



2010 VCE VET Music Industry GA 2: Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The general standard of playing/singing this year was perhaps lower than in previous years, but there were still some outstanding performances. The range of Industry Contexts was consistent with previous years, and some well-structured, interesting and unique performances were presented. In particular, there were a number of very successful original, alternative-style groups. It is clear that personal ownership of the music provides opportunity for considerable flexibility and finesse in delivery.

It was noted that many singers were left waiting with nothing to contribute while other students and/or teachers played long solos that were meaningless in the context of the assessment. If a solo by a supporting artist is absolutely necessary, the assessed student should use the time to actively contribute to the performance; for example, by playing tambourine, shakers or other percussion, or performing actions, dancing or other staging elements.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Criterion 1 – Compliance with the requirements of the task

Most students scored well on this criterion, demonstrating an awareness of the requirements for the examination. However, there were still several instances where compliance issues were not addressed. For example, several acts failed to perform one work from memory. Some students were under the impression that only one Statement of Intention was required for an entire band; however, this is not the case and a separate statement for each assessed performer is required. Several students needed to rush on the day of the exam to have the Performance Program Sheet authenticated, as this validation had been neglected prior to the examination day. Students and teachers are advised to check all the requirements of the performance exam on the VCAA website on the VCE VET Music Industry study page.

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 deal with 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.

Of concern this year were a number of song performances where the chosen key was too low for the singer. This was often the case when a female singer was performing a song originally performed by a male singer. Even if backing bands prefer to play with original key shapes, capos or electronic keyboards, transposition could be used to support the singer in an appropriate key.

Intonation for singers was also an issue. In high-scoring VCE VET Music Industry performances, intonation tends to be very good, but the low-scoring performances can verge on atonal.

Sufficient interval training for singers is essential and therefore this area needs to be addressed for students who are intending to present for the assessment as singers. Regardless of the widespread use of Autotune in the recording studio, this does not represent the industry reality, which for the vast majority of singers is to 'be in tune or be out of a job'.

There were several performances where it was evident that students had not prepared well or had left repertoire choice to the very last minute. Some performances contained little more than insubstantial percussion parts played out of time over existing class or school band repertoire. It is essential that adequate preparation begins early in the year and that when planning their program students consider their capabilities and choose material they can perform competently.



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 or compositions, as this is not the focus of the criterion. Many performances contained interesting, well-conceived interpretations of songs presented with creative arrangements, as well as original works demonstrating a sound knowledge of song structure, harmony and lyric writing in a wide range of styles.

Performing in an individual and creative manner is underpinned by technical facility and students generally require strong technical skills to enable them to score well for this criterion.

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 students' skill in performing as a member of a group, including 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.

Students who scored well for this criterion were able to place their instrument or voice in the group and the performance space in a way that was balanced and appropriate to the style and context, and adjusted this balance throughout the performance. There were several cases of individual instruments in a group not being loud enough to be heard clearly. It should be noted that the balance, tone, intonation, arrangement and voicing also affect the sense of loudness.

Of concern was the number of groups with two guitars playing the same parts for much of the performance – the same chords and voicings, and similar tone settings. The exam description clearly states 'There should only be one performer per musical part to ensure that the work of each assessed student can be clearly identified.'

Interaction between performers in groups can take many forms. This could include obvious stage actions or more subtle musical interactions in which the group members are so familiar with each other (in a musical context) that there is almost a sense of them being parts of a whole – they can move, and make changes and entries without having to give obvious cues.

Criterion 6 – Skill in presenting a cohesive program of music

This criterion assesses the selection and programming of material and is linked to the performer's Industry Statement. Students seemed to have a good grasp of this concept and chose material appropriate to their context. To score well for this criterion, the material must also be structured or programmed in a way that is suitable to the context. In most cases, this requires some sense of narrative in the performance, with obvious highs and lows and, usually, a peak at a suitable point in the program.

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

Although elaborate staging, lighting, audio/visual displays and props can assist students to score well for this criterion, they are in no way a requirement. Essentially, this criterion assesses the way in which performers engage the audience. Some groups did this with well-planned lighting, effects or costumes, but a solo performer with none of this can still be engaging for an audience in their stance, confidence, dialogue, expressions and their own interest and passion for their performance. Students who scored well had made appropriate decisions about their presentation with respect to their Industry Statement and implemented these with confidence and creativity.

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

Students scored highly on criterion. Performance areas are generally well set up with OH&S principles in mind – leads taped down, no drinks on stage, tripping hazards removed, the use of guitar stands, etc. However, the extreme loudness of some bands is an OH&S concern. If a group is playing in a style that demands high volume levels for tonal and/or stylistic reasons performers should use some form of ear protection. This needs continual attention and reinforcement from trainers throughout the year.