VCE Music Repertoire Performance (Unit 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 2023–2027 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 Repertoire Performance indicate that many teachers have successfully made the transition from the previous study to the reaccredited VCE Music Study Design 2023−2027.

For Unit 3 Music Repertoire Performance, students undertake 3 outcomes, which are all School-assessed Coursework (SAC) tasks.

Outcome 1, Performing, involves performances of both solo and ensemble works by each student. Students should be regularly performing in class to practise their skills and should be aware of the 7 criteria that they will be marked against for the end-of-year performance examination. This outcome gives students the opportunity to present a written/oral task explaining the process they use to select a performance program. It is recommended that they include works intended for performance in Unit 4.

The Outcome 2 task requires students to demonstrate and discuss techniques related to the performance of works in Outcome 1. Aspects of expression and interpretation should be considered in addition to more technical challenges. Most schools have successfully developed tasks that meet all the requirements of this outcome. Some schools adapted tasks from previous years by adding a requirement for students to create their own exercises either to assist in development of their overall technique or to address specific issues relating to performance of works selected for Outcome 1. It is important to structure the discussion component of the task so that students respond to previously unknown questions/prompts rather than submit material they have developed over the semester, such as a practice journal.They should be encouraged to use the terminology as described in the Cross-study specifications (pages 16–19 of the study design) when discussing music elements, concepts, and compositional devices in works they are performing. Teachers should note the weighting for this task is now out of 30 marks. The assessment descriptor provided by VCAA separates the demonstration and discussion but is still giving schools the opportunity to interpret the actual weighting of the task.Many schools continued to assess Outcome 2 early in the second term in order to spread out the assessment tasks.

The task for Outcome 3 includes 2 parts: written responses to structured questions (relating to previously unheard music) and a practical demonstration of music language knowledge and skills (identification, recreation, on instrument or voice, and style appropriate notation of short music examples). Teachers will decide on the weighting for particular skills within each part of the task through their task design. For example, while each of the practical key skills should be practised in class, the task should only assess a cross-section of these skills. Otherwise, an onerous amount of time would be needed to assess each student. Some tasks submitted during the audit showed confusion around the elements/concepts that may be referred to in listening/critical response questions for this task. By focusing on these aspects of the recorded performances, students learn how other performers use these elements to create expressive outcomes and can then apply this to their own performance.

Again, teachers should refer to the elements and compositional devices contained in the Cross-study specifications.

The practical demonstration of music language knowledge and skills requires part of the assessment task to be completed using voice and/or instrument.

Assessment

Some tasks submitted during the School-based Assessment Audit did not have the correct mark allocation for the outcomes in Unit 3: 10 marks for Outcome 1, 30 marks for Outcome 2 and 40 marks for Outcome 3. Outcome 3 requires 20 marks for a written response and 20 marks for a practical demonstration. The audit revealed that some schools used mark allocations from the previous study design. Each outcome is now a SAC task, which is different to the previous study design. It is very important that the task design allows all students the opportunity to show their level of skill and demonstrate their expertise. Outcome 3, in particular, needs to have a range of difficulty in both sections of the SAC.

For all tasks, teachers must inform students not just of the format and structure of the task, but also about how it will be assessed. For example, a marking schedule that outlines the assessment criteria and weighting of each aspect of the task should be provided with the task instructions. The task description from the study design should be included in the instructions developed by the school. Information about how student work will be authenticated should also be provided in the task instructions.

For some schools the instructions to students were unclear or contradicted the task as outlined in the study design. Some of the assessment rubrics did not address the key skills listed for the relevant outcome. It is extremely important that students have a clear understanding of what is required of them and how they will be assessed. Ideally, they should be given an assessment booklet at the start of the school year that lays out all of the required information in a clear and concise manner. Some schools included the incorrect subject title, using the previous study design names. Because some schools offer more than one music subject in the same class, it is important that the students obtain the correct subject material. For example, Music Performance should now state Music Repertoire Performance, so it does not get confused with the other music studies.

The Unit 3 SAC tasks contribute 20 per cent to the study score. Teachers need to peruse the study design carefully for the weightings of each component the tasks.

Use of commercially available School-assessed Coursework tasks

Some schools used commercially available tasks for Outcome 3. If choosing to do this, they need to be aware that these tasks and the answers are also available to the public, including students. If using commercially available tasks, teachers are advised to alter them sufficiently to ensure that students have not seen the outcome task.

Procedures

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

School-assessed Coursework audit questionnaire responses

Many of the audit questionnaire responses showed an excellent understanding of the VCE Music Study Design and methodical planning of the teaching and learning program. Some responses were limited, and these schools were asked to provide more detail. Some of the issues included:

* Outcome 1: students should be required to perform both solo and ensemble works but it is the written/oral explanation, including the process used to select a performance program, that is scored for the SAC.
* Outcome 2: students should include exercises that address both technical and expressive challenges.
* Outcome 3: some schools included a very narrow range of skills in the practical component or did not include any complex questions, such as the ‘listen, play, notate’ key skill. Including a range of skills with different levels of complexity is an important aspect of task design. For example, a student’s ability to play previously unheard music provides information about their development of aural memory and their ability to recognise aspects such as scale forms, rhythmic patterns, and melodic contour. Their ability to notate this material provides feedback about development of aural memory and understanding/familiarity with notation conventions. Some schools omitted entire sections, such as the practical section, from the task or used incorrect weightings and marking schemes.

Specific information

Unit 3: School-assessed Coursework

Outcome 1: Performing

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to explain the artistic and practical considerations used to select a program of works for performance and demonstrate a diverse range of techniques and expressive qualities through performance of works or sections of works including one work from the prescribed list intended for their final recital program and at least one ensemble work.

This outcome contributes 10 out of 80 marks allocated to School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3.

Task type options

Performance

Outcome 1 now has school-assessed coursework worth 10 marks.

In order to achieve an S for Outcome 1, students are required to present a selection of works, or sections of works, including one from the prescribed list and one ensemble work. While the outcome requires students to demonstrate a diverse range of techniques and expressive qualities through the performance of works, the performance of works is not marked. The assessment item for Outcome 1 is the short written/aural task explaining the process of selecting works for performance.

Most schools choose to complete this task in class because there is now a short written/oral component. Some schools still gave each student the opportunity to perform in a formal recital setting, either during the school day or at night with an audience. This offers students the opportunity to practise their presentation techniques as well as demonstrating the musicianship skills required.

It is important to understand that, in order to complete this task, solo students must perform in **both** solo and ensemble contexts. This is because different skills are learnt and demonstrated in these different settings.

Students performing as a soloist at the end of the year must include an ensemble work. This may be a duet with another student or teacher, or an assessed student accompanying another student. The ensemble component may also be completed by the student being accompanied by another instrument.

It is suggested that students complete a practice diary, including work developed for Outcome 1. This gives each student the opportunity to set weekly/term/semester goals and gives the teacher something to see in writing on their development of a performance program.

The Music Repertoire Performance course is designed for all knowledge and skills to relate back to performance. The more links are highlighted and continually referred to, the more the students will gain from the course.

Assessment

The marking schedule for Outcome 1 needs to be based on the key skills outlined in the study design. Most schools used the marking guide provided by VCAA, which is available in the support materials for this specific music study.

Students should be aware of the 7 criteria used in the end-of-year performance examination These can be found in the Music Performance examination specifications. This approach helps students identify each criterion and work towards fulfilling it to the best of their capabilities.

Outcome 2: Analysing for performance

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to demonstrate and discuss techniques related to performance of selected works, including aspects of interpretation.

This outcome contributes 30 out of 80 marks allocated to School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3.

Task type options

Demonstration and discussion

Most schools chose to have a 6–8-minute demonstration of technical skills with the discussion during or immediately following the demonstration.

This task needs to be started early in the school year to be fully effective. It was noted in the assessment calendars provided that many schools are now giving the students timelines and important information in the last weeks of term 4 of the previous year.

Many schools used the practice journal to include the start of this information for the SAC. Students can conceivably add an extra exercise each week, therefore building up a comprehensive program of techniques that will help them progress towards a better recital outcome. During the assessment task the teacher should ask the student to perform selected exercises from the technical work program. They must present material that includes aspects of interpretation.

While it is no longer mandated, many students are required to create exercises of their own. In-class workshops that model a process for developing exercises and evaluating worked examples are a helpful pre-task learning activity for this component of the task.

Where instrumental music teachers are involved in preparation for this task, good communication needs to be in place to ensure a common approach. For example, teachers might work together to frame the task instructions and develop a workbook of learning activities. Instrumental teachers can then work with students to identify challenges, discuss aspects of the technique that students need to work on and provide feedback about the work-in-progress.

Assessment

The marking schedule for Outcome 2 needs to be based on the key skills outlined in the study design. This outcome is marked out of 30. Many schools used the performance descriptors provided by VCAA. In these descriptors there are 2 paragraphs, one a demonstration and the other a description. This will give the teacher the opportunity to provide a wider range of marks when assessing. Not only are students being assessed on their technical prowess, but they need to clearly demonstrate that they have a deep understanding of their own technical limitations and how to best go about addressing these challenges. This outcome is not just about performing scales and exercises at a high level of technical proficiency; it is about students understanding how to identify their own technical challenges and then to create a program of work that will best address these challenges. This must also include aspects of expression and interpretation.

Outcome 3: Responding

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to discuss the interpretation of expressive elements of music, and identify, recreate, notate, and transcribe short excerpts of music using voice or instrument.

This outcome contributes 40 out of 80 marks allocated to School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3, with 20 marks for written responses and 20 marks for a practical demonstration of music knowledge and skills.

Task type options

Written test and practical test

For Outcome 3, most schools developed a task that included a written test of 60–90 minutes and a practical test of roughly 5 minutes. It is important to note that these tasks are not to be overly lengthy, particularly as the end-of-year exam is now only one hour long. A shorter written paper than the end-of-year exam is quite acceptable because students are also required to present the practical aspect, which contributes 20 marks out of 40.

Because the practical task is worth a significant amount, it is logical to spend a reasonable amount of class time practising these skills. The duration of this section of the task will vary according to the questions/skills that are included.

Assessment

Teachers should note that the weighting for this task is 20 marks for written responses to structured questions, and 20 marks for the practical test. If the test paper is marked out of a higher mark, the final score will need to be reduced to the required mark before the scores are entered into VASS.

Unit 4

GENERAL COMMENTS

Responses to the Unit 4 School-based Assessment Audit questionnaire for VCE Music Repertoire Performance indicate that most teachers have successfully made the transition from the previous study to the reaccredited VCE Music Study Design 2023−2027.

For Unit 4 Music Repertoire Performance, students undertake 3 outcomes, one of which is a School-assessed Coursework (SAC) task.

Outcome 1, Performing, involves performances of both solo and ensemble works by each student. This outcome is assessed only as S/N and does not contribute to students’ coursework score for Unit 4. Most schools chose to fulfil this outcome by having the students perform their full recital as a practice run for their end-of-year external recital. The assessed S/N component of that practice recital is usually ‘performances of the pieces not performed for the Unit 3 recital’. Solo students are now required to include an ensemble work in their end-of-year performance examination. This gives the students more opportunity to perform with other musicians within the classroom environment or outside in other real performance groups. Students were encouraged to address any issues that came up with their Unit 3 recitals over the course of Unit 4.

The Outcome 2, Analysing for performance, task requires students to develop and use a structured program of material that will support their overall development as an instrumentalists/vocalist and assist them to prepare works selected for Outcome 1 for performance. This outcome is a SAC task and contributes 10 per cent of the final study score. The weighting for this task is a mark out of 20.

The Teaching and learning page for Music Repertoire Performance of the VCAA website gives a useful description of the sorts of classroom activities that could support learning for this outcome.

Asking students to reflect on and evaluate their skills after their Unit 3 assessment is an important part of the preparation for this SAC. Many schools run this SAC in about week 6 of term 3, in order to not crowd the end of term with too many assessments. This timing means that students need to start work on this SAC early. Many schools give Unit 4 materials out well before the start of this unit of study, as noted in the provided assessment calendars.

The task for Outcome 3, Responding, is an S/N task for Unit 4, and requires students to discuss interpretation of expressive elements in pre-recorded works, and identify, recreate, and notate.

Common practice is to run the written task as a practice examination in order to give students a good understanding of how their end-of-year exam will run. The practical part of the outcome (singing intervals, etc.) is generally run in class.

Teachers are recommended to review the sample aural and written examination paper, or the past paper from 2023, when they are planning their Outcome 3 task. Giving students the same structure on their practice exam as the end-of-year paper enables them to prepare more thoroughly.

Assessment

Although Outcome 1 and 3 are S/N tasks, providing a structured assessment task gives students valuable feedback.

For Outcome 1, many schools used the 7 criteria that students are assessed on at their end-of-year recital. This helps focus students’ attention on their areas of strength and identifies areas for improvement. Some schools used these 7 criteria each time students perform in class as a constant reminder of what the students will be assessed on. These criteria can be found in the Music Repertoire Performance examination specifications.

The Outcome 2 SAC is now marked out of 20. Many schools used the descriptors in the support material provided to teachers. It is important to make sure the correct number of marks are included in the information provided to the students.

Although Outcome 3 is an S/N task, following the structure of the sample aural and written examination paper enables a marking structure for teachers to provide students with feedback about how they are progressing in each area. The practical task is marked as an S/N in Unit 4.

Procedures

Teachers should be aware that procedures for the VCE are the same for all VCE subjects. Teachers should download a copy of Procedures for assessment in VCE Studies 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 a very good understanding of the 2023–2027 study design, as well as methodical planning of the teaching and learning program. Schools that provided limited information were asked to provide more detail. Some of the issues noted, specifically regarding the assessment of Outcome 2, were:

* not specifying that students need exercises that address their general challenges as well as repertoire-specific challenges.
* not specifically giving students the opportunity to demonstrate a personal approach to interpreting a work or demonstrating expressive intentions.
* incorrect weightings or markings
* some teachers used old marking schedules that specified different skills to the ones required for the current study design.

Specific information

Unit 4: School-assessed Coursework

Outcome 1: Performing

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to perform a final recital of up to 20 minutes’ duration, demonstrating a diverse range of techniques and expressive qualities reflecting an understanding of a range of music styles and performance conventions.

Task type options

Performing

Outcome 1 is an S/N task that involves students presenting part of their end-of-year recital program.

The Unit 4 school-based performance program presented for assessment in Outcome 1 should be about 10 minutes in duration for soloists, and ensembles of one to three assessed performers. For ensembles of 4 or more assessed performers, the program should be about 10–15 minutes in duration.

Most schools choose to have their students present their entire program with the with S/N based on ‘performances of the pieces they did not perform for their Unit 3 recital’. This task is usually conducted in a formal recital setting, which offers students the opportunity to practise their presentation techniques as well as demonstrating the musicianship skills required.

It is important to understand that, in order to complete this task, students must perform in both solo **and** ensemble contexts. This is because different skills are learnt and demonstrated in these different settings.

Students performing as a soloist at the end of the year must include an ensemble work. This may be a duet with another student or teacher, or an assessed student accompanying another student. The ensemble component may also be completed by the student being accompanied by another instrument/s.

Some schools did not complete both contexts or were not specific about their approach to this outcome in their audit responses. Rehearsing and performing in these different settings enables students to develop more rounded musicianship skills and thoroughly understand all the elements used in the analysis section of Outcome 3.

The Music Repertoire Performance course is designed for all skills to relate back to performance. The more links are highlighted and continually referred to, the more the students will gain from the course.

Assessment

Although this is an S/N task, many schools mark this recital using the same 7 criteria that students will be marked on at the end of the year to assist students to identify each criterion and work towards fulfilling it to the best of their ability. These criteria can be found in the Music Repertoire Performance examination specifications.

Outcome 2: Analysing for performance

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to demonstrate and discuss techniques (technical and expressive) relevant to the performance and development of a personal interpretation of works selected for performance.

This outcome contributes 20 marks (10 per cent) allocated to School-assessed Coursework for Unit 4.

Task type options

Demonstration and discussion

Many schools asked students to prepare 10–12 minutes addressing both technical and expressive work. In order to keep the length of the individual tasks manageable, teachers can then choose 6–8 minutes’ worth of the prepared exercises to hear on the day. Common practice is to have the discussion during or immediately following the demonstration.

This task needs to be started early in the semester to be fully effective. Students can conceivably add an extra exercise each week, therefore building up a comprehensive program of techniques that will help them progress towards a better recital outcome. They should be able to explain and demonstrate a personal approach to expressive intention across their recital program.

Where instrumental music teachers are involved in preparation for this task, communication strategies need to be in place to ensure a common approach. For example, teachers might work together to frame the task instructions and develop a workbook of learning activities. Instrumental teachers can then work with students to identify challenges, discuss aspects of the technique that students need to work on and provide feedback about the work-in-progress.

Assessment

The marking guide for Outcome 2 needs to be based on the key skills outlined in the study design. This outcome is marked out of 20. Not only are students being assessed on their technical prowess, but they need to clearly demonstrate that they have a deep understanding of their own technical limitations and how to best go about addressing these challenges. This outcome is not just about performing scales and exercises at a high level of technical proficiency; it is about students understanding how to identify their own technical and expressive challenges and then to create a program of work that has the potential to demonstrate a personal interpretation.

Outcome 3: Responding

On completion of this unit, the student should be able to identify and discuss the interpretation of expressive elements of music in pre-recorded works and develop their auditory discrimination and memory skills through identifying, re-creating, and notating short examples.

Task type options

Written test and practical test

For Outcome 3, most schools developed a task similar to the end-of-year written and aural paper.