



2011 Music Performance GA 3: Aural and written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the Music Performance examination was consistent with the guidelines in the sample examination material on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au> and comprised of a total of 100 marks across two sections. Students had to answer sixteen questions.

It was encouraging to note that most students attempted the entire paper, as in previous years time management was always a concern. However, some students did not attempt to answer some of the questions, especially in Section A. Students need to fully utilise their time, especially in Section B. The median mark was 60 per cent, which was higher than the Music Solo or Music Group papers in previous years. However, overall, the level of literacy and aural music perception is inconsistent throughout the cohort.

It is always advisable to use a sharp pencil for Section A, especially for transcription tasks such as the melodic and rhythmic questions.

Examination Technique

Students should read each question carefully and note the requirements. It would be a very useful strategy to underline any key words before attempting the question.

The most common areas of weakness included:

- a lack of basic theoretical knowledge, especially regarding the correct names and numbers for intervals and the correct terminology used for intervals and chords
- limited aural skills, including an inability to identify tonalities (scale forms) and intervals
- limited ability to use the other (not-to-be-transcribed) parts of the printed score in transcription questions in order to optimise the likelihood of responding correctly
- confusion about the notes in chords with 7ths and 4ths, and the notes in primary triads
- confusion about or misunderstanding of basic terminology used to describe music language.

Advice

- Students need to be aware of the requirements of various question types and should practise answering similar questions as part of their teaching and learning program.
- Students should use the 15 minutes of reading time productively and ensure that they have read each question carefully.
- Students should write as clearly as possible, especially when notating on a staff. Notation conventions should be learnt and applied accurately. When notating music, students should use a pencil and an eraser rather than a pen.
- When undertaking transcription questions, students are advised to do their rough work on the blank manuscript paper provided and then transfer a neat, legible copy of their final response on the space provided for the answer.
- If students do their rough rhythmic transcription work using 'stick' notation (stems and flags without note heads) or slashes across lines representing rhythmic subdivisions/segments of each beat, they need to be very careful when they transfer their work across from the 'rough work' page to the answer space. It is not advisable for students to write their final answer using 'stick' notation unless it is perfectly clear at all times. Dotted rhythms tend to become muddled with this style of notation.
- Where possible, students should have access to appropriate aural training software and a computer music 'sequencer', especially to program rhythms, chords and chord progressions for aural practise.
- Overall, more work is required in aural perception. This includes singing intervals, scales and chords, and listening to and aurally identifying intervals, chords, progressions and melodic and rhythmic transitions.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

For each question, an outline answer (or answers) is provided. For Section B the answers given are not the only answers that could have been awarded marks.



Section A – Theory and aural comprehension

Part 1: Intervals

Question 1 – Identify intervals presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	13	14	15	15	16	20	3.5

- 1. Perfect 4th (F to Bb ascending)
- 2. Minor 2nd (D to C# descending)
- 3. Minor 6th (E to C ascending)
- 4. Perfect 5th (G to D ascending)
- 5. Tritone/Augmented 4th/Diminished 4th (A to D# descending)
- 6. Major 7th (F to E ascending)

Students need to sing and play intervals in class and/or as a part of their instrumental/vocal learning. Students should be aware of the sounds of each interval and develop the ability to identify the sound by its correct name. The study design connects aural (listening) aspects of musicianship across all outcomes and the relationship should be acknowledged in learning programs.

Responses that were not accepted as interval names included:

- Major 4th
- Major 5th
- Minor 4th
- Minor 5th
- Dom7
- Sus4.

Question 2 – Identify written intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	9	11	20	53	3

- 1. Perfect 8ve
- 2. Minor 6th
- 3. Major 3rd
- 4. Major 7th

The question specifically asked for the quality and size of each interval, and both were required. Many students only stated 'octave' not 'Perfect octave' and so did not receive a mark for that interval. Some students were not able to count the correct distance from one note to another. Some students used chord type names instead of interval names.

Overall, students found identifying intervals in context easier than aurally recognising them, although many found the Grand Stave problematic. The intervals written wholly in the stave were generally better answered.

Question 3 – Write intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	4	14	22	55	3.2



Again, most students did well on this question. However, some students did not read the question carefully, especially in regards to above or below the given note. Some students misread the clef and therefore wrote the incorrect interval. Some students changed the given note to make it the stated interval, and others did not count the correct distance between the two notes accurately.



Enharmonic equivalents were not accepted; for example, Eb not D#. If accidentals were required, they needed to be written before the note and level with that note.

Writing on the staff was problematic for some. When asked to write a second, students should write the note beside the given note, not on top.

Part 2: Scales and modes

Question 4 – Identify scales/modes presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	9	14	23	51	3.1

- 1. Blues scale (A C D Eb E G A G E Eb D C A)
- 2. Mixolydian mode (G A B C D E F G F E D C B A G)
- 3. Major scale (D E F# G A B C# D C# B A G F# E D)
- 4. Harmonic minor scale (E F# G A B C D# E D# C B A G F# E)

Students did better at recognising scales and modes aurally rather than the written versions in Question 5. However, it was disappointing that students used scale and mode names not in the current study design. 'Minor' was not accepted for 'harmonic minor' as there are two types of minor scales that are examinable.

Some students incorrectly used chord type names as responses to this scale or mode question.

Question 5 – Identify written scales/modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	11	17	23	39	2.7

- 1. D melodic minor
- 2. A minor (la) pentatonic
- 3. Bb mixolydian mode
- 4. A major scale

Some students did not demonstrate awareness of the structure (formation) of scales or modes. They needed to state which type of minor scale and pentatonic scale they were referring to. 'Dim' and 'mixed melodic' are not scale or mode types.

Many students stated a tonic note and the direction the scale or mode was going. Neither of these pieces of information was required to gain full marks.

Question 6 – Write scales/modes

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	13	8	9	8	15	9	38	3.8



Again, many students did not read the question fully. Many students did not use the rhythmic value given, and stem directions were not always correct.

Students must learn the structure and formation of all scales in the study design. They should be singing and playing all scale and mode types so they understand the structure and formation of each.



Part 3: Chords and chord progressions

Question 7 – Identify written chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	4	11	12	16	56	3.1

- 1. Major 7th
- 2. Diminished
- 3. Minor 7th
- 4. Minor

The most common problem in this question was reading the clefs incorrectly, but it was very pleasing that the majority of students identified at least three chords correctly.

Question 8 – Write chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	9	7	12	22	51	3

Eb Major	D Suspended 4	C Minor	G Augmented
Eb – G – Bb	D – G – A	C – Eb – G	G – B – D#

Many students wrote the suspended 4 incorrectly. The G Augmented chord was correct more often than the others. Accidentals must be placed correctly on the proper line or space and on the left side of the note head. If the accidental was on both a line and space, the mark was not awarded.

Some students wrote the answer as a four-note chord. This answer was accepted if the fourth note was the upper tonic.

Question 9 – Identify chords presented aurally

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	7	15	24	51	3.2

- 1. Minor (A – C – E – A – E – C – A)
- 2. Diminished 7th (C – Eb – Gb – Bbb – Gb – Eb – C)
- 3. Suspended 4th (E – A – B – E – B – A – E)
- 4. Dominant 7th (B – D# – F# – A – F# – D# – B)

‘Dominishd’ is not a chord name. Students should be singing all set chords to aurally recognise them when played. They should also take opportunities to analyse chords used in repertoire they are learning and connecting notation to sound.

Question 10 – Harmonic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	6	16	17	16	10	8	7	6	5	8	4.7

- | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| 1. D minor | 2. A(dom)7 | 3. D minor | 4. Bb major 7 | 5. G minor | 6. A major |
|------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|

OR

- | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. i minor | 2. V(dom)7 | 3. I minor | 4. VI major 7 | 5. IV minor | 6. V major |
|------------|------------|------------|---------------|-------------|------------|

OR

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Harmonic grid	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Bass note	D	A	D	Bb	G	A
Quality	minor	(Dom) 7	minor	Major 7	minor	Major

Most students heard the return to the tonic at Chord 3 – d minor; however, even stronger students tended to miss the 7 in the Bb major7 chord. Many students seemed to assume that the progression would finish on the tonic.

Students must learn and be able to recognise all common cadences; however, many students did not know or understand the qualities of chords in a minor key. Some students could not hear the difference between major and minor chords. Students must know the available chords in both major and minor chord progressions.

Some students who used Roman numbers wrote them incorrectly. Some students who used the bass note gave 'B' rather than 'B flat' as the answer.

Part 4: Melody

Question 11 – Melodic recognition

Question 11a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	24	0	76	1.5

A

Question 11b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	20	0	80	1.6

C

Students should try to identify the differences between the options to make it easier to distinguish the correct response. Students can use reading time and the time given to read the question before the audio is played to identify key differences between the options.

Question 12 – Melodic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	12	14	14	14	13	9	7	5	5	4	4	3.7



Although the rhythm was given, some students still notated it incorrectly. Some students made up their own rhythms, and some students wrote chords and not a melody. Many students did not see the hints that the Pianoforte part was giving. In many high-scoring responses, the Eb and Bb were missing, indicating a lack of awareness of connections between intervals, scales and melodies.

Some students did not observe the conventional use of stem directions. Students must remember to place the tie under the note head and not over the tails.

Bar 1: Bb – A – Bb – A – G

- All step wise movement
- Many students did not hear Bb – A (a semitone or minor 2nd), instead hearing Bb – G (a minor 3rd).

Bar 2: F – Eb – D – Eb – F – G

- All stepwise movement
- Many students missed writing in the Eb.

Bar 3: A – G – A – G – D – F – Eb – D

- This was the most difficult bar, and tended to be the discriminator between strong and weaker students.

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- Many students wrote this as scale-like.

Bar 4: C – G – C – D – Bb

- Many students missed the perfect 4th interval from C to G and back to C.
- Many students placed a B as the final note, which was not accepted. It needed to be a Bb for it to be correct.
- Students must use the given accompaniment for reference of tonal centre.

Part 5: Rhythm

Question 13 – Rhythmic recognition

Question 13a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	32	0	68	1.4

B

Question 13b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	18	0	82	1.7

D

Students need to practise this type of question more. The better students circled the differences in the score, which is a good technique to adopt.

Teachers may wish to create their own examples using a music software program. Students can practise using notation conventions and build awareness of possible rhythmic subdivisions within each time signature set for study by writing examples of this question type.

Question 14 – Rhythmic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	6	7	8	9	7	7	6	5	6	7	6	10	16	6.5

Many students used notation for 3/4 and not 3/8, and many did not have the correct number of quaver beats in each bar. The higher end students often missed the two semiquavers in the second last bar of the clarinet (top) part.

It was disappointing that nearly six per cent of the cohort either received no marks or did not attempt this question. Reading a score of this type requires regular and systematic practise.

Section B – Analysis of pre-recorded works

In previous years, students appeared to run out of time to complete the prose questions. Students should use the time available at the end of the examination to complete Section B responses.

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Students must have a clear understanding of all key knowledge and skills for both Unit 3 and 4; this includes understanding what expressive elements are. Students also need to understand the difference between describe and discuss, and use the number of marks assigned to the questions as a guide to how much they should write.

Many students wrote a commentary or listening guide rather than answering the question. However, the higher level students identified the character of the work then supported this with specific information on rhythm, tone colour of the instruments, etc. as required by the question.

Students may use dot points to answer these questions.

Question 15

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	1	4	11	20	19	17	15	10	5	4.4

Answers included but were not limited to the following.

- Rhythm section – bass, ukulele (guitar-like or banjo-like sound were accepted) and non-pitched percussion
- Melodic instruments– voice, clarinet, trumpet and xylophone

Introduction

- The clarinet and trumpet play the first eight-bar phrase (motif/melodic theme) in unison. Then the clarinet, vibes and trumpet play the second phrases in a type of canon, ending on a sustained note and vibraphone trill.
- There are combinations of melodic phrases, staccato, riff-based phrases and sustained notes with swells on long notes at the end of phrases.
- The bass and ukulele combine to create the rhythm section.
- The bass provides a steady, repetitive driving pulse on every beat. This is a simple repetitive part.
- The ukulele also plays simple, repetitive chordal part on-off beats (syncopated) with rhythmic embellishments.
- There is a constant, subtle rhythmic presence in the non-pitched percussion played on the side or rim of the drum.
- The percussion section adds embellishments on the cymbal and bell of the cymbal (a variety of different parts of the cymbal are used to achieve a range of tone colours).

Verse (chord progression changes)

- The bass continues playing on the beat with quaver-note phrases, especially where the melodic motif enters (played by the trumpet and clarinet).
- The ukulele also continues repetitive rhythmic patterns; however, it creates space where the melodic theme enters by playing less attacks.
- Constant percussive parts change between various instruments and instrumental parts. This creates a variety of different tone colours while maintaining similar rhythmic phrasing.
- The percussion section also continues embellishments primarily on the various parts of the cymbal and occasional attacks on the low tom.

There were many varied responses to this question but, unfortunately, many students seemed to struggle to understand the question. The three dot points given were generally used, but students were not limited to these.

This was a ‘describe’ question, requiring students to identify and recount what they were hearing.

Question 16

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	1	2	6	8	11	14	13	12	11	9	7	4	3	6.3

Answers included but were not limited to the following.

- This work was written for an orchestra – woodwind, brass, percussion and strings.
- The opening clave sound //// //// followed by a low drum sound (membranophone) (in four sets) creates a rhythmic excitement through tone, duration and texture.
- The next section sounds like a bass clarinet and another woodwind instrument. It contains a layer of woodwind instruments, starting with lower to upper tessituras.
- The increasing instrumentation increases the intensity of the sound (dynamics).
- It sounds random.
- The last section has the addition of a theme on a low brass instrument.

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- This is extended with an increase of orchestral instruments (a string flourish).
- The basic theme is repeated in different instruments and varied to create excitement.
- The tutti theme in the new section is extremely rhythmic.
- A contrasting section contains a new theme in strings.
- The tutti section is played again.

The five points given were generally used, but again, students were not limited to these.

This was a 'discuss' question, thus more marks (12) were available than for Question 15. 'Discussion' requires commentary about what has been heard as well as a description of the music.