VCE Music Contemporary Performance (Units 3 and 4: 2023–2027)

School-based assessment report

This report is provided for the first year of implementation of this study and is based on the School-based Assessment Audit and VCAA statistical data.

All official communications regarding the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Music Study Design are provided in the *[VCAA Bulletin](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx)*. It is recommended that teachers subscribe to the [*VCAA Bulletin*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx) to receive updated information regarding the study. Schools are required to alert teachers to information in *VCAA Bulletins*, especially concerning assessment schedules. Important administrative dates and assessment schedules are published on the School administration page of the *[VCAA website](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/HomePage.aspx)*.

Unit 3

General comments

Responses to the Unit 3 School-based Assessment Audit questionnaire for VCE Music Contemporary Performance indicate that most teachers have successfully made the transition from the previous study to the reaccredited [VCE Music Study Design 2023–2027](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/music-performance/Pages/unit3-4.aspx).

For Unit 3 Music Contemporary Performance, students undertake 3 outcomes, which all have some element of scored School-assessed Coursework (SAC) that contributes to their overall study score.

This current study design has a number of new and exciting elements that were not found in previous study designs. While some schools have relished the new outcomes and designed new assessments that allow students to access and present knowledge in different ways, others have played it safe with what they have taught or used previously and have not fully explored the breadth of learning and assessment that can be found in this study design.

As always, it is important that a broad range of activities are used to allow schools to rank students throughout the spectrum of skills and knowledge. Tasks that are too easy and allow all students to achieve high or full marks may not help in ranking students. So too, having tasks that are too difficult do not allow all students to access the curriculum. A broad range of activities has been provided by schools and the most equitable and balanced have allowed for fair access and robust ranking.

Outcome 1: Performing

Similar to previous study designs, Outcome 1 requires students to explore and understand the different aspects that make up a well-constructed musical program. Students should be honing their craft through regular practice and lessons, as well as regular performances throughout the unit in anticipation of the end-of-year recital. There is no defined repertoire list other than the requirements of performing a reimagined work, performing a piece by an Australian composer post-1990, and performing a piece live with another performer. Students, with guidance from their classroom and instrumental teachers, should be developing well-rounded programs that show the variations found in the keys skills, and demonstrate personal voice and appropriate stylistic techniques and conventions. As part of their School-assessed Coursework, which is scored, students must present a short written or oral task explaining their choice of the proposed program of works to be performed.

Outcome 2: Analysing for performance

Often still referred to as ‘The Tech SAC’, Outcome 2 asks for students to demonstrate an intended approach to reimagining an existing work, as well as a discussion in which the development of techniques and personal voice are explained and demonstrated. It is this second part in which a number of schools have reverted back to what is known and have continued the format and structure of the old ‘Tech SAC’. We will look further at what is best practice later in this report.

Outcome 3: Responding

This outcome is broken into 2 main sections:

1. responding to structured questions relating to unheard material
2. identifying, recreating (on instrument) and notating short music examples.

These concepts are mostly not new in this study design and a number of schools chose to complete both the responding to unheard material and the identifying and notating sections in exam-type settings. It is essential that schools read the study design carefully to ensure they are assessing only the scales/intervals/chords/chord progressions/rhythmic patterns that are part of the current study design for Music Contemporary Performance (pp. 43–44). A number of schools either missed or were unsure about how to assess the recreation on instrument. It is vital that this practical component be included in the score for this SAC, but it is up to schools as to how much of the 20 total marks be given to this.

A big change to the current study design is the shift away from Western notation being the only form of notation that can be assessed. While not all students will need to know how to use piano rolls, TAB or rhythm grids, it is essential that schools expose students to these different approaches to notation.

Schools are reminded that only aspects that are found in the study design can be assessed.

Teaching improvisation, composition and different scales/chords/progressions/rhythms will broaden student knowledge and assist them to expand their personal voice through their playing. However, they cannot be included as part of the scored aspect of their School-assessed Coursework in Outcome 3.

Assessment

Some tasks submitted during the School-based Assessment Audit did not have the correct mark allocation for the outcomes as specified on page 45 of the study design. It is also imperative that schools follow the types of tasks that are specified in the study design. There has been a great breadth of approaches to the different types of assessments, but it is worth a reminder that all School-assessed Coursework should follow the VCAA Assessment principles of being valid and reasonable, equitable, balanced and efficient.

All tasks should be clearly documented and explained to students in student-friendly language to ensure they know what and how content and knowledge will be assessed. Some of the best examples that were presented through the School-based Assessment Audit included the task description from the study design and a clear rubric (whether self-devised or from the VCAA website) that showed students how they would be assessed.

While a number of schools are teaching multiple Music studies, it is essential that they treat each subject individually and devise separate tasks and assessments for each study. Music Repertoire Performance and Music Contemporary Performance share a number of similarities, however, there are just as many differences and schools are reminded to check and ensure that the coursework matches the study being taught. Careful reading of the study design for the correct weighting of each School-assessed Coursework task is needed by all schools. Unit 4 has different weightings.

Use of commercially available School-assessed Coursework tasks

A number of schools chose to use commercially available tests, particularly for Outcome 3. Although teachers are time poor, it is essential that aspects of these purchased tests are altered because they are freely available in the commercial market and students and tutors also have full access to them. By adjusting these papers, students will not be able to see the assessments before they complete it.

Procedures

Teachers should be aware that procedures for the VCE are the same for all VCE subjects. Teachers should download a copy of the Procedures for assessment in VCE studies document in order to make sure they are clear on policies, such as satisfactory completion of a unit of work, authentication and redemption procedures.

Specific information

Unit 3: School-assessed Coursework

Outcome 1: Performance

In this area of study, students perform regularly in a variety of contexts and use these performances to explore and build on ways of developing technical skills and interpretation approaches relevant to the style(s) of the selected works. They investigate the possibilities of exhibiting personal voice by reimagining at least one existing work.

Task type options

Performance

Outcome 1 includes both a Satisfactory/Not Satisfactory (S/N) task and a scored School-assessed Coursework task. The S/N task is very similar to previous study designs and has the students perform a selection of their program, including the performance of a reimagined work.

Most schools chose to complete this task as a formal recital in front of an audience. This allows students the opportunity to practice their performance techniques as well as receive instantaneous feedback from a live audience.

Proposed program

The scored element of this outcome asks students to create a short written or oral task explaining their choice of the proposed program of works to be performed.

There was some confusion among schools as to the purpose of this task. A number of schools had students creating their Performer’s Statement of Intent, which is used in the performance exam for this task. These two documents serve different purposes and it is essential that schools are aware of this.

The School-assessed-Coursework for Outcome 1 is simply asking for students to put their program together and then explain why they chose the pieces and possibly the order of the pieces. Schools that did this well had students creating short written pieces, presentations or oral discussions.

This School Assessed-Coursework is worth 10 per cent of students’ GA1 mark.

Having students complete this task early in the semester will allow schools to check:

* for inconsistencies or errors within their program
* that students will be demonstrating a wide range of techniques and musical elements
* that students are ready early in the year to make the most of their preparation time.

While some schools chose to create their own rubrics to assess this task, most schools chose to use the Performance descriptors found on the VCAA website.

Outcome 2: Analysing for performance

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to demonstrate and discuss performance development techniques and approaches relevant to performance of selected works and an intended approach to a reimagined existing work.

This outcome contributes 30 per cent towards the student’s GA1 mark.

**Task type options**

Demonstration of an intended approach to reimagining an existing work

This task requires students to demonstrate their intended approach to reimagining an existing work. Some schools chose to include this as part of a recital performance that also met the requirements of Outcome 1, while others had students perform this as part of an interview-type task. This is different to the scored assessment in Outcome 1, in which students are discussing intended approaches. In this task, students need to demonstrate, by playing, their intended approach to reimaging an existing work.

This task could be completed anywhere throughout the semester, however, having it later in the semester means students have more time to develop their reimagining of an existing work.

Most schools used the VCAA Performance descriptors on the rubrics for this task.

Authentication is important for this task so that students are not just finding a reimagined version of an existing work online and then claiming it as their own work. Constant checking in with students, listening to their development and questioning the choices they are making helps with the authentication process. It is also important that schools are using the Authentication record, which can be found on the VCAA website.

This task makes up 20 per cent of students’ GA1 mark.

Discussion in which the development of techniques and personal voice are explained and demonstrated

In general, this was the task that a number of audited schools struggled to move from the parameters of the 2017–2022 study design to those of the current 2023–2027 study design.

A number of schools still required students to create exercises to demonstrate the development of techniques, however, this could cause unnecessary work for the students.

It is essential that students also demonstrate the techniques that they are discussing. Some schools chose to complete this as individual interviews, in which students would demonstrate and discuss the development of techniques and personal voice. Other schools chose to have students create videos or presentations that allowed them to present their work in a refined way. Both ways of approaching the presentation of the work have merits and benefits. A number of different approaches for this task can also be found on the Teaching and learning page of the VCAA website.

This task can be completed anywhere throughout the semester; however, a long lead time needs to be given so students can really develop their techniques and personal voice. Completing this task later in the semester allows students time to develop even further and can provide an avenue for reflection on how they have progressed and tried different techniques and ideas throughout their practice and preparation.

This task is worth 10 per cent of the students’ GA1 mark.

Outcome 3: Responding

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to discuss a performer’s interpretation and manipulation of music elements and concepts in works, and identify, recreate and notate music language concepts from examples presented, both in context and in isolation.

This outcome contributes 40 per cent of the students’ GA1 mark.

**Task type options**

Response to structured questions relating to previously unheard music

For Outcome 3, most schools decided to complete this task as a written test, modelled on previous exams and the sample aural and written examination that was published in February 2023. As part of this task, schools created structured analysis questions for students to answer in written form.

This is one way for students to prepare for the written examination at the end of the year, but there are other ways to assess these skills, and it is worth remembering that the skills and language used for this outcome can be consolidated by using the same language when discussing works that students are performing, and recordings of those works by other artists in Outcomes 1 and 2, too. The Outcome 3 task could be completed in a variety of different and creative ways, some of which can be found on the Teaching and learning page of the VCAA website. If that is the case, a practice exam can always be used as part of the overall teaching and learning program.

Some schools that participated in the School-based Assessment Audit created some tasks that had students completing structured questions on the elements of music, aural skills and practical skills based on the pieces that they were preparing. These types of tasks give more meaning to the theoretical work and place the knowledge and skills learnt into musical contexts.

This task is worth 20 per cent of the students’ GA1 mark.

Identification, recreation (on instrument) and style-appropriate notation of short music examples

As with the previous task, a number of schools combined the parts of this task into a paper modelled on the sample written and aural examination. It is worth noting that these papers should not be longer than the written exam at the end of the year.

Schools need to ensure that they are only assessing the scales, intervals, chords, rhythms and harmonic progressions that can be found in the study design for Music Contemporary Performance. With a number of schools teaching both Music Contemporary Performance and Music Repertoire Performance (some within the same classroom), it is essential that students are only assessed on what is provided in the relevant study design. It was apparent that some audited schools did not realise that there had been changes to the key knowledge or that they were confusing the two performance subjects with each other.

A rather large change in this study design is the use of style-appropriate notation. It is important that students are exposed to the variety of different notation styles that are mentioned in the study design to make an informed choice as to what works best for their music making. Most of the tasks that were submitted for the School-based Assessment Audit continued with the traditional Western notation.

A large component that was lacking in a number of submissions for the School-based Assessment Audit was how students would be assessed for the recreation (on instrument) component of this task. Those that did address it ranged from students preparing different scales/arpeggios/intervals/rhythms on instruments, choice boards, and isolating scales from pieces and playing them, etc. It is essential that schools assess this component of the task practically. These tasks could be assessed live or recorded, allowing flexibility for schools to find the best arrangements for their students.

This task is worth 20 per cent of the students’ GA1 mark, however, there is no break down for the weighting of written and aural language and recreation on instruments.

Unit 4

General comments

Responses to the Unit 4 School-based Assessment Audit questionnaire for VCE Music Contemporary Performance indicate that most teachers have successfully made the transition from the previous study to the new 2023–2027 study design.

Unit 4 has all the same outcomes as Unit 3, however, for Unit 4 Music Contemporary Performance, only Outcome 2 is assessed as School-assessed Coursework. All other outcomes are assessed externally.

It is essential that schools look closely at the weighting of Outcome 2 and the slight change in wording to ensure they are assessing and scoring their students appropriately.

Assessment

Outcome 1: Performing

Outcome 1 is assessed externally; however, schools need to provide a S/N result for this task. A good starting point for this may be the external exam assessment criteria.

Outcome 2: Analysing for performance

This outcome is part of students’ School-assessed Coursework, and the entirety of this outcome accounts for 20 per cent of students’ GA1 mark.

Outcome 2 asks for students to demonstrate an intended approach to reimagining an existing work, as well as a discussion in which materials designed to assist in the development of techniques and personal voice are explained and demonstrated. It was this second part in which a number of schools reverted to what is known and have continued the format and structure of the old ‘Tech SAC’.

Outcome 3: Responding

This outcome is assessed externally; however, schools need to provide a S/N result for this task. A good starting point for this may be the sample exams and previous end-of-year exams.

Procedures

Teachers should be aware that procedures for the VCE are the same for all VCE subjects. Teachers should download a copy of the Procedures for assessment in VCE studies document in order to make sure they are clear on policies such as satisfactory completion of a unit of work, authentication and redemption procedures.

School-based Assessment Audit questionnaire responses

Many of the responses to the audit showed an excellent understanding of the 2023–2027 study design, as well as methodical planning for the teaching and learning program. Schools that provided limited information were asked to provide more detail. Some of the issues that came up included schools running Unit 3 Outcome 2 again in Unit 4, not adjusting the weighting as prescribed in the study design, and not asking students to demonstrate their skills practically.

Specific information

Unit 4: School-assessed coursework

Outcome 2: Analysing for performance

On completion of this unit, students should be able to demonstrate and discuss performance development techniques and reimagining approaches relevant to performance of selected works.

This outcome contributes 20 per cent of students’ marks for the GA1 mark.

**Task type options**

A discussion in which materials designed to assist in the development of techniques and interpretation are explained and demonstrated

While very similar to Unit 3 Outcome 2, it is important that schools take note that this outcome is different. A number of schools still required students to create exercises to demonstrate the development of techniques. This could cause unnecessary work for the students.

It is essential that students also demonstrate the techniques that they are discussing. Some schools chose to complete this as individual interviews, in which students would demonstrate and discuss the development of techniques and personal voice. Other schools chose to have students create videos or presentations that allowed them to present their work in a refined way. Both ways of approaching the presentation of the work have merits and benefits. A number of different approaches for this task can also be found on the Teaching and Learning page of the VCAA website.

This task can be completed anywhere throughout the semester, but a long lead time needs to be given so students can really develop their techniques and interpretations.

This task contributes 15 per cent to students’ GA1 mark.

A demonstration of an approach to reimagining of an existing work

A number of schools used this as a continuation of the work that students were doing in Unit 3.

This task could be completed anywhere throughout the semester, however, by having it later in the semester, students have more time to develop their reimagining of an existing work.

Most schools used the VCAA Performance descriptors in the rubrics for this task.

Authentication is important for this task so that students are not just finding a reimagined version of an existing work online and then claiming it as their own work. Constant checking in with students, listening to their development and questioning the choices they are making helps with the authentication process. It is also important that schools are using the Authentication record that can be found on the VCAA website.

This task makes up 5 per cent of students’ GA1 mark.