



2009 VCE VET Music Industry GA 2: Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The general standard of performance was quite high and there were some quite exceptional performances. The range of Industry Contexts continues to broaden, and some well-structured, interesting and unique contexts were seen this year. It was pleasing to see more specific performance contexts this year, and there were certainly fewer 'rock bands' playing 'a range of music to suit all tastes'.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Criterion 1 – Compliance with the requirements of the task

Students generally scored well on this criterion, demonstrating an awareness of the requirements for the examination. There were still a few students who presented for the exam without a completed Industry Statement. Also, several students needed to rush on the day of the exam to have the program sheet authenticated as required, as this had obviously been forgotten or overlooked by the student. Students and teachers are advised to check all the requirements for the task on the VCAA website.

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.

These criteria, and the musical skills they assess, are interrelated and fundamental technical aspects of training that tend to differentiate and reward skilled players.

Of concern this year were some of the problems experienced by less skilled performers. It is essential that students are able to tune their instruments and able to recognise and adjust tuning if problems arise. The selection of material for performance is also crucial. When planning their program, students should consider their capabilities and choose material they can perform competently. This is particularly important for vocalists. Several vocalists chose material at the extremes of their range and, as a result, their tone and intonation were severely affected.

Students should also consider carefully the benefits of performing on multiple instruments and voice, especially if they are not strong performers on all of them. Performing on more than one instrument is not necessarily a demonstration of versatility and some students would be well advised to focus on being versatile on their main instrument.

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

Criterion 4 focuses on **performing** with creativity, individuality and originality. It is not enough to simply present original work or compositions, as this is not the focus of the criterion.

Many performances had a clear sense of the 'voice' of the performers. Interesting, well-conceived interpretations of songs presented in creative arrangements and original works demonstrating a sound knowledge of song structure, harmony and lyric writing were presented in a wide range of styles. This year, far fewer performers simply copied professional or popular acts.

Performing in an individual and creative manner is underpinned by technical facility and students generally require strong technical skills 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. Some students were overly concerned about high volumes; however, very few performances were at risk of being too loud. There were several cases of individual instruments in a group not being loud enough to be clearly heard. It should be noted that the balance, tone, intonation, arrangement and voicing also affect the sense of loudness.

Still of concern is the number of groups with two guitars playing the same parts for much of the performance – the same chords and voicings, and similar tone settings. 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.’

Interaction between performers in groups can take many forms. This could include obvious looking at each other to more subtle musical interactions in which the group members are so familiar with each other (in a musical context) that there is almost of sense of them being parts of a whole – they can move, and make changes and entries without having to give obvious cues.

Criterion 6 – Skill in presenting a cohesive program of music

This criterion assesses the selection and programming of material and is obviously linked to the performer’s Industry Statement. As mentioned earlier, students seemed to have a good grasp of this concept and chose material appropriate to their context. To score well for this criterion, the material must not only be appropriate to the context, but also be structured or programmed in a way that is suitable to the context. In most cases, this requires some sense of journey with respect to intensity and energy, 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 student 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-thought-out lighting or effects or costumes, but a solo performer with none of this can still be engaging with the audience in their stance, confidence, banter, expressions and their own interest and passion in their performance. Students who scored well had thought through and made appropriate decisions about their presentation with respect to their Industry Statement and implemented these with confidence and creativity.

Criterion 8 – Skill in OHS principles appropriate to the performance program

Almost all students scored well for this criterion. Performance areas are generally well set up with OH&S principles in mind – leads taped down, no drinks on stage, tripping hazards removed, etc.

In addition, many guitarists used several guitar changes within their performances, but at times placed the guitars lying face up on the stage during changeovers. The use of guitar stands should be encouraged.