

# 2016 VCE VET Music performance examination report

In the 2016 VCE VET Music performance examination, students were assessed in relation to the following units of competency:

- CUSMPF301A Develop technical skills in performance
- CUSMPF402A Develop and maintain stagecraft skills

Students were also assessed in relation to either of the following units of competency, depending on the elective they undertook:

- CUSMPF404A Perform music as part of a group
- CUSMPF406A Perform music as a soloist

Each student/group was required to perform an artistic and cohesive program consisting of at least three works.

## General comments

### Group performance

Students performed at their best when the program allowed all assessed students to address the criteria and where all parts were discernible. For example, in groups with more than one vocalist, where the work of each vocalist was clearly discernible by the assessors, roles were clearly defined; for example, lead and backing vocals, and each vocalist was given the opportunity during the program to demonstrate their skills.

### Areas of concern

- Music stands obscured the assessors' view of the students.
- Poorly set up sound/amplification: the balance of instruments, tone and volume should be carefully adjusted prior to the examination. A useful strategy would be for students to perform regularly throughout the year with the sound reinforcement/stage setup they will be using in the examination and mixing from the stage.
- Some programs did not fit into the allowed time frame: anything performed after the time limit was reached was not assessed. Some students were not permitted to perform the last song in their program as the maximum time had been reached.
- Short programs: programs that were well short of the time allowance limited students' opportunities to address the criteria, especially where there was a lack of variety in the program.
- Use of non-assessed performers: non-assessed performers should not direct, count in, prompt, advise students to tune, make adjustments to equipment other than their own, encourage and congratulate students, or do anything to detract from the student performers, such as playing extended solos. Apart from breaching the examination conditions, non-assessed performers who act in more than a supporting role may potentially disadvantage assessed performers (see criterion 7).
- Many Industry Statements lacked detail, particularly in the 'area of specialisation'.

- A number of students wrote the incorrect student number on their Industry Statement and Performance Program Sheet.
- Students may disadvantage themselves if they perform on more than one instrument, where their skill level is discernably lower on their second and subsequent instruments.

## Specific information

### Criterion 1 – Compliance with the requirements of the task

- i. OHS principles applied appropriately in the performance
- ii. Minimum of three works performed
- iii. At least one work performed from memory
- iv. Requirements for group and solo configuration and use of non-assessed performers (when needed) are met
- v. Performance Program Sheet completed and submitted prior to commencement of examination
- vi. Industry Statement Form completed and submitted at commencement of performance
- vii. Program performed in accordance with Industry Statement Form and the Performance Program Sheet

Most students complied in all areas and received full marks for this criterion.

### Criterion 2 – Skill in performing with accuracy and control

- Accuracy and control of the rhythm, pitch, articulation, timing and phrasing, tuning as appropriate to the instrument or voice and area of specialisation

For this criterion marks are awarded for accuracy and control, and degree of difficulty is taken into consideration. In order to maximise their marks students are advised to select programs that are appropriate to the level of their ability. High marks cannot be awarded to students who perform a program with a low degree of difficulty; equally, students who perform challenging material with poor accuracy and control will not be awarded high marks.

### Criterion 3 – Skill in realising the expressiveness and versatility of instrument(s) (or voice(s)) or technology throughout the program

- This includes performance techniques such as maintaining a strict tempo, and artistic use of accent, crescendo, diminuendo, staccato, silence, legato, tenuto, rubato, ritardando, accelerando, pitch bending and other techniques as appropriate to the area of specialisation

Students who performed several pieces that demonstrated the same approaches and/or pieces that demonstrated a few approaches that were repeated throughout the piece did not score highly for this criterion.

The descriptor above is not to be thought of as a checklist but rather as an indication of what techniques could be used to demonstrate expressiveness and versatility.

Students who skilfully used an extensive range of performance techniques with a high degree of difficulty scored well for this criterion.

### Criterion 4 – Ability to use a variety of rhythms, time signatures, beat patterns, rhythmic styles, scales, chord sequences and music systems relevant to the area of specialisation

- Skill in using variety of duration (rhythm, metre, pattern) and/or melody and harmony (scales, chords, chord progressions) and music systems relevant to the area of specialisation

Students who scored well for this criterion presented a program of music that demonstrated a wide range; for example, using different time signatures, including metre changes within pieces, presenting works in a variety of tempos and using different scales and/or modes.

Care should be taken when selecting a program to ensure that students have opportunities to meet this criterion.

Students whose program consisted of pieces in a similar tempo, using the same metre and similar approaches to rhythm did not score well for this criterion.

Students who presented everything in the same one or two keys with the same chord voicings also did not score well for this criterion.

### **Criterion 5 – Ability to phrase and shape music appropriately**

- Skill in phrasing and shaping music in a manner appropriate to the area of specialisation

Students who were awarded high marks for this criterion demonstrated a variety of different approaches to phrasing and showed sophistication and depth of stylistic understanding.

Students who demonstrated a limited range of approaches to phrasing, especially where the degree of difficulty was low – for example, using the same simple strumming pattern in every piece – met this criterion at a low level.

### **Criterion 6 – Ability to demonstrate originality and innovative approaches in interpretation within the requirements of the group or as a solo performer**

- Skill in interpretation and expression, and the ability to demonstrate appropriate musical nuance, an individual style of musical expression, and original and innovative approaches to stage performances relevant to the area of specialisation

Students who scored well for this criterion demonstrated creative interpretive decisions and presented works where their own 'voice' was evident.

Students who played simple parts for the duration of their program with little or no variation of expression did not score well for this criterion.

It should be noted that students are not awarded marks for performing original material; however, original material may provide an effective vehicle for students to demonstrate originality in their approach to performance. Playing original material with a lack of skill will not result in extra marks for this criterion and may disadvantage students in other criteria.

### **Criterion 7**

#### **Group performance**

- Ability to listen critically to the performance of others and respond, interact and collaborate appropriately, adjusting the performance to achieve required outcomes relevant to the area of specialisation

or

#### **Solo performers**

- Ability to listen critically to one's own performance and continuously adjust own performance to produce the required outcomes relevant to the area of specialisation

High-scoring students demonstrated the ability to make appropriate, convincing and at times sophisticated adjustments during their program, including adjustments to the balancing of musical parts and lines.

In Group performance, students who actively and clearly demonstrated working with others to contribute to the success of the group scored well for this criterion.

Other examples of students who scored well were in groups where students performed arrangements that required high-level collaboration such as the use of *accelerando*/*rallentando*, metre changes, stops and starts, rhythmic unison and *rubato*.

### **Criterion 8 – Skill in presenting a cohesive program of music**

- Skill in presenting an authentic (in relation to the selected area of specialisation), dynamic and well-constructed program of music with appropriate sequencing of items and appropriate choice of repertoire

High-scoring students presented a convincing ‘set’ in their nominated industry context.

The use of the word ‘dynamic’ should be noted. Some industry contexts may make it more difficult for students to score highly for this criterion; for example, students whose context is playing background music in an environment such as a coffee shop.

Some low-scoring programs were monotonous, disjointed or did not flow well.

### **Criterion 9 – Ability to observe and maintain protocols appropriate to the area of specialisation**

- Skill in communicating effectively through original and innovative approaches to personal stagecraft, expressing appropriate dramatic nuance, while taking venue and style performance into account

Students who scored well for this criterion demonstrated a convincing approach to delivering an engaging performance through the use of the non-musical aspects/elements of their performance, for the duration of their program. The opportunity for students to perform as often as possible during the year, especially in an industry context, is recommended.

Thought should also be given to the examination space. Some students who presented their examination in a classroom, where little attempt had been made to simulate a typical industry performance space, appeared to be overly ‘casual’ in their approach to their performance and therefore did not score well for this criterion. While the use of elaborate staging, including the use of technology such as visual effects, may assist the student’s approach and delivery, this does not in itself result in extra marks.

### **Criterion 10 – Skill in presenting a confident performance through consistent focus and energy, and with pacing appropriate to the area of specialisation**

- Skill in applying a range of personal stage skills while performing a suitably paced and focused performance

Students who achieved high marks for this criterion appeared well prepared and organised, and were highly engaged in their performance.

Students who achieved lower marks typically appeared underprepared and disorganised; for example, being unsure of the order of the set list and/or not appearing engaged in their performance. Low-scoring students also typically appeared to be rehearsing instead of performing. Confidence in performance requires students to be well rehearsed in presenting their set. Students who were not well prepared and appeared to be rehearsing rather than performing for an audience received low scores for this criterion. Regular performance opportunities throughout the year may assist students to develop confidence.