

2016 VCE Music Style and Composition: Externally assessed Task (EAT) examination report

General comments

In 2016, the Externally assessed Task (EAT) consisted of two parts and comprised a total of 100 marks. Both sections of the task were compulsory, and the format followed the guidelines published by the VCAA.

Student performance was reflected across the range of possible marks. Overall, the submissions generally represented a good understanding of the component requirements for the EAT. Students mostly responded appropriately to the different sections; however, some submissions demonstrated a lack of understanding concerning details of the task. It is suggested that teachers and students be familiar with all aspects of the EAT through the study design and associated supporting documents published by the VCAA. All materials submitted for assessment should be labelled with the student number, Unit number and specified task, and page numbers.

Specific information

Unit 3

Creative exercises

Overall, the creative exercises were presented appropriately. Some submissions included exercises for more than five instruments, while others were for only one. The task specifications are for 2–5 instruments. Time/bar number requirements were mostly adhered to, with only a few creative responses outside these limits. The majority of submissions were in the middle to upper marking range, showing clear and relevant links between the creative exercises and studied works. High-scoring responses tended to show individual and creative approaches to the task, with innovative expressions of the chosen elements of music and compositional devices. Most responses were appropriate to the task, but there were some less successful submissions. A few of the lowest-scoring submissions had no obvious connection to the music identified as the stimulus for the exercise. While many of the elements of music were understood well, in some submissions there was limited understanding of the elements of music. It is important to note that the assessment criteria for this section of the EAT requires manipulation of the elements of music, use of at least one compositional device and a connection to a studied work, so all submissions should reflect these three aspects.

Documentation

The source work and composer for each of the creative exercises was included on most submissions. The highest-scoring responses showed clear links to the source work through explained annotations or narrative descriptions. The elements of music and compositional devices explored were explained in detail. In the lower-scoring submissions it was difficult to find

connections between the creative responses and source works. The meaning was implied or poorly explained, or diagrammatic in nature rather than explanatory. Clefs should always be included in musical examples involving pitch. Descriptions and/or annotations need to be explicit and clear, and all documentation should be checked for clarity. Music language and terminology was also quite limited or incorrectly used in lower-scoring submissions. In the highest-scoring submissions descriptions and annotations were very clear and expressed with sophistication, showing the intentions by using appropriate music language and terminology.

Unit 4

Original music work

Overall the compositions presented were of a good standard, with a majority in the upper–middle marking bracket. Many were interesting and creative, reflecting a range of musical styles and genres. Musical material was explored and developed with great creativity in the highest-scoring submissions, reflecting a strong understanding of the compositional devices of repetition, contrast and variation.

The highest-scoring examples showed originality and excellent manipulation of the elements of music. They adhered to the task outlines and demonstrated consistent stylistic integrity through the treatment of various music elements and compositional devices. There was also strong structural understanding evident in these music works. Low-scoring works did not explore the elements of music in much detail and were limited in the development of the musical material. They often showed limitations in their structural understanding.

Students' understanding of the idiomatic capabilities and qualities of specific instruments was not always strong. It is recommended that the instrument/voice ranges and playability of written lines be checked carefully to ensure that all technical details relating to instrument capability are accurate. While music software may be able to give a rendition of particular technical performance aspects, real players may not be able to produce the same results.

Students are reminded of the need to be careful when 'quoting' other musical works. It is suggested that there should be clear individuality and creativity demonstrated by the student in their music work, with enough divergence from the original work.

Many live recordings were presented, and many were of a very high standard. While live recordings of works are to be encouraged, this is not always possible and is not an assessable part of the EAT. Where possible, and particularly where they are exploring styles that feature improvisation, students are encouraged to at least trial live performance of their work. Sequenced recordings were mostly balanced and provided clear renditions of the music works.

Documentation

The majority of documentation for Unit 4 was in the upper–middle range, reflecting a good level of documentation as described in the task outline. At the highest level the writing was linked closely with the music work and expressed clearly with appropriate use of music language and terminology. Most of the documentation was suitably presented and the intention was clear. At the lower level, many of the same issues for the documentation of the Unit 3 creative exercises were found. The most common issues were a lack of clefs in score examples, poorly described and inaccurate use of music language and terminology, and problems with proofreading. There were examples of incorrect spelling and poor expression that led to possible ambiguity in meaning. Some documentation did not directly reflect the information in the score or musical representation, and some electronic representations were not properly explained.

Overall notation

The musical notation was generally presented in a style-appropriate format, showing that the majority of students had good understanding of notating or representing their music work. Some comprehensive scores or musical representations were presented, but many were missing detail. Common omissions in more traditional scores were tempo indications, dynamics, articulations and bowings, and, in some cases, clefs and time signatures. The majority of scores were generated on music software. There were some layout issues – the most common being with traditionally presented scores. There were many cases where the melody line was very low on the score and percussive accompanying instruments were at the top of the score. The format of the scores should be logical. It is advised that both teachers and students check the formatting, layout and details of the completed scores prior to submission, rather than relying on a technology platform.

Jazz, electronic and contemporary scores were often lacking detail, although there were also some excellent examples of scores in these musical styles. A jazz score, for the EAT, needs to be more than a lead melody line and chord chart. Full scores, not individual parts, need to be submitted. There were some very good examples of musical representations for electronically generated pieces that showed the details of the piece(s) clearly through a series of screenshots with accompanying explanations.