# Musicianship Subject Assessment Advice

## Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s 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.

In 2017, 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 grade bands when compared with results for the external assessment, where a larger proportion of the students received results in the B and C grade bands.

# 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 commonly:

* demonstrated high levels of competency in all areas, especially rhythmic and melodic dictation, and harmonisation
* comprised assessments that covered the full scope of theory concepts for the subject progressively across the two tests, including the harmony. For example, Test 1 covering part of the scope of Musicianship at a less demanding level, with Test 2 covering the full scope at a level that reflects the higher learning required for the examination
* featured Skills Development tests that were designed with a range of questions that were of increasing levels of challenge, giving students the best opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge at the highest levels, as described by the performance standards. For example, an assessment that included rhythmic and melodic dictation questions, as well as a comprehensive harmony question, allowed students to demonstrate both Knowledge and Understanding and Practical Application at the highest levels
* included a range of question types, reflecting those found in previous examinations (available as support materials on the Musicianship minisite) rather than an exclusive reliance on routine questions such as multiple choice
* contained tests that were in alignment with the time requirements prescribed in the subject outline.

The less successful responses commonly:

* were inconsistent in the application of skills and knowledge, demonstrating degrees of competency in some areas but providing less evidence in others
* comprised a collection of simple questions that assessed the same skill or understanding, such as multiple scale-writing questions, that did not interrogate students’ understanding of more complex concepts, such as those found in dictation or harmony questions
* did not address the full range of skills, knowledge and understanding outlined in the relevant learning requirements (1-4).

Assessment Type 2: Arrangement

The Arrangement provides an opportunity for students to synthesize their understanding of theoretical concepts, musical style and notation skills, through the creative development of an arrangement based on a pre-existing melody, with an accompanying statement.

The more successful responses commonly:

• demonstrated well-designed form and structure — deciding how to start, develop, and finish the arrangement successfully is an important part of the arranging process, conceived at the outset

• revealed good knowledge of the capabilities of the chosen instruments and/or voices, often derived from the student’s first-hand familiarity with the properties of the chosen instruments and/or voices, or through feedback from musicians who play the instruments

• used simple melodies to arrange that allowed students to easily modify rhythmic, melodic and harmonic elements to show creativity and development of ideas

• demonstrated 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

• included concise and clear written statements that detailed the technical features of the arrangement using appropriate terminology — the well-considered use of musical quotes made it easy to link commentary with the musical passages described

• presented the score in a format (either portrait or landscape) to allow for the appropriate reading of the notation, to resemble professionally produced scores

* featured careful editing to produce a musically articulate score with highly appropriate use of dynamics, expression, performance direction, articulation and phrasing.

The less successful responses commonly:

• 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

• included incorrect note grouping and incorrectly written chords

• were simplistic, demonstrating an inconsistent and/or restricted use of arranging techniques

• featured arrangements that indicated a lack of knowledge and understanding of the capabilities and ranges of the instruments used

• presented parts in the arrangement that produced music in the computer playback with the sound required, but were not playable by a real musician. For example, writing guitar parts, where multiple notes were provided to achieve the chord sounds desired, and drum parts, where mapping was presented incorrectly. 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

• provided musical quotes in the written statement that did not support the text of the statement. When musical quotes are used, they should demonstrate an aspect of the process undertaken in producing the arrangement. Quotes should also make musical sense, with instruments being labelled and clefs, key, and time signatures being included. This may involve producing the quotes separately in the scoring program, rather than simply using the ‘copy and paste’ function.

# External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

The Examination provided students with ample opportunity to demonstrate their level of Knowledge and Understanding, and Practical Application of the musical concepts, harmonisation skills, musical techniques, and aural recognition skills described in the subject outline.

Students and their teachers are encouraged to structure their revision around the content of the subject outline.

**Part 1: Theory, Aural Recognition, and Musical Techniques**

Question 1

Over 75% of students were able to correctly identify the three rhythms.

Question 2

Around 33% of students were able to identify the time signatures correctly and place all bar lines. Another 25% of students were able to do the same but omitted the double bar lines at the end of the rhythms. Less successful responses were unable to discern the time signatures, despite being given the reference to a four-bar melody in the question.

Question 3

Around 16% of students were able to complete the rhythm successfully. The most effective responses included the tie between bars 1 and 2, the restatement of the bar 1 rhythm in bar 3, and took account of the anacrusis in the last bar.

Question 4

Around 10% of students were able to complete the rhythmic dictation correctly. The most successful responses were able to pick the dotted quaver/semiquaver figure at the start and in bar 3, to pick the dotted crotchet/quaver figures at the end of bar 1 and at the start of bar 2, and to use a double bar-line at the end of bar 4.

Question 5

Almost 40% of students were able to identify and notate both intervals correctly. The most successful responses recognised the major seventh in part (a) and notated a C sharp above the given D, and also recognised the minor sixth in part (b) and notated a G above the given B. Less successful responses for part (b) recognised the interval as a perfect fifth or tritone (diminished fifth).

Question 6

Most students were able to identify the tonality in (i), and many were successful in at least one of the intervals in (iii). However, only the most successful students were able to identify both time signatures in (ii) as simple triple in (a) and compound duple in (b).

Question 7

Around 45% of students were able to identify both melodies correctly.

Question 8

Approximately 35% of students were able to identify the type, and write the scale used, and circle the correct scale degree indicated.

Question 9

Again, around 35% of students were able to write the six crotchets correctly. Less successful students missed placing a crotchet on beat 4 of bar 1 and consequently were confused when trying to fit the remaining notes in the space provided.

Question 10

Students were challenged by this question, with only 6% of students able to notate the entire melody correctly. The most successful responses were able to utilise the chord symbols provided in the question to inform their choices about the notation in the melody, correctly identifying the B natural in bar 2, and the ascending form of the melodic minor in bar 11 (A natural and B natural after G on beat 1). Successful students also recognised the sequence a note lower of bars 5 and 6 in bars 7 and 8.

Question 11

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

Question 12

Around 25% of students were able to identify and add the appropriate accidentals to both broken chords. A number of less successful students answered Db major triad in root position for (a) instead of Gb major triad in second inversion, for which they received some credit.

Question 13

Around 12% of students identified both harmonic progressions correctly.

Question 14

Most students answered (a) and (b) correctly but less successful students were unable to recognise bar 1 as the correct choice in (c).

Question 15

Almost two-thirds of students were able to answer the three parts of this question successfully.

Question 16

There were a variety of answers for these questions. The most successful responses were able to identify the modulation in part (c) to D minor, and identify this correctly as the relative minor key, and recognise the chord in concert pitch in (d) as G minor seventh.

Question 17

A variety of answers were given for this question. The most successful responses were able to identify the chord in part (b) as A half-diminished seventh, or ii7 in G minor.

Question 18

Over 35% of students were able to rewrite these melodies with correct grouping.

Question 19

More than 20% of students were able to answer all six parts of this question correctly.

**Part 2: Harmony**

Question 20

The more successful responses commonly:

• substituted E minor seventh in bar 7 and B minor seventh in the last half of bar 2. Other successful options included E minor seventh in the first half of bar 4 and G major seventh in bar 3

• extended the A chord in bar 4 to A dominant seventh and the B minor in bar 6 to B minor seventh. Other successful students also chose to extend the D chord in bar 5 to D major seventh

• were generally accurate with writing the chords, demonstrated smooth voice-leading, and wrote their chord voicings in middle-to-moderately-low register (i.e. avoided writing above C 3rd space in the treble clef or on leger lines below the bass clef)

• created countermelodies that started after the melody and finished after the melody on an F sharp, to create a consonant interval. They also featured rhythmic motives used in the melody (four quavers, syncopated quaver-crotchet-quaver), and were active where the melody was not. The more successful students used an appropriate pitch range of an octave to a twelfth to allow for melodic shape, chose to avoid excessive use of arpeggiated chords in the countermelody, and were careful to avoid clashing pitches of notes between melody and countermelody

• wrote the correct key signature (four sharps) for the transposition and transposed all the notes up a major ninth.

The less successful responses commonly:

• tried to force the circle-of-fourths from the start of the music by placing a G major seventh in the second half of bar 1 and then trying to place a C sharp half-diminished in bar 2

• extended their chord by erroneously placing a seven after the G chord in bar 4 (making G dominant seventh), or after the D chord in bar 5 (making a D dominant seventh)

• did not use the middle-to-moderately low register when voicing chords in piano or keyboard style

• extended the range too far or too little 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

• dealt correctly with the time signature in the transposition, but then only transposed up a tone rather than a ninth as was appropriate for a tenor saxophone.

Question 21

The more successful responses commonly:

• 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 (D major) and making successful use of the circle of fourths progression. Successful students used the 2-5-1 progression in the last two bars

• handled well the first modulation to the sub-mediant major key (B major), although chord placement was challenging and required careful consideration. The most successful responses placed a C sharp minor seventh chord in the second half of bar 3, then an F sharp dominant seventh and B major seventh in bar 4

• achieved the second modulation to the super tonic key (E minor) in bar 6

• 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 was well observed.

The less successful responses commonly:

• placed chords that did not allow either of the two modulations to occur smoothly and effectively

• did not include sharps in the chord symbols, erroneously using chords such as C and F minor seventh rather than the correct C sharp and F sharp minor seventh

• tried to extend and/or alter too many chords. It is worth keeping in mind that two of each is all that is required; it is worth spending the time to choose chords carefully, based on how they work with both melody and chord voicings. If students use more chords 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

• wrote piano chord-voicing that would have been difficult or even impossible to play, with issues such as exposed ninths or unwanted semitone clashes.

Question 22

The more successful responses commonly:

• finished the harmony successfully with a plagal cadence

• placed an interrupted cadence at the end of the first phrase

• added a passing note in any of the three added parts

• placed the dominant seventh successfully at the beginning of the exercise or as part of the interrupted cadence with correct voicing and voice leading. Most students who used the dominant seventh correctly for the anacrusis omitted the fifth of the dominant seventh chord which allowed the best voice leading option

• used the passing 6/4 chord in a correct progression in bar 4

• chose appropriate chords and harmonic rhythm

• used appropriate chord voicing, voice ranges and note doublings

• used correct chord spelling, and good voice leading, especially when using the leading note

• used the cadential 6/4 at the end of the second phrase, using two chords on the minim in bar 6.

The less successful responses commonly:

• used chords iii and vii that both contain the leading note. Although it was not a requirement for students to demonstrate the use of either of these chords, those who did so more often voiced and resolved these chords unsuccessfully

• added more than one passing note per beat. This often resulted in the creation of new chords, or notes that did not work well together

• harmonised passing notes in the given melody that did not need to be harmonised, (e.g. harmonising the second of each quaver pair in bars 5 and 7)

• did not fully harmonise each bar of the given melody, or added notes to the given melody.