VCE Music Advice for teachers 2017–2022

Composition, improvisation and arrangement in VCE Music resources

Opportunities for students to create music are embedded throughout VCE Music. For example:

* Music Performance: students can create and perform works for Outcome 1 in all Units. Note that students who undertake Units 3-4 as a soloist need to get their work approved as an alternative work. Application forms and guidelines are available on the VCE [Music Performance](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/studies/music/musicperformunits3-4/musicperformunits3-4index.aspx) and [Music Investigation](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/studies/music/musicinvestigateunits3-4/musicinvestigateindex.aspx) index pages.
* All students create exercises (2 or more) for Music Performance Units 1-4 Outcome 2 and Music Investigation Unit 3 Outcome 2.
* In Music Investigation Unit 4 Outcome 2 students compose, improvise or arrange a work that reflects key characteristics of their Investigation Topic. They also perform this work.
* In Music Style and Composition Units 1 and 3, students create exercises in response to music they have studied and in Unit 4 they compose original works. They can but are not required to perform these works.

Note, where the term ‘composition’ is used generically in VCE Music, it can refer to composition, real-time music creation, improvisation and/or arrangement.

Across VCE, students may compose in any relevant style or genre. For example, students might:

* Work as a group to write an original song in a style that contrasts with other works in their Music Performance program.
* Write a vocal that reflects articulation and rhythmic patterns relevant to a song they are preparing for performance.
* Compose a work that features extended techniques they have studied through their Investigation Topic.
* Use a chord progression or rhythmic motif as the basis for an exercise that explores how another composer has used this material.
* Compose music for a short film that a friend has made for VCE Media

Students may document/note/record their creative work using any appropriate format such as western staff notation, traditional notation relevant to music from a specific time or location or screen shots. See the [Music Style and Composition Externally-assessed Task specifications](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/music/mustylecomp-EAT-specs-w.pdf) for details re requirements for that task.

As teachers plan VCE Music courses they need to make decisions about where and how composition activities can be included in ways that will be relevant and meaningful for students. Teachers also need to consider how composition/improvisation/arrangement skills and technical competence can be developed along with performance, musicianship, and analysis/critical response skills. For example teachers might provide ‘how-to’ materials that model traditional and contemporary examples of creative/compositional process via the school intranet or compile a list of online tutorials/resources that students can access for advice about technical issues such as instrument ranges, scoring and notation conventions etc.

VCE Music also encourages students to document their listening, analysis, evaluation and critical responses. These reflections provide a resource for composition ideas. To scaffold this, teachers can include information about music students are studying which acknowledges the integral role of the composer as architect and designer of the fundamental arrangement/construction of elements that characterise the music. This can assist in delineating the composers’ work from that of the performers particularly in Music Performance Outcomes 1 and 3 where students focus on the interpretive elements of expression in live performance. For example, students could discuss and debate questions such as:

* How do successive generations of musicians and composers interpret / perform period music, especially the nuances of style?
* What can contemporary composers / musicians learn from past composition and performance practice?
* How can the compositional tools available via hand-held devices be used to create music or enhance performance?
* What are the advantages and disadvantages of real-time composition vs traditional methods.

Students are encouraged to use available and appropriate technology as an integral part of their learning and performance practice across all units in VCE Music. This can range from using mechanical and easily formulated elements of music technology software programs such as pre-recorded loops, samples and effects for composition and performance to creating works in the electronica genre or using sequencing software to notate or arrange.