

MUSIC

Paper 9483/11
Listening

Key messages

A more secure grasp of the typical features of Baroque instrumental music would allow candidates to answer **Question 2** more confidently and accurately. Similarly, an understanding of key terms such as structure, texture and articulation would help candidates write relevant answers to questions.

Essays in **Section B** should not refer to track timings, as Examiners do not have the recordings that the candidates use.

Essays in **Section C** should answer the question by drawing on specific pieces of music as evidence, giving detail of the musical features of these works.

General comments

Examiners encountered a wide variety of responses, across the mark range.

Many candidates chose not to answer one or more questions in **Section A**.

Handwriting is occasionally difficult to read, particularly in the essays.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

The strongest responses in this section demonstrated detailed knowledge of the Baroque set work, with the ability to apply this knowledge to unfamiliar repertoire. Candidates should ensure that they refer to musical features that they have heard in the audio extract provided, not just general musical features that they have learned.

Question 1

- (a) More than half the candidates were able to correctly identify this as the second movement/*Adagio e staccato*. No other answers were accepted.
- (b) About the same number of candidates achieved the mark available here as did for **part (a)**, correctly naming the oboe as the solo instrument.
- (c) Fewer than half the candidates correctly identified the final cadence as imperfect. Phrygian was also accepted (as was half cadence).
- (d) Some candidates gained both marks available here, most commonly referencing the ornamentation and legato articulation, with a few candidates referring to the flexibility of the tempo.

Question 2

- (a) Answers which referred to texture often scored well here, with marks most frequently being awarded for the alternation of melody and accompaniment and the polyphonic/homophonic texture and less often the soloists playing in thirds. Other points in the mark scheme were rarely seen.

However, many candidates described features of the music that were not related to texture and therefore did not gain credit.

- (b) One mark was awarded for sequence, with the second achieved for ascending in conjunction with sequence. Many candidates gained at least one of the two marks available.
- (c) A significant number of candidates omitted this question and those that did answer it did not often achieve the two marks available. A wide variety of chords other than I/D major were suggested and very few candidates went on to give the correct inversion.
- (d) Again, many candidates omitted this question and about a third gained the one mark available for suspension.
- (e) Some candidates wrote about features other than structure when answering this question and therefore did not achieve any marks. It was rare for candidates to refer to ritornello and episode in their answers and only a very small number made any mention of keys. Three correct statements about the structure and keys, together with correct bar numbers allowed candidates to access the six marks, but this was very rarely seen.

Question 3

- (a) A relatively large number of responses did not refer to ornamentation at all, or only very briefly. Some answers made general comments about features of the music (e.g. there are suspensions and the violins play) which could not be awarded credit. Most answers were not detailed, but gained a few marks for noting the trills and/or mordents. A few answers referred to the flutter tonguing from bar 73. A small number of candidates used timings in their answers, but these could not be credited as the question specifically asks for bar numbers.
- (b) The strongest answers to this question worked through the suggested musical features, comparing the two extracts and using the evidence to suggest which performance was most historically informed. Occasionally some candidates made incorrect statements (such as the pitch of Performance B was higher) or missed out the crucial letter when naming a performance (e.g. Performance is faster). One or two candidates seemed to think that the two performances were two different pieces, suggesting changes in tonality. Candidates cannot achieve a mark in the highest mark band (8 – 10) unless they give some contextual information. The highest-achieving answers were detailed and gave bar numbers of some specific features (e.g. dynamics and articulation).

Section B

The strongest answers in this section demonstrated an ability to draw on specific musical features of the **Section B** set work(s) to answer the question, giving a clear and detailed account of the music, leaving the Examiners in no doubt as to which part of the work was being described. It is very important that when answering their chosen question in this section that candidates do not just 'tell the story' behind the music, but refer to specific musical features.

Question 4

This was the less popular of the **Section B** essay questions, chosen by about a third of the candidates. Many candidates who did answer this question did not have a clear understanding of harmony and tonality and described a wide range of features of the music. However, only the points relating to harmony and tonality could be given credit, resulting in some relatively low-scoring essays. Examiners frequently saw reference to dissonance in both works and to the parallel chords in the Debussy. These were often successfully linked to the section of the myth or story they are designed to suggest. Candidates who wrote about more than one movement of the Grieg could only receive credit for their observations about one of the movements.

Question 5

Candidates choosing to answer this question usually achieved slightly more marks than those answering **Question 4**. Answers frequently began with the first movement of the work, describing the Sultan's theme and its instrumentation, followed by Scheherazade's and Sinbad's. The strongest answers were then able to describe these themes as heard in another movement, together with a description of how the instrumentation/theme had changed. Weak responses gave incorrect instruments for particular themes.

Section C

In this Section the strongest responses answered the question by drawing on a wide range of repertoire and describing the musical features of these pieces. Examiners encountered many essays where specific musical examples were not given, or only the title and composer of the work, with no musical detail. Some responses were rather short and others spent a great deal of time giving the background to a particular style or genre, which was not required by the question. Candidates should remember that credit cannot be awarded for long descriptions of non-musical features of a piece of music, recording or performance.

Question 6

This was the most popular essay in **Section C**, with half the candidates choosing to write about how music can describe a particular time and/or place. Answers frequently referred to film music and how it can enhance the scene, with the higher-scoring responses naming a particular film cue and describing both the music and the scene it accompanies. There were also many references to Indian raag, again with higher-scoring answers naming a specific raag and when it would be heard. Some candidates extended the scope of the question to include how particular pieces of music were representative of when they were written. More successful responses taking this approach referred to blues and jazz and protest music in general. Answers which referred to the different periods of Western Classical Music were generally less effective.

Question 7

This was the second most popular option in this section, with nearly one third of candidates choosing to write about how improvisation is used in different traditions. As expected, candidates spent some time discussing the use of improvisation in jazz. As always, the highest-scoring answers referred to specific pieces of music. Candidates also wrote about improvisation in Indian music and some also explained how small changes in live performances of pop music could be seen as improvisation. Candidates answering this question achieved the highest marks in this section on average.

Question 8

This was the least popular option in this section, possibly reflecting candidates' lack of confidence with the concept of structure in music. Candidates answering this question achieved the lowest mark on average in this section. The most common structure to be discussed was the verse-chorus structure of most pop songs. Stronger answers also referred to the other sections that might be found in a pop song, together with specific examples.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/12
Listening

Key messages

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Essays in **Section B** should not refer to track timings, as Examiners do not have the recordings that the candidates use.

Essays in **Section C** should answer the question by drawing on specific pieces of music as evidence, giving detail of the musical features of these works.

General comments

Examiners encountered a wide variety of responses, across the whole mark range.

Many candidates chose not to answer one or more questions in **Section A**.

Handwriting is occasionally difficult to read, particularly in the essays.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

The strongest responses in this section demonstrated detailed knowledge of the Baroque set work, with the ability to apply this knowledge to unfamiliar repertoire.

Question 1

- (a) About two thirds of the candidates correctly stated that the title of the movement is *Air*.
- (b) A significant number of candidates were able to gain the mark for this question, by giving an accepted Italian tempo marking for the performance. Andante or moderato would be expected for this movement, but given the faster tempo of the recording, allegretto and allegro were also accepted.
- (c) The large majority of candidates were able to correctly identify the harpsichord as the keyboard instrument heard in the extract.
- (d) This was less well-answered. Some candidates gained both marks, for correctly describing the contribution of both the woodwind (doubling the 1st violin/playing the melody) and the brass (playing a sustained note/pedal). The marks available for the woodwind/bassoon playing with the continuo or the brass/horns doubling the melody at cadences were less often awarded.

Question 2

- (a) (i) A small number of candidates named the chord in enough detail to be awarded the mark – both dominant/V/A and 7th were required.

(ii) This was not very often answered correctly, with keys such as A minor, E major and relationships such as the dominant or relative major being suggested instead.

(b) Candidates were more successful in this question than the previous one, often gaining a mark for sequence and sometimes the second mark for ascending. The word 'precisely' in the question and the two marks available were to draw candidates' attention to the fact that 'sequence' alone was not enough for full marks.

(c) About two thirds of the candidates named the scale correctly as chromatic. 'Descending' was not awarded credit.

(d) Some candidates were able to gain both marks, for suspensions and circle of fifths. Candidates gaining one mark usually correctly identified the suspensions. A significant number of candidates did not gain either of the marks available.

(e) Candidates often noted that the solo cello doubled the tutti cello part, the alternation of the semiquaver pattern between solo cello and the violins and the homophonic texture. Some candidates pointed to the continuo accompaniment alone, but few referred to the bars where the tutti violins and viola accompanied. Three correct musical observations, together with the correct relevant bar numbers was enough for a candidate to achieve all six marks available for this question.

Question 3

(a) Although most candidates did write about dynamics when answering this question, some missed the crucial part of the question asking about dynamic contrast. This led to some very general comments about the two performances, which received only a few marks. Stronger answers gave some detail, together with bar numbers.

(b) The strongest answers to this question worked through the suggested musical features, comparing the two extracts and using the evidence to suggest which performance was most historically informed. Occasionally some candidates made incorrect statements (such as the pitch of Performance B was higher) or missed out the crucial letter when naming a performance (e.g. Performance is faster). One or two candidates seemed to think that the two performances were two different pieces, suggesting changes in tonality. Candidates cannot achieve a mark in the highest mark band (8 – 10) unless they give some contextual information. The highest-achieving answers were detailed and gave bar numbers of some specific features (e.g. ornamentation and articulation).

Section B

The strongest answers in this section demonstrated an ability to draw on specific musical features of the **Section B** set work(s) to answer the question, giving a clear and detailed account of the music, leaving the Examiners in no doubt as to which part of the work was being described. It is very important that when answering their chosen question in this section that candidates do not just 'tell the story' behind the music, but refer to specific musical features.

Question 4

This was the less popular of the **Section B** essay questions, but a large number of candidates still chose to answer this question. There were some strong responses, most of which chose the final movement 'Festival at Baghdad' from *Scheherazade*. These discussed the use of different scales/modes, instrumentation (particularly percussion) and ornamentation, often relating these to the music of Janissary bands.

Question 5

This question was slightly more popular than **Question 4**, with candidates on average achieving a slightly higher mark. Candidates were often confident on the descriptive intentions of the music, but many struggled to give examples restricted to dynamics, dissonance and pitch. Successful responses traced the use of the three elements throughout the work, relating each to the suggestion of the myth.

Section C

In this Section the strongest responses answered the question by drawing on a wide range of repertoire and describing the musical features of these pieces. Examiners encountered many essays where specific musical examples were not given, or only the title and composer of the work, with no musical detail. Some responses were rather short and others spent a great deal of time giving the background to a particular style or genre, which was not required by the question. Candidates should remember that credit cannot be awarded for long descriptions of non-musical features of a piece of music, recording or performance.

Question 6

This was the most popular option in this section, with nearly half the candidates choosing this title. Candidates often referred to music used in celebrations and ceremonies (including weddings, birthdays and the use of national anthems). Many also broadened the question to include types of music that might be heard in everyday life, such as watching a film, allowing them to write about film music. References to music used for leisure opened answers up to examples of pop music. The strongest answers named a particular situation in everyday life, gave an example of a specific pieces of music and then described the musical features that made this music suitable.

Question 7

Very few candidates chose to answer this question, but those that did scored on average the highest marks in this section. Answers seen included examples of music from Africa and India, jazz and death metal. References to pop and jazz allowed candidates to write about the use of the drum kit. Some candidates also pointed to percussion being important in helping to maintain a steady tempo in music for dancing.

Question 8

This was the second most popular title, with many candidates choosing this option. Answers referred to the use of technology in different venues, with amplification allowing musicians to perform in large arenas. Candidates also pointed to the negative side of technology, with the recent use of AI to compose pieces of music. There was also frequently discussion about the fact that musicians now have the ability to create music at home alone, without the need for any collaboration, recognising that this was both positive and negative. Stronger answers gave examples of specific pieces of music, describing how they had been created, performed or shared.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/13
Listening

Key messages

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Essays in **Section B** should not refer to track timings, as Examiners do not have the recordings that the candidates use.

Essays in **Section C** should answer the question by drawing on specific pieces of music as evidence, giving detail of the musical features of these works.

General comments

Examiners encountered a wide variety of responses, across the mark range.

Many candidates chose not to answer one or more questions in **Section A**.

Handwriting is occasionally difficult to read, particularly in the essays.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

The strongest responses in this section demonstrated detailed knowledge of the Baroque set work, with the ability to apply this knowledge to unfamiliar repertoire.

Question 1

- (a) About three quarters of the candidates correctly stated that the extract was taken from the first movement. *Allegro* and *allegro moderato* were accepted, but *allegro assai* was not, as this is the tempo marking of the final movement.
- (b) A significant number of candidates were able to gain the mark for this question, recognising that a sequence is heard. The word 'descending' was not required for the mark.
- (c) Many candidates were able to gain all three marks available, by giving three different points about the interaction between the solo violin and the rest of the orchestra. Few answers mentioned that the tutti plays the original ritornello melody which the soloist plays arpeggios, but the other ways of achieving the marks were more frequently seen.

Question 2

- (a) This question was often well answered, with candidates gaining all three marks available. Examiners saw reference to the fugal entries, the polyphonic texture and the order of the entries most frequently, with some candidates noting the monophonic opening with the soloists doubling the tutti 1st violin.

(b) Some candidates correctly identified both harmonic devices. Those that achieved only one of the two marks for this question usually gained this for suspensions.

(c) (i) The cadence given (perfect) was more frequently correct than the key (G minor), with G major and various other keys seen by Examiners.

(ii) About half the candidates gained the mark for 'dominant', with relative major being a common incorrect answer.

(d) This question was usually well answered, with candidates often gaining all or most of the six marks available. Successful answers usually referred to at least one of the examples of imitation, sometimes also indicating the difference in pitch. Responses receiving all six marks also usually identified the violins playing in thirds. Three correct musical observations, together with the relevant bar numbers was enough for candidates to receive full marks for this question.

Question 3

(a) On average candidates received fewer of the six marks available for this question than they did for the previous one. The weakest responses made no reference to articulation, instead writing about other features of the music and therefore could not be awarded credit. The statement that Performance A was more legato (or Performance B was more staccato) was often seen, with some candidates also noting the more accented Performance in B. Many answers did not give sufficient detail to be awarded more than a few marks.

(b) The strongest answers to this question worked through the listed musical features, comparing the two extracts and using the evidence to suggest which performance was most historically informed. Occasionally some candidates made incorrect statements (such as the pitch of Performance B was lower) or missed out the crucial letter when naming a performance (e.g. Performance is faster). Candidates cannot achieve a mark in the highest mark band (8 – 10) unless they give some contextual information. The highest-achieving answers were detailed and gave bar numbers of some specific features (e.g. ornamentation and dynamics).

Section B

The strongest answers in this section demonstrated an ability to draw on specific musical features of the **Section B** set work(s) to answer the question, giving a clear and detailed account of the music, leaving the Examiners in no doubt as to which part of the work was being described. It is very important that when answering their chosen question in this section that candidates do not just 'tell the story' behind the music, but refer to specific musical features.

Question 4

This was the more popular of the **Section B** essay questions, with nearly two thirds of the candidates selecting this option. The question gave candidates the opportunity to work through the myth of the submerged cathedral, explaining how the musical ideas reflected the different parts of the story. The strongest answers also referred to the structure of the work as a whole, while weaker responses sometimes gave a good account of the myth, but with little mention of the music.

Question 5

Just over one third of the candidates answered this question in **Section B**. Weaker responses were usually able to point to one or two examples of melodic material and who was being represented while stronger answers then went on to explain how the melodies were developed and what this might be representing in terms of the story. This included the passing of the Prince's theme between different instruments in the Rimsky-Korsakov, together with the changes in the accompaniment.

Section C

In this Section the strongest responses answered the question by drawing on a wide range of repertoire and describing the musical features of these pieces. Examiners encountered many essays where specific musical examples were not given, or only the title and composer of the work, with no musical detail. Some responses were rather short and others spent a great deal of time giving the background to a particular style

or genre, which was not required by the question. Candidates should remember that credit cannot be awarded for long descriptions of non-musical features of a piece of music, recording or performance.

Question 6

This was the most popular option in this section, with more than half the candidates choosing this title. Most responses used film music as one of the examples, with stronger candidates giving a specific example and then going on to explain how the features music reflected the scene. Candidates sometimes extended the question to include how specific pieces of music were reflective of the time in which they were written, using the different periods Western classical music or jazz as examples. Programme music from the Western classical tradition was also popular, with candidates managing to avoid writing about their set works.

Question 7

Few candidates chose to answer this question, but Examiners saw examples of very comprehensive responses. These included references to Arab scales and tuning and Western equal temperament, but also guitar scordatura and examples of pieces of music using this. Mention was also made of Indian raag, with stronger answers giving an example of a raag. Gamelan was also used as an example, with the very careful tuning of the instruments to achieve the 'shimmering' effect.

Question 8

This was the second most popular title, with just under a third of candidates choosing this option. Unfortunately, some candidates spent a great deal of time writing about non-musical features of a performance (such as dancing or lighting) and could not be awarded credit for these sections of their essays. Stronger answers linked the size of a venue to the actual music, with some performers enjoying the freedom of an intimate venue (such as a small jazz club), giving them the confidence to try out new ideas, while other performers in a very large venue (such as an international pop singer in an arena) going with the enthusiasm of the crowd and making changes to well-known songs. Examples were also drawn from Western classical music (with performances of Baroque music adding ornamentation) and the recording studio, where a 'definitive' version of a track is created.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/02
Practical Music

Key messages

- Consult the Checklists on pages 24 and 25 of the syllabus before sending candidates' work. Nothing in these lists is optional.
- Read the bullet points above the mark descriptors (pages 26 – 31 of the syllabus) before deciding candidates' marks.
- In Element 1, candidates playing in an ensemble must be musically and visually identifiable, and not be excessively doubled by another performer.
- In Element 2, candidates must write for at least **two** instruments.

General comments

There was much evidence of impressive musicianship across the two elements, and most candidates seem to have engaged in the course with enthusiasm and commitment. Many teacher assessors wrote copious notes in support of the marks awarded: the information therein is incredibly helpful during the moderation process, and all comments were carefully read. Thank you also to all the accompanists, instrumental teachers and IT technicians who work so hard behind the scenes to ensure that candidates' work is presented in its best light.

The administration of the two elements is straightforward, and well documented in the syllabus – and there were many examples of excellent practice – but there were occasionally some administrative problems which meant that centres had to be contacted. These included:

- Un-named files on USB or DVD: Moderators sometimes had to play detective and match teacher comments to video or audio recordings.
- Missing sheet music: sending copies is a syllabus requirement, otherwise Moderators cannot assess fluency and accuracy. Sometimes these were visible on the stand in the Element 1 recording, but not included in the submission.
- Unidentified candidates in ensembles: teachers should annotate both the Element 1 video and the enclosed sheet music so that Moderators are clear who they are assessing. Candidates playing or singing in ensembles should not be doubled by other performers; for this reason, large-scale choral or band performances, with several performers to a part, are not suitable for Element 1.
- Centres should ensure that candidates and their instruments are always visible on the Element 1 recording. Candidates should not play with their backs to the camera.

Other administrative points occasionally caused difficulties:

- A significant minority of Element 1 recordings were impaired by poor acoustics in the performance venue. A lot of reverb makes it more difficult to identify the breadth of dynamics in a performance, and an outdoor venue makes it more difficult for a performer to hear themselves while performing. Always do a sound check before recording Element 1 – excessively loud accompanists or backing tracks do not help candidates. Some candidates performed with headphones, so that only they could hear the backing track. This did not aid reliable moderation.
- Some candidates did not include Element 2 Written Statements. These should be considered when assessing Criterion A (Preparations) and D (Communication) and omitting them from the submission may result in a downward adjustment in marks.
- Larger centres with 10+ candidates are required to send a sample of their work across the mark range: please ensure an even spread and include the work of the highest and lowest-marked complete submissions. This is to ensure that any adjustments made to marks are fair to all candidates.

- Assessors should check the addition of marks on the two WMS and ensure that totals are correctly transferred onto the CASF and the MS1 Mark Sheet.

Comments on specific questions

Element 1: Performing

The work presented in Element 1 was very varied, and Moderators were privileged to witness some impressive performances in all genres of music. For many candidates, it was by far the strongest Element. Performance contexts were varied, but most candidates do better when there is a sense of occasion – whether that be audience, venue, or both, candidates performing in their bedrooms rarely exhibit a full range of performing skills. The most successful presentations were those where the repertoire is well within the capability of the candidate: it is better to play simpler pieces with musicality, rather than performing at the limits of technical ability. Element 1 performances can be filmed at any point in the course – this is not a terminal examination – and pieces can be recorded more than once if assessors feel that candidates could produce a better account on another day. Many candidates enthusiastically embraced the notion of 'contrast' and performed in more than one genre – for example, a Beethoven and be-bop pianist ensured that a wide range of skills were available for assessment.

A small number of candidates did not perform at least two pieces of music, and this impacted both on their ability to demonstrate a range of techniques and their understanding of contrasting styles of music. Many candidates performed from memory: there is no requirement to do this, but candidates using a stand should ensure that it does not obscure the instrument or face on the recording – this is crucial for singers, whose ability to communicate the meaning of lyrics is assessed in Criterion D. Do encourage vocalists to make eye contact with the audience, even if that is only a camera.

Marking was largely accurate in Element 1, but Moderators sometimes felt that centres were generous in assessment criteria C and D. Teachers should ensure that the nuances of a performance are accurately reflected in the video submitted and that the performance venue is sympathetic to what candidates are trying to achieve.

Element 2: Composing

More work required mark adjustment in Element 2, although again, there were some excellent submissions. The best work was informed by a clear written statement citing specific music influences and not veering into narration, autobiography or too much analysis of the piece. This was then followed through with work that was well structured, memorable, and made good use of the relatively short time limitation set on submissions, with idiomatic use of instruments or voices.

Where possible, even if the recording is not live, candidates should – at some point in the compositional process – at least attempt to try out instrumental parts on the instrument they are writing for to ensure that they are even possible to play. The harp was a popular instrument, but most of the time it was written for as if it were a piano, and some instruments were presented completely out of range, or with impossible double stopping. There were some excellent vocal compositions, but candidates should be reminded that vocal compositions normally require lyrics. A 'blended' recording, where performers sing over a backing rather than simply using a digital 'ooh' or 'ah' sound, will almost invariably score more highly in assessment criteria C and D. The literary quality of lyrics is unimportant, but correct underlay, with appropriate stresses and inflections, is vital.

Some weaker compositions cited as an influence a style that relies on functional harmony or polyphony, but then did not demonstrate understanding of harmonic progression, with a lot of seemingly unintentional or random dissonance. An understanding of the circle of fifths would help candidates understand how to achieve deliberate consonance or discord in chords and chord progressions. Similarly, some compositions were very 'busy' with lots of different simultaneous rhythms which did not align with the perceived musical influences. Even in a short composition, it is usually better if the chosen instruments do not play all at the same time, all the time.

Candidates composed just as well using DAWs as with standard notation, although often the empirical written evidence could be a little sketchy. The best submissions in this format used a variety of written media including screen shots and timings to provide an account that could be easily read as the composition was played. This is different from the written statement, which has the same purpose for all compositions,

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regardless of the compositional tools used. All candidates, regardless of the genre in which they are writing, should mix down their recording so that the status of the chosen instruments is always coherent and clear.

MUSIC

**Paper 9483/03
Extended Performance**

Key messages

- Check that all video files are complete and will play before sending them to Cambridge.
- The performance theme must have a consistent single focus, from any tradition.
- The Research Report must be supported by carefully selected and recorded audio extracts.
- The Coursework Cover Sheet must indicate the nature of the work that has been submitted for Components 04 or 05.

General comments

There were many stunning performances, in a huge range of genres, and most candidates were extremely well prepared for their recording. The conventions of 'performance' were often embraced with enthusiasm, and it was clear that, for many candidates, their recording was the culmination of a long career in school music-making. Most candidates were very ably supported by accompanists, technicians and indeed appreciative audiences, and the work that goes on behind the scenes to present candidates in the best possible light is greatly appreciated.

Most candidates have grasped the idea of 'single focus' in this component, but there are still a significant minority of submissions where the chosen repertoire has no real stylistic or thematic connection, for example programmes of unrelated pieces only connected by an over-arching extra-musical theme such as 'Love'. Candidates who do this limit the marks available to them in assessment criteria A, D and E. Performance repertoire and the Research Report go hand in hand, and teachers are advised to supervise candidates closely from the beginning to ensure that marks are not unnecessarily lost by inappropriate repertoire choices. The interpretative points made in the Report should ideally impact on the **whole** performance programme. Misunderstandings such as this are sometimes replicated across complete centres, and both teachers and candidates should read the syllabus requirements carefully (on pages 35 and 36 of the syllabus) before starting work

The list of items to be included in the submission is on page 34 of the syllabus. The Cover Sheet is a significant document that enables Examiners to check that there is no crossover between the work presented for 03 and 04 or 05. Candidates should include as much detail as they can, and teachers are advised to ensure that the breadth of work covered in the second year of the examination is varied, and discrete to each component.

Several centres sent video files that would not open, or cut off a performance half-way through, or had very poor sound quality. Please do a sound check before recording and play all material carefully before despatch. Requests for additional or replacement material can cause delays, particularly at a time when the school year is drawing to a close.

Comments on specific questions

The Research Report

There were many excellent reports, regardless of the performance, and many candidates had truly engaged with the process of research, comparison and reflection. The most important aspect of the Report is the comparison of **two** performances of **one** piece that the candidate has performed, and this should form the central core of the report. The rest of the repertoire can certainly be mentioned – if the performance focus is appropriate, the points made impact on that too – but candidates should not be distracted by extraneous or irrelevant detail.

In general, it is better to write about a small amount of music in greater detail, so candidates who perform one piece (for example a sonata) should concentrate on one movement, rather than trying to write about the entire piece. The written comments **must** be supported with carefully selected, relevant audio extracts which carefully inform the assertions made. It is not enough to simply provide YouTube links or complete performances – even with time stamps – and candidates who do this can expect to see lower marks in Assessment Criterion A.

When comparing performances, most candidates wrote convincingly about tempo and dynamics. Candidates exploring interpretation in more depth wrote about phrasing, tone and instrumental or vocal-specific points such as bowing, pedalling and diction. Where appropriate, it was good to see some detailed references to authentic performance practice, and occasionally, a consideration of sound quality in earlier analogue recordings, if used. Some candidates use live performances, courtesy of YouTube, and the visual aspect of performance can also add a new dimension, along with fruitful points for self-reflection. Occasionally, there were inconsistencies in the provision of audio extracts – either they were referred to in the text but not included in the submission, or the tracks were in an order that did not concur with the text or the footnotes.

Examiners are not looking for formulaic reports, but those which achieved marks in Levels 4 and 5 of assessment criterion A tended to do most the following:

- Included a separate file of audio tracks, linked to the text, footnoted so they could be listened to at the appropriate point.
- Covered just enough music (not the whole programme) to make a good range of interpretative points, appropriate to the chosen repertoire, that impacted on the entire performance.
- Used the conventions of academic research – including footnotes and a (compulsory) bibliography to support their assertions.
- Provided **relevant** historical context and analysis to inform their performance choices.
- Reflected on how studying the interpretations of contrasting performers had impacted (or not) on their own performance.

Candidates often reflect upon how an interpretation has influenced their own performance and may mention specific features they have adopted. Whilst it is fine not to be inspired by the chosen listening, Examiners do reward appropriately in assessment criterion E if interpretative features mentioned and favoured in the report enhance the performance.

Regrettably, there were a small number of candidates who had missed the point of the research report entirely and simply wrote a series of programme notes, or a description of their practice regime. Attention is drawn to the descriptors for Levels 1 and 2 of assessment criterion A, which is where work that fulfils few of the syllabus requirements can expect to be placed.

The Performance

Most candidates were very well prepared, and there were many excellent submissions, in an eclectic range of styles. Piano and voice were the most popular disciplines, but a full range of vocal, orchestral, pop and jazz instruments were examined, with some examples of World Music too. Examiners were pleased to see that most performers approached the recording with a due sense of occasion: for most candidates, a small audience can give an appropriate focus and take the attention off the camera. There were fewer examples of candidates playing music that was technically too difficult for them this year (remember that there is no minimum standard of musical complexity for this examination), although some candidates found dynamic or expressive nuance more problematic when the notes were testing. Some candidates would benefit from re-tuning in between items – this is perfectly acceptable and should take place on camera. Candidates are advised to exercise caution over repeats in music. If they are included to demonstrate (for example) that the performer is aware of the conventions of Baroque or jazz ornamentation, that that is fine; if they are deployed merely to extend an 8-minute performance to an acceptable length, then that is a little more problematic.

In general, candidates coped well with playing for an extended period. However, whilst it is fine to have a drink handy, performers should be aware of the conventions of performance and not sip water *during* a piece, or when the accompaniment is still playing. Wind players are allowed a break (on camera) of up to a minute during the recording. Candidates who recorded completely on their own – perhaps in a practice room, or even in their bedrooms – sometimes forgot that they were performing at all. Singers sang very quietly (as if they were afraid someone might hear), pianists left their foot on the sustain pedal whilst they found the music for the next piece and guitarists disappeared off camera whilst they adjusted the amplifier.

Assessment criteria D and E have bullet points which specifically refer to performance skills, and candidate should be made aware of these.

Many candidates play or sing from memory. This is not a syllabus requirement, but candidates who use sheet music should not hide behind a large stand. Singers should practise looking up and engaging visually with the audience (and camera) so that their musical communication is not impeded. Many singers use microphones – this is fine, provided they remember that it is not a substitute for projection, dynamic variety or diaphragmatic support. Teachers should ensure that amplified sound is a true representation of the candidate's vocal or instrumental timbre and not use excessive reverb or special effects.

Technical and Administrative Points

- Please ensure that the camera is placed so that the Examiner can see the candidate's hands, instrument, face and feet (if appropriate). Pianists and drummers are best filmed from the side, rather than from above (or sometimes even from behind).
- It is helpful if the accompanist is visible on screen as this enables the Examiner to better assess musical communication. Please also ensure that the accompanist does not play too loudly and obscures the candidate's performance.
- Candidates should **always** be accompanied, if the repertoire demands it.
- The sound check should include assessing the minimum and maximum volume levels at which the candidate is expecting to perform, so that a good range of dynamics is discernible on the recording. Overly resonant rooms may also cause problems with dynamics and/or articulation.
- Candidates using a backing track should ensure that it is audible to the Examiner, and not just heard on personal headphones.
- Please place sheet music in the correct order, particularly if titles are not written in Latin script. A list of pieces played is one of the required items in the submission checklist on page 34 of the syllabus.
- Please ensure that all the audio tracks that the candidate refers to are on the USB or DVD, and that they are numbered, cross-checked with the report text, and of an appropriate length.
- Please check the quality of videos (including the lighting) and ensure that they play to the very end of the candidate's performance. Originals should be retained in centre, just in case.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/04
Extended Composition

Key messages

- Please double check that all audio materials are complete and accessible on the CD or USB submitted by the candidate.
- Candidates can maximise their marks by giving full attention to the requirements of the Research Report.
- Centres can support their candidates in using the research requirement as a framework to develop composing skills whether this is in areas of harmonic language, understanding of instruments or use of technology, for example. Investigating how composers compose, use a range of skills and techniques and providing referenced edited portions of audio material is a vital part of research preparation and concurrent working.
- Teachers should encourage breadth of learning and encourage curiosity in the way candidates approach their choice of topics for the two options in the second year of study.

General comments

Candidates choosing this option, typically have a particular interest in composing and want to spend a committed length of time in their second year of study to produce an extended piece of work whilst learning from the music of others, how to do so.

What is an extended composition? Whilst the syllabus allows for a piece ‘in parts’ – these parts must be *musically* connected to enable a demonstration of extension and development of ideas. Two songs, linked by a narrative theme (yearning/attachment etc.), for example, cannot demonstrate musical development over a longer span particularly if the songs have different instruments and styles.

Many successful compositions saw candidates drawing on their skills in performance, writing for a string ensemble or jazz band, for example, thereby reflecting their own wider ensemble performing experience.

Cover Sheet

- The accurate and comprehensive completion of the cover sheet for this unit is mandatory.
- Candidates must fill in **Section A**, the teacher completes **Section B**.
- Candidates must give sufficient detail of composers/pieces included as part of their research to evidence that no significant overlap has occurred between components.
- It is helpful, for example, to provide transparent details of an Extended Performing programme or a title and reference pieces for an Investigation.
- An example of inappropriate overlap with Extended Performance (03) would be a candidate who performs Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata including a comparison of two performances of that sonata and uses the same piece as one of only three compositions analysed as part of the Research Report for Extended Composition (04).
- An example of inappropriate overlap with Investigating Music (05) would be a candidate researching the music of Joe Hisaishi, who also submits an ‘animé’ film score for Extended Composition (04), mentioning some composers in passing but crediting the main influence to have been Joe Hisaishi.
- Candidates who make substantial references to the Set Works cannot be credited for the inclusion of this detail in the Research Report as it does not represent independent research.

Inclusion of a track list

A fully detailed track list with references to sources, performers, musicians etc. should be provided in line with accepted academic research standards.

Some candidates helpfully chose to also include a general ‘discography’ pointing to a more general range of relevant listening.

A Research Report

The syllabus makes clear that the Research Report is a substantial piece of evidence that is presented as a summary of the more detailed research log that candidates will have compiled during their work in this component. It should include analysis of music relevant to the candidate’s composing work and edited audio clips and/or annotated manuscript extracts must be included as evidence of what they have heard in the music of others. Audio extracts from a candidate’s own composition are not required.

There are 20 marks available for this section of the component. A hastily compiled ‘commentary’ which is simply descriptive of the composition rather than explaining of the *process* of composition cannot score highly. It is important that candidates use formal language in their writing; they should avoid being on ‘first name-terms’ with composers. They should take time to reflect on the process and outcome of their work.

Teachers can support their candidates by having in-depth conversations to uncover the scope the research will take. Do candidates need to improve their understanding of harmonic practice? Can you support them in providing extra examples of composers’ work to explore within specific styles or genres of interest to the candidate? Are technical skills of idiomatic instrumental writing or techniques of modulation to be improved? What exploration of the techniques of minimalist extension of rhythms and motifs might be studied to help a candidate understand how to develop and extend initial ideas? What skills would be learned in engaging with the notation of a range of drum-kit patterns?

These are just a few of an enormous range of questions that might be asked.

Other ways issues to bear in mind include:

- Focus on substantial features in research music examples. Referencing the use of trills/tremolo/tempo changes/use of *sfz* etc. may be of limited value if the candidate is unable to shape a memorable melody or establish a harmonic system to underpin a song.
- References should not be presented in the form of a YouTube link with no detail of the piece’s title or composer, for example.
- Candidates should be ready to take a ‘deep-dive’ into relevant music. A simple reference to Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring as evidence of engagement with ‘dissonance’ is not convincing.
- Successful writing by candidates, clearly explained what was learned from analysis about texture/use of instruments/melody shaping/harmonic schemes and possibilities, etc.

It may be advantageous to provide candidates with a structured harmonic course if this is relevant to their intentions. A ‘communal’ approach where appropriate should not, however, take away the candidate’s choice to pursue an entirely different route. The individual nature of composing work cannot be over emphasised.

B Shaping of Ideas; structure

Writing a composition of 6 – 8 minutes is a significant challenge within this elected option at A level. Successful candidates understood that they needed to construct and consider a range of ideas and used their thinking about *structure* as a way to plan and organise the presentation of their material. Whatever the genre, style or tradition selected, candidates need to carefully consider and demonstrate the range of understandings of relevant techniques to effectively execute their creative plans.

C Working with ideas; the use of compositional techniques

Some candidates wrote music that was very slow and of little content to achieve the required length of composition. More successful candidates worked creatively with metre and tempo, mode and modulation, contrast and continuity, understanding the need to take time to explore the potential in their ideas for extension and development.

D Use of medium and texture

Candidates intending to write for relatively large orchestral forces understood the need to develop an understanding of the idiomatic qualities of individual instruments and their family groups. The research here

often contributed significantly to understanding. Successful candidates understood orchestration skills to be much more than distributing the materials between the instruments.

Whether in a jazz, pop, gaming soundtrack or chamber music context, candidates asked themselves, 'Is this playable and what would this sound like beyond this computer I am notating on?'

Some candidates demonstrated good levels of skill and understanding in producing and finely balancing their ideas in an electronic context.

Explaining their sound sources and production/mixing techniques is a critical requirement here – total transparency in the use of samples and their manipulation can best be achieved by providing audio extracts of original loops or samples.

E Communication

There were several convincing live performances of compositions that conveyed a strong level of expression and a commitment to the faithful reproduction of the composer's work. Equally impressive were those candidates laying down live individual tracks using various sequencer programmes to generate an authentic representation of their work.

There is a great deal candidates can do to use notation programmes to generate expressive 'performances' with attention paid to accurate 'interpretations' of dynamic markings, articulation and changes to tempi as required.

Candidates submitting a commentary in place of a score realised that this was information to be accessed by the Examiner in a separate document to the Research Report. If candidates do not sufficiently explain the roles and instructions assigned to various performers in non-notated music, this is highly problematic. Only the work of the composer can be credited and non-notated performances where the contribution of others is not fully explained cannot be credited to the composer.

Centres are reminded that this is an English-language qualification and scores should not use Cyrillic or Hanzi symbols, for example, to label instruments. The traditional use of Italian for score directions, is entirely acceptable.

It is good practice to provide a separate set of lyrics for any songs. They can be sung in any language but an English translation should be provided so that the appropriateness of the word setting can be musically assessed.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/05
Investigating Music

Key messages

- The design of this A level course requires approximately 180 hours of guided learning in a second year of study where two options are chosen from Extended Performing, Extended Composition and Investigating Music.
- Please support candidates in the framing of their research questions, whilst fully acknowledging their own motivating enthusiasms, curiosity and interests.
- There should be no overlap between the chosen options or with the Set Works in the Listening Paper.
- The Research Investigation is a self-contained document with all evidence of listening to be made available to the Examiner on USB or CD. Please supply a fully detailed track list of supporting audio extracts. YouTube links alone, are insufficient in a research document.

General comments

This report to teachers acknowledges the high standards of some of the work received this session but is intended to provide helpful suggestions for ways to support candidates in accessing the full range of marks available.

Planning and supporting from the very start of the course

Successful candidates have a clear idea of the syllabus content both in terms of its guidance and requirement; they appreciate the scope of the assessment criteria and the way their submissions will be evaluated by Examiners.

Centres must provide opportunities for discussion, debate and support as candidates formulate their research question/Investigation title. Some candidates who have a weak starting point such as a topic that is not focused on *music* will be at a severe disadvantage. Candidates can be fascinated by contextual detail such as historical information or psychological or sociological considerations. Candidates might submit presentations with a focus on film and video-game storylines; they might give excess coverage to the lyrics of specific songs. In presenting an unbalanced Investigation, candidates disadvantage themselves in not being able to access the full range of marks for music analysis, listening etc. Teachers should monitor the progress of their candidate's research and advise them to give attention to all the criteria required.

Centres can provide oversight to ensure *breadth* of approach across the options chosen.

It may be necessary for centres to introduce candidates to some standard research skills including developing an understanding of typical referencing options in academic work. Candidates often refer to the difficulties they have had in finding scores or sources of information on the topic they were investigating. Whilst this was sometimes the case, at other times the information was easily found and the key issue was – knowing *how* to search, look, find.

Cover Sheet

- The accurate and comprehensive completion of the cover sheet for this unit is mandatory.
- Candidates must fill in **Section A**, the teacher completes **Section B**.
- Candidates must give sufficient detail of the *music* focused on, including names of composers/pieces included as part of their research, to evidence that no significant overlap has occurred between components.
- It is important, for example, to provide transparent details of an Extended Performing programme or a title and research reference pieces for an Extended Composition.

- An example of inappropriate overlap/narrow range of study with Extended Performance (03) would be a candidate who performs Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata including a comparison of two performances of that sonata and submits an Investigation into two late Haydn piano sonatas for their Investigation (05).
- An example of inappropriate overlap/narrow range of study with Extended Composition (04) would be an Investigation focused on game music across the development of the Super Mario franchise and composition whose research is confined to Howard Shore's Lord of the Rings film music.

A Reflective statement

A minority of candidates did not provide discrete reflective statements. Candidates should be mindful that this statement is worth 20 per cent of the available marks.

A significant number of reflective statements focused on the practicalities of the essay writing – difficulties in keeping to or meeting the word limit, difficulty finding scores or literature about their chose area, rather than reflecting on the ultimate suitability of their research focus, the appropriateness of their research base and their success in generating their own informed original ideas to present alongside the statements of other commentators. Successful statements included objective evaluation of strengths and relative weaknesses of the work in a reflective manner.

B Listening

A small minority of submissions did not include audio extracts at all, though some candidates successfully used annotated score extracts in lieu of audio. Listing of YouTube links alone are not sufficient as a way of referencing audio materials.

Many candidates used extremely short extracts of audio to prove points; these lacked context for a listener as they were so brief. When appropriate, candidates could provide both a 'zoomed in' shorter extract and a longer musical phrase to illustrate the context of a device or feature.

Details of performers/conductor are extremely important to acknowledge. Candidates must not take their lead from social media or streaming websites that exhibit poor practice by often not acknowledging the musicians involved in a specific performance/interpretation.

C Contextual Understanding

Context was best established by candidates writing in a concise way, referencing features of historical, geographical, societal, political relevance and/or exploring the general musical landscape, either prior or contemporaneous to the music being studied in depth. The best work established context by detailing several of these factors at the start of the essay. As already mentioned, candidates should not over-develop their writing about contextual matters at the expense of analysing representative music in depth.

Candidates must use authoritative sources in their contextual research. An undergraduate essay found online, for example, will often be authored by a candidate of relatively little experience and is certainly not considered to be a scholarly source. Teachers can often helpfully point candidates in the direction of writers considered to have significant authority and respect in their chosen fields of expertise.

D Analytic/investigative techniques and technical vocabulary

There was good evidence, supported by audio and annotated manuscript extracts, demonstrating a clear sense of enjoyment on the part of candidates, uncovering the layers, structures and components of the music they were investigating.

It is important that candidates use correct terminology in analysis. Candidates should not use the word 'song', for example, to describe every piece of music. Instrumental music has its own discreet vocabulary to accurately describe structures, genres etc.

Some candidates chose pieces of music that they were clearly passionate about, however particularly with some pop music, film, computer game music or musical theatre, the pieces chosen as the focus of investigation lacked sufficient musical complexity and variety of harmony, for example, limiting the extent to which the piece could be investigated.

Candidates sometimes used transcriptions of piano/vocal/guitar scores which were not an accurate representation of the audio recording in the case of popular genres. Stronger candidates were able to acknowledge these limitations in their reflective statement and placed the emphasis of their analysis on recordings as the primary source document.

In the analysis of popular genres, successful candidates understood and wrote about the collaborative nature of the compositional process in different styles of music. They wrote about the way film, game or theatre music is often devised in a 'workshop' context and the importance of different ways of working if music is not notated.

Several candidates investigated music composed using motifs (minimalism, EDM, Wagnerian 'leitmotif' concept, computer game music) but mainly focused on the use of change of timbre to give variety in the repetition of ideas. To access the full range of marks here, candidates would need to explore the more extended means by which composers develop motifs: extension, fragmentation, inversion, retrograde, transposition, augmentation and diminution are just some examples.

The 'deep detail' in this type of music is often overlooked.

Harmonic analysis was often a weaker element of otherwise very good work. Leitmotifs in John Williams' film scores, for example, are readily available online but at A level, more is required than stating this thematic material. Candidates might ask, for example, 'How has this melody been shaped, what role does the harmonic context provide in the presentation of this thematic material, how does this material change and develop when it is heard in different parts of the film score?'

Candidates who chose to analyse music from the Western Classical tradition were often dealing with complex compositional devices and structures and it was important for them to develop a good understanding of harmonic practice.

E Communication and substantiation of judgements

The most successful Investigations were focused on *music* and used a range of research and media sources including online journals, books, documentaries and interviews. Candidates provided a wide variety of well organised audio extracts, often with self-annotated excerpts of scored material. They should ensure that clefs and key signatures are included on any screen-shot inserts. Successful candidates were able to develop their own independent ideas about the music.

Candidates using only web-based research seemed unaware in their reflective statements that this was a narrow source range. Candidates should understand the potential role of bias in self-published online 'research' and always seek to test and verify the material in online sources.

Many candidates successfully used footnotes or referencing in a final well produced list of sources.

In communicating their findings, weaker submissions contained a dense patch work of multiple quotations and could not access the full range of marks because of the lack of independent thought.

Concluding remarks

In this component, the importance of planning, preparation and adequate support throughout the progress of the work cannot be overstated. Several candidates expressed how much they enjoyed the independence and freedom offered to them in this component. Many were indeed able to work with a high degree of independence but it is important for the teacher to remain vigilant and ensure candidates are 'on-track' to fully meet the requirements of the syllabus and assessment criteria.