



2011 Music Performance (Solo/Group) GA 2: Performance Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

This year was the first year of the revised study, Music Performance (previously two subjects, Music Solo Performance and Music Group Performance). Many aspects of the course were similar for both subjects (pre-2011). The main differences were some revised criteria, and the common coursework for solo and group.

The main changes to the criteria in 2011 were:

- criteria were reduced from eleven to ten
- the maximum mark for each criterion went from seven to ten.

Each student (solo or group context) was assessed in relation to either identical criteria or criteria of equal importance. Performances were marked against each criterion and applied equally regardless of instrument or context (solo/group).

Advice to students

Students and teachers should check with the VASS coordinators in their schools that students are correctly enrolled. That is, students who wish to be assessed as members of a group use the GR code and students who wish to be assessed as soloists use the code for their instrument.

Students and accompanists are reminded that mobile phones are not permitted in the examination room. Students who choose to use MP3 backing tracks should use a dedicated MP3 player, not their mobile phone, even if it has the capability to play MP3s. Similarly, any third party allowed into the examination room may not bring in a mobile phone. Severe penalties may apply.

Group performance examinations

Students who presented for the Music Group Performance examination performed with 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.

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

Students should be conscious of maximising their marks in criteria that relate to group interaction and balance of the musical instruments. In many cases, students seemed to have focused 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, the role (where appropriate for the group style) of introducing each item could have been shared more equitably in relation to the criteria of presentation. Students should have allowed time between items to check their tuning. In fact, a student may have improved their results if they demonstrated their ability to adapt positively to unforeseen situations; for example, if another band member forgot their part or broke a string.

Students needed to choose a group composition and program that would be advantageous to the group as a whole. For example, it might have been preferable to have two vocalists perform in separate examinations even though the rest of the assessed band would play for both singers. In this case, the instrumentalists would be assessed in the first examination, leaving them free to accompany the second vocalist in the second examination. Some of the songs from the first program could be repeated, along with additional songs suited to the second singer. As a result, the two vocalists avoid direct comparison and allow for programs more suited to both of them.

It was important that groups chose keys for songs that were suited to the vocalists as well as the instrumentalists. The focus should be on selecting songs that support each student to maximise their possible score. At times, students should consider transposing the songs themselves to find more appropriate keys for all students. As well, students should be careful when using transcriptions from the Internet – it is worth checking the original recordings for accuracy.

Students consistently met the requirement to perform two musical items from the prescribed list of group works. A number of students performed additional works from the prescribed list, which was permissible. It can be difficult for



groups with two or more assessed performers to address criteria at the highest level if they only select two works from the list. In this case, students should consider performing more than two prescribed works to allow all of the assessed performers to meet the criteria.

Teachers and students should also be careful to ensure that they put together the strongest possible program for the assessed students when they were performing an entire program of items from the prescribed list. When determining the musical program for the examination, students needed to be careful about selecting a majority of original compositions; they needed to consider their selections in relation to the criteria, especially regarding a range of musical styles.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Prescribed list

Students needed to 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.

Assessment criteria

The criteria for awarding grades were applied to the whole program, not to individual works. There were 10 criteria covering all instruments and the performance of all works in the program. The document that listed the criteria also included annotations about each criterion to help unpack general criteria into components more relevant to particular instruments.

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, students should consider the likelihood of scoring well in the assessment criteria when making this decision. For example, students may not maximise their marks if they try to assist the balance of their group by playing an instrument that they are not particularly competent with for a considerable part of the program. Student should be careful not to compromise the amount of time spent performing to their strengths.

An opposite example might be where the student is a strong performer on more than one instrument. In this situation, there were criteria in which the student benefitted from performing on more than one instrument, such as 'skill in performing a range of techniques' and 'skill in performing as a member of a group'.

The examination

Assessed students performed as members of a group or ensemble, and were assessed in this context. The level of ability of other members of the group did not directly affect the assessed student's results. The assessors concentrated on the performance of the student being assessed and on how well they met 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 they perform. For example, a drummer who keeps irregular time or rhythm will affect the assessed performer's ability to maintain an even tempo and accurately interpret rhythm patterns, and will therefore indirectly influence the assessed student's ability to obtain their highest score.

Composition of the group

Students and teachers should carefully read the Music Performance 'Examination Specifications and Criteria' document, which can be downloaded from the VCAA website.

A group is defined as two or more students enrolled in a secondary school. 'Where a group comprises two performers only, that group may not have a non-student performer ... as a member' (page 3, Music Performance Examination Specifications and Criteria). The musical parts should be arranged so that each performer is equally able to take a leading role during the performance. However, the assessed performer(s) can vary the composition of the group during their performance as they wish, which may enhance the ability of the assessed performer(s) to demonstrate a variety of styles and techniques. Students must decide on how best to organise their group context(s) in a program to help them give their best performance.

Students should also have been aware that non-students could only assist as part of the group within certain guidelines, as outlined in the document, Music Performance 'Examination Specifications and Criteria'. Teachers are advised that their role, if participating, should not distract from, or limit the ability of, the assessed performer(s) to present a program that will maximise their marks.



Assessed student performers needed to perform in a way that allowed them to maximise their results in all criteria. Hence, non-assessed performers should not have counted in, conducted, tuned, adjusted instruments and equipment, led or otherwise played a dominant or distracting role during the performance examination. This only lessened the opportunities for the assessed students to address all of the assessment criteria.

Program selection

The program needed to contain at least four contrasting works, including two works from the prescribed list of group works. Students needed to ensure that they selected from the latest published list as it is revised annually. Students should ensure, if selecting Section B works, that they perform the actual section, movements, etc. listed.

The program that the students selected was the foundation for achieving their best results. It is strongly recommended that students carefully consider the selection of works or songs for their program on the basis that each work contributes to a program that meets the assessment criteria.

All assessed performers should have ensured that they participated significantly in presenting all of the works or songs in their program. Assessed performers should have presented the works selected from the prescribed list at a standard that was consistent with the rest of the program. This may have involved arranging works to create appropriate parts and/or allowing opportunities for improvisation, as appropriate to the style.

For works in Section A, or similar music styles, although performers did not necessarily need to present accurate note-for-note transcriptions, it was essential that the original integrity of the music be retained. Chord progressions and the main melody should have been faithful to the original. Variations from this requirement may have occurred for a number of reasons, including where students sourced transcriptions via the Internet. While the Internet can be a great resource, students must be aware that many transcriptions sourced from it are overly simplified or inaccurate.

Students should avoid only performing works from styles that they are most familiar with, 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.

However, it is acceptable to present a program that has a range of styles within a particular type of group, as contrasting styles can exist within particular genres, such as rock or jazz. 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.

As well as scoring highly in the criteria assessing their ability to perform a variety of styles, assessed performers who presented a diverse program could also score higher marks in other criteria. For example, by performing a diverse program stylistically, the assessed performer(s) could also score more highly in the 'skill in using a range of performing techniques' criterion.

Students should have demonstrated 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. Students should have been able to demonstrate their awareness of this in their performance. A guitarist, for example, could have used plectrum, finger style, sliding, bends, double-stopping, tapping and/or alternative tunings.

The assessed performer(s) should also have avoided performing material that merely repeated material previously presented.

Time limits

The time allowed for the examination varied according to the number of assessed performers in a group (page 46, *VCE Music Study Design*):

- groups of one assessed performer: 25 minutes maximum
- groups of two or three assessed performers: 30 minutes maximum
- groups of four assessed performers: 35 minutes maximum
- groups of five or six assessed performers: 40 minutes maximum.

Assessed students are advised to make full use of the time available. Specifically, students should make sure changeovers between performances are well rehearsed to ensure they make the most of their time. It is recommended that the prescribed works be performed early in the program to ensure that Criterion 1 is met within the time limit.



Setting up at the examination venue

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

Students are advised to arrive at the examination centre at least 30 minutes before their start time. Students will have access to the examination room at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the examination and should use this time to set up and adjust equipment, tune their instruments and warm up. Non-assessed students may assist in adjusting the equipment before the examination; however, once it has started, only the assessed performers may adjust their instruments and equipment. When setting up, students may need to restrict their volume if another examination is underway in a nearby room. All examination performances must be presented at safe volume levels.

During the year, students should practise in a variety of rooms in order to accustom themselves to different performance spaces with varying qualities of acoustics and volume requirements.

Groups should plan how they will sit or 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.

Solo performance examinations

The standard of performance continued to be very high in 2011. Statistics reflect the high level of dedication and passion of a large amount of students, and assessors were often inspired by the performances. Performances that gained the highest marks fully exploited the assessment criteria within the 25 minutes allowed. Many high-performing students selected programs that exploited the widest range of styles, genres, tonal effects, structures and techniques. They performed each work in a different manner demonstrating executive ability to actually play in different styles, with different techniques and tonal colours. They also demonstrated an understanding of different genres, and musical structures, through the use of a wide variety of articulation, phrasing, dynamic variation and appropriate tempo variation.

The highest-ranking students were also clear about the conditions of the task, and the specific requirements for each instrument. These students performed from the best editions of sheet music available, evident through accurate and authoritative performances.

Performance practice was also evident in these performances; that is, students were clearly well prepared to present their examination program as a recital-style performance. They were able to maintain the required level of stamina for the entire performance, and in many cases demonstrated careful selection of appropriate works for themselves; development of technique over a long period of time, which enabled them to last the distance in the performance; and careful consideration given to the order of works in the performance examination.

The role of the accompanist (where applicable) was of paramount importance. Much rehearsal was evident through highly synchronised performances, which were extremely well balanced and allowed the important parts of the music to remain prominent. They had chosen accompanists who had a clear understanding of the stylistic conventions of the works being performed, and who themselves were excellent musicians capable of supporting and inspiring the students being assessed.

Current students and teachers should ensure that they consult the most recent edition of the *Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works* for any changes from the previous list(s). Changes are highlighted in red text.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Criteria

Criteria 1 – Compliance with the requirement of the task

Most students were able to achieve full marks in this criterion. Some of the issues for students who failed to comply with the requirements of the task included:

- poorly timed programs where a required work was not performed or completed within the 25-minute time allocation



- performing an accompanied work without accompaniment (or omitting an unaccompanied work)
- selecting a piece not on the current list of works (for example, a different arrangement to the one specified or a different opus/catalogue number to the one specified)
- omitting a required movement or section (for example, where two movements were specified 'to be counted as one work')
- presenting less than the minimum number of required works.

Criteria 2 – Skill in performing accurately and with clarity

Students were expected to perform their works accurately and up to the required tempo range for each work chosen. Accuracy included pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation and phrasing. At the same time, the passagework, tone production, timing, phrasing and articulation should have been performed with clarity as appropriate to the instrument.

Accuracy often underpinned many of the other criteria, especially criterion 3. Often poor fluency was the major contributor to performing inaccurately. Students achieved a wide range of results in this criterion. Around 15 per cent of students managed to receive full marks for this criterion. The relationship of this criterion to the others was clear when looking at the statistics. Poor accuracy tended to go with a low result in the other criteria.

Criteria 3 – Skill in performing a range of techniques with control and fluency

First, to score well in this criterion, students needed to select programs containing a wide range of techniques that they could demonstrate. Second, they needed to have finely developed technical resources in order to perform these techniques with control and fluency. Fluent techniques were apparent when the work seemed to be performed effortlessly.

Fluency of performance was also expected. Control of passagework was demonstrated most highly in performances that remained even and disciplined at the required tempo. It was also demonstrated through the ability to alter tempo and/or dynamics, and through subtle pitch adjustments as appropriate to the instrument. This was all done within appropriate stylistic conventions, although style was not assessed in this criterion.

Criteria 4 – Skill in producing a range of expressive tonal qualities

This criterion assessed the quality of a students' tone, as well as the use of a range of expressive tonal qualities typical of the instrument and reflective of the range within the works in the prescribed list. The starting point for best practice in the use of a range of tonal devices, again, is the program itself. The program needed to allow the student to demonstrate this range. Sample programs published with the prescribed list provided a guide to choosing an appropriate range of works. Students who performed best in this criterion performed programs that allowed for a wide variety of expressive tonal qualities to be demonstrated. They were also able to perform these tonal qualities at a very high level.

Students who gained the highest marks in this criterion were able to control the tone of their instrument to create a diversity of expressive tonal effects. Best practice was evident through a disciplined and thoughtful use of tonal effects throughout the performance. This discipline was so integrated into these students' performances that, with a finely developed aural sensitivity, students were able to adjust to the performance conditions.

Criteria 5 – Skill in expressive communication through articulation and phrasing

The most captivating performances were the ones that seemed to say something to the audience. Students who managed to do this at the highest level expressively created shape in phrases in much the same way as a good orator tells a story. Tension and release were created through a variety of elements such as changes in dynamics, articulation and tempi, as well as the use of elements such as silence and surprise. These performances were dramatic, poignant, moving, disturbing, challenging and whimsical. Students were able to take the notated score and make it their own while still maintaining its integrity. In some cases, communication beyond the notation of the work included enhancing notated dynamics or tempo changes to build tension. In other cases, it involved particularly effective use of rubato or accent.

Criteria 6 – Skill in differentiating the musical lines

The highest-ranking students in this criterion recognised the importance of performing programs that had a variety of textures. The parts and textures were particularly well balanced, and an empathy and synchronisation between the solo and accompaniment was evident. This occurred in a variety of contexts. The most typical was between the soloist and accompanist. It was also demonstrated through soloists' internal synchronisation and balance of parts of a musical texture. Performers on solo instruments such as piano, harp and classical guitar demonstrated these elements internally by balancing the levels of the various textures. The best singers and instrumentalists demonstrated the various textures even in the unaccompanied work, as well as the accompanied works. These students were extremely well rehearsed



with their accompanist, had a high degree of technical mastery so as to be able to separate the different musical textures and were able to use tension and release to bring out the main musical elements.

Criteria 7 – Skill in differentiating the structures and characteristics of each work

Students' ability to perform a wide variety of structures, as well as their ability to differentiate these structures, was assessed in this criterion. The highest-scoring students were able to perform a variety of structures reflected in the prescribed list of works. The variety of structures included short and extended structures, polyphonic, homophonic and monophonic structures, programmatic and free form structures, contemporary and traditional structures and so on. They were able to create musical performances that had clear musical direction, maintaining a high level of interest and engagement for the listener. They effectively used a variety of performance elements to highlight musical structures, including the use of expressive elements, nuances in tempo variation, dynamics and articulation.

Criteria 8 – Skill in presenting an informed interpretation of a range of styles

The highest-scoring students selected programs that reflected the range of styles in the prescribed list. They performed programs that were extremely well thought-out. Each piece had a different style for the performer to explore (for example, polyphonic, lyrical, extended form such as a sonata movement, jazz or contemporary, or avant-garde). They approached each work in a unique manner, using a range of different performance techniques to demonstrate their ability to play in different styles. The highest-scoring students also were able to demonstrate an informed understanding of different styles. They didn't simply make the works sound different, but were able to perform each style idiomatically, referencing contemporary conventions of how each style is understood within a contemporary context.

Criteria 9 – Skill in performing with musicality through creativity and individuality

The highest-scoring students were successfully able to perform in a way that showed something of their own personality, in ways that moved the listener. These students gave something of themselves in their performances, presenting with absolute confidence and security while delivering their own interpretation of works presented. They successfully maintained the tension of performing within strict guidelines of accuracy and stylistic conventions, and performing as a means of personal expression.

Some students who performed with a very 'personal interpretation' were off task in many of the other criteria, where these interpretations made little reference to the original notation.

Criteria 10 – Skill in presenting a musical program within appropriate performance conventions

The best performances demonstrated great poise and focus. They flowed well from one work to the next, and were presented as recitals in which there was a sense of poise throughout the performance. The performers allowed just the right amount of time between works. This was equally true for classical as well as contemporary popular instruments. The best students not only faced their audience, but also, and more importantly, musically addressed their audience in performance. These students used appropriate and varied volume levels that remained within OH&S safety standards. They incorporated excellent performance techniques throughout their performance. This included a thoughtful programming order to create and maintain maximum variety and interest. Where much equipment was used (such as amplifiers, drum kits and percussion equipment), it was prepared prior to the performance time. Recorded backings were tested and the logistics of their use was well rehearsed (for example, starting, stopping and tracking recorded backings).

Often these students also dressed appropriately, which assisted them in creating a sense of 'occasion' for the performance. They arrived at the performance venue with plenty of time to spare, and in some instances arranged for equipment to be delivered to the venue ahead of time. Where much equipment was required for the performance, consideration was given to how the music was placed in the space, creating a sense of organisation and professionalism in the performance. Water bottles were used sparingly and discreetly.

Comments on particular instruments (solo performance examinations)

The following information provides guidance for preparing successful programs for particular instruments. These comments are made in relation to specific instruments but many may also be applicable to other instruments.

Contemporary popular guitar and drum kit

- Students and teachers should check the *Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works* on the VCAA website and read it carefully to establish that they have met its requirements. Using the correct arrangement/edition is critical, as using arrangements other than the ones listed may constitute playing a different piece to the one prescribed, and thus incur a penalty. Some guitar students who downloaded a TAB from the Internet may not have had the correct edition or arrangement.



- Many students performed very similar programs with assessors hearing about eight or so works for each instrument. Perhaps more thought could go into tailoring individual programs with the students' strengths and weaknesses in mind.
- As students were allocated 25 minutes to fulfil the criteria, one or two works more than the minimum number required could be prepared to allow students to more comprehensively meet the requirements of the criteria.
- Students should have ensured that volume levels were appropriate for the performance space and that the volume of backing tracks was appropriately balanced. Students must not perform at unsafe volume levels. Additional warm-up/set-up time is allocated to assist with this requirement.
- Where possible, students might consider using some 'live' backing accompaniments to demonstrate artistic interaction with the accompaniment.
- Drum kit students could have demonstrated a wider range of dynamic control and stylistic variation. This would be a good opportunity to include Latin, funk and odd-metre works.
- Drum kit students needed to ensure they had adequately prepared rudiments such as snare and brush pieces.
- Students should have ensured that the CD backing(s) were used as specified on the prescribed list.
- Students should have made sure that they thoroughly rehearsed their performance (rather than just playing a compilation of pieces without consideration for the movement from one piece to another).
- If using a music stand, it is recommended that students position it discreetly so that it doesn't form a barrier between the performer and assessors.
- Some guitar students were not as well synchronised in their use of effects pedals (on and off).
- The best students were able to synchronise with backing track fade-outs.
- Guitarists who used the best presentation techniques tended to perform standing up in a confident manner.
- The best students used repeated passages as an opportunity for self-expression, by using improvisation and variation on the repeat, first playing all of the notated work accurately
- Some missed out on marks for criterion 10 (presentation) by talking too much in between pieces under the guise of announcing the works. If a student decides to talk in the performance, it should enhance, not detract from the performance

Electric bass

- The minimum number of works required was six. Students should have checked the list carefully to ensure they met all areas of compliance.
- Students are to provide all equipment.
- For other information, refer to the points for contemporary popular guitar (above).

Voice – contemporary popular

- Students and teachers should check the *Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works* on the VCAA website and read it carefully to establish that they have met its requirements. Note that some works in the vocalise category actually require performing both in a set of two vocalises. Some students made very effective connections between the two vocalises.
- The vocalise should be sung as an expressive song. Many students seemed to go through the motions, singing the vocalise without much interest or expression, then went on to perform the rest of the program with much flair. This was the weakest part of the examination for many students, and lacked thorough preparation or thought.
- Students needed to make sure that the 'variety of styles' was addressed in their choice of program as well as in the delivery of each song. Students should have avoided just singing favourite songs, and instead considered what was being looked for in the assessment criteria
- Appropriate keys need to be chosen to best suit the vocal range or 'fach' of the student.
- The accompanist needed to provide a stylistic backing –making sure that the melody line was not present in the accompaniment. The accompanist should have played to the vocal capabilities of the student. Accompanists should avoid playing too loudly. Appropriate tempi were very much related to style also.
- If a CD accompaniment was used, students should have ensured that burnt CDs were tested in the CD player they intended to use. Also, with the vocals, they needed to ensure that the correct track was used for the backing. Where a CD has both an accompaniment only, and a melody and accompaniment, as provided with the sheet music, the correct track must be used for the performance examination.
- Students should not have exceeded the number of recorded backings allowed (a maximum of three).
- There was a tendency to use backing tracks that were too quiet for the performance space. This made it hard for the singer or audience to hear the backing, and it was impossible for the student to demonstrate any kind of interaction with the accompaniment.



- When considering using a backing track, students should have ensured that there could be some demonstration of interacting with the accompaniment. They might consider keeping backing tracks to a minimum.
- The best balance was often achieved with an acoustic guitar backing.
- Some students were not careful in their choice of the unaccompanied song, and failed to maintain a pitch centre. At times, students failed to maintain an appropriate rhythmical pulse. If these were problems for a singer, it would have been best to choose a shorter unaccompanied work to perform.
- Students should consider their vocal health. To avoid forcing their voice, students needed to choose their program wisely. The keys and technical demands on the young voice should have been considered as well as changing keys to suit a particular student's abilities.
- When choosing an outfit for the performance, students should consider their posture. High stiletto shoes are not good for a singer's posture.
- If using hand or body gestures, students should make them appropriate to the text.
- Students must be aware that the examination is a 'recital', not a sing-along.
- Try to avoid holding on to a water bottle or remote control while singing.
- The 'country' category is the most misunderstood. Students should use reference recordings to research performance style and use of appropriate vocal techniques.

Voice – classical

- Students needed to ensure that they understood different styles clearly (for example, students should avoid scooping in the baroque or classical work).
- Students who select a large number of works from the 'ballads', 'music theatre' and 'jazz/pop' categories, should consider choosing 'Voice – contemporary popular' rather than 'Voice – classical' as their instrument.
- The demands of the program should be considered for each individual student; particularly in regards to the program length (some students became fatigued before their last song).
- If using hand or body gestures, they should be appropriate to the text.
- Students should choose their accompanist wisely. Students need to be able to create an 'ensemble' in which the accompanist plays a supportive rather than a dominant role.
- The highest-achieving students ensured that their unaccompanied folksong and vocalise had as much attention to detail as the other works on their program.
- The highest-achieving students chose a wide variety of interesting repertoire suited to their voice rather than performing 'standard' pieces. Students and teachers should try to explore the wide range available in every category on the list rather than staying with the most popular pieces. Teachers are encouraged to become acquainted with pieces with which they are unfamiliar to help create interesting programs and highlight their students' abilities.
- The highest achieving students included different languages in their programs. The words were pronounced with clarity and fluency and the performer knew the meaning of each word and how to highlight important syllables, words, phrases or ideas. Including a work sung in a language other than English is not a requirement of the examination but can be a way of broadening the range of styles and characters evident in the program.
- Some pieces tend to be more demanding in terms of intonation than others. These should be selected carefully.

Piano – contemporary popular

- Students and teachers should check the *Prescribed List of Notated Solo Works* on the VCAA website and read it carefully to establish that they have met the requirements. Using the correct arrangement/edition is critical, as using arrangements other than the ones listed may constitute playing a different piece to the one prescribed.
- The works on the list were technically comparable with works on the pianoforte list. The complexity of syncopated rhythms can be extremely challenging, so students needed a disciplined approach to learning them.
- Accompaniments were not accepted for any works in this list (no CD backing was allowed).
- Five works were required, with four categories to be represented.
- A steady beat was essential, with a clear understanding and differentiation between a swung and straight feel.
- Many students needed to further develop a refined pedalling technique.
- A wider range of tonal effects needed to be explored; many students seemed to want to 'bash' the piano.

Pianoforte

- Students needed to ensure the continuity of their performance when turning pages. Assessors can assist with page turning if required.
- Although the prescribed list of works is comprehensive, the range of works selected by many students was often limited. Students who wish to showcase their capabilities might do well to explore the lesser-known works on the list.



- Students needed to perform within their capabilities and avoid taking on programs that were too demanding for them. They should have explored a range of styles, techniques and genres that were within their capabilities.
- Students should have practised performing on different pianos and in different environments. Students who may be considering performing their program on a grand piano should have practised playing on a grand piano as much as possible throughout their examination preparation. Students should have prepared the program both with and without a middle sostenuto pedal.
- Maintaining a disciplined practice regime throughout the whole year enables students to maximise their potential and to be able to walk into the examination room with a confident attitude.

Wind Instruments

- Students needed to ensure that they had enough stamina to perform their entire program.
- A students' physical stamina needed to be balanced with the need to fulfil the criteria to the highest level.
- Where the total playing time was calculated to exceed 20 minutes, it could have been useful to place all of the 'required' works early in the program.
- Students needed to have a strong understanding of the whole work, not just the solo part.
- Students should have considered the suggested or conventional metronome mark if possible.
- Students should have practised performing in public as much as possible.
- Students needed to pay due attention to concise articulation and phrasing.
- Students should have considered their placement in relation to the accompanist. Placement needs to allow for communication with the accompanist and for the performance to address the audience.
- Students needed to try to handle their nerves in an artistically appropriate manner. Often sipping water was used to assist in calming the nerves, but doing so between each piece (particularly in huge gulps and slurps) could detract from the overall poise and presentation of the performance.

Brass instruments

- Many of the issues for students in this section were similar to issues for wind instruments, especially regarding the stamina needed to complete the performance effectively.
- Students should have demonstrated thorough preparation with the accompanist.
- If performing a work that used a backing track, students needed to ensure that the correct track was used in the correct way; for example, if the backing had the solo doubled on one channel, this channel needed to be turned off in the performance.
- Students needed to use the correct editions and/or to consider the appropriateness of editorial markings when using other sheet music.

String instruments

- Students who choose repertoire that is too difficult for them, or that doesn't explore a range of performing techniques, often fail to maximise their score. Students should perform a range of techniques well, and ensure that all works chosen are within their technical facility.
- Students who perform very long programs are advised to include all required works early in the program.
- Students should be prepared for contingencies; for example, by carrying spare strings, rosin and so on.
- Students should practise performing in a range of acoustical environments from flat to very bright. They should become accustomed to performing in different temperatures. This will make it easier to adjust to performance conditions.
- Cellists and double bass players should be prepared for either a hard or soft floor surface by bringing a cello board or something similar to ensure their instrument cannot slip on either surface.