

MUSIC

Paper 9483/11
Listening

Key messages

Candidates often do not write very much for the essay questions, limiting the number of marks that they can achieve.

Questions should be answered with the type of musical feature required by the question e.g. a question which asks for a tempo marking should not be answered with a time signature.

Candidates should ensure that they are writing about music, rather than a detailed analysis of lyrics.

General comments

Fewer candidates are answering more than one question in **Sections B** and **C**. However, some candidates are still omitting many questions.

Handwriting is occasionally hard to decipher.

There was a wide range of scripts seen, with some candidates scoring very few marks and others with some very good answers, particularly in **Section B**.

Some candidates appeared to see **Section C** as an opportunity to write a brief history of jazz, or everything they know about Indian music, rather than attempting to answer the question.

Centres are reminded that no credit can be awarded for reference to the set works in **Section C** and that candidates should refer to at least two of world, folk, pop and jazz in their answers. The weakest answers made little or no reference to specific pieces of repertoire.

Comments on specific questions

Section A - Compositional Techniques and Performance Practice

Question 1

- (a) About a quarter of the candidates knew that the tempo marking for the movement was Larghetto. Examiners saw many answers such as andante and allegro and also answers given in BPM.
- (b) Some candidates correctly identified the cadence as perfect, but less were able to identify the correct key of G minor.
- (c) Many candidates seemed to suggest that the music moved on to the next movement or section, rather than continuing with the same music but with different instrumentation.

Question 2

- (a) Pedal was sometimes correctly identified but was rarely matched with dominant.
- (b) A few candidates correctly identified the harmonic device as a suspension. Pedal and circle of fifths were sometimes seen here, along with many suggestions that were not harmonic devices.

- (c) Some answers included information about instruments other than the three soloists, which could not be awarded credit. Very few candidates mentioned the movement in thirds and sixths, but some answers noted the unison playing of the 1st violin and (solo) cello and the imitation.
- (d) About a fifth of candidates gave the correct answer of first (inversion). Many candidates appeared to not be sure what the question was asking.
- (e) A reasonable number of candidates noted the monophonic opening texture and/or the polyphonic texture as the extract progressed. However, there was very little use of fugal terminology seen (subject, countersubject and answer). In this question (as in **Question (c)**) candidates need only make a musical point, tied to a correct bar number, for two marks.

Question 3

- (a) Many answers referred to features which were not anything to do with articulation, including comparisons which could have been used in **part (b)**. Many candidates were able to achieve one mark for mention of the fact that Performance B was more legato. The more precise detail needed for further marks was rarely seen. Candidates should ensure that they are clear with the language they use: 'clearer articulation' is rather vague as it could mean clearly staccato or clearly legato!
- (b) A common error was to state that Performance B was lower in pitch, when it was actually higher than Performance A. Candidates were often able to correctly identify that Performance A had a faster tempo and that Performance B involved a larger ensemble with a louder bass line, but there was little detail beyond this. A few candidates seemed to think that the recordings were of two different pieces or had very different instrumentation (such as clarinets).

Section B – Understanding Music

Question 4

Just over two thirds of the candidates chose to answer this essay question, (describing some of the different ways the music of Nyman and Dvořák reflects their intentions, as expressed in the titles). The strongest answers identified a musical feature, described it and then explained its effect, linking this to the title of the piece. A few candidates seemed to have very little or no knowledge of the set work at all. Candidates should not give track timings (since the Examiners have no idea which recording a candidate is referring to) but need to find some way of clearly identifying where in a piece of music they are describing. Successful responses drew on the European, folk music and African-American features of the Dvořák and the way in which Nyman suggests a train moving through different landscapes.

Question 5

Just under one third of candidates chose to write about how Bonds and Price set the poems to music. Some answers spent much of the time discussing the poems and their backgrounds, rather than describing the music and how it enhanced the poem. The highest-scoring responses took a musical feature (such as structure) and compared it in both songs, rather than taking a chronological approach with one song and then the other.

Section C – Connecting Music

Question 6

About a third of the candidates selected this title (How music can express sadness and mourning.). As in the previous question, the most successful responses chose a musical feature (such as minor tonality) and explored this in several pieces, rather than simply naming a piece of music and listing one or two features of it. Candidates are likely to achieve higher marks with pieces that they can demonstrate they know really well, drawing out features to support their answer.

Question 7

This was the least popular title in **Section C**, with fewer than a quarter of the candidates giving a response. Examiners saw a small number of good responses, referring to artists such as Laufey, but many candidates struggled to describe pieces of fusion music. This title seemed to particularly result in candidates choosing to

write everything they knew about a particular style (e.g. bhangra) without explaining how it was a fusion of musical styles and referring to examples of music.

Question 8

This was the most popular question in this Section (Should music always be listened to in silence?). Candidates were often secure in suggesting how different contexts suggest a different response to how music is listened to. However, they then often failed to support this with reference to specific pieces of music. The better answers looked at both sides of the argument.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/12
Listening

Key messages

Candidates sometimes did not write very much for the essay questions, limiting the number of marks that they could achieve.

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Candidates should ensure that they are writing about music, rather than a detailed analysis of lyrics.

General comments

Fewer candidates are answering more than one question in **Sections B** and **C**. However, some candidates are still omitting a significant number of questions.

Handwriting is occasionally hard to decipher.

There was a wide range of scripts seen, with some candidates scoring only a few marks in total and others with some very high marks.

Some candidates appeared to see **Section C** as an opportunity to write a brief history of jazz, or everything they know about Indian music, rather than attempting to answer the question.

Centres are reminded that no credit can be awarded for reference to the set works in **Section C** and that candidates should refer to at least two of world, folk, pop and jazz in their answers. The weakest answers made little or no reference to specific pieces of repertoire.

Comments on specific questions

Section A - Compositional Techniques and Performance Practice

Question 1

(a) This was reasonably well answered, with many candidates gaining at least one of the two marks available for the woodwind/oboe and bassoon join in and it is louder.

(b) (i) Just under half the candidates correctly stated that the dance was a courante.

 (ii) Candidates were frequently able to identify the triple time signature as signifying the type of dance, the other possible answers for the second mark were less frequently seen.

Question 2

(a) More than half the candidates gained the mark for suspension.

(b) Just over half the candidates knew that the chord was in first inversion. This question was omitted by a significant number of candidates, suggesting that inversion was a term they were not familiar with.

- (c) This was well answered, with many candidates receiving one mark for sequence and a good number going on to be awarded the second mark for descending.
- (d) Candidates were slightly less successful with this question, with more gaining a mark for dominant than the key of D minor.
- (e) About two fifths of the candidates recognised the circle of fifths as the harmonic device.
- (f) Fewer than one third of candidates correctly stated that the cadence was interrupted, with many opting for imperfect instead.
- (g) Candidates were most frequently awarded marks for more general comments, such as references to homophony, movement in octaves and the semiquaver pattern being passed around. In order to achieve all six marks available for this question candidates simply need to correctly identify three musical features (in this case to do with texture) and give accurate bar number references.

Question 3

- (a) There were very many ways in which the candidates could achieve the marks available, but vague answers (often referring to an 'ornament' rather than specifically a trill or appoggiatura etc.) meant that frequently lower marks were achieved here. A few candidates wrote a significant amount about features other than ornamentation.
- (b) Strongest answers identified features of the two performances and then used these to suggest which performance might be more historically authentic. Stronger answers also discussed many musical features, giving specific examples where appropriate (e.g. the location of staccato or legato passages).

Section B – Understanding Music

Question 4

More candidates chose to answer this question in **Section B** than **Question 5**. Though Examiners did see examples of very good responses to this question, many candidates struggled to restrict themselves to discussion of melody, broadening their answer to include instrumentation, rhythm and many other features. Some candidates also wrote about more than two movements in the Dvořák. Both these types of responses meant that there was sometimes a considerable amount of writing that did not receive any credit. Candidates who successfully described the use of melody drew attention to the melodic shapes and ranges of pitch in the Dvořák and the return of melodies from earlier movements in the final movement. The use of repetition, development and additive melodies in the Nyman provided material for the essay.

Question 5

As in **Question 4**, some candidates wrote about features of the music other than the interaction between the voice and piano, meaning that some of their response did not gain them any credit. The strongest answers described the relationship between the voice and piano, linking this to specific words in the text or the overall setting of the poem.

Section C – Connecting Music

Question 6

This question was selected by the fewest candidates, but some very strong responses were seen. Popular music being simple (in terms of metre, melody and tonality) and therefore fans being able to sing along was a common theme, with Western classical music often held up as more complex. Rock music was also cited by some as being more complex, particularly in the guitar solos. A good example given was 'Bohemian Rhapsody' by Queen, with its considerable length and wide variety of styles. Jazz was also suggested as having the potential to be more complex, again particularly in the solos.

Question 7

This was significantly more popular than both the other questions in this section. Some weaker answers referred only to music with words and then concentrated mainly on how the words told the story rather than the music. Candidates cited genres such as musical theatre, sometimes successfully explaining how the music contributes to the storytelling beyond the lyrics and also pop music, where the choice of instrumentation and how the music is sung and played can elevate the storytelling. One particularly strong response compared music using different tonalities (including some using modes) and explained how this contributed to the overall picture.

Question 8

About a quarter of the candidates selected this question. Answers were very varied in terms of both content and marks awarded, but weaker answers referred to only performance or composition, not both as required by the question. Creativity in fusing two musical styles was frequently discussed, including artists such as Anoushka Shankar.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/13
Listening

Key messages

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General comments

Fewer candidates are answering more than one question in **Sections B** and **C**. However, some candidates are still omitting a significant number of questions.

Handwriting is occasionally hard to decipher.

There was a wide range of scripts seen, with some candidates scoring only a few marks in total and others with some very high marks.

Some candidates appeared to see **Section C** as an opportunity to write a brief history of jazz, or everything they know about Indian music, rather than attempting to answer the question.

Centres are reminded that no credit can be awarded for reference to the set works in **Section C** and that candidates should refer to at least two of world, folk, pop and jazz in their answers. The weakest answers made little or no reference to specific pieces of repertoire.

Comments on specific questions

Section A - Compositional Techniques and Performance Practice

Question 1

- (a) About two thirds of the candidates knew that the time signature for this part of the movement was C. 4/4 and common time were also accepted.
- (b) As in part (a) this was reasonably well answered, with many candidates gaining both available marks.
- (c) Candidates usually did not achieve both available marks for this question. Slow tempo was more frequently seen than dotted rhythms.

Question 2

- (a) Few candidates used the word imitate to describe the 2nd violin entry, with many answers describing the music as polyphonic, which was not awarded credit.
- (b) Half the candidates correctly identified the harmonic device as a circle of fifths.

(c) (i) This was fairly well answered, with a good number of candidates gaining both marks for the cadence and the key. Answers gaining just one mark usually had the cadence correct but not the key.

(ii) Half the candidates correctly stated that the key is the subdominant of the tonic key of the extract.

(d) Examiners saw many references to ascending and descending sequences instead of arpeggios or broken chords. Few answers mentioned key centres, but the strongest responses gave both these and correct bar numbers. Candidates need to make only three correct musical observations with accurate bar number references to be awarded all six available marks.

Question 3

(a) Of the candidates who correctly understood the term ornamentation, trills were most successfully recognised with a small number also recognising mordents. Weaker responses often mistook the mordents for trills or turns. Some answers were too vague to receive much if any credit: the particular ornament should be identified, not just referred to as an 'ornament'.

(b) Some candidates spotted that the two performances were at different pitches, but sometimes erroneously stated that Performance B was lower. Most candidates mentioned that Performance A was faster with better answers also identifying the articulation and dynamic differences. The presence of the lute was noted by a very small number of candidates. No credit could be awarded for references to ornamentation as this was **part (a)** of the question. The strongest answers made many observations and then used this evidence to suggest which performance was a better historical interpretation.

Section B – Understanding Music

Question 4

This was marginally less popular than **Question 5** in this section and some strong responses were seen. Better answers related musical features to contrast and continuity, pointing to the rhythmic pulse, changes of instrumentation and repeating cells in the Nyman and the use of diatonicism in the Price. Strong responses also referred to the overall structure of both pieces and the return of earlier ideas in Region 5 in the Nyman.

Question 5

This question was more popular than **Question 4**. Many candidates struggled to concentrate their answer on tonality and scales. Better answers identified pentatonic and folk elements, in addition to major and minor shifts in the Dvořák and the lack of clear tonal centre and dissonance in the Bonds.

Section C – Connecting Music

Question 6

This was the least frequently chosen question in this section, answered by about a quarter of candidates. Some did not note the requirement to refer to world and pop music in their answers, reducing the number of marks that were achieved. As might be expected, Indian music was frequently cited, but candidates were sometimes unclear as to how and where improvisation would be used. In pop music candidates often referred to guitar solos or to examples of rap where performers improvise. Some candidates also commented on the fact that if music is recorded then an improvisation is 'set', rather than being different every time in live performances.

Question 7

This was the most popular essay choice in **Section C**, selected by nearly half of the candidates. There were some strong responses that discussed AI, instrument design and development alongside the use of notation software and amplification. Weaker answers were usually still satisfactory, discussing amplification, DAWs and microphones. Examples included music using technology for special effects in pop songs (such as the flanger in 'Killer Queen' by Queen), the use of 'modern' instruments in performances of folk music to engage contemporary audiences and the recording of live performances of music to be shared with wider audiences. Many answers also included information about effects pedals in various genres.

Question 8

Many candidates who chose this option wrote long answers that sometimes lacked relevant focus. Frequently answers focused on the lyrics alone, failing to discuss how they were combined with the music. Examiners saw detailed analyses of lyrics of various pop songs, but with little or no mention of the music. Better answers discussed a variety of ways that music and words could be combined, such as songs (in a wide range of styles) and rap. The use of background music in films underneath dialogue was also a successful way to answer this.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/02
Practical Music

Key messages

- Work for 9483/02 should not be sent to Cambridge on the same USB as other components of the examination.
- Carefully read the moderation report which is issued to centres when results are published. If marks have been adjusted, this will give more information on which Element(s) and assessment criteria were adjusted, and if any syllabus requirements were not met by the submission.
- In Element 1, candidates should play music which is well within their capability. Musicianship is more important than difficulty in this component. Simpler music, played well, will almost always score more highly than difficult repertoire which is beyond the performer.
- In Element 2, candidates should undertake some targeted listening prior to starting their compositions. The influence of this should be recorded in the compulsory Written Statement for each composition. It is an essential document, enabling Moderators to understand where the composition (and the candidate) is coming from. This document should be taken into account when assessing Criterion A.
- Please include a signed cover sheet for each candidate.
- Please ensure that work is easy to find on the USB or DVD. It is helpful if each candidate has a dedicated file set up for their work, with everything named and appropriately titled.
- Please ensure that hard copies of the music the candidate is performing are included for Element 1. These will usually be requested if they are missing from the submission. Please do not send us URLs or links to external websites such as Google Docs.
- The Element 2 Written Statements are compulsory and will be requested if they are not included in the submission. If you have a candidate who has not submitted a statement, please tell us on the box on the working mark sheet – and take this into consideration in criterion A when you assess the submission.
- If you have a large entry, please send the work of at least 10 candidates across the complete range of marks, including the highest and lowest-ranked candidates – but send the working mark sheets for all candidates.
- Please keep presentation of work simple and logical. One or two plastic pockets for each candidate is fine.
- Please check that all files are complete and have uploaded properly by checking the beginning **and** the end of video files, and retain all originals until results are released.

General comments

It was evident that much care, attention and pride goes into the work submitted for assessment. There were submissions from all over the world, and there was a wide range of performances in Element 1. Piano, voice and guitar were the most popular disciplines, but every instrumental family and voice type was represented, along with numerous examples of World Music traditions, and there were many stunning performances. There were numerous live, or partially live, recordings for Element 2 compositions, and candidates were actively involved in performing their own music. There were many informed comments in the dedicated boxes on the working mark sheets which are helpful. Contextual information about recordings is always welcome, for both Elements. Performances can be recorded at any point in the course, and if you feel that a recording does not represent the best work that a candidate can produce, then please do record again, if you have time.

Element 1

The range of genres presented in this Element was huge, and many candidates are well used to performing in a range of musical styles. There should be an element of contrast in the music presented, and candidates should always play more than one piece, to demonstrate this versatility. The difficulty of music performed is addressed in assessment criterion B (Fluency and Accuracy), but regardless of this, candidates should play music which enables them to demonstrate their response to the *conventions* of the repertoire, especially if the music does not routinely deploy expression or dynamic markings on the scores. Candidates are free to record their performances wherever they like, but performances where the candidate has nothing but the camera to perform to can miss out on opportunities to demonstrate their musicality and aural awareness.

Further considerations for Element 1:

- Ensemble performances are encouraged, but the discrete contribution of the candidate must be aurally and visually identifiable. Choral or band performances, where there are several performers to a part are **not** appropriate for this Component, and centres who submit performances of this nature are advised to make arrangements so that the candidate's contribution can be *uniquely* heard. Sending a video of the school choir filmed from the back of a hall, with 10 performers to a part, is not suitable evidence.
- The candidate's face, instrument, hands and feet (if appropriate) should be in shot at all times.
- The programme should be 6 – 10 minutes in length: any shorter and it is unlikely that a wide enough range of skills will be demonstrated. If it looks like the performance will exceed 10 minutes, then do omit repeats or edit long passages such as orchestral exposition in the accompaniment.
- Unless the chosen repertoire is primarily oral, please send us the sheet music. Jazz performers can annotate a lead sheet – they do not need to write out a full transcription of a solo part.
- If the repertoire demands it, then a candidate must be accompanied, either by a live accompanist or a backing track. It is not appropriate to play a concerto movement (for example) completely solo.
- Singers performing in very small rooms do not generally need amplification or excessive application of reverb; indeed, the latter may mask some subtleties of expression and dynamics.
- Candidates do not have to perform from memory. However, singers are particularly advised not to be too rooted to the stand – if a candidate does not look up from their music for the entire performance, this can impede interpretation and aural awareness.
- Some candidates played music that was so technically challenging that the finer points of the music – dynamics, expression, tempo etc. – were compromised. It is **always** better to choose a programme where the full range of the candidate's musicianship can be demonstrated, not just their ability to play lots of notes.
- Please do a sound check before recording – there were numerous performances where the candidate was drowned out by the accompanist or backing track. However, neither should the accompaniment be so quiet that it cannot be heard.
- Many candidates introduce themselves on the recording, which is helpful. However, they do not need to announce the repertoire: Centres should provide a list of the pieces their candidates are performing instead, with the sheet music in the same order as the recording.

Element 2

The standard of work produced in Element 2 was mostly of a good standard, with some very creative submissions, across a wide spectrum of genres. Many candidates approach composition with enthusiasm and incredible commitment, and had clearly explored a range of established styles before starting their assessed work. However, some candidates produced compositions that had little evidence of a convincing structure, with ideas that were neither distinctive nor well-developed. Candidates having an awareness of the assessment criteria for Composing will enable fruitful discussions on such matters as melody, harmony, structure and texture. Sometimes high marks were awarded by assessors in Assessment Criterion D (Communication) simply because the piece had been produced and recorded using music technology. To achieve marks in the top band of criterion D, work should demonstrate the successful use of expression and dynamics and consistently reflect the status and idiom of the chosen instruments. The score and the recording are of equal importance here and both should be considered when awarding marks.

Some composition styles – for example EDM – lend themselves better to a detailed written account of the compositional origins of the piece. This is not the same as the compulsory written statement. Candidates are free to approach this in a way which is appropriate for the chosen genre, but the best examples provided a vivid technical and musical account of the creation of the piece, often informed with screen shots of the music technology deployed. The very best examples of these allowed Moderators to read in real time whilst listening to the recording, which is just as good as a musical score.

Further considerations for Element 2:

- Listening to – and evaluating the music of – established composers is a very effective starting point in Composing.
- The two compositions should be **contrasting**. We had numerous examples of candidates who wrote for similar instrumental resources, and in similar styles, for both pieces.
- The compulsory Written Statement (which informs Assessment Criterion A) should be viewed as an ongoing, rather than summative document. The best examples explained the context and purpose of the piece and went on to explain any relevant listening influences. It is not necessary for candidates to provide a theoretical analysis of the piece, nor is it appropriate to discuss the lyrics without appropriate reference to the music.
- Compositions should be written for at least two instruments. Several centres submitted pieces for solo instruments.
- If the candidate provides a detailed account of the process of composition instead of a score, and then submits a live performance, the written work must include detailed information about how the performers were briefed. Any improvisatory sections should be declared and not included in the assessment if the decisions were those of the performer and not the composer.
- If candidates write music that is unidiomatic for the chosen instruments – for example, flute parts out of range, piano parts with lots of dense-textured, close position triads at the bottom of the register, or songs which have an inappropriate alignment between lyrics and melody, then alternative approaches should be explored. This tends to happen less when candidates try out their music with live performers.
- Some candidates indicated in the written statement that the compositions they submitted were the only two they had ever written. Candidates will benefit from having composed music prior to their assessed pieces.
- If a candidate writes a piece of music for piano and another instrument, they should be encouraged to think of the keyboard as more than just an accompanimental tool. It may be appropriate that they first listen to some pieces where the piano has a more creative role.
- Some candidates who wrote very dissonant music would have benefited from studying some apposite compositional models before starting their assessed work.

MUSIC

Paper 9483/03
Extended Performance

Key messages

- Work for 9483/03 should not be sent to Cambridge on the same USB as other components of the examination. This causes confusion and delay and could lead to a late issue of results.
- Please fill in the cover sheet correctly, giving specific details of the work undertaken for **both** components chosen by the candidate from 03, 04 and 05. Leaving this blank or incomplete is a potential compliance issue.
- The repertoire chosen for the performance and the Research Report should reflect a consistent musical and stylistic focus.
- Occasionally, candidates do not submit a research report. Please let us know if this happens. The performance work will still be marked.
- Please check that all files will open, play and are relevant to the examination. Audio excerpts should be cross-checked against the text of the research report before burning to CD or USB. It is a good idea to check the beginning and end of each video file to ensure that the complete performance is there.

General comments

Examiners saw performances from a very wide range of musical styles and traditions. There was much evidence of excellent musicianship, ably supported by skilled accompanists and technicians. Piano, voice and guitar are the most popular instruments, but examiners heard examples of virtually every orchestral, pop and jazz instrument, as well as some from World Music traditions. The genres of music performed were very varied: singers performed everything from art song to rap; from pianists we heard everything from Bach to Hans Zimmer, and guitarists covered a range of styles from classical to heavy rock. Most performances were afforded a due sense of occasion, often with an appreciative and supportive audience. Performances where it is just the candidate and a camera to perform to often miss out on the best opportunities to demonstrate their musicality and aural awareness.

Candidates are required to select music for this component that represents a 'single focus from any tradition'. High marks in several of the assessment criteria are only possible when candidates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of a discrete style of music. In criteria D and E, candidates are credited for their ability to perform with *contextual understanding within the chosen performing focus*, and to make *interpretative connections between research elements and performing outcomes*. Appropriate focuses included those linked by a particular composer, style period or specific genre: for example, 'the songs of Alan Menken', 'Chopin Preludes', or '70's rock music' or by a more general purpose, such as 'Waltz'. Candidates should be wary of 'development of' themes, or those in which the focus is extra-musical, or driven by lyrical or biographical content. 'Love' is a popular theme for singers – but if the music performed ranges from Schubert to Lin Manuel Miranda, then the focus is almost certainly too wide. It is clear that some candidates choose the pieces they wish to play first, then contrived a focus to link together music which had no palpable link apart from the fact that it had appeared on a conservatoire examination syllabus. Teachers are advised to steer candidates away from this approach –it does not fulfil syllabus requirements. Occasionally, a performance was appropriately focused but then marred by one unrelated item which sometimes felt it had been added as a time filler. The 'test' of all this is the Research Report: if the piece chosen for comparison in that has a stylistic and interpretative connection to the performance as a whole, then the focus should be fine.

We would also advise to ensure that there is not a crossover between the style of music chosen for this component and the work undertaken for 04 or 05. It is absolutely fine for candidates to demonstrate enthusiasm for one period or style of music but playing the music of (for example) Pink Floyd in 03 Extended Performing and then researching the music of the same band in a 05 Investigation is inappropriate.

The Research Report

The research report attracts the greatest range of marks and candidates are required to compare two performances of **one** piece that they have included in their Extended Performance programme. This should be supported by carefully selected audio extracts, along with some analysis of relevant interpretative issues, including a reflection on their own performance and the impact that the research has had upon it. What candidates are **not** required to do is to write a series of programme notes for their chosen pieces. Neither are they required to compare performers of **all** the pieces in their programme. Reports like this (and there were many) will, at best, only achieve marks in the bottom two levels of the assessment criteria for criterion A.

Candidates who chose one piece (or movement) from a well-focused theme, analysed it from an interpretative perspective, then compared two contrasting performances from established performers (with a good range of audio extracts on USB to support their assertions) and reflected on how the research had impacted on their performance **as a whole**, almost always achieved marks in the top 3 levels of the mark scheme. If they further supported their research with conventional academic referencing (for example footnotes, brief screenshots of musical score excerpts and a bibliography that went beyond Wikipedia), the full range of marks in criterion A was open to them, and there were many examples which were worthy of Level 5 in the mark scheme.

Other points to note regarding the research report are listed below:

- The audio extracts should be provided on a USB or a DVD/CD. This is a syllabus requirement. Sending URLs or YouTube links in a hard copy document is not appropriate. Neither is sending two complete performances rather than just the section that the candidate was writing about.
- Some audio clips were only a few seconds long (e.g. a clip of a single trill), which was not that helpful. Conversely, some clips were a minute or more long, with the feature referred to only audible in the last few seconds.
- Candidates should be supported in their choice of suitable performers to compare. Professional performances are preferable if available. For jazz, rock and music theatre reports, studio and live performances by the same band or performer can be a fruitful choice. For example, a candidate could compare the OCR and a live performance of a song from 'Wicked' by the same performer, or perhaps choose two Rolling Stones live performances, but 30 years apart.
- It is not generally appropriate to compare performances on different instruments.
- Candidates who perform one complete piece (for example a sonata) should choose one movement for comparison, rather than using the whole piece. It is generally better to look at a smaller amount of music in more detail.
- Many candidates do not get beyond tempo and dynamics in their comparison. Articulation, phrasing, timbre, historical differences between performances and relationship with the accompaniment can also be considered, along with instrument-specific matters such as touch, bowing, vibrato, strumming styles, diction and breath control, as appropriate.
- A more general overview would sometimes be beneficial; some reports tended to be pedantic about very short phrases, described chronologically, when some phrases could have been grouped together as examples of a common feature.
- It is fine for candidates to not be particularly influenced by the performers they have listened to, as long as they offer cogent interpretative alternatives. If they **do** take a particular performer's approach on board, then this can be reflected in assessment criterion E (Interpretation and aural awareness).
- Candidates must check that the audio excerpts match the references in the report text. There were several instances where excerpts were recorded in the wrong order, or were missing altogether, despite references to them in the text.
- Candidates should develop an appropriate technical vocabulary for their instrument or voice and to keep the language suitably academic in the report.

The Performance

For most candidates, this is the culmination of their musical journey at school and most afforded the performance a due sense of occasion, often with an audience. There were some stunning performances, but the repertoire does not have to be virtuoso standard to score highly in **all** assessment criteria. Some candidates would definitely benefit from playing less challenging music – whilst they may get through the notes virtually intact, expression and dynamics often take a back seat when the going gets (musically) tough. The syllabus only says that the performance *must take place on a single occasion*. It does **not** stipulate that

there can be only one take, and centres are quite at liberty to re-record, if necessary, as long as the recording takes place on a **single occasion**.

Some performances were short of the 15-minute minimum, which may well affect the marks in assessment criterion C (Technical control) and E (Interpretation and aural awareness). Candidates need to decide the best order for the repertoire – there were one of two examples of candidates performing their most challenging piece at the very end, when they were tiring. Performances well over 20 minutes are equally not advisable, and in extreme circumstances, the parts of the performance that go beyond the time limit will not be credited. However, most candidates coped very well with performing for an extended period of time. It is fine for candidates to have water to sip, but this should take place in between pieces. Wind players are entitled to a short break, but this should take place on screen with the camera rolling. Tuning up can certainly take place between pieces.

Many candidates perform from memory, although there is no requirement to do so. This has no impact on marks per se, but singers are advised to know the music well enough so that they can look at the camera and use their faces to convey the meaning of the words they are singing. A candidate who sings into the music stand for 15 minutes or more without ever looking up is likely to be impacted in assessment criteria D and E. Similarly, candidates who use a microphone should ensure that they still use the full range of their voices. The microphone should not do the work, nor should it cover the face of the candidate.

Other points to note regarding the performance are listed below:

- Please send sheet music in the correct order, and in hard copy.
- It is advisable to do a sound check, particularly if the candidate is playing with other musicians, or is accompanied. There were numerous performances where the candidate was drowned out by an accompaniment or backing track.
- If the candidate is accompanied, please ensure that they are placed so that both the accompanist and the camera can see them.
- If the repertoire has an accompaniment, then this must be provided, either by live musicians or a backing track. It is not appropriate for a candidate to play an entire flute concerto (for example) as a monophonic solo piece.
- Candidates do not have to introduce each piece, which may disturb the flow and impede concentration. It is, however, a syllabus requirement that centres send a list of pieces for each candidate.

MUSIC

**Paper 9483/04
Extended Composition**

Key messages

- Including edited audio extracts of music (on USB or CD) is essential to verify and exemplify the research report analysis.
- Never combine any materials from different components in a single package or USB.
- Please print out all materials (score, commentary in place of a score, Research report) in line with syllabus requirements.

General comments

Cover Sheet

Centres should only use the dedicated template for this component. It is particularly important to outline and detail the content of each option chosen in this year of study to demonstrate there has been sufficient breadth in the work and that overlap has been avoided. A performance (03) of Taylor Swift songs, for example, combined with an 04 submission of two songs composed in a similar style would be unacceptable. An Investigation (05) of the development of Blues Songs and a composition (04) submission of a piece for small band, using characteristic blues gestures and harmonies would similarly constitute a narrow field of study even though one was predominantly vocal and the other instrumental.

Educational good practice should encourage candidates to be curious about the vast range of music possibilities in this component.

Sometimes teachers gave very helpful information in the optional comments section of the Cover Sheet. All information about the details of candidate's research, however, must be presented by the candidate to receive credit. The place for explaining the value of attending tutorials on harmony, orchestration, and music technology, for example, is in the Research Report.

Comments on specific areas as they relate to the assessment criteria

There was some very inventive and assured work from several candidates: all had made good choices for their piece and had the focused listening research to provide convincing support to their stated aims.

A Research Report

The syllabus explains that the Research Report is worth 20 per cent of the marks for this component and it involves much more than providing a short commentary.

The role of researching the music of others cannot be over-stated. In this way, candidates learn about specific approaches to harmonic language, rhythm, use of instruments etc. as a foundation for their own composing work.

Analytical comment on extracts of music by other composers and the specific relevance of this to the candidate's work is essential. Using audio or manuscript extracts of the candidate's own piece in the report is not required.

Weaker reports were those in which the quality of analysis was often shallow and superficial. Listening examples were cursory and unfocused, with tenuous links to the composition.

Candidates did not receive credit for analytical references to the Listening Paper Set works although it was understandable that in a general sense the specific works of Debussy and Rimsky Korsakov, for example, gave rise to an interest in musical story-telling and programmatic depiction. This is a legitimate starting point but candidates should then choose to analyse other works by these composers to provide evidence of their research.

Many candidates continue to describe their finished piece in the report rather than describe the *process* of their composing work across the course as required. They should address questions such as evaluating *how* their ideas were shaped, *how and why* decisions about structure were made, *how and why* specific ideas were 'grown' and developed?

Reflection on all aspects of their composing is a requirement here. Sharing failures as well as successes is a difficult but important step on the way to helpful self-evaluation that ultimately enables growth.

General points of good practice:

- If candidates want to refer to bar numbers of scores, they could include scores in an appendix.
- Teachers can help support developing composing skills by identifying a candidate's individual research needs.
- Ensure candidates understand the syllabus requirements to keep a research log.
- Make sure the Track List accurately details the name of the music/composer.
- Bibliography/discography details must always be completed to academic standards, including the names of performers, conductors etc.

Why are audio extracts so important?

Audio extracts are the direct *evidence* of what candidates have heard. A candidate who speaks of 'Coltrane's harmonic fluidity in *Giant Steps*', for example, might have found this information in a written source but evidence to confirm an *aural* understanding of this – has the candidate *heard* this, can be demonstrated by the inclusion of a relevant audio extract.

B Shaping of Ideas; structure

Candidates have an open remit as to style, genre and use of medium for their composing ambitions. There was an interesting and often successful range of submissions reflecting the flexibility of the syllabus. Compositions that might be described as conventional, experimental, reflecting western traditions, encompassing musical facets of varied traditions and cultures, using acoustic and/ or electronic or digital resources – all had the potential to be successful.

Difficulties for some candidates arose when a genre/approach was chosen for which the vocabulary was not mastered. The reports frequently describe passages as 'dramatic' or 'tragic' or 'unsettling', but the music was too bland or basic to fit that claim. Here, the research element of the component provides candidates with the opportunity to develop their skills and understanding.

In structural terms, some compositions contained too many different sections – perhaps to fit the narrative of a fast-changing programme but this meant there was less scope for development and difficulty in maintaining overall integrity. For candidates using a digital approach, they should understand that composition at A level must demonstrate more than the assembly of a 'sonic jigsaw puzzle' of pre-existing parts.

Song writing

There were several very effective songs, although some were let down by too much unvaried repetition and problems combining vocal lines successfully with backing instruments. Supporting vocals were frequently a strong part of the music, and the most inventive work varied their textures and relationship to the main vocal line.

Having a live vocalist is essential for strong communication: if software has to be used, it would help to have better timbres than default vocal patches. Vocal lines should be shaped with articulation and dynamics.

Sequenced vocal lines often showed awkward word-setting. This problem would be quickly identified in rehearsal with a singer, further emphasising the importance of checking the word-setting demands in this way.

C Working with ideas; the use of compositional techniques

In general, candidates often underuse relatively straight-forward techniques such key and time signature changes, and the use motivic manipulation, fragmentation, extension and development.

Songs should demonstrate that the requirement of 'extended composition' has been understood by making a clear link between songs if more than one is submitted. They should consider the genuinely musical ways in which a song can extended beyond a standard 3–4-minute framework, for example by considering extended episodes of related instrumental material.

D Use of medium and texture

Successful candidates understood the idiomatic characteristics of their chosen forces. Piano textures were variable: there were certainly many fine explorations of piano writing, but too often there was weak writing, with thick left-hand parts, clashing lines or thin textures that were not generally effective.

Where candidates use resources such as Logic or DAW – it is essential to name any hardware/software used and to explain *how* these are used in terms of manipulation of sounds/use of loops/modification of loops etc. Examiners should be left in no doubt as to the range of skills and compositional methods used in a candidate's work with these resources.

E Communication

There was often a good standard of recording, with effective use of treatments and attention to the final mix. Some recurring problems were a muddy low-mid range and choice of synth voicings: sometimes these were too washy with slow attack for the role they played. Conversely, lead lines were sometimes rather harsh and did not blend well with the other parts.

When the music was heavily dependent on recording/electronics etc., candidates often failed to mention software/mics used/production values/application of techniques – in the commentaries in place of a score. Candidates sometimes referred to bar numbers in their accounts where timings would have been much more helpful when only an audio is provided.

Some live performances were very impressive but so were recordings where the candidate took time to use the technology strategically to vividly convey the composer's intentions.

Scores were often carefully edited and in the best work, meaningful dynamics, expressive markings, tempi indications and articulation markings were musically detailed.

Lyrics in the score of a song, and other words on the score should be written in English not, for example, using Chinese or Cyrillic characters.

It is acceptable for candidates to apply the 'hide empty staves' facility from page 2 onwards of scores.

Concluding remarks

One candidate writes:

'Keeping a composition journal proved invaluable, allowing me to document decisions and reflections throughout the process. I plan to continue this process in future projects, as it provides critical insight into my compositional development.'

MUSIC

Paper 9483/05
Investigating Music

Key messages

- This research coursework task requires close understanding of syllabus detail and familiarity with Cambridge policy on the use of generative AI.
- A key to success is close teacher-learner interaction in choosing an appropriate topic and engaging in on-going monitoring.

General comments

Administrative matters

Please ensure that all materials for this component are packaged securely and separately from any other component. The essay, reflective statement with references, biographical details/appendix material, should be printed out as a hard copy. Audio extracts should be presented on USB or CD.

Numbering pages and giving a word count for the essay and separate reflective statement are small but important details for this research task.

The Cover Sheet must be fully completed. Details about the two options chosen are asked for. Together, the options form the basis of a complete year's study; teachers must ensure a suitable breadth of enquiry is achieved. Candidates may start from a point of personal interest but by encouraging curiosity and engagement with less familiar musical landscapes, teachers can also help to enlarge candidate perspectives.

Choosing a Research Topic or Question

Music must be at the heart of a candidate's investigation – not simply the *subject* of music but the actual *music* it's sound, genesis, sonorities, construction, purpose, effects, context and so on. This is an Investigation – so it is not about candidate knowledge alone but critical thinking, analysis and insights about the information a candidate has uncovered and verified.

Some candidates chose a very narrow range of enquiry. For example, an extended performance (03) of Songs from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* was paired with an Investigation (05) of the more general style of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musicals. Even with some different works analysed and alternative songs from *The Sound of Music* included, there is a great deal of overlap in context, composers, medium, genre, period, country of origin.

Strong Investigations often asked a question as a title. They had a focus that was carefully chosen to allow in-depth analysis, discussion and critical thinking within the scope of the topic. Weaker submissions were often too broad and generalised or too narrow to include sufficient comprehensive study at this level.

Preparing for and monitoring the research process

The syllabus makes clear the importance of the 'log' in tracking the research each candidate undertakes. In a small number of cases, candidates openly acknowledged the benefits of working in this way, not least the ease with which a clear reflective statement could be constructed with all the relevant information at hand.

Teachers may find it helpful to support candidates with a monitoring process. This could include teacher approval of a research proposal together with regularly spaced reviews. Teachers might include a seminar

approach to give guidance on research strategies, verifying sources, use of AI in planning, how to evidence critical thinking and provide opportunities to promote discussion to support oral expression of understanding.

Comments on specific issues and their relation to the assessment criteria

A Reflective statement

Strong candidates honestly appraised their own research journey and were able to reflect on their successes and challenges in an authentic way.

A small number of candidates did not include a reflective statement, worth 20 per cent of the total marks.

B Listening

Listening examples in the form of edited audio extracts are an essential requirement and should be submitted on USB or CD. Audio materials from other components must not be combined in the same packet as other components.

The selection and editing of musical materials is a powerful indicator of what the candidate has heard and understood. The strongest work was supported by a mixture of focussed extracts to highlight a specific point, with longer extracts that evidence a wider context.

Several weaker submissions contained no audio. With no evidence to check the assertions of the analysis, unsubstantiated claims could not receive any credit. Candidate-annotated screen shots of music manuscript included in the report can be useful evidence of understanding but they must be large enough to read.

Short manuscript extracts must have clefs and key signatures to be meaningful. Some candidates did not exercise enough discretion in accessing manuscript of popular songs/film scores, for example, online. Scores from poor quality websites were often inaccurate and contained substantial rhythmic errors.

Carefully edited audio with clear explanation of analytic points in the text, for example, is entirely sufficient to meet the syllabus requirements. A matching score is not required.

C Contextual Understanding

The strongest submissions presented a balance of interesting and relevant contextual information, writing with understanding. Some Investigations were ill-advised in their focus on subject areas such as psychology, sociology or cultural politics with a resulting over-emphasis on contextual matters at the expense of investigation of the music. It is always worth investing time to understand the historical and social context of a topic, for example, and choosing the most important information for the reader to gain a clear understanding but not all the information researched will necessarily be included in the final essay.

D Analytic/investigative techniques and technical vocabulary

Candidates should use a variety of means to research their topic/music. Academic journals, books and scholarly sources on the internet may be relevant in many topic areas but many candidates deferred to websites and YouTube videos that did not necessarily contain the most reliable information or accurate use of terminology.

E Communication and substantiation of judgements

A clear and coherent writing style is essential for effective communication. Initial drafts can be read by others able to give constructive feedback to the candidate. In weaker submissions, candidates did not check the references or audio-track alignment with essay contents. Errors here impeded the accuracy and flow of the communication.

Some extracts were very poor quality, as if initially recorded from a sound source to a phone, impairing the overall presentation.

A substantial minority did not provide full references for their sources – essential evidence in a research task.

Comments on the use of AI

In the strongest work, candidates were well supported in this demanding component with candidates writing with enthusiasm, commitment and a demonstration of deep understanding of their chosen research area.

Many candidates, however, submitted work that was very difficult to follow and seemed to make little semantic sense. Centres should be familiar with the concepts of AI 'hallucination'.

Centres are advised to consult the guidance about the use of AI on the Cambridge website. There was a great deal of evidence that AI had been used – such as uniform contents lists and headers, inconsistent language and style between sections, repetition and lack of 'candidate voice' but there was no mention of AI use. Only a single candidate referenced their use of AI to reduce the final word count. This is an inappropriate use of AI – the final essay must reflect the content choices of the candidate.

The following points are intended to help centres maximise the positive potential of AI whilst understanding that candidate demonstration of critical thinking supported by audio evidence remains at the heart of the assessment process of this component.

Centres are encouraged to review the revised policy on '**The use of generative AI in coursework**' from November 2023.

The use of generative AI programmes by students in the preparation of material for submission as coursework are acceptable *if clearly acknowledged in the work*:

- to carry out initial research into a topic in preparation for a written study. This is no different from browsing in a search engine and citing websites visited in the bibliography. Candidates should cite clearly the prompt or series of prompts they used
- to quote briefly from AI generated text within an essay and engage in critical discussion of the quotation. Quotations must be clearly acknowledged and identified within the candidate's writing, and like any other sources of evidence should be contextualised and reviewed.

The best work will always evidence candidates digging deep into a range of sources, well beyond AI summaries that now dominate any online search.