2022 VCE VET Music Performance external assessment report

General comments

To assist students to develop confidence in performance and strong stagecraft skills it is recommended that students have numerous opportunities to hone their skills by performing in front of an audience during the year. Equally, as students are required to present their exam in a performance context, with a sense of audience, practising their set under examination conditions is also recommended.

Students are advised to present their programs on the instrument(s) that will allow them to demonstrate the most skill. It is not recommended for students to perform part of their program on their main instrument and part of their program on a different instrument if their skill level is significantly lower on that instrument.

Vocalists are advised to select appropriate keys, which may not be the same keys as the reference recordings.

Group performance

The examination condition ‘there should only be one performer per musical part to ensure that the work of each student presenting for assessment can be clearly identified’ is designed to prevent students from being disadvantaged. However, some groups presented with up to three students playing the same parts on the same instruments for the majority of the program, and some groups presented with vocalists who sang most of their program in unison.

Similarly, teachers are advised to take note of the performance configuration requirement that ‘a student presenting for assessment in a group performance must perform an obviously discernible role that allows them to clearly demonstrate their performance skills in accordance with the assessment criteria’. Care should be taken to ensure that assessed performers are not obscured musically, or visually, as students are disadvantaged if they cannot be heard and seen clearly. Non-assessed performers, including teachers, should not overshadow assessed performers, including taking dominant musical and/or nonmusical roles.

A recommended strategy for groups with two or more vocalists who perform parts in harmony, is to ensure that each student presents a solo section, or part of a section, early in the program to allow the assessors to identify each student’s individual sound and therefore identify the work of each student when they are singing together.

Specific information

Criterion 1: Compliance with the requirements of the examination

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0 | 0.1 | 1 | 99 | 9.9 |

Most students received full marks for this criterion. Schools are advised to ensure that students are given the correct documentation; some students presented documents from other VCE Music studies. Students who use notation or other written prompts are advised to make it obvious to the assessors when they are performing from memory (minimum of one piece), for example by turning the music stand away.

Criterion 2: Skill in performing with accuracy and control

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.3 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 11 | 20 | 18 | 17 | 11 | 13 | 7.0 |

Students who performed repertoire with an appropriate level of challenge and demonstrated consistent control and security in technique evidencing a convincing year’s work scored highly in this criterion.

Vocalists who did not score well in this criterion typically had poor vowel placement and articulation, and/or consistent pitching inaccuracy. Vocalists are advised to ensure they select repertoire and keys that are suitable for their vocal range.

Instrumentalists should ensure their intonation is accurate for the whole program, which may require attention to tuning during the program. Guitarists who use a capo are advised to check their tuning when putting it on and taking it off.

The program should provide opportunities for each assessed performer to demonstrate accuracy and control at the highest level of which they are capable.

Students who performed works with a low degree of difficulty and/or who attempted more challenging material with poor execution did not score well in this criterion.

Criterion 3: Skill in realising the expressiveness and versatility of instrument(s)/technology/voice throughout the performance program

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 14 | 17 | 17 | 15 | 10 | 14 | 6.9 |

When developing a program, it is important to consider how to demonstrate appropriate musical expression and versatility through the use of dynamics, expressive devices and articulation, taking into account the relationship between Criterion 3 and Criterion 4, as programs that lack variety in musical elements and conventions, typically provide fewer opportunities to demonstrate expression and versatility.

It is also important to consider the appropriateness of the expression used. Does it align with the selected style and area of specialisation? Are expressive devices being overused and detracting rather than enhancing the performance?

Students who scored highly in this criterion took advantage of and maximised their opportunities to demonstrate a variety of expressive elements across their set and often within each piece.

Students who presented their work ‘mechanically’ and/or used a limited range of approaches to expression did not score well in this criterion.

Students who attempted to use expressive devices requiring a high level of technical expertise with an inconsistent or a low degree of success did not score well in this criterion. In particular, a number of singers who attempted to use a wide dynamic range, with lack of support and control, ‘forced’ their voices, resulting in ‘cracks’ and straining.

Criterion 4: Ability to demonstrate variety in musical elements and conventions relevant to the area of specialisation

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.5 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 13 | 21 | 17 | 12 | 10 | 14 | 6.9 |

Presentation of a program that demonstrated variety in musical elements that was also cohesive (Criterion 8) and strongly aligned with the area of specialisation (Performer Statement) was a feature of programs that scored highly. This may present more of a challenge in some areas of specialisation than others.

Some of the ways that students were able to meet this criterion well included using a range of metres, sometimes within pieces, variety in chord inversions, use of syncopation and presenting works in a range of key signatures, including pieces that changed key, for example moving to the parallel key in one section. In some cases, programs that scored highly featured arrangements/interpretations of pieces that provided not only variety but a unique approach to achieving variety.

However, students who performed pieces that provided opportunities to demonstrate variety that was not realised, for example, playing only on the beats regardless of the rhythmic style, did not score well in this criterion.

Other examples of programs that did not score well included students using similar, and typically very basic, approaches to beat subdivision across their pieces, guitarists moving capos around the neck and played only open position chord shapes, and keyboard players playing everything in root position and/or who transposed the keyboard.

Criterion 5: Skill in producing a range of expressive tonal qualities relevant to the area of specialisation

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.5 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 11 | 20 | 17 | 13 | 10 | 14 | 6.8 |

Students who scored highly in this criterion demonstrated expressive tonal qualities across the range of their instrument and adjusted their tone to suit each piece and within pieces as appropriate to the style and area of specialisation. Students who made no or minimal adjustments to their tone across their program and/or who did not sustain an expressive tone across the range of their instrument did not score highly in this criterion.

Vocalists should take care to ensure their tone is consistent across their range. For example, some vocalists were able to produce pleasing expressive qualities in part of their range, typically in their middle to upper middle register, however, did not maintain these expressive tonal qualities in their lower and/or higher registers.

Production of tonal qualities can also include the adjustment of electronic equipment including instruments, amplifiers and effects, and the use of devices such as mutes.

Accuracy and control of tone production is assessed in Criterion 2.

Criterion 6: Ability to demonstrate originality and innovative approaches in interpretation within the performance configuration (solo or group)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0.2 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 14 | 14 | 18 | 14 | 8 | 16 | 6.9 |

Students who scored highly in this criterion presented creative personal interpretations of their pieces, for example by demonstrating musical nuance and expression, appropriate to the style and area of specialisation, beyond reproducing a reference recording.

Marks are not awarded for composing and presenting original material, however, in some cases performing original material can be an effective vehicle for students to demonstrate their interpretive skill. Care should be taken when considering whether to include original material in the performance if the intention is to gain marks in this criterion, at the expense of gaining marks in other criterion such as Criteria 2 and 4.

Other features of high-level creative interpretation include showing a range of approaches to variation including phrasing and melodic variation and using a range of different ornaments and embellishments, for example drum fills, in repeat sections.

It should be noted that attempts to present material in an original way must be appropriate and successful to score highly.

Another vehicle that may assist students to score more highly in this criterion is presenting successful original instrumental solos/’lead breaks’.

Criterion 7A: Ability to listen critically to one’s own performance and continuously adjust one’s own performance to produce the required outcomes relevant to the area of specialisation – Solo Performance

Criterion 7B: Ability to listen critically to the performance of others and respond, interact and collaborate

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 1 | 0.3 | 3 | 5 | 11 | 16 | 18 | 17 | 13 | 16 | 7.2 |

A key component of this criterion is awareness of overall balance. Students who played at an appropriate volume and adjusted the volume smoothly, for example when playing a solo or accompanying another performer soloing, were able to demonstrate this. Features of high-scoring group programs included the use of band dynamics, band accents and polished endings, including extended endings requiring high-level listening and adjusting skills.

Soloists working with backing tracks are advised to ensure the backing tracks are at an appropriate volume. Students are advised to consider mixing adjustments that may be required to achieve this if their volume varies from piece to piece.

Vocalists using a microphone are advised to develop strong microphone technique, including moving the microphone further away for louder notes or sections.

When developing a program, it is important to consider how to find or create opportunities for students to demonstrate the ability to listen critically and adjust.

Criterion 8: Skill in presenting a cohesive program of music

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 14 | 19 | 20 | 11 | 23 | 7.6 |

The key components of this criterion are the construction of the program and the flow of the program.

Regarding the former, students who strongly aligned their choice and arrangement of repertoire with their Performer Statement evidenced this well. It should be noted that marks in this criterion will be limited if the performance lacked expected elements of the area of specialisation identified in the statement.

Regarding the latter, marks are awarded for the performer’s contribution to the flow of the program, which includes preparedness for the next piece and sustaining the performance, and can also include, if appropriate, cues and musical direction, starting a piece, segues, talking to the audience and ‘banter’ with fellow performers. Students who scored highly had clearly rehearsed their performance many times in its entirety to ensure that it ran smoothly from beginning to end.

When selecting pieces and constructing a program, students are advised to consider how to create a sense of dynamism and forward movement in their performance.

Students who use backing tracks are advised to consider how these can be used unobtrusively. Stopping and starting the backing track is more obtrusive than a continuous playback with appropriately timed gaps between pieces. Detracting practices to avoid include searching for the correct track and stopping the track after the new track has started.

Care should be taken when constructing a program to consider how to manage instrument and equipment changes, and non-assessed performers entering and leaving the performance area.

Criterion 9: Skill in presenting a confident performance through consistent focus and energy and with pacing appropriate to the area of specialisation

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 26 | 7.8 |

In this criterion students are assessed on the extent to which they are engaged in their own performance*,* and their ability to maintain this engagement for the entire performance, including between pieces. Typically, students who knew their parts and arrangements well, and who were well prepared and organised were able to demonstrate success in this criterion. Detracting behaviours to avoid typically include continually looking unnecessarily down at one’s own instrument, equipment and/or the floor.

Criterion 10: Ability to demonstrate key stagecraft skills in relation to the area of specialisation and market appropriate for the performance program

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 13 | 17 | 16 | 13 | 24 | 7.6 |

In this criterion students are assessed on the extent to which their performance is engaging to an audience, and their ability to sustain this engagement for the entire performance, including between pieces. This includes appropriate enhancement of the performance through movement, both pre-planned and spontaneous; dramatic nuance; interaction with other musicians, instruments and equipment; responding to the music; use of stage; facial expressions; and the presentation of a well-developed and convincing image that aligns strongly with their Performer Statement.

Although the Performer Statement is not directly assessed, students who articulated a well-conceived performance context in their statement and crafted a convincing performance that met their stated intention scored well in this criterion.

Students who presented their work in a context that lacked opportunities to demonstrate stagecraft skills limited the marks that could be awarded. Students are encouraged to find opportunities to show some variety in their use of the performance space if appropriate, such as taking a microphone off the stand, moving to a different area of the stage, sitting down, standing up, etc.