VCE Music Investigation: Topic approval notes and guidelines

Introduction

The Investigation Topic approval process allows VCAA to confirm that each student enrolled in VCE Music Investigation Units 3–4 has selected an Investigation Topic of appropriate depth and breadth; that this Topic has appropriate links to a work selected from a VCE Music Prescribed list and that the Topic provides adequate scope for the student to prepare and present a performance examination program that will allow them to address assessment criteria at the highest level.

Each section of the approval form must be completed. Copies of the form can be downloaded from the   
VCE Music Investigation study page.

**Completed approval forms should be uploaded via VASS on or before 5.00pm on Wednesday,   
23 February, 2022. A reply indicating ‘approved’ or ‘not approved’ will be sent by VCAA before the end of Term 1.**

Before submitting forms for approval, schools must ensure that each student is correctly enrolled in the study:

* MC05 3–4
* Correct focus (instrument) code is identified. Instrument codes are available as a VASS download. Note that the code for Group is GR
* As needed, an application for Alternate instrument is submitted in addition to this Investigation Topic approval form
* As needed, an application for Alternate work is submitted in addition to this Investigation Topic approval form

Applications can only be processed after the student is enrolled in the study.

Schools are not required to submit sheet music or audio files at this stage. During the approval process VCAA may contact schools and request copies of sheet music and/or audio recording/s.

Enquiries regarding this form and the approval process should be directed to Margaret Arnold, VCAA Curriculum Manager, Performing Arts, [margaret.arnold@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:margaret.arnold@education.vic.gov.au) or (03) 9059 5140

If students wish to significantly change an approved Investigation Topic, the school should contact VCAA before approving the change. For example, a student who wishes to change from ‘bowing techniques in Violin music – Baroque to Romantic eras’ to ‘use of the violin in jazz ensembles’ should seek approval for the change. These requests should be sent to [margaret.arnold@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:margaret.arnold@education.vic.gov.au).

Approval of the Investigation Topic is a separate process from the School-assessed Coursework audit.

Notes

In VCE Music Investigation, the Investigation Topic determines the scope, content and direction of the student’s study across the year. The student’s work for each Area of study, Outcome and assessment task, including the end-of-year performance examination, must draw on content relevant to the Investigation Topic.

Students submit two documents relating to their Investigation Topic at different stages of the year. Neither document is assessed.

The Investigation Topic approval form

* is prepared as the student begins Unit 3 and requires a broad, general description of the content the student intends to study across the year.

The Performer’s Statement

* is prepared in Unit 4 Outcome 1 and requires a specific description of the stylistic knowledge and understanding of performance techniques and conventions the student has gained through their performance research and which they intend to demonstrate in the performance program.

1. Investigation Topic approval – submitted via VASS in late February

A description of the proposed Investigation Topic that:

* outlines the content the student intends to study across Units 3 and 4 and demonstrates that the scope of the Topic will enable the student to meet the requirements of the study including School-assessed Coursework tasks and the performance examination at appropriate levels of depth, breadth and rigour
* explains how the work they have selected from a prescribed list is characteristic and representative of the Investigation Topic
* identifies aspects of the Investigation Topic that could be demonstrated in the performance examination program.

2. The Performer’s Statement provided to the assessors on the day of the performance examination

This statement is prepared for Unit 4 Outcome 1 and explains the student’s artistic intentions and interpretative approach to the works they will perform in the examination. The explanation will draw on students’ research into the performance practices relevant to their Investigation Topic and their understanding of specific performance practices and conventions that they will demonstrate in their performance.

Completing the Investigation Topic approval form

**Investigation Topic approval**

By 23 February, enrol the student in the study and submit Investigation Topic for approval via VASS. Provide:

* a succinct description of the area of music that will be studied throughout the year
* a justification of the link between the prescribed work and the Investigation Topic.

**Units 3 and 4**

Use the Investigation Topic to determine content relevant to the key knowledge and skills for each Area of Study and outcome.

**Performer’s Statement and Examination Program**

These templates are provided on VASS and must be completed and provided to assessors on the day of the examination. The Performer’s Statement is prepared for Unit 4 Outcome 1 and:

* explains to the assessors, the student’s artistic intentions and interpretative decisions or ‘performance focus’ (direction/ scope of the performance)
* connects the performance program with the broader Investigation Topic studied throughout the year.

**S/N and SAC assessments**

Students complete each assessment task using content relevant to the Investigation Topic they have selected.

Develop a performance program that communicates knowledge and understanding of the Investigation Topic through selection of repertoire and application of performance techniques and conventions

1. Student number

This information is available via VASS

1. Student name

Please use the student’s full name as per their VCE enrolment.

1. Instrument/s

A list of focus (instrument codes) is provided on the VASS enrolment screen Focus Area. A drop-down menu lists all instruments including Group. This information is required to enrol the student in this study. (Enrolment must be completed before the Investigation Topic approval form is submitted).

1. Type of group (if appropriate)
2. Investigation Topic title

The title should be succinct ‒ no more than 20 words. On VASS, the cell character limit for this information is 180 characters. The title should identify content to be studied and must relate to performance practice and technique rather than a generic style name or compositional practice. For students who will perform as members of a group, identify the instruments they will play here. For example:

Contemporary vocal techniques for a male voice quartet (potentially too broad, not enough detail about techniques that could be demonstrated in the performance)

Contemporary vocal techniques used in a male vocal quartet to imitate instruments through singing, vocal percussion, live looping and audio effects

The influence of Jimi Hendrix on guitar performance, 1960 to the present (potentially too broad, not able to be represented in a single performance program, reads as an essay topic rather than a starting point for performance research)

A demonstration of performance techniques and conventions used by Jimi Hendrix that have been adopted and adapted by guitarists in the late 20th and early 21st centuries

1. Prescribed work title and composer/performer

Please copy the information exactly from the relevant prescribed list.

1. List and category that the prescribed work is selected from

A drop-down menu is provided on the VASS screen. For example, Voice – Contemporary popular: Rock and Pop.

1. Provide a brief description of the topic. The description should be about 100–200 words (character allowance on VASS is 1800) and must be written from a performer’s perspective. It needs to
   * identify the aspects of performance practice that will be studied, for example, list specific instrumental/vocal/performance techniques and conventions that will underpin the student’s investigation of this topic and identify composers/performers whose work will be studied/performed and
   * explain how the prescribed work is characteristic and representative of the Investigation Topic
   * identify the time frame to be studied, for example from 19xx to the present or ‘in the 1960s and ‘70s
   * list significant instrumental/vocal techniques and performance conventions, composers/performers and music styles/genres, influences and/or issues that will be studied
   * identify at least three works that could be included in the Unit 3 Outcome 1 sample of works, that is works that will be studied but not necessarily performed.
2. List three other works of an appropriate standard that might be performed in the end-of-year performance examination.

Advice

Students are advised to select an Investigation Topic

* that will allow them to explore an area of music performance practice that is of personal interest whilst providing appropriate scope for new learning. Generic topics where the primary purpose is to link works that can be performed for another examination are not appropriate for this study
* that will challenge them and sustain rigorous study
* that has relevance, that is, the topic is appropriate to the style, works, genre, period and technical potential of the instrument
* from which they can generate a cohesive performance program of at least four works at an appropriate performance standard for VCE level.

Descriptions of the Investigation Topic should

* focus on performance practice relevant to the topic. Lists of generic techniques such as ‘breathing’ for a vocalist are not appropriate.
* avoid generic descriptions of the actual music style or genre.

The list of works that might be performed in the end-of-year examination may be changed through the year without further VCAA approval. Identifying possible works for the program allows the student to test the viability of their preferred topic – if at least four contrasting works of an appropriate standard cannot be readily identified then the Topic may not be viable.