2024 VCE Music Inquiry externally assessed task report

General comments

The 2024 externally assessed task (EAT) for [VCE Music Inquiry](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/music/Pages/Index.aspx) required students to choose a musical Area of Investigation and submit a folio consisting of three practical music items along with accompanying documentation related to the student’s music focus.

The practical music items included both performance and the creation of original work. Students could submit either two performances and one original work, or one performance and two original works.

Performances needed to be videoed in one take with a supervisor present. The original work could simply be an audio file that had been created over time, including live audio and/or digital resources. Multi-tracking was allowed.

Documentation needed to include:

* a description of the Area of Investigation
* an analysis of two representative works
* a description of the connections between the works, and a discussion of their influence on the student’s own music making
* an explanation of how the student’s own performance(s) and original work(s) were linked to the Area of Investigation
* appropriate documentation of the original work(s)
* a cover sheet.

The published performance descriptors, marking guide, study design and VCAA supporting materials assist students to make informed decisions when choosing their Area of Investigation focus, and indicate how practical items will be assessed.

Everything within the submitted folio needed to relate directly to the stated Area of Investigation. Assessors first consider the documentation component. This effectively sets up the stylistic aspects by which performance(s) (Criterion 1) and original work(s) (Criterion 2) are assessed. The documentation component is also critically important for Criterion 3, which is related to how clearly an understandingof the Area of Investigation is evident in the performance(s) and original work(s). This is directly linked to what has been articulated within the documentation.

The range of music areas investigated was vast. This included Japanese pop, Chopin preludes, Nu metal, female power ballads and Late Romantic violin concerti.

All are legitimate musical genres to investigate. Some genres selected became limiting if the focus was primarily on performance techniques. It is important to ensure that the chosen Area of Investigation allows scope for both performance(s) and the creation of original work(s).

This also applies to the analysis aspect of the documentation. Students were asked to analyse two pieces from within their Area of Investigation and describe the connection between them (there is no requirement to include the influence of one on the other). While some submissions provided informative, relevant and detailed analysis, others did not demonstrate sufficient depth of analysis based on the elements of music and compositional devices. As this is also the basis of Outcome 3 (Responding) in this study, students should have a clear understanding of music terminology and strategies for detailed music analysis.

In general, items within folios were presented in formats that were outlined in the published [Specifications and guidelines](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/music/2024music-inquiryEATspecs.docx) document.

Videoed performances were required to be announced by a supervisor (off-camera), who identifed the student only by their student number using the script provided. All school identifiers needed to be removed as well. In some cases this was not done. Students must not identify themselves by name and introduce the piece that they will be performing because they must remain anonymous at the assessment stage.

Overall, the quality of recorded live performances was satisfactory. Time should be spent experimenting with the audio component of the video recording. While some very professional recordings were presented, in some cases the student could not be heard clearly, especially if backing tracks were used, making assessment difficult.

Original works produced for Criterion 2 were mostly presented as audio files. Some students also videoed a live performance of the original work. The vast majority of the works here were original compositions rather than re-arrangements of existing pieces.

It is important that original works have direct links to the Area of Investigation. In most cases, this was apparent.

There was evidence of students spending time creating the best possible works, often involving live and multi-tracked productions. Some also relied on audio exported from notation-based software. All formats were acceptable.

Most performances and original works were within the specified time limits (no more than 12 minutes for the three items).

It is worth restating that Criterion 3 is based on how well both the performance(s) and original work(s) provide evidence of an understanding of the Area of Investigation. If direct links are established and articulated in the documentation, these will provide clear pathways to assessment. If the Area of Investigation is not clearly described and analysed, and if links to performance(s) and original work(s) are not articulated, then high marks were not awarded.

In a number of cases, the high standard exhibited in performance(s) and original works(s) was not matched by clearly articulated documentation. This meant that high marks could not be awarded for Criterion 3.

The introduction of a dedicated cover sheet helped assessors to quickly ascertain what was being presented.

In 2024, the word count for the documentation component was raised to 1200 words. While this was generally adhered to, a small number of submissions far exceeded this number. In these cases, higher marks were not awarded.

The vast majority of submissions were text-based, often with tables and charts incorporated. This can be a clear and effective way to present information about the Area of Investigation and its links to performance(s) and original work(s).

Some students used PowerPoint as a format for their documentation. They were also asked to produce a PDF of the presentation. A number of problems were encountered when audio and/or video was included as part of the documentation.

Note that:

* Audio/video that requires any external links (e.g. YouTube) will not be considered for assessment.
* Audio/video must be embedded seamlessly into any multimedia presentation rather than linked to another submitted resource.
* PowerPoint or other presentation software should comply with maximum file size limits and be of equivalent word count (up to 1200 words).
* Multimedia presentations should not be longer than 6 minutes.

Specific information

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

The criteria were equally weighted, with a maximum mark of 25 for each.

Criterion 1: Performing

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| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| % | 0.4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 8 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Average |
| 8 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 12 | 5 | 8 | 18.7 |

Some outstanding performances were produced for this criterion. Highest marks were given to performers who clearly exhibited appropriate technical skills and performed with accuracy and control. Often these students had clearly worked on interpretation and intention in performance within their selected Area of Investigation.

Assessment of the Performing component depended on the selected Area of Investigation. Interpretation of a range of elements and concepts differed, depending on the music being performed. For example, while a funk guitarist may focus on clear scratch-strumming, single note back-beat lines and overall locked-in groove, a music theatre singer might focus on diction, changes in register and vocal technique while maintaining clear intention related to the lyrics.

Documentation that clearly defines the performer's focus within the Area of Investigation can help assessors evaluate how the performance conforms to the guidelines.

Some performances were underprepared and in some cases inappropriate (e.g. performing a piece that was not related to the Area of Investigation).

The following points might be considered by a student when preparing performance(s):

* If performing one part of an arrangement (e.g. a bass line in a song), ‘it is recommended not to perform solo – use a backing track.
* Choose a piece that will allow a range of techniques – for instance, one that involves more than strumming a short repeated chord pattern.’
* Choose a piece that suits a known level of performance and also has some variation that allows demonstration of some flair.
* If performing with other musicians, it is important to ensure that there is an opportunity to be featured at some point.

Performance(s) needed to relate directly to the Area of Investigation. Some exceptional performances clearly aligned with the focused music area, demonstrating technique, accuracy and control relevant to the investigated area. Other performances were limited or did not link directly to the main focus.

In selecting performance pieces, a student might ask:

* Is my performance instrument an important part of my selected music area?
* In performance, can I exhibit a range of techniques and interpretive aspects?
* Is my focus in performance an essential aspect of the selected music area?
* Can I articulate all of the above in my documentation?

While the majority of performances submitted were satisfactory, there is an expectation in this study that performances will be developed over a number of months leading up to a final recording. Teachers can check on progress and assist with this process. In some cases, the recorded performance seemed like a one-off performance of a song with very little preparation or thoughtful intention.

Criterion 2: Original work

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| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| % | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Average |
| 2 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 7 | 13 | 19.0 |

Some outstanding original works were produced, and this criterion achieved the highest mean score across the cohort. This is consistent with the nature of the task, which allows time to be spent refining ideas before the final submission.

By analysing the make-up of two musical works, there is an expectation that students will use a range of similar approaches in their own creative endeavours.

In most cases, overall sounds, textural arrangements and structures were appropriate to the music area under investigation.

Highest marks were awarded to works that covered appropriate treatment of a wide range of elements and concepts, and were effective music pieces in their own right.

Criterion 3: Music making

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| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| % | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 8 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Average |
| 5 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 18.1 |

This criterion is based on how the student’s music making (both Performing and Creating) demonstrates an understanding of the chosen Area of Investigation.

For the most part, clear links could be observed between the selected music area and the practical items presented. It is worth pointing out that the published Performance descriptors for this criterion include the following for marks in the highest range:

Demonstrates a range of clear and appropriate observable links in both performing and creating/ arranging that clearly illustrate direct influence of the investigated works as articulated in the documentation.

There is a clear requirement outlined here that links should be observable, as well as specifically articulated in the documentation.

To achieve high marks, students needed to document exactly how their performance approach as well as their original work(s) were linked to their selected Area of Investigation. If these were not articulated, high marks were not awarded.

Criterion 4: Documentation

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| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| % | 0.8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.8 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 2 | 1 | 0.8 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 7 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | Average |
| 7 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 17.6 |

The highest marks were awarded to students who submitted information clearly. This was often set into discrete sections based on the published requirements for this criterion.

The mean score for this criterion was the lowest of the four criteria. This indicates that students may not adequately understand what is expected for this criterion.

Documentation is of vital importance within the overall submission as it allows students to frame what they are presenting. Students should aim to inform assessors rather than simply present facts. They are being assessed on how well they:

* describe their chosen music Area of Investigation
* explain the key features of the music area by analysing two representative works
* describe the connections between the works
* explain how their performance(s) can be linked to the selected music area
* explain how their original work(s) can be linked to the selected music area.

The last two points are essential for creating links between the selected music area and the practical items being presented.

Both the performance(s) and the original works(s) need to be linked to the selected music area. Some students only described links to their original work. Links to both should be articulated in the documentation. This allows for high scores to be awarded for Criterion 3.

The following points should be noted for submitting documentation:

* The analysis of works should point out relevant features that help define the Area of Investigation.

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| **Example** | **Chief Assessor’s Comment** |
| Harmony:  Chords used are: Ab, Bbm, Eb7, C, Fm | Only lists a series of chords (which could be in a variety of pieces/styles). |
| Harmony:  Relies on simple diatonic triads in expected progressions, e.g. ii-V-I and III–vi to change to the bridge | Shows understanding of the make-up of chords and their progressions within the piece and how chord changes are part of the structure. |

* Charts and/or tables can be an efficient analysis tool, but they must also be relevant and meaningful.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Example** | **Chief Assessor’s Comment** |
| Harmony:  The song's harmonic techniques play a crucial role in creating the overall sound. | Does not define the techniques used or how the overall sound is affected. |
| Texture:  The use of patterns in the music helps contribute to the song's overall feel and texture. | Does not explain what patterns are used or how they contribute to feel or texture. The actual textual arrangement is not described. |

* While score extracts may provide evidence of understanding in analysis, there is no specific requirement for these to be used.
* There is no need in the analysis to describe an effect (e.g. ‘the beautiful melody creates a feeling of nostalgia and makes you think about your own past’).
* Connections between works should be described rather than implied.
* When completing analysis charts, make connections between the two analyses. Connections between the musical approaches should help to define the overall music style being investigated. This needs to be stated.
* Connections between works should not focus on lyrics (e.g. ‘Both were written about break-ups’).
* There is no need to include sheet music of performed pieces.
* Terminology as listed in the study design should be used and understood.

Documentation of original work(s)

The documentation of original work(s) was varied. While some traditional stave-based notation could be awarded very high marks, there were also some innovative ways of documenting works using screenshots with clear, well-articulated annotations.

This part of the documentation should be seen as a visual representation of the original work(s).

Simply producing lyrics with chord changes attached was not awarded high marks.