



2004 VCE VET MUSIC INDUSTRY GA 2: Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

2004 is the first year that there has been an option for students to receive a study score in the Certificate III in Music program. This score is generated, in part, from the performance examination held in the October examination period. This examination is intended to test the student's knowledge and skills in the following units of competence:

CUSMPF04A Prepare self for performance

- This unit covers the technical and creative skills developed through rehearsal and private practise. It deals with planning, continual performance evaluation, repertoire knowledge and the application of OHS principles.

CUSMGE01A Maintain self or group in music

- This unit covers the competencies required by music groups or individual composers and performers to develop and expand their artistic product.

CUSMGE12A Maintain and expand music knowledge and critical listening skills

- This unit covers the skills required to maintain and apply knowledge of music styles, trends, artists and repertoire to music industry work and learning.

CUSMPF06A Extend technical skills in performance

- This unit describes the technical competencies required to extend technical skills and perform a range of simple exercises and repertoire. It covers tuning, performance preparation, the accurate performance of pieces, and instrument care and maintenance.

In general, the examination performances reflected each of these criteria well, and most students showed that they were fully engaged in the process and responsible for their own music pathways. The VCE VET Music Industry Performance examination assessment round was marked by an obvious enthusiasm for the subject and the absolute joy and exuberance of student performances.

The importance of the Performance Program Sheet and the Statement of Intent cannot be stressed too strongly. These documents must be completed and submitted to the examiners before the assessment begins. It is the statement indicating the appropriate market for the material being presented that sets the context within which assessment will take place. For example, if a student suggests that he or she is performing at a wedding reception or an art gallery opening, the examiners can then assess the degree to which the student achieves that specified goal. This is what the term 'relevant to the selected area of specialisation' in the examination criteria refers to. Obviously a performance at a wedding reception has very different requirements to a performance of a rock band on a Saturday afternoon in a restaurant, a DJ set at a rave party, or a formal concert in a concert hall. The student is, of course, sitting a VCE examination under exam conditions, but is at the same time attempting to demonstrate the extent to which they can successfully entertain an audience measured against industry standards. Some amount of role playing is useful in achieving this end.

Some students presented programs that were too short and were therefore unable to demonstrate an appropriate range of skills. The examination should be completed under the following time conditions:

- Single performer being assessed within a group – 25 minutes
- Two or three performers being assessed within a group – 30 minutes
- Four or five performers being assessed within a group – 35 minutes
- Six or more performers being assessed within a group – 45 minutes

The work of each student presenting for assessment within a group setting was not always clearly discernible. On some occasions, assessed student's parts were masked by supporting instruments. The overall group program should allow each student presenting for assessment to clearly demonstrate his/her performance skills in accordance with the assessment criteria. Some accompanists played too loudly and some pianos were badly out of tune. It is essential that pianos be made ready for examinations; piano tuning at examination centres should be budgeted for at the start of each year. Some performers found it useful to employ several accompanists on different instruments. This is entirely appropriate and often enhanced the performances. If recorded backing tracks are used, they should be transferred onto a single CD or tape and played through appropriate sound reinforcement equipment, not portable ghetto blaster systems. Whatever the backing, it must blend with and support the assessed performance, not detract from it.



Each student was assessed on the extent to which their performance demonstrated accomplishment in each of the criteria. In this context, the term 'extent' refers to the range of ways in which each criterion is met and the degree of difficulty involved in meeting each criterion.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Criterion 1

Criterion 1 assessed accuracy in performance. Students who scored well demonstrated a very high level of precision in timing and rhythm, and, when appropriate, precision of intonation and clarity of diction. It is important to remember, however, that we are dealing here with accuracy 'relevant to the selected area of specialisation'. A student can demonstrate the highest level of accuracy in timing and rhythm within the confines of, for example, the punk rock medium, and can therefore score very well. Similarly a cellist in a string trio can demonstrate the highest level of accuracy in timing, rhythm and intonation within the confines of the chosen repertoire and can also score very well. It should be stressed again that the Statement of Intent is a very important guide for the examiners in ascertaining the context of the performance.

Criterion 2

Criterion 2 is similar to criterion 1 in that it assessed mechanical technique on the instrument or voice. It deals with the areas of dexterity, fluency, flexibility and control and covered such things as the level of technical control in performing changes in the music, for example dynamics and rhythmic patterns. Students who scored well on this criterion demonstrated seamless instrument and/or sound setting changes, or demonstrated precise and very accurate dynamic control and dexterity and fluency on their instrument(s).

Criterion 3

Criterion 3 assessed the student's skill in using a range of performance techniques to engage an audience. Students scored well in this area if they presented a believable, authentic performance within the context of their chosen genre or style. Some students employed theatrics and other non-musical movements on stage. Others clearly demonstrated personal expressiveness and versatility on their instrument. In many ways this criterion was used to assess the 'it' factor: that intangible charismatic force that a compelling performer can harness to mesmerise his or her audience.

Criterion 4

Criterion 4 assessed the student's ability to communicate his or her personal interpretation of the music. Students scored well on this criterion if they presented highly creative, original music or novel arrangements and innovative approaches to other people's music. A student could, for example, present a funk version of a Ricky Lee Jones song. The original may have been more in the style of a ballad, but the student has recognised the funk elements present in the original and expanded on that aspect. Generic or clone-like performances do not score well in this criterion. Works submitted as 'original' works must always be verified as the original work of the student(s) by the teacher. This verification must be included on the Performance Program Sheet and submitted to the examiners at the start of the performance.

Criterion 5

Criterion 5 assessed the student's contribution and placement within a group, or their skill in performing as a solo artist. In a group setting, students who scored well demonstrated positive and intuitive interactions with other group members and an ability to balance the sound of their individual part with that of the group. The solo artists achieved high scores by demonstrating consistent interpretations of each work and fully embracing the role of presenter of the main musical ideas.

Criterion 6

In order to achieve high scores in criterion 6, the student must demonstrate their ability to structure a cohesive program of music and also maintain the continuity of the program throughout. The student should use suitable language to address the audience and should conduct themselves in an appropriate manner for the selected style. Some students presented programs that were very similar to a VCE Group Performance set and therefore tried to cover a diverse and often disconnected range of styles. Although the student should demonstrate his or her ability to perform using a range of techniques, this should always be within a clearly defined style. For example, it is not helpful in contributing to a cohesive set when a heavy metal band suddenly breaks into a Latin samba, unless of course it is transformed into a heavy metal samba! It should be noted here that it is a requirement that **one** piece of music be performed from memory. When music is used, a copy should be provided to the examiners prior to the performance.

Criterion 7

Criterion 7 assessed fluency in a range of performance techniques and fluency in the structure and continuity of the program as a whole. Some students used appropriate staging, lighting and other non-musical aids in order to create a



believable professional scenario. Others appeared to give little thought to the environment in which they were performing. Even a simple classroom can be transformed into an atmospheric performance space by the use of basic props and lighting. In terms of performance conventions and mannerisms, a student is not expected to step outside the accepted norms for their area of specialisation, but can demonstrate a diverse range of performance techniques within those confines.

Criterion 8

Criterion 8 assessed the student's use of technology, physical stance and posture, ability to physically sustain a performance and other OH&S principles. One area that needs clarification here is performance volume. Although the sound volume during the examination must be within the limits prescribed by health and safety regulations as 'safe', it seemed that some students had been advised to play more softly than they would normally play. For some styles of music it is entirely appropriate to play at considerable volume in order to achieve specific tonal qualities or to blend instruments with loud acoustic drum kits. Playing too softly in some situations can be as detrimental to a student's score as playing too loudly. It should also be noted that placement of drinks on top of amplifiers is a very unsafe practice which attracted harsh penalties in this area of assessment.

Criterion 9

Criterion 9 assessed presentation techniques for adjusting to performance conditions, as well as the incorporation of presentation elements into the performance throughout the program.

When teachers are preparing students for the 2005 VCE VET Music Industry Performance examination, students should be advised to always play to their strengths and keep their programs stylistically true to their personal musical vision and to the statement accompanying their Performance Program Sheet indicating the market appropriate for the material being presented.