



## 2008 VCE VET Music Industry GA 2: Performance examination

### GENERAL COMMENTS

This year saw many outstanding performances by groups and soloists in a wide range of industry contexts. However, it was concerning that there was still some misunderstanding in relation to the construction of a group. In some cases, there was more than one group for the duration of a performance; there were many changes to the line up of the group over the period of assessment. There were also instances of several smaller groups and programs being combined to create one longer one, yet the students only performed for **part** of the total performance.

Some changes in group members/instrumentation during a performance is reasonable, but wholesale change several times during a performance is quite disruptive and not in the spirit of a 'real performance' within an industry context. Some groups might have been better off to have split into two (or more) separate performances for the different combinations of players and styles being presented.

Often **non-assessed** performers run mixing desks through which backing tracks are routed. It is an examination condition that all adjustment of sound and mixing must be done by **assessed** performers.

### SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Students generally scored very well on criterion 1. However, there were some instances of students sharing statements of intent. Although it is important that students develop their statements together throughout the year, it is vital that each student presents their own specific version of the statement with their program sheet.

Although no minimum time is stated in the conditions for this examination, only that a minimum of three works is required, the maximum times given should be read as an indication of the approximate length of performance required.

Students should note that the examination will last between 25 and 45 minutes. Students should always refer to the VASS booklet that specifies the length of tasks.

#### **Criterion 2 – Skill in using performance techniques relevant to the area of specialisation with accuracy and control**

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

Criteria 2 and 3 assess mechanical technique and accuracy, and expressiveness and fluency in performance, respectively. Within this program, these are the only two criteria that directly focus on specific technical 'playing' issues. When preparing for this area of assessment, students need to focus on:

- accuracy and articulation of the rhythm, pitch, timing, phrasing, texture and structure
- fluency and control in the execution of expressive techniques, such as variations of tempo and groove, accent and other dynamics, tone and texture relationships and interplay, variations in mix and tone colour and manipulation of electronic production devices, etc.

These criteria, and the musical skills they assess, are interrelated and fundamental technical aspects of training that tend to differentiate and reward skilled players.

#### **Criterion 4 – Skill in performing with musicality through creativity, individuality and originality**

Criterion 4 focuses on **performing** with creativity, individuality and originality. It is not enough to simply present original work, as this is not the focus of the criterion. All musical works must expressively communicate music ideas beyond simple rote learning or score reading. In order to achieve new interpretations of specific works, or reinventions of particular genres, students require strong technical skills. Technical facility as a basis for individual improvisation within the music form is the bedrock upon which all else is created.

Students generally scored lower in this criterion than in Criteria 2 and 3. This is perhaps an indication that more work on developing an individual voice and creative approach to performance is still required, rather than simply copying performances of professional acts or recreating songs from recordings.



**Criterion 5 – Ability to place the sound of the instrument or voice within the performance environment and/or interact with other performers when appropriate**

Criterion 5 assesses skill in performing as a member of a group. This includes interaction with other group members, and/or skill in performing as a solo performer, with a particular focus on placement of sound in the performance environment or context.

There were several instances where an instrument or instruments were not loud enough in performance, creating difficulty for assessors who were not always able to hear what was being played. Many groups seemed anxious to not play too loudly, obviously considering OHS issues, but ended up playing too softly for their chosen industry context. Students are given time to set up and sound check and should make the most of this opportunity. They should take into consideration the location of assessors in the room and set appropriate levels. A good balance of instruments is achieved through clever arrangement of music as well as good sound production.

In a group context, students who scored well in this criterion demonstrated engaging and intuitive interactions with other group members. Solo performers who presented with an accompanist were assessed similarly. Solo performers without an accompanist achieved high scores by demonstrating consistent interpretations of each work, the ability to project well in the performance space, and maintain full control over the delivery of musical ideas in the performance environment.

Some singers used sequenced backing tracks with very stilted melodies in the sound sources. Often these melodies featured poor quality pulse code modulation samples and were significantly louder than all other sounds in the sequence. This is clearly detrimental to performance. Accompaniments should be of a high sound quality and should not double the melody in an unbalanced way.

**Criterion 6 – Skill in presenting a cohesive program of music**

Students generally scored well in this area. Many presented a program of music that had been carefully selected and programmed and that related well to their industry statement. Those who scored lower on this criterion often presented a selection of unrelated works from a wide range of styles and even with very different groupings of performers. The program should reflect the industry statement; there is no requirement to present a variety of styles. A well planned performance within a well defined industry context will usually concentrate on one style, incorporating the notion of a 'journey' throughout the program with highs and lows in energy and intensity.

**Criterion 7 – Ability to communicate through the use of non-musical elements of the performance, such as stage management, visual appearance, performance etiquette, manner and/or movement, as appropriate to the performance**

This criterion assesses the ability of performers to communicate through the use of non-musical elements, but is not simply a measure of the amount of staging, lighting, costuming or technology used in the performance. Performers who scored well in this area demonstrated that consideration and planning of the visual appearance of the performance had occurred, but were also **engaging** performers to an audience. This must be appropriate to the industry context and also the instrument being used. Although some instruments, for example the drum kit, limit how much the performer can be seen and also limits their movement. These performers can still be fascinating and engaging through their movements, energy, interaction with others, even their facial expressions.

**Criterion 8 – Skill in OHS principles appropriate to the performance program**

Almost all students performed well in this area. This criterion assesses the application of general workplace safety. There were some excellent examples of stage areas that were well set up, with all cables laid safely and taped down. There were virtually no volume concerns this year, and most students performed at an appropriate, yet safe, volume (although sometimes not loud enough – see Criterion 5). This criterion also covers specific health issues directly related to singing and/or playing technique and posture, etc.