

2017 VCE Music Investigation performance examination report

General comments

In 2017 a revised study design was introduced for Music Investigation.

Most students provided a Performer's Statement that introduced the performance program effectively. Students should take care to use terminology relevant to the current study in this statement; for example, it is not appropriate to refer to a Focus Area. Performer's Statements that succinctly introduced the scope of the performance program gave insight into how findings from the wider investigation would be articulated through the performance program. These statements generally referred to:

- the stylistic context(s) of the selected program
- performance techniques central to the selected repertoire
- how the selected program tied together within a nominated investigation topic
- a timeline or boundary that framed the selected program
- other information relevant to the performance (such as where key sophistication existed within the style/repertoire/performance techniques being presented).

Some students provided information that was not relevant to matters of performance. In some instances, this made it difficult to determine how the selected program reflected the students' overall understanding of their Investigation Topic.

Conditions and guidelines for the assessment of Music Investigation are clearly articulated in the *VCE Music Study Design* and on the Music Investigation study page of the VCAA website.

Conditions for the performance assessment component of Music Investigation are not identical to those of the Music Performance study. When planning/designing an Investigation Topic and subsequent performance program, teachers and students are advised to carefully read and consider the following sections within the available documentation:

- selection of instrument or voice (study design, page 15)
- composition of a group (Music Investigation examination specifications)
- conditions of assessment (Music Investigation examination specifications)
- selection of repertoire (Prescribed List of Group Works and Prescribed List of Solo Works).

Specific information

Teachers are advised to refer to current documentation, including:

- Performer's Statement
- information in the examination specifications regarding participation of non-student performers in a group setting
- length of set-up time available for assessments
- information specific and/or unique to instruments or voice within solo settings, set out in the Music Investigation section at the beginning of each instrument's Prescribed List

- group students participating in assessments (of their peers) before completing their own scheduled examination.

Where a special provision, consideration or request for changed examination conditions beyond those listed in the examination specifications is sought, VCAA approval is required prior to the day of the assessment. Assessors do not have the authority to modify examination conditions on the day of an assessment.

Comments relevant to the assessment criteria

Each student who presented for the performance assessment was graded on the extent to which their live performance demonstrated accomplishment across 11 criteria. These criteria and accompanying descriptions are available on the Music Investigation study page of the VCAA website. A 10-point marking scale was used to grade each criterion. The criteria are equally weighted.

The highest-scoring students evidenced, throughout the entire performance examination, a high level of control and technical skill in relation to the provided Performer's Statement. Students with high scores had clearly selected and prepared performance programs designed to demonstrate skills and understanding relevant to the examination criteria.

In terms of program selection, it is important to acknowledge that while every performance style, genre or period may have the potential to provide access to the highest possible scores, not every program selected within those styles, genres or period will give this access.

Students are advised to ensure that assessors are able to clearly hear and see their performance at all times. For example, the hands of keyboard players need to be visible throughout the examination, even in a group setting. Similarly, where an assessed performer is a saxophonist within a saxophone quintet it is essential that assessors are able to clearly discern and attribute the performance of the assessed student.

Criterion 1 – Compliance with the requirements of the task

Students are required to perform a minimum of four works, of which at least one work must be selected from either the Prescribed List of Group Works or the Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works as published by the VCAA. Where an appropriate or suitable work cannot be chosen from either prescribed list, an application for approval of an alternative work can be submitted to the VCAA. Conditions for approval of alternative works can be located on the study page of the VCAA website.

Students who select their prescribed work from the Voice – Classical list are advised that a microphone cannot be used at any time during the examination. Students who select their prescribed work from the Voice – Contemporary Popular list may, but are not required to, use a microphone.

Criterion 2 – Skill in performing accurately and with clarity

Many students presented repertoire that contained a high level of technical complexity, which was masterfully performed. Other students performed less demanding material that was also performed extremely well. Students are advised to carefully consider the technical merit of repertoire selected for assessment within this study and to select works appropriate to their technical capability.

Criterion 3 – Skill in performing a range of techniques with control and fluency within the context of the Investigation Topic

Careful planning appeared fundamental to achieving higher scores within this criterion. Excessive repetition in a work and/or across the broader program restricted access to higher scores. Students

who scored highly evidenced a wide range of identifiable performance techniques, which were performed to a high standard of control and fluency.

Criterion 4 – Skill in producing a range of expressive tonal qualities relevant to the Investigation Topic

This criterion requires students to demonstrate a variety of expressive tonal qualities within works and across the program as a whole. Many students did not demonstrate 'a range of expressive tonal qualities'. One expressive, or well-developed, tone cannot warrant the awarding of high marks within this criterion.

Criterion 5 – Skill in the interpretive control of articulation and phrasing within the context of the Investigation Topic

Students who scored highly in this criterion were able to highlight stylistic nuances contained in the selected repertoire by way of their subtle and considered manipulation of articulation and phrasing. Typically, these students were able to mask technical difficulties that were inherent to the selected performance program. A high level of preparation and diligent rehearsal was clearly evident for those who excelled in this criterion.

Criterion 6 – Skill in differentiating the musical lines in the selected works as appropriate to the Investigation Topic and as appropriate to the instrument and/or instrumental context (i.e. solo or multi-instrumental contexts)

Central to achieving a high score in this criterion was the ability to identify and appropriately interpret the role, importance and function of musical lines contained in the selected repertoire. This extended to the most significant climatic phrases and accompanying or secondary figures. Where a student simply 'played the notes' scores were limited.

Criterion 7 – Skill in differentiating the structures and textures within each work as appropriate to the Investigation Topic

For most performance programs this criterion relates to the interpretive scope and delivery of repeated sections within repertoire. Students with high scores were able to demonstrate a sophisticated perspective in regard to the interpretative demands contained within the compositional elements of the repertoire presented for assessment. Those who achieved lower scores in this criterion appeared to simply repeat sections of a work's form/structure without discernable variation.

Criterion 8 – Skill in presenting an interpretation of the works that is informed by historical and/or contemporary practices and conventions relevant to the Investigation Topic

Students who were able to achieve high scores in this criterion evidenced a high level of attention to detail in terms of their practical understanding of performance conventions used by elite performers. On some occasions students were able to bring a new perspective to the interpretation of existing repertoire. New perspectives, or interpretations, of repertoire should be based on research into the existing significant recordings available for repertoire or styles being presented for assessment.

Criterion 9 – Skill in performing with musicality through creativity and individuality

Students who were able to transcend the technical demands of the repertoire being presented for assessment often exhibited a high level of musicality. Students who could not demonstrate adequate control, or appeared underprepared for the examination, invariably struggled to create or maintain a sense of artistic and/or creative purpose. Importantly, students are advised that in the context of a performance examination, incorporating individuality into performance must not be viewed as a substitute or replacement for demonstrating core conventions that are fundamental to the authenticity of repertoire.

Criterion 10 – Skill in demonstrating how the works in the program are representative of the Investigation Topic

Students must be mindful of delivering an identifiable performance intention in their examination. Some students presented programs that did not reflect the stated Investigation Topic. Students must avoid presenting programs that are solely framed on the demonstration of generic performance techniques. A number of technically proficient students appeared not to have considered the examination criteria, or the broad intention of the study, but chose to present a concert performance rather than an examination performance.

Criterion 11 – Skill in the presentation of a cohesive program relevant to the Investigation Topic

Some students introduced items throughout the examination. This was rarely of benefit in terms of awarding marks in relation to this criterion. Those who spoke were typically unable to convey a sophisticated understanding for the repertoire to be performed, others appeared unclear, underprepared or were factually incorrect in their statements regarding repertoire.

There are many approaches to presenting a program in a cohesive manner. Some students presented carefully ordered programs to illustrate characteristics of the style or genre that was central to their Investigation Topic. Other students chose to link repertoire within the selected examination program by speaking to the assessors about the works or introducing each work. Students who take the latter approach are advised to ensure that their comments are accurate and designed to illustrate a sophisticated understanding of the Investigation Topic.