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Musicianship

2016 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## 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.

In 2016, most students were assessed as achieving within the A, B, and C grade bands, suggesting that they were able to demonstrate success against the performance standards for all assessment types. Moderation results for school assessment showed a higher proportion of students achieving in the A and B ranges when compared with results for the external assessment, where a larger proportion of the students received results in the B and C range. This suggests that students found it easier to demonstrate proficiency against the performance standards in the skills development and arrangement tasks compared with the external assessment.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Skills Development

As well as being important assessment items in themselves, the two tests in this assessment type are a valuable preparation for the external assessment.

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated high levels of competency in all areas, specifically rhythmic and melodic dictation, and harmonisation.

**The less successful responses**

* were more inconsistent in the application of the skills and knowledge, demonstrating degrees of competency in some areas but providing less evidence in others.

**General information**

* The most appropriate and successful tests seemed to be those that covered the whole scope of the theory concepts for the subject in both tests, including the harmony, but did so progressively across the two tests. For example, Test 1 might be best designed to cover part of the scope of Musicianship at a less demanding level. This would allow Test 2 to cover the full scope at a level that reflects the higher learning required for the examination.
* Skills development tests should be rigorously designed to give students the best opportunity to reach the highest level as described by the performance standards, and to demonstrate their skills and knowledge at that level.
* Teachers are encouraged to use the support materials on the SACE website and to use past examinations as a guide for the development of their skills tests. This is particularly important in the harmony section. The development tests should be 60‑75 minutes for each task. Teachers should consider producing their own skills tests to best suit both the time frame allowed and their teaching program. These tests should include a good mix of more routine questions such as multiple choice, and more challenging questions such as rhythmic and melodic dictations.
* Teachers are asked to prepare moderation materials including task and answer sheets, and to provide evidence of how the tasks were assessed, such as annotating assessment rubrics and marks schemes.

Assessment Type 2: Arrangement

**The more successful responses demonstrated**

* well-designed form and structure — deciding how to start, develop, and finish the arrangement successfully is an important part of the arranging process, and should be approached at the outset
* good knowledge of the capabilities of the chosen instruments and/or voices — students should ideally be encouraged to write for instruments and instrument groupings that are available to them and with which they have some familiarity
* knowledge of style — this was particularly clear in the writing when students showed evidence of having listened to or played and analysed examples of music within their chosen style or styles
* concise and clear written statements that detailed the technical features of the arrangement using appropriate terminology — the well-considered use of musical quotes to illustrate made it easy to link commentary with the musical passages described
* presentation of the score in either portrait or landscape format — these formats allow the easiest reading of the music without having to turn the page every three or four bars, and they also resemble professionally produced scores. Additionally, careful editing was evident at the final stage to produce a highly musical score with appropriate dynamic, articulation, and phrase markings.

**The less successful responses**

* were written for instruments such as voice, piano, or drums, without clear stylistic structure or strong harmonic foundation, and that used the rhythm section in a repetitive manner by using the ‘cut and paste’ function of the arranging software
* selected original melodies that were complex melodically and/or harmonically, and did not easily have the potential to be modified and manipulated to create new music, such as countermelodies and harmonic changes. Complex originals can lead to ‘arrangements’ that come close to being transcriptions because little can creatively be added to the music
* produced works where the original melody was close to non-existent in the final product. It is important that the evidence presented is in the form of an arrangement in which the original melody is clearly present, and not a composition
* created a commentary with musical quotes that did not support the text of the commentary. When musical quotes are used in the commentary, they should demonstrate an aspect of the process undertaken in producing the arrangement. Quotes should also make musical sense, with instruments labelled and clefs, key, and time signatures included. This may mean producing the quotes separately in the scoring program, rather than just using the ‘copy and paste’ function
* created arrangements were instrumental ranges and capabilities were not understood but computer programs appear to show the music as ‘playable’ — therefore students did not appropriately transpose instrumental parts as required. A useful exercise, if possible, is to give the instrumental parts to instrumentalists who play the chosen instrument, who will soon give feedback as to the appropriateness of the writing
* presented parts in the arrangement that produced music in the computer playback with the sound required, but were not playable by a real musician. This was a particular issue with guitar parts, where many notes were provided to get the chord sounds desired, and drum parts, where mapping was not done correctly. Students could consider producing two copies of their arrangement at the completion of the arranging process: one that plays back in the desired manner, and can be used to create the recording; and one that reads correctly, with chord symbols for guitar and correct drum mapping, which is presented for marking and moderating.

**General information**

* The standard of achievement in arrangement demonstrated a strong understanding of performance standards by teachers and students, and a consistent quality of work produced.
* Sound recordings to accompany scores worked best when MIDI voices had been chosen carefully to best represent the intention in the scoring. Drum and guitar parts need special attention. Students can make live recordings, if appropriate, as the process may help them to better understand the capabilities of their chosen instruments. Students are reminded that audio files need to be presented in a format that can be played in a media-playing program, on a USB or CD, and that it is not appropriate to submit original Sibelius files for moderation.
* Some teachers annotated their decisions and comments directly on the scores, which was helpful for moderators in ascertaining how the assessment decision was formulated.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Part 1: Theory, Aural Recognition, and Musical Techniques

Question 1

Over 80% of students were able to correctly identify the three rhythms.

Question 2

Around 25% of students were able to correctly identify the time signatures and place all the bar lines. Another 25% of students were able to do the same but omitted the double bar lines at the end of the rhythms. The less successful responses missed the length of melodies referenced in the question and therefore answered with 6/8 or 4/4 answers, for which they received some credit.

Question 3

Around 25% of students were able to successfully complete the rhythm. The most successful responses included the triplet in bar 4, the tie in bar 6, and the double bar line at the end of bar 8.

Question 4

Almost 40% of students were able to correctly complete the rhythmic dictation. The most successful responses were able to pick the quaver, dotted-quaver, and semiquaver rhythm in the second half of bar 3.

*Question 5*

Around 30% of students were able to correctly identify and notate all three intervals. The most successful responses recognised the tritone (or augmented fourth/diminished fifth) in part (a) and notated a B natural above the given F, and also recognised the minor second in part (c) and notated a C flat above the given B flat. Less successful responses for part (c) recognised the interval as a minor second, but then wrote a B natural, in fact notating an augmented unison.

Question 6

Almost half the students were able to correctly identify both rhythms.

*Question 7*

Generally, around 40% of students were able to correctly identify the type and write the scale used, and circle the correct scale degree indicated.

Question 8

Around 45% of students were able to correctly identify and write the four missing crotchet rhythms.

Question 9

Students were challenged by this question, with only 4% of students able to correctly notate the entire melody. The most successful responses were able to identify the chromatic auxiliary and passing notes in bars 6 and 10, and utilise the chord symbols provided in the question to inform their choices about the notation in the melody.

Question 10

Around 75% of students were able to correctly identify both pairs of chords.

Question 11

Almost 40% of students were able to correctly identify and add the appropriate accidentals to both broken chords.

Question 12

Over 40% of students correctly identified both harmonic progressions.

Question 13

There were a variety of answers for these questions. The most successful responses were able to identify the modulation in part (d) to G minor, and correctly identify this as the dominant key and the cadence as perfect.

*Question 14*

A variety of answers were given for this question. The most successful responses were able to correctly identify the chord in part (c) as G augmented (or G+).

Question 15

There were a variety of answers for this question. The most successful responses were able to correctly identify the tonic key in part (a) as F sharp minor, and the two chords used in part (h) (ii) as B minor and F sharp minor.

Question 16

Over 40% of students were able to successfully rewrite these melodies with correct grouping.

Question 17

Students generally performed much more successfully in this question. The most successful responses correctly identified the chord in part (f) as G minor.

**Part 2: Harmony**

*Question 18*

**The more successful responses**

* substituted a C seventh chord in the second half of bar 1, and a D minor seventh chord in the second half of bar 3. Other successful options included E   
  half-diminished seventh followed by A minor seventh in bar 3, then D minor seventh followed by G minor seventh in bar 4, completing the first six chords of the circle of fourths in bars 2 to 4
* extended the C major chord in bar 4 to a dominant seventh chord, the F major chord in bar 5 to a major seventh chord, or the B flat major chord in bar 5 to a major seventh chord
* were careful with chord spelling to ensure that the chord symbol matches the chord voiced, in particular using the seventh in the notation if the chord   
  requires it
* demonstrated smooth voice-leading
* created countermelodies that continued smoothly from the given two bars, featured the two rhythmic motives (four quavers; dotted quaver–semiquaver–two quavers), were active where the melody was not, and finished after the melody with the final note being an ‘A’ to create a consonant interval
* completed the transposition by transposing the correct bars (5 and 6). A high percentage of students were able to transpose both the key signature and the notes given correctly, including correctly dealing with the accidentals.

**The less successful responses**

* erred by confusing the tonality of chords in the key given (F major) and utilising incorrect chord types (for example, a dominant seventh on the tonic or   
  sub-dominant where a major seventh is needed)
* did not use the middle-to-moderately low register when voicing chords in piano or keyboard style
* extended the range too far when writing countermelody; while melodic shape is important, students need to be mindful of the range when writing countermelody
* allowed clashing pitches of notes (dissonances) between melody and countermelody to remain in their answer
* were confused in dealing with the key signature, or did not know how to correctly treat the natural in bar 5 in the transposition process.

*Question 19*

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated a strong grasp of the performance standards in this question and showed a general grasp of the harmonic concepts required to answer the question appropriately. This included both starting and finishing in the tonic key (F major) and making successful use of the circle of fourths progression. Successful students used the 6-2-5-1 progression in the last two bars
* handled well, in general, the first modulation to the super-tonic key (G major), although chord placement was challenging and required careful consideration. The most successful responses then transitioned back to the tonic key by following the G major chord with a G minor chord
* achieved the second modulation (by permission) to the relative minor (D minor) over bars 5 and 6a
* chose and executed their chord extensions well
* remembered to check the key signature when extending a chord to the ninth to ensure that a flattened ninth wasn’t being produced
* notated playable piano chord voicings with smooth voice-leading, and the correct middle-to-moderately-low range well observed.

**The less successful responses**

* struggled to place chords to allow either of the two modulations to occur smoothly and effectively
* tried to extend and/or alter too many chords. It is worth keeping in mind that two of each is all that is required, and thus it is worth spending the time to choose them well, based on how they work with both melody and chord voicings. If students use more they should make sure they use them appropriately
* altered a note present in the melody when adding an altered-note chord, causing a semitone clash between the altered note and the melodic note
* attempted to alter notes in major or minor seventh chords, rather than the dominant seventh as required
* wrote piano chord-voicing that would have been difficult to play, with issues such as exposed ninths or unwanted semitone clashes.

*Question 20*

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated an adequate preparedness for finding an appropriate harmony solution to the given melody
* took careful note of all the requirements within the question, then created appropriate cadences at the end of each phrase, chose their harmonies to include passing and cadential 6/4 chords, and used the dominant seventh chord correctly in at least one place in their harmonisation
* checked their answer carefully as they proceeded, being ready to change choices of chords, if necessary, to solve any errors that might have appeared.

**The less successful responses**

* didn't take full advantage of the passing notes embedded in the given melody to use fewer chords under these notes and found creative but often unwieldy ways to harmonise almost all the quavers in the melody
* included one or more consecutive fifths or octaves between parts, sometimes created by the actual choice of chords
* notated gaps wider than an octave, especially between the melody line and alto part.

## Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

Classes that combine for assessment should, wherever possible, collaborate on the design of the skills development tests, task sheets, and assessment decisions in both the skills tests and the arrangements to ensure consistency and validity of results across the assessment group. They should also confirm each other’s results by moderating across the grouping before results are submitted.

For the skills tests and the external examination it is recommended that students use pencil to answer the questions in order to erase errors and make their answer clearly legible for marking. Students must have an eraser for both the tests and the examination.

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Chief Assessor