2023 VCE Music Composition externally assessed task report

General comments

In 2023, the externally assessed task (EAT) was exclusively evaluated in Unit 4. The unit comprised three compulsory components, and students were obliged to adhere to the guidelines set by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). The assessment revealed a diverse range of marks, predominantly concentrated in the middle band, and with the overall standard being of a high quality. Students demonstrated adept use of compositional devices including repetition, contrast, transition and variation amongst others. While many submissions showcased high standards, only a few works attained the highest marks. Full marks were granted to works exhibiting sophisticated, refined and fluent utilisation of the compositional devices, and diverse, creative exploitation of the musical elements. Conversely, lower-scoring works lacked an understanding of criteria, with limited development of compositional devices and a failure to demonstrate key skills outlined in the study design.

An appropriate selection of instrumentation, coupled with an understanding of instrument idiosyncrasies, correlated with greater success in the assessed task. The use of performance descriptors, marking guides, study design, and VCAA support materials aided students in making informed decisions. Notably, clear development of sections and musical structure, dynamic and pedaling markings articulations, and the appropriate labelling of materials ensured anonymity, while live recordings, although not mandatory, were encouraged for a higher demonstration of playability and practicality. Film, Electronic, and Gaming Music emerged as popular genres, with an increasing number of works. Notably, compositions attaining higher marks in these genres provided a clear outline of the creative process and purpose. Music notation representative of the style and genre was essential for the work’s success, including the need for explicit documentation for computer-generated music. The Externally Assessed Task composition folio constituted 50% of Unit 4 Area of Study Outcome 1. Students creating a major work expanded from their work in Unit 3 Outcome 1, demonstrated unity and diversity to produce a coherent musical piece. Full marks were achieved through original, innovative compositions utilising repetition, variation, contrast, transition and well-documented creative processes. There was a rising trend of incorporating notated bars in documentation; however, such additions did not consistently enhance documentation quality. The upper marking band was awarded to clear, concise documentation outlining the creative process and choices.

Overall, the submitted work for the 2023 EAT in 2023 reflected a diverse array of student compositions, with notable achievements in creative processes, documentation and notation. Areas for improvement include careful consideration of word limits, attention to detail in notation, and the consistent use of explicit documentation in various musical contexts. The overall standard of notation across all genres was commendable.

Specific comments

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Marks** | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** | **13** | **14** | **15** | **16** | **17** | **18** | **19** | **20** |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** | **31** | **32** | **33** | **34** | **35** | **36** | **37** | **38** | **39** | **40** | **41** |
| 0.6 | 1 | 0.6 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0.6 | 4 | 0.6 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0.6 | 2 | 0.6 | 2 | 1 |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **42** | **43** | **44** | **45** | **46** | **47** | **48** | **49** | **50** | **51** | **52** | **53** | **54** | **55** | **56** | **57** | **58** | **59** | **60** | **Average** |
| 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 45.9 |

The submitted original music works spanned various styles and genres, with higher marks awarded for innovative manipulation of musical elements and adept use of compositional devices. Thorough understanding of orchestration and idiomatic playability in diverse contexts contributed to higher marks. While live recordings were not obligatory, those students who used live recordings were better able to demonstrate playability and practicality. Well-balanced, sequenced recordings generally provided clear renditions of musical works, legitimising the creative process.

Documentation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 7 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | Average |
| 5 | 10 | 6 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 10 | 23.4 |

Thorough documentation in Unit 4 showcased insightful information from initial intention to final realisation. The highest marks were attained by students articulating the creative journey with detailed explanations and complex language. Notably, visual stimuli in the form of notated sections did not consistently enhance documentation quality. Care must be taken with word limits, particularly concerning annotated scores, as these contribute to the overall count. Most documentation adhered to specified word limits.

Notation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0.6 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 12 | 25 | 18 | 28 | 8.1 |

Notation quality ranged from nonexistent to exceptional. Full marks were achieved through intricate details such as bowing techniques, dynamics, tempo markings and phrasing. However, some scores lacked essential elements and attention to detail. Time allocation to score cleaning is encouraged.