Music - Music Technology

2012 Chief Assessor's Report

Government of South Australia

SACE Board of SA

MUSIC - MUSIC TECHNOLOGY

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Eighty-nine students from twenty-three schools completed Stage 2 Music Technology in 2012.

Students submitted recordings in a wide range of musical styles, including: rock band, electronic, dance, hip hop, soundscapes, and vocal recordings. There was a balanced emphasis between recording original songs or compositions and creating arrangements of covers.

Commentaries were mostly in written essay form, although several filmed presentations and multimedia formats were submitted.

Students who were most successful in this subject demonstrated a higher degree of creativity and musical effectiveness, and approached their recordings from the perspective of a music producer and audio engineer rather than only as an audio engineer.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio of Minor Projects

Approximately half of the students chose to record their five minor projects in the combination option. The remaining students chose the single recording option, divided approximately evenly between digital recording, MIDI sequencing, and loops and waves.

Students who were most successful demonstrated creative development, textural contrast, and appropriate and varied use of the nominated recording process. Task designs that created an authentic purpose for these five minor projects assisted many students to construct more complex music and address the A and B grade bands of the performance standards. Successful examples of minor projects included advertising jingles, movie soundtracks, and song excerpts featuring drum, guitar, and vocal solos that emphasised the nominated production techniques within the required 30-second duration.

Teachers should carefully check the nominated processes for assessment of students' minor projects and their marking should reflect the student understanding and knowledge of these processes. Teachers should encourage students to correctly combine projects into a single 30-second project. The diversity of software tools now available to students will continue to cloud the distinction between MIDI and software/hardware synthesis.

Teachers should guide students in their minor projects to focus on developing technical process skills for a specific recording option.

It is advised that the five minor projects for each student be submitted on a single audio CD for moderation.

Assessment Type 2: Commentary

Commentaries were mostly submitted in written essay form. Commentaries that were successful clearly stated the nominated recording process, explained the function of the process, used annotated diagrams or screen shots, explained the recording process, and described the changes made to the final sound. Students were also selective with their discussions, focusing upon their nominated processes and keeping within the limit of a maximum of 1200 words.

It is important for teachers to dissuade students from creating work with audio tracks and screen shots that contain clipped recording signals, or inappropriate use of devices and terminologies, such as ‘distortion to clean up the track’, or using a ‘compressor to sweeten the sound’, and choosing to ‘auto-tune the drum tracks’.

Teachers are encouraged to include annotated performance standards rubrics or other assessment notes with moderation materials.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Major Project

The major project gives students the opportunity to explore musical styles that they may find motivating and engaging. It was pleasing that many students demonstrated an understanding of appropriate production and engineering techniques for the musical style of their recording. There was an even distribution of the three recording options; however, no analogue recordings were submitted this year.

Students who were successful followed a task design that demonstrated the technical skills to accurately record a performance and then continue to improve the recording through music production and processing. These improvements include:

- overdubbing instruments
- rearranging and editing the recording
- a discerning and appropriate use of EQ and FX processing
- consideration of textural and musical variety and development, as well as post-production mastering.

Students who were most successful also closely matched the recording options and processes of their minor projects to the skills and techniques required to successfully complete their major project.

Commentaries that were successful:

- discussed aspects of pre-production and trial recordings
- provided track sheets with explanations of production decisions and processing
- demonstrated appropriate application and understanding of relevant core and option topics
- discussed recording influences and focused upon an effective and appropriate musical outcome.

Teachers are encouraged to discuss the performance standards when students are formulating their major project task design so that students can maximise their opportunity to address the specific features at the highest level.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Teachers are advised to download the subject outline and the subject operational information from the SACE website.

Chief Assessor
Music Technology