

Music in Context

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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MUSIC IN CONTEXT

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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.

It was pleasing to see that most students who studied this subject achieved against the performance standards to the best of their ability and at a slightly higher standard than in previous years. Teachers can impact on the improvement in student achievement particularly in the understanding, spelling, and use of musical terms. Teachers and students are encouraged to build a personal dictionary of terms related to the core topics, school-developed topics, and investigation topics being studied.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Skills Development

The choice of school-developed topic was obviously made at each site to cater for student interest, with a range of approved classical, jazz, and popular topics. In all genres students were able to perform at the highest levels provided that the school tests gave them appropriate opportunities.

Teachers who set tests with a range of questions — from those requiring one-word or simple factual answers or ticks to indicate the best multiple-choice answer, which were suitable for the D to C range of responses, to those requiring more challenging paragraph answers that aim to elicit B to A+ responses — gave their students scope to perform at all levels of the performance standards.

Assessment Type 2: Investigation

There were outstanding investigations on a wide range of topics across a variety of musical genres. It was clear that students were highly engaged by their investigation topic and motivated to research, using a variety of sources such as scores, films, recordings, texts, experts in the field, and websites. Successful students used footnotes and the appropriate referencing and made it clear that they accessed this range of sources by listing, scores, films, recordings, and experts in their bibliography. This practice verifies the authenticity of student work. Some students had obviously used a range of sources but failed to reference them appropriately.

Most students submitted their work as an essay keeping to the word count. Investigations from successful students included annotated scores or (in text) musical examples with clefs and labels to enhance the argument. A few chose to deliver their findings in a PowerPoint or multimedia presentation. Both these forms

gave students the opportunity to include edited musical examples, which were particularly helpful in projects that had been undertaken aurally without the availability of notated scores.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Examination

Students who were able to apply their knowledge in answering the questions showed a maturity of understanding in their responses. Those who presented a fact and explained it fully to show complete understanding, and then illustrated it with one or more musical examples scored more highly than those less successful students who merely listed fact after fact. Students are discouraged from memorising pre-prepared essay answers.

It was clear that some students had undertaken their own research on the core topics beyond the initial teacher direction. In this age of easy access to information this is an approach to self-directed learning. Those who prepared for the examination in this way, achieved at a high level.

Teachers are encouraged to offer diverse opportunities for students to prepare for the examination. Past papers are a useful resource for this work. Teachers can create a class exercise in discussing and planning answers or support students to complete a practice paper under examination conditions.

In the (a) question on the Schubert topic, a few students ably answered the question, which required them to refer to musical aspects of Romanticism in the set works. They showed comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the topic, describing a feature of Romanticism, stated a fact that related to this, explained it thoroughly, then illustrated it with reference to musical examples, and showed how this supported their claim for the works to be either Romantic or Classical. Other less successful students merely listed facts about the music without attempting to say how these related or not to the Romantic style.

In general the essays and short answers on Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* were done well, possibly because the questions allowed for the presentation of facts rather than the application of these facts to an argument. Most students focused on the texture and instrumentation, although some delivered details that were unrelated to the question, writing down possibly all they knew of the work rather than focusing on the required aspects.

The Beethoven and Sculthorpe questions were generally well done and Duke Ellington proved to be a popular topic with many very strong responses.

In responding to the blues (a) questions, some students included details that bore no relevance to the question and showed a limited ability to discuss how the following factors contributed to the expressiveness of the style: the vocal melodies and effects; texture and guitar improvisation; and form and lyrics of the set songs. Many students focused on the harmonic structure and presented this accurately for each song, but omitted to state that this simple structure allowed the freedom necessary for self-expression through many other aspects, including improvisation and lyric delivery. Answers often showed a limited and superficial understanding of the music.

In responding to the (b) questions, students showed some knowledge, in drawing on memorised facts, but in questions such as (i) and (iv), where some depth was required, students generally showed limited ability in applying knowledge to discuss musical style.

The Beatles and the Beach Boys (a) answers showed that some students had limited capacity to discuss both the musical and cultural elements that reflected the generation in which the songs were written. Students are to be encouraged to give up more than the facts in order to support an essay argument.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

In preparing moderation materials teachers submit student samples of assessment tasks including, assessment rubrics, task design and any supporting assessment notes. Teachers are encouraged to attach the answer sheets with the marked the skills development tests. The recordings used for the aural are not required.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2014 Music clarifying forum is an opportunity for stage 2 Music teachers to engage in collegiate discussion on task design, best classroom practice and common understandings of the performance standards.

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Chief Assessor