivered a sustained, confident and poised performance, which included maintaining composure, engagement and focus between musical items.

It should be noted that students are expected to develop strategies for addressing performance anxiety as part of their coursework.

It is recommended that students are provided with opportunities to perform regularly throughout the year to develop confidence and strategies to deal with contingencies.

A number of students provided commentary between items that served as an unnecessary explanation of what was about to happen, and which detracted from the performance, rather than a more industry appropriate linking narrative/introduction.

10. Ability to demonstrate key stagecraft skills in relation to the selected area of specialisation and market appropriate for the program of music

- Skill in applying a range of stagecraft skills to present a coherent and appropriate image that enhances performances
- Effective use of non-musical elements in performance including movement, facial expressions, way of holding instrument(s) or equipment and effective use of the performance space

Students who presented a well-conceived, well-developed and convincing image that clearly aligned with their Industry Statement, and sustained this image for the whole examination, scored well in this criterion.

Many students effectively enhanced their image through the use of non-musical elements. Many performers presented themselves to their advantage in a simulated professional environment that was consistent with their Industry Statement and crafted their performance with a clear concept of audience.

Although non-musical elements such as costumes, lighting and props, etc. are not directly assessed, in many cases students were able to use them well to enhance their performance and image.

Students who did not score well demonstrated minimal enhancement of their musical performance and minimal awareness of communication with the audience.