2021 VCE Music Style and Composition external assessment task (EAT) report

General comments

The Externally-assessed Task (EAT) had two sections covering Unit 3 and Unit 4 respectively. Both sections were compulsory, and students were required to follow the guidelines published by the VCAA.

A range of marks was represented across the scoring spectrum; however, most work was in the middle band. Overall, the work submitted for Unit 3 was of an acceptable standard and Unit 4 music works demonstrated an understanding of the required task. The Unit 4 works were mostly in the middle band, utilising the compositional devices of repetition, contrast and variation. For the most part, the Unit 4 work presented was of the required standard.

Works that scored highly demonstrated creative, refined and fluent use of the compositional devices. Works that did not score well did not demonstrate an understanding of the criteria and had limited development of one or more of the compositional devices. These works did not develop or demonstrate the key skills published by the VCAA. An appropriate selection of instrumentation and understanding of instrument idiosyncrasies allowed for greater success in the Unit 4 musical works. Utilising the performance descriptors, marking guide, study design and VCAA supporting materials assists students to make informed decisions in their Unit 4 musical work. For the most part, materials were labelled appropriately, with the student number as the composer, to ensure the work was not identifiable. Recordings of the works were mostly in the correct format. While not compulsory, live recordings of both the exercises and music works are strongly encouraged, as these recordings demonstrate a higher level of playability and practicality to the compositions.

Film, electronic and gaming music is becoming increasingly popular with a large selection of works in these genres. Compositions that scored highly in these genres clearly outlined the creative process and purpose of the composition. Music notation that was representative of the style and genre in either electronic, graphic notation or soundscape format that accurately represented the musical work scored highly. Music that is computer-generated without explicit documentation and instructions could not access full marks. Well-explained documentation outlining the creative process using music terminology that supported the musical work generally scored highly. Graphic notation should allow for recreation of the music work, providing a clear description of how to replay the work.

Some students included small sections of notated bars in the documentation of both units, using multiple colours to highlight comparisons, trends, creative choices and similarities. This is not required as part of the task and in most cases did not enhance the documentation. Documentation that scored highly was clear and concise and distinctly outlined the creative process and choices.

Specific information

While most of the documentation for both units was within the specified word limit, it is recommended that large unexplained screenshots or selected music bar pictures are not submitted as they often have no bearing or relation to the task. Annotated scores for both units need to be considered for the word count and for overall relevance.

Overall notation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 15 | 20 | 27 | 18 | 3 | 6.9 |

Generally, music notation was good and representative of the musical work. Notation that scored highly had great detail such as dynamics, tempo markings, bowing and pedalling techniques, ties, slurs, and phrase markings.

Some scores were missing time signatures or key signatures, had multiple bars at the end of the work not deleted or in a section of the work, with no clarity on how to perform the work and in some instances what the work was composed for. Time for score-cleaning and attention to detail needs to be allocated before submitting the final work. Electronic scores require clear, well-explained graphic notations or soundscape to be able to follow and authenticate the work. Screenshots of a soundwave are inadequate as notation and do not fulfil the requirements of the EAT. It is important to note that notation is style-specific, and so soundwave-type graphic scores for pieces that would usually be presented as traditional notation also do not fulfil the requirements as outlined in the ‘expected qualities’ section of the assessment criteria.

Unit 3

Creative exercises

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | Average |
| % | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 6 | 1 | 14.9 |

The overall standard of exercises was competent, with many students demonstrating a clear connection to the studied work and understanding of the stimulus material.

Most Unit 3 exercises demonstrated a clear link to the musical stimulus. Most students followed the guidelines of length and/or time outlined in the study design and there was a variety of works selected. Musical works with clear musical form and structure tended to score highly.

All students displayed a compositional device of repetition, variation and/or contrast in their work.

The highest scoring exercises demonstrated imaginative and complex manipulation of the elements and development of musical ideas, including a clear link to the work studied. While a small number of students did not connect their work to the stimulus material, for the most part the standard of works was high. Students are encouraged to clearly identify which compositional device they are using (even though all three may be represented) and how it has been manipulated to achieve creative outcomes.

Documentation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 19 | 19 | 26 | 18 | 4 | 1 | 6.2 |

Documentation for Unit 3 was for the most part clear, explaining the creative process and link to the studied work. The highest scoring responses provided concise information describing the relationship between the studied music and creative work with clarity. The use of music notation in the documentation often made it difficult to understand the relevance and/or make a clear connection to the studied work. Annotations often pushed out the word count.

Unit 4

Original music work

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| % | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | Average |
| 3 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 27.3 |

A range of musical styles and genres was presented, and only a small number of students scored in the lower band. The musical works that scored highly demonstrated innovative manipulation of the musical elements, thorough use of the compositional devices of repetition, variation and contrast and were well-supported by the documentation and creative process. Unit 4 works that did not develop musical ideas, were brief or did not address the criteria did not score well. Orchestration and idiomatic understanding varied widely. When writing for orchestration, choirs and bands, those students who demonstrated thorough understanding of instrument range and idiomatic playability received the highest marks. Student works for film, electronic or gaming music demonstrating sophistication and artistic creativity also scored highly.

Electronic works that did not demonstrate an understanding of software or develop the musical ideas did not score well. Students who wrote for solo instruments, orchestras or small groups that did not demonstrate knowledge of the compositional devices, instrumentation limitations or playability also could not access full marks.

Many compositions were recorded live, although this is not a requirement. Live recordings are encouraged whenever possible as they demonstrate the playability and give a more realistic representation of the musical work. Sequenced recordings were mainly well balanced and provided clear renditions of music works. Students need to clearly outline the creative process in their documentation, and this should be evident in the musical work.

Documentation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | Average |
| % | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 14 | 20 | 13 | 6 | 2 | 14.7 |

Documentation in Unit 4 was mostly thorough, providing insightful information of the creative work from its initial intention to its final realisation. Documentation that scored highly articulated the creative journey through processes and creative choices until the final realisation. Students who provided detailed explanation of decisions made and creative choices throughout the different stages of the process scored highly, and these students also used sophisticated language and terminology. On most occasions sections of notation provided as visual stimulus did not enhance or relate to the documentation.