2024 VCE Music Composition externally assessed task report

General comments

In 2024, the Externally Assessed Task (EAT) was exclusively evaluated in Unit 4. The unit comprised three compulsory components, and students were expected to adhere to the guidelines set by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). Students who scored in the upper band demonstrated a high level of creative skill and understanding of the criteria. These students demonstrated the functions of repetition, variation, contrast and transition though their music works fluently and with great refinement, engaging with a wide variety of musical elements and concepts. Students who scored in the upper band demonstrated and created a cohesive, expressive work that was both unified and diverse. While many submissions were of a high standard, only a few works attained the highest marks. There were only minimal submissions that did not explore the range of compositional devices and music elements. These submissions did not fully address the criteria and advice set out in the specifications, expected qualities document and in the [study design](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/music/Pages/Index.aspx).

There was a wide range of marks across the cohort. Students who researched and utilised the performance descriptors, marking guides, Study Design and VCAA supporting materials exhibited a deeper understanding of the task. This knowledge was evident when students provided a clear, explicit account of the creative process and a connection to the creative work through analysis, outlining the decision-making and creative process through a detailed response accompanied by an appropriate representation of notation. Notably, the smooth transition and cohesion of sections and structure, attention to musical nuances and appropriate language, coupled by live recordings, demonstrated playability, instrument idiosyncrasies and practicality. Although live recordings were not a requirement, where appropriate they assisted in the demonstration of the overall success of the work.

A large number of the genres represented in 2024 were ambience and dance music, exploring technology and synthetic sounds through music. The compositions that scored higher marks in these genres created a memorable melodic motif in the opening section that developed and varied through the smooth transitions and subtle variations of the musical sections and ideas. Repeated sections that included variations in rhythm, harmony, and/or orchestration each time the motif reappeared added contrast and diversity to the creative work. These variations and transitions allow the main motif to evolve through unity and diversity while maintaining musical integrity and engaging the listener.

Overall, the VCE Music Composition EAT in 2024 reflected a wide variety of genres through student compositions. The upper marking band was awarded to clear, concise documentation outlining the creative process, relevance to stimulus material and creative choices. Outcome 1 may be improved by revising the VCAA published criteria and resources, ensuring that the creative work addresses all areas of the criteria and complies with the requirements of assessment. Careful consideration of word limits and clear, explicit documentation outlining the creative process and relevance to stimulus material with attention to detail in notation, as published by the VCAA, will also assist in the overall success of the study.

Specific information

Note: The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total of more or less than 100 per cent.

Creative Work

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Mark** | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** | **13** | **14** | **15** | **16** | **17** | **18** | **19** | **20** |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.6 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0.6 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** | **31** | **32** | **33** | **34** | **35** | **36** | **37** | **38** | **39** | **40** | **41** |
| 0.6 | 0.6 | 0 | 0.6 | 1 | 2 | 0.6 | 0.6 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0.6 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 3 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **42** | **43** | **44** | **45** | **46** | **47** | **48** | **49** | **50** | **51** | **52** | **53** | **54** | **55** | **56** | **57** | **58** | **59** | **60** | **Average** |
| 4 | 0.6 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 0.6 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 43.9 |

The creative work submissions demonstrated a vast degree of exploration, understanding and execution of the expected qualities for the task. The music elements, compositional devices and concepts to achieve creative intentions were explored on a variety of levels, resulting in a wide variety of marks based on the success of the submission. The higher-scoring submissions addressed all areas of the criteria, with harmonic language explored in depth, in addition to the composer employing both diatonic chord progressions and more adventurous chromatic or modal harmonies. These submissions evidenced colour and complexity, supporting the emotional undercurrent of the composition, creating tension and release through unity and diversity to convey the musical ideas. Some of these examples utilised flowing rhythms, while others used more complex, syncopated patterns, adding both variety and contrast, further enhancing the work. The use of texture varied from sparse, solo lines to dense, layered full orchestrations, demonstrating a firm understanding of the creative task requirements. Some of the submissions in the upper band utilised dynamic shift in texture that supported the music’s narrative, adding to the cohesion and success of the piece. Submissions in the upper band demonstrated an understanding of thematic material through the different instruments, creating a rich palette of sounds, including modulation, dissonance, non-diatonic chords and musical form to seamlessly shift from one harmonic area to another, creating a sense of unity and diversity.

Documentation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 10 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | Average |
| 3 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 21.8 |

Documentation in 2024 varied considerably. Documentation that was clear, concise and utilised music language, as well as explaining the creative process, the connection to the work stimulus material and included music analysis scored in the higher band. These submissions linked explicitly to the creative work and demonstrated a clear walk through the creative process, legitimising the work. Submissions that provided analysis of the works through visual representations, without providing clarity around the importance or relevance of the images, did not receive the highest marks. These visuals and chord representations often led to lack of clarity and to the examiner needing to analyse what the visuals represented. Often these submissions had an over-representation of colour, adding to lack of clarity or a detailed explanation of the creative process, comparisons, musical intent or connection to the stimulus material. Some of the electronic genre submissions provided a video walk-through of the score, outlining the creative process. It is advised that students who choose to provide this form of documentation in addition to the written document adhere to the word count and requirements of the task outlined in the specifications.

Notation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 13 | 25 | 25 | 15 | 7.6 |

Notation quality ranged from limited responses to exceptional, fully performance-ready scores. Full marks were achieved through intricate, refined well-marked scores and/or electronic representations on how to successfully reproduce the work or understand the visual relevance. Some notated scores lacked essential elements or included many unreadable ledger lines or non-conventional writing across beat. Some of the scores did not align with the musical work or add relevance of the genre. Students providing electronic representation are reminded to also submit a succinct guide in the notation for relevant representation and demonstration of the notation function. A screenshot does not provide adequate representation, and voice-over submissions should align with the Study Design, specifications and published expected qualities. The overall standard of notation across all genres was commendable.