



2011 VCE VET Music Industry GA 2: Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The range of industry contexts in the 2011 VCE VET Music Industry performance exams was perhaps more diverse than in previous years, and some well-structured, interesting and unique performances were given. There were a number of very successful original interpretations of music review-style shows, as well as some alternative-style approaches to jazz and classical performance.

It should be noted that if a trainer is preparing a number of students who do not have enough material to create substantial performances, it is still better to present shorter sets, as long as there is a minimum of three pieces, than to try and combine stylistically different groups into one longer performance. It is particularly difficult to present a cohesive program of music if there are two or more different ensembles performing two or more pieces in different styles and walking on and off the stage, as well as sometimes swapping individual members from each group into the other group, under the guise of one ensemble. All instruments, including voice, on which a student presents, will be assessed. It is not possible to nominate only certain parts of a performance for assessment. It would be wise to check ensemble and set development continually against the conditions of the examination published on the VCAA website. This will be especially important in 2012 as there will be new assessment criteria for the 2012 end-of-year performance examinations.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Criterion 1 – Compliance with the requirements of the task

Most students scored well on this criterion, demonstrating an awareness of the examination requirements. There were issues in regard to ensemble and set construction as stated above. Students and teachers are advised to check all the requirements of the performance exam on the VCAA website on the VCE VET Music study page.

Criterion 2 – Skill in using performance techniques relevant to the area of specialisation with accuracy and control

Criterion 3 – Skill in realising the potential expressiveness and versatility of instrument(s) or voice(s) or technology throughout the program

Criteria 2 and 3 deal with mechanical technique and accuracy, and expressiveness and fluency in performance, respectively. Within this program, these are the only two criteria that directly focus on specific technical 'playing' issues. When preparing for this area of assessment, students need to focus on:

- accuracy and articulation of the rhythm, pitch, timing, phrasing, texture and structure
- fluency and control in the execution of expressive techniques such as variations of tempo and groove, accent and other dynamics, tone and texture relationships and interplay, variations in mix and tone colour and manipulation of electronic production devices, etc.

There were a number of students who presented programs that demonstrated minimal or no capability in the areas stated above. Either they were simply underprepared or they lacked the fundamental skills to achieve at a higher level. These students were marked in the minimal or poor assessment bands.

Students who were able to demonstrate functional and consistent facility with the technique areas outlined above were awarded marks in the average to good range. To be awarded the highest marks for these criteria, accuracy and fluency of the required techniques needed to be excellent or outstanding, that is, at or well above 'industry standard' for the Certificate III level.

Criterion 4 – Skill in performing with musicality through creativity, individuality and originality

Criterion 4 focuses on performing with creativity, individuality and originality. The focus of this criterion is not about the presentation of original works specifically, but about performing interesting, well-conceived interpretations of songs presented with creative arrangements. Of course this could also include the performance of original works that demonstrate a sound knowledge of song structure, harmony and lyric writing in original or individual styles but that are also performed in creative, individual and original ways.

Some students presented programs of original works but lacked the technical skill to perform with facility, and in some cases seemed to be unsure of the conventions and repertoire of the selected style. Performing in a unique and creative manner is underpinned by technical facility, and students generally require strong technical skills to enable them to score well for this criterion.



Criterion 5 – Ability to place the sound of the instrument or voice within the performance environment and/or interact with other performers when appropriate

Criterion 5 assesses students' skill in performing as a member of a group, including interaction with other group members and/or skill in performing as a solo performer, with a particular focus on placement of sound in the performance environment or context.

Students who scored well for this criterion were able to place their instrument or voice in the group and the performance space in a way that was balanced and appropriate to the style and context, and adjusted this balance throughout the performance. There were several cases of individual instruments in a group not being loud enough to be heard clearly. It should be noted that balance, tone, intonation, arrangement and voicing also affect the sense of loudness.

An area of improvement from previous years was in the arrangement of guitar parts. This year most groups had arrangements that included different chord positions and voicings, and different tone settings for each guitarist. The exam description clearly states, 'There should only be one performer per musical part to ensure that the work of each assessed student can be clearly identified'. Trainers should be mindful of this when preparing students for the examination.

Interaction between performers in groups can take many forms. This could include obvious stage actions or more subtle musical interactions in which the group members are so familiar with each other (in a musical context) that there is almost a sense of them being parts of a whole – they can move and make changes and entries without having to give obvious cues. This level of group unity attracted the highest of marks for this criterion.

Criterion 6 – Skill in presenting a cohesive program of music

This criterion assesses the selection and programming of material and is linked to the performer's Industry Statement. Most students seemed to have a good grasp of this concept and chose material appropriate to their context. Students who scored well for this criterion presented material that was structured or programmed in an excellent or outstanding way, in line with the industry context. In most cases, this required some sense of narrative in the performance, with obvious highs and lows and usually a peak at a suitable point in the program.

Criterion 7 – Ability to communicate through the use of non-musical elements of the performance, such as stage management, visual appearance, performance etiquette, manner and/or movement, as appropriate to the performance

Although elaborate staging, lighting, audio/visual displays and props can assist students to score well for this criterion, they are in no way a requirement. Essentially, this criterion assesses the way in which performers engage the audience. Some groups did this with well-planned lighting, effects or costumes, but a solo performer with none of these can still be engaging for an audience in their stance, confidence, dialogue, expressions and their own interest and passion for their performance. Students who scored well had made appropriate decisions about their presentation with respect to their Industry Statement and implemented these with confidence and creativity. It was pleasing to see at least some thought regarding appropriate performance attire for almost all performances.

Criterion 8 – Skill in OH&S principles appropriate to the performance program

Students scored highly on criterion. Performance areas are generally well set up with OH&S principles in mind – leads taped down, no drinks on stage, tripping hazards removed, the use of guitar stands, etc. There were far fewer instances of extreme loudness from bands, which has previously been an OH&S concern. Regardless of this, if a group is playing in a style that demands high volume levels for tonal and/or stylistic reasons, performers should use some form of ear protection. This needs continual attention and reinforcement from trainers throughout the year.