



2008 Music Group Performance GA 2: Group performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students who presented for the 2008 Music Group performance examination presented a diverse range of instruments, including voice, in the context of many different types of groups and ensembles. Students' ability to address the criteria varied and was influenced by their performance skills, understanding of the music styles being performed and experience in performing in a group context (perhaps as a member of a school ensemble).

Students who attained high marks confidently communicated a high level of musical, technical and interpretative skills and displayed excellent interaction with the other members of the group.

Some students could have increased their marks in some of the criteria relating to group interaction and presentation. It appeared that these students were not aware of all of the criteria when rehearsing and practising during the year. In many cases students seemed to have focused solely on instrumental skills and neglected to develop their skill at performing as a member of a group. Many students would benefit from consciously listening to and acknowledging the other group members and adjusting their musical contribution to enhance the overall group sound.

In some cases one student introduced all the songs when this could have been shared among the group. Students should spend a moment or two between items to check their tuning. Also, students' ability to adapt to unforeseen situations (for example, where another band member forgets their part or breaks a string) can enhance their result if they demonstrate an ability to adapt positively to the changed musical situation.

On a few occasions teachers performed inappropriately as a member of the group, for example, by counting in the song, talking to or joking with the students during the performance, improvising for extended periods (thus taking away valuable time from the assessed performers) or otherwise playing a dominant role in the group. Such behaviour is distracting and does not ultimately assist the assessed students. The conditions for the performance examination specifically preclude this sort of behaviour. Non-assessed performers must read and follow the conditions listed in the study design.

Students consistently met the requirement to perform two musical items from the Prescribed List. A number of students also performed additional works from the Prescribed List, which is permissible. It can be difficult for groups with two or more assessed performers to perform substantially on only two prescribed works. In this case students should consider performing more than two prescribed works to allow all of the assessed performers to meet the criteria.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Study Design

'Unit 3: Music Group Performance' and 'Unit 4: Music Group Performance' in the current *VCE Music Performance Study Design* contain the relevant key knowledge and skills and a description of the examination. This document is available on the VCAA website, <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au>. Teachers and students should also refer to the examination section of the *VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*, which is published annually.

Prescribed List

Students must include two works from the 'Prescribed list of arrangements for Music: Group Performance' in their end-of-year performance examination program. This is available on the VCAA website, <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au>.

Assessment criteria

The criteria for the award of grades are applied to the whole program and not to works individually. There are 11 criteria which cover all instruments and the performance of all approved works in the program. The document which lists the criteria also includes annotations which provide commentary about each criterion to help unpack the general criteria into components more relevant to particular instruments. For 2009, the criteria can be found on the VCAA website, <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au> or in the *VCE Assessment Handbook (Music 2006–2009)*. This document is published annually and only the current version should be used.



Selection of instrument

The term 'instrument' as used in the study design includes voice. Students may choose to perform on more than one instrument in their performance examination; however, this decision should be made with the student's likelihood of scoring well on the assessment criteria in mind. For example:

- where the group wants an assessed performer to assist the balance of the group by playing an instrument that they are not particularly competent with. This may result in the student losing opportunities to maximise their marks if they perform on this instrument for a considerable part of the program. The student should be careful not to compromise the amount of time spent performing to their strength
- where the student is a strong performer on more than one instrument (or voice). In this situation, there are certain criteria (such as 'skill in performing a range of techniques' and 'skill in performing as a member of a group') in which the student would benefit from performing on more than one instrument.

The examination

Assessed students perform as members of a group or ensemble, and are assessed in this context. The level of ability of other members of the group does not directly affect the assessed student's results. The assessors concentrate on the performance of the student being assessed and on how well they meet the criteria for assessment.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that the assessed performer's ability to maximise their results is contingent on the context within which each individual performs. For example, a drummer who keeps irregular time or rhythm will affect the ability of the assessed performer to demonstrate their ability to maintain an even tempo and accurately interpret rhythm patterns, and will therefore indirectly influence their ability to maximise their results.

Groups should also plan how they will sit/stand during the performance. Assessed performers must ensure that assessors can observe all performance techniques and technical skills. This may mean setting music stands so that finger movement and breathing techniques are visible. The seating plan or group organisation may be varied across the program to achieve the best performance environment for each work in the program.

Composition of the group

A group is defined as two or more students enrolled in a secondary school. Page 60 of the *VCE Music Study Design* states that 'Where a group comprises two performers only, that group may not have a non-student performer ... as a member. The musical parts should be arranged so that each performer is equally able to take a leading role during the performance.'

The assessed performer(s) can vary the composition of the group during their performance as they wish, which may enhance the assessed performer(s) ability to demonstrate a variety of styles and techniques. Students must decide how best to organise their group context(s) in a program that will facilitate their best performance according to the assessment criteria.

Although students can be assessed as individuals (that is, as the only assessed performer in a group), they should be aware that this does not guarantee better marks.

Students should also be aware that non-students may assist as part of the group within certain guidelines as outlined on page 60 of the study design. Teachers are advised that their role, if participating, should not distract from or limit the ability of the assessed performers to present a program that will maximise their marks.

Assessed student performers are expected to perform in a way that allows them to maximise their results in all criteria. Hence, non-assessed performers should not count in, conduct, tune, adjust instruments and equipment, lead, or otherwise play a dominant or distracting role during the performance examination. This will only lessen the opportunities for the assessed students to address all of the assessment criteria.

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Program selection

The program must contain at least four contrasting works, including two works from the *Prescribed List of Arrangements for Group Performance*.

The programs selected by the student(s) are the foundation that allows them the opportunity to achieve their best results against each criterion. It is strongly recommended that the students carefully consider the selection of works/songs for their program on the basis that each work contributes to a program that meets the assessment criteria.

It is important that all assessed performers ensure that they participate significantly in the presentation of the prescribed list of works. Assessed performers should present the selected works from the prescribed lists at a standard that is consistent with the rest of the program. This may involve arranging works to create appropriate parts and/or allowing opportunities for improvisation as appropriate to the style.

Students should not be distracted by their inclination to perform works only from styles with which they are most familiar, as this may limit their ability to perform in a variety of styles. The assessed performer's primary focus should be on performing a program that is diverse in style and mood.

It is acceptable to present a program that has a range of styles that relate to the type of group, as contrasting styles can exist within particular genres such as rock, classical or jazz. Therefore, groups can perform music that has contrasts in styles; for example, a jazz group could perform swing, bebop, west coast and/or fusion. Students should not necessarily perform styles that are not associated with the type of group that they represent. On the other hand, the criteria allow scope to acknowledge when students extend their variety of styles to successfully perform styles that are uncharacteristic of their group composition or instrumentation.

Assessed performers who present a program with a variety of styles enhance their ability to score marks in criteria other than that which specifically assesses students' ability to present a program that has a variety of styles. For example, by performing a diverse program stylistically, the assessed performer(s) could also score more highly in 'skill in using a range of performing techniques'.

Students should demonstrate their ability to use a range of performance techniques. Each instrument is capable of producing different timbres, dynamics and effects, and has an inherent potential to allow the performer to apply a range of performance techniques. The student should be able to demonstrate their awareness of this in their performance. A guitarist, for example, could use a plectrum, finger style, sliding, bends, double stopping, tapping and/or alternative tunings.

The assessed performer(s) should also be aware of the need to avoid performing material that is merely a repetition of material previously presented.

Time limits

Since 2007, the examination times include a minimum time as well the maximum time allowed.

The time allowed for the examination varies according to the number of assessed performers in a group.

- groups of one assessed performer 15–25 minutes
- groups of two or three assessed performers 20–30 minutes
- groups of four assessed performers 25–35 minutes
- groups of five or six assessed performers 30–40 minutes

Students are advised to make full use of the time available. Well-rehearsed changeovers between songs or pieces can maximise the use of time and make performers more comfortable with the constraints of the examination. Each song or item performed should demonstrate a further ability musically and not merely repeat skills that have been previously demonstrated.

It is recommended that the prescribed works are performed early in the program to ensure that criterion 1 is met within the time limit.

Performance program information form

Prior to the examination, students will receive their individual VCAA Examination Slip and a Performance Program Information Sheet. The Examination Slip states the student's name, the date, time and venue of the examination and the address of the venue. The Performance Program Information Sheet should be completed prior to the examination and

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presented at the examination. The works selected should be written in order of performance and the selections from the prescribed list identified. The VCAA Examination Slip is sent direct to schools through VASS, usually in August each year.

Arrival at the examination venue

Students are advised to arrive at the examination centre at least 30 minutes before their starting time as they will have access to the examination room during this time. They should use this time to set up and adjust equipment, tune their instruments and warm up. Students may need to restrict the volume level if another examination is proceeding in a nearby room.

During the year students should perform in a variety of rooms with different acoustics in order to become accustomed to adjusting to different performance spaces with varying acoustics qualities and volume requirements.

Equipment

Students are advised to carefully check their equipment before leaving home/school for the examination. They must remember to pack all the required gear, including replacement strings if appropriate. They should also bring extra power boards and extension leads so that the planned set-up is not compromised by the placement of electrical switches at the venue.

Students will have access to the examination room at least 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the examination. They are advised to arrive early and use this time to set up and adjust equipment, tune their instruments and warm up. Non-students, such as teachers, may assist in adjusting equipment; however, once the examination has commenced only the assessed performers may adjust their instruments and equipment. When setting up, students may need to restrict their volume level if another examination is being conducted in a nearby room.