2020 Music Studies Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2020 assessment cycle, gives 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, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

Teachers are also encouraged to utilise the resources provided on the SACE website. This includes the calibration materials provided in PLATO, which are helpful in providing ideas for designing assessment tasks and in applying the performance standards to the students work.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Creative Works (40%)

This assessment task allows students to apply their musical understanding, skills and techniques by presenting a folio of their own creative works, which could include performances, compositions or arrangements.

The students also present a creator’s statement, in which they provide evidence of their learning as they reflect on their creative works.

The more successful responses commonly:

* linked performances with a theme, which gave students a starting point for their creator’s statement
* performed solo or ensemble works demonstrating strong instrumental or vocal skills along with a highly developed understanding of the music and style they were utilising
* produced compositions and/or arrangements with scores that utilised correct score conventions
* produced arrangements intentionally and successfully in a style different from the original work used
* presented well organised creator’s statements which discussed higher order musical elements, making good use of tables and/or musical examples to inform the text/script.

The less successful responses commonly:

* produced scores of compositions/arrangements lacking in normal score conventions, such as inappropriate transposition and lack of dynamics, tempo markings, etc.
* performed solo or ensemble works demonstrating less developed instrumental or vocal skills and lacking a solid understanding of the music and style they were utilising
* presented poorly organised creator’s statements which lacked specific detail and omitted discussion of higher order musical elements; using ‘cut-and-paste’ musical examples which inadequately informed the text/script.

Teachers need to ensure that students are clearly identified at the start of videos of ensemble performances and that part-testing is included in the evidence provided for ensemble performance students. The provision of sheet music for both solo and ensemble performances is encouraged, and the provision of audio along with the scores of student compositions and/or arrangements.

Assessment Type 2: Music Literacy (30%)

Students complete three literacy tasks, allowing students to manipulate musical elements, apply and refine musical literacy skills, deconstruct and analyse musical works and/or styles and synthesise their findings.

At least one of the three tasks should be a composition or arrangement, allowing each student to demonstrate their practical application in manipulating musical elements.

The more successful responses commonly:

* created musical works that clearly demonstrated higher order skills and knowledge that were appropriately matched to the given task, such as well-planned and organised arrangements in a specific style and which utilised the instrumentation the student was most familiar with
* responded to music through discursive analysis, and which were enhanced through discussion of higher order musical elements
* demonstrated a highly developed understanding of and response to music through competent completion of complex aural and harmony skills assessments, which reflected the difficulty levels of Assessment Type 3: Examination — External Assessment
* synthesised their findings in well written or produced responses, which included thoughtful discussion of musical elements with the helpful use of musical excerpts where appropriate.

The less successful responses commonly:

* created musical works that did not demonstrate a working knowledge of the instruments included or the style used, or which were lacking in planning, structure or form
* responded to music with written analyses which were lacking in depth, and focussed mainly on basic musical elements, such as tempo and dynamics, rather than higher order elements, such as compositional techniques.
* demonstrated a less developed understanding of and response to music through less than competent completion of complex aural and harmony skills tests at difficulty levels significantly below that expected in Assessment Type 3: Examination — External Assessment
* synthesised their findings in less competent written or produced responses, which included basic discussion of musical elements with overuse of musical excerpts to pad out the document with little appropriate explanation or analysis.

It would also be helpful if teachers could indicate which LAP applies to which group of students where two or more schools are grouped together for assessment purposes. The inclusion of all source materials is encouraged to help with the moderation process, such as an audio file(s) for all compositions and arrangements, along with a score for each audio file. Submission of source material for arrangements, though not prescribed, is also extremely useful in helping to ascertain the students arranging skills and knowledge.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination (30%)

In general, the examination was completed at a more competent level by the student cohort than in the previous year. Additionally, as with the 2019 examination, the format followed the pattern of the exemplar provided before the first year of this redesigned music subject. This allowed for students to be familiar with the types of questions provided and be able to confidently demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Students were provided with a formula sheet and a number of questions were given with the student’s ability to use this sheet in mind. Teachers should ensure students are familiar with and able to utilise the formula sheet to solve problems in different contexts.

Question 1

Most students generally answered these four aural recognition questions successfully, with over two thirds of students answering at least three of the four parts correctly. The most successful students were able to correctly identify the option as Option 3 in part (b) instead of the other likely but incorrect choice which was Option 1.

Question 2

Some students found this rhythmic dictation question challenging. However, almost half of the students were able to correctly notate the entire rhythm. The most successful students were able to recognise the dotted-quaver, semiquaver figure and the quaver triplet in bar 3 of the rhythm.

Question 3

Students also found this interval recognition question challenging, with only a large minority of students able to correctly identify and notate the two intervals. Less successful students incorrectly identified the interval in part (b) as minor sixth rather than the correct minor seventh.

Question 4

The majority of answers to this question were successful with most students correctly identifying the major pentatonic scale in part (a), and the melodic minor scale in part (b).

Question 5

This melodic dictation question proved challenging for most students with a minority notating the entire melody and answering the two additional questions correctly. Successful students recognised the chromatic auxiliary note on beat one of bar 2 and showed an understanding of the relationship between the melody and the harmony in bar 3.

Question 6

Most students successfully answered this question with a majority able to correctly identify option 4 as the chord progression.

Question 7

This melody completion question was the first creative question in the paper, and a majority of students were generally successful. The most successful responses made use of the rhythmic motifs present in the given start, used a discernible cadence to finish their melody, and ensured their melody had appropriate range and contour.

Question 8

Students generally found this set of questions challenging, with a large minority of students achieving at least 16 out of the total of 21 marks. The most successful responses recognised the form as rondo form, correctly explained the use of a pause in music, were also able to explain a triplet, and were able to identify the relationship between the clarinet and piano as imitation in octaves.

Question 9

This question, which relied totally on the aural skills of the students with no score provided, was challenging for many students. However, a large minority provided some very thoughtful and well-expressed answers. Less successful students struggled with discussing texture and timbre, and some repeated themselves (saying the same thing in a slightly different way) rather than providing new points. Students are encouraged to read the question carefully and ensure their answers pertain to the musical element they are being asked to discuss.

Question 10

A majority of students were able to correctly identify option 4 in this short aural recognition question based on the music in Question 9.

Question 11

In this question requiring analysis of an arrangement of a nursery rhyme, a majority of students gained at least 10 marks out of the total of thirteen. The most successful responses recognised that the change of metre resulted in the use of augmentation to the melody notes in part (a) and correctly identified the instruments playing the melody in each section in part (b). Successful students were able to discuss the role of the violoncello by describing the use of repetition, outlining the harmony, and maintaining the pulse by accenting the first and fifth quavers in part (c).

Question 12

In this comparative analysis question a large minority of students were able to gain at least ten out of the total of fourteen marks. Less successful responses struggled to isolate discussion to the given musical elements, especially texture. Many students found part (c) particularly challenging and answered by naming the musical elements they recognised, (such as dynamics and articulations), rather than identifying compositional techniques as the question required.

Question 13

Most students were able to complete the three parts below the given melody in this question generally well, with a majority of students gaining at least 18 out of the 24 marks. The most successful answers were able to write three additional parts that complemented the given melody both melodically and rhythmically, adding chord extensions where appropriate (such as, for example, adding a C in parts 1 or 2 in the second half of bar 3 to extend to a D minor seventh chord), and judiciously adding passing or auxiliary notes between notes in parts to add colour and movement.

Question 14

Many students were able to accurately complete this grouping question and correctly add the bar lines.

Question 15

Overall, students provided strong harmonisations for their chosen option with a majority of students gaining at least 25 out of the total of 32 marks.

Option A

The most successful students selected and spelled their chords carefully, and applied correct voice leading in the parts. Strong chords were used at cadence points, and higher-level skills demonstrated in utilisation of six-four chords and dominant seventh chords as appropriate.

Option B

The most successful students selected and spelled their chords carefully and applied correct smooth part writing in the chord voicings. The modulation to D minor in bar 2 was recognised and correctly facilitated, and higher-level skills were demonstrated in utilisation of extended and altered-note chords as appropriate.