



2013 Music Investigation Performance GA 2: Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Music Investigation remains a relatively new study in comparison to Music Performance. Therefore, this report focuses on the most common errors, or misunderstandings, identified throughout the 2013 examination period, particularly regarding the relationship between the Focus Area studied throughout the year and the performance examination program.

Teachers are strongly advised to carefully review and keep a readily available copy of all Music Investigation advice provided to schools through VCAA bulletins and other VASS-generated documents. Please contact your VCE/VASS coordinator to request a copy of all relevant bulletins and advice provided within the 2013 calendar period.

A number of students presented for the examination without the required VCAA paperwork. Students should have an Advice Slip that details the student's VCAA number, enrolled instrument, time/date and location of examination, and Music Investigation Program Sheet & Focus Statement documents (which must be typed). Two copies of the Music Investigation Program Sheet & Focus Statement are to be provided to the venue coordinator on the day of assessment. These document templates are available through the school's VASS coordinator.

Teachers are advised to carefully read the conditions of the examination as outlined in the *VCE Music Investigation Study Design* (page 94) and the examination specifications available on the VCAA website. Those students who select to present within a group setting are directed to carefully note the 'composition of a group' rules as published by VCAA.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Forming and presenting a Focus Statement

The Focus Statement is an opportunity for students to advise assessors that they have noticed something in an era, genre or performance style that is very important, or interesting, to them as a musician. This aspect of performance is deemed so important that the student studies it in-depth for an entire year. Then, when the student has studied the essential performance techniques and stylistic nuances to a sophisticated level of depth, they demonstrate it in a performance that conveys to the assessors what has been discovered and hopefully mastered.

The key difference between the Focus Area and the Focus Statement should be well known. Crucially, the Focus Area relates to all work undertaken throughout the year's study, the composition/arrangement/improvisation explored in Outcome 2, the research assignment in Outcome 1 and the technical work incorporated in Outcome 3. Much of this work, completed within the broader Music Investigation study, is not directly relevant to the Focus Statement that will be provided to the assessors on the day of the performance examination. The Focus Statement provided to assessors (on the day of the performance examination) should refer to the performance work/research undertaken by the student during the year.

It is recommended that students work to refine (and regularly document) their performance focus throughout the year, rather than attempt to retrospectively articulate a Focus Statement immediately prior to the performance examination. Refinement of the Focus Statement should occur alongside the developing practical work undertaken in the practice room (with input from the instrumental and classroom teachers). It was evident that some students had attempted to write the year's focus retrospectively.

The primary role of the Focus Statement should be to articulate the focus of performance program, emphasising technical and stylistic performance techniques that have been developed throughout the year together with an explanation of the chosen musical context (style, period, performer, etc.).

Teachers and students should ensure that the approved Focus Area is a determining element for all repertoire selection and performance development throughout the study. Often the presented program, sometimes to a very high standard, appeared to have had a Focus Statement imposed on a preset or existing program of music (perhaps from an AMEB exam or equivalent). In these instances, the examination criteria prevented students from accessing scores that might have been considered in keeping with the performance ability displayed.



Focus statements and the performance examination

While the Focus Statement is not formally assessed, it plays a key role in providing information to assessors about the technical and stylistic work undertaken throughout the year. Similarly, it guides assessors to what the performer is seeking to demonstrate in the performance.

Teachers and students should carefully consider any core performance obligations that are fundamental, or essential, to the Focus Statement/Area. Were performance opportunities taken or were they overlooked (both technical and stylistic)? Also, did the selected program support fulfilling the identified core performance obligations?

Several students chose to present very generic Focus Statements such as: The evolution of electric guitar techniques from 1960 to the present day. While Focus Statements such as this are considered legitimate, a great deal of responsibility, in terms of delivering all of the significant guitar techniques from 1960 to the present day, is required to realise such inclusive broad statements in a single, 25-minute performance. Where the performance recital is limited in terms of realising/fulfilling the Focus Statement, students' access to higher scores will be limited.

Some students referred excessively to the **analysis** of works in their Focus Statement and/or presentation of the recital performance. In particular, students should avoid referring to compositional devices as being central to a performance focus.

Students who performed works that were irrelevant to the Focus Statement were restricted in their access to higher scores. Where students present only a tenuous connection between the recital performance and the provided Focus Statement, marking within Criteria 10 (Skill in demonstrating how the musical works in the program are representative of the Focus Area) was reduced. Similarly, students who performed a series of works that were very similar in style or technical content were also restricted in their access to higher marks.

Several Focus Statements were lacking in terms of an identifiable performance focus. These statements commonly suggested that the influence of X on Y was going to be demonstrated in the recital performance. For example, The influence of Jimi Hendrix on post-2000 contemporary guitar soloists. Statements such as this are more suited to an essay style task/project. A more appropriate Focus Statement would have been: Performance techniques central to the style of Jimi Hendrix that are present in post-2000 contemporary guitar repertoire.

Program and Program Selection

The selection of an appropriate recital program is vital to students reaching their potential in terms of accessing higher marks within the examination structure. While it is generally accepted that every style, genre or period may have the potential to provide access to the highest marks, not every selected program within those styles, genres or periods will be awarded high marks.

Students who achieved the highest marks selected a program that clearly demonstrated a range of advanced performance techniques to a very high level of control and fluency. These performance techniques were used to display a highly sophisticated understanding of musical style. Focus Statements provided by these students accurately identified the scope of the study undertaken throughout the year and successfully predicted the program content presented in the recital performance.

Several students presented very short programs in relation to the maximum time available. For all performance examinations it is expected that a comprehensive program which includes an extended range of performance techniques, tones, articulations and structures relevant to the Focus Statement be appropriately demonstrated (to depth) within the time available to the student. Programs of less than 15 minutes were typically unable to demonstrate substantial depth of understanding in terms of style and technical facility.

Considering the examination criteria

Students and teachers are advised to carefully read and consider the entire assessment criteria when selecting repertoire for presentation. For example, several students presented outstanding performances that failed to include a range of expressive tonal qualities. This resulted in a reduction of scoring within Criterion 4.

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The technical difficulty and stylistic depth presented within a recital program can be a contributing factor to accessing higher scores across several of the examination criteria.

Students are advised that additional marks are not awarded for the performance of original compositions. As with any work performed, students are awarded marks for the demonstration of relevant performance techniques demonstrated within the nominated stylistic framework.

Some students, who presented as solo performers, failed to appropriately set the volume (balance) of their backing tracks in relation to their own performance volume. Backing tracks were typically far too soft to function as stylistically appropriate accompaniment. Students are advised to ensure a sufficient volume level is sound-checked before the examination takes place.

Students are reminded that the examination should be treated as a formal recital or similar concert experience. As such, an appropriate demeanor, poise, engagement with the performance and dress code should be considered in relation to the program presented. Where students were limited in their presentation, higher scores within Criterion 11 of the examination criteria were limited.

Students who achieved a low or medium result across several of the examination criteria typically displayed a limited level of technical proficiency, a shallow understanding of stylistic control and made only an adequate performance link to the provided Focus Statement. In some instances more careful refinement of the Focus Area coupled with a more considered selection of program would have yielded a stronger result.