

MUSIC (MSM315115)

AURAL AND THEORY

CRITERIA 5 AND 6

It was good to see that a significant number of candidates had obviously used reading time well in order to prepare for the aural section by highlighting important information and preparing multiple choice questions by isolating the differences. In very general terms, students who had done this seemed to do better.

There were a couple of students who answered the exam paper in biro instead of pencil. Whilst marks were not deducted for this, it did impact on the students as they couldn't erase and correct.

Question 1: This was generally well answered with most candidates getting at least 50%.

Question 2: again, quite well answered.

Question 3: this is still a problematic area. Possibly some candidates thought it not possible to have two perfect cadences. Many incorrectly identified the first excerpt as plagal.

Question 4: this was generally well answered with most candidates getting at least 50%.

Question 5: quite good.

Question 6: this caused considerable difficulty. Many candidates did not identify rests and the syncopation in bars 3 and 4 proved quite problematic.

Question 7: quite good.

Question 8: this caused many candidates considerable difficulty. They commonly failed to identify the repeated pattern (or miss out the flat sign) and the descending scale in part 2, whilst in the 1st part, the 'C' was missed in bar 2 and the chromatic nature of the last bar was not identified.

Question 9: well answered.

Question 10: there were a significant number of good responses, however, it was quite common for candidates to begin with an anacrusis but forget to allow for it in the final bar. The biggest problem was the flow of the verse. Many candidates did not understand how the words related to strong and weak beats.

Question 11: many candidates had difficulty with these chords. Some forgot to take into account the bass line.

Question 12: note grouping continues to be problematic, especially once ties become involved.

Question 13: terms and signs were generally known, however, intervals and chords were quite problematic. This was particularly obvious when a key signature or an accidental was involved.

Compositional devices were a problem for many candidates. Issues included: identifying features which were not compositional devices, incorrect identification of where a device was situated and not completing the question.

The transcription was well answered by many and it was good to note that a number of candidates gave consideration to the musicality of assigning the parts and used octave displacement to take into consideration the

best range for each instrument, however, full marks were also given for a direct transposition which maintained pitch as traditionally requested in this question. There were a number of candidates who put all 4 parts into each instrumental line and didn't understand the question or the melodic nature of the instruments they were transcribing for.

Question 14: whilst there was some confusion between natural and melodic minor (which was taken into account by the marking examiners), many candidates demonstrated that they understood the devices they were employing. However, it was quite common for candidates to fall down when it came to making musical sense of the devices and some did not clearly mark them as requested in the question.

PERFORMANCE

CRITERIA 7 AND 8

There were seventy-nine candidates who completed performance exams for MSM315115 in 2017. Generally, the candidates presented themselves well by being organised, punctual and performance-ready prior to the exam time.

Examining as many candidates as possible in their own schools has seen the performers more comfortable as a whole and able to focus more easily on the task at hand. This was particularly apparent with contemporary candidates who were relying on backline equipment. Thank you to all the schools for ensuring all was setup ready for the exams with appropriate desks and power supply.

A particular cause for concern across most schools and colleges was the inaccuracy of the program timings. There were many which were listed on the proforma as a total length of around 12-13 minutes, which in the exam room were only just on 10 minutes. Whilst 10 minutes is all that is required, there seemed to be a lot of luck that more programs did not run under time. Candidates and teachers are reminded that in MSM315115 it is the **candidate's performance time** which should be tallied and long introductions, long interludes and solos by other band members where the candidate is not playing **should not** be counted towards the exam performance time. This does **not** mean that such features of the music should be omitted from the exam performance, they simply should not be counted in the time tally. Indeed, bars of rest are extremely important to both the integrity of the music and to the performer of some instruments, particularly brass players who need to rest the embouchure.

Students and teachers need to be familiar with all the current exam requirements as listed in the Practical Assessment Guidelines. In these guidelines the requirement for **all contemporary candidates** (instrumentalists and vocalists) is that they perform 1/3 of their program to the written score. This needs to be worked out according to time and therefore needs to be 3'20" of the program (or more). There were many instances where the performance proforma did not indicate these pieces.

A note to vocalists and their teachers about the appropriate use of microphones is warranted. In classical repertoire a microphone should not be used. A classical vocalist should have their technique developed to a point where this is not necessary within the small venues which are used for these exams. On the other hand, it is useful for contemporary vocalists to be developing their technique in using the microphone and it is good to demonstrate this in the exam context. However, candidates should have practised using a microphone and have an understanding how to use it.

If candidates are performing on more than one instrument, it is important to be careful that pieces for both instruments need to be of the required standard.

Contemporary guitarists and drummers should be mindful when choosing music to perform in their exam that playing chords or a repetitive pattern for the entire piece does not show versatility, musicianship, musical development, soloistic understanding and rigor. Likewise, vocalists need to be careful that they do not include too many songs in their program which are in strophic form with numerous verses. A point for music departments is

that pianos used for accompanying candidates need to be tuned. Whilst there are budget considerations here, a piano which is quite out of tune can be a disadvantage to candidates who are being assessed on intonation.

COMPOSITION AND IMPROVISATION

CRITERIA 9 AND 10

This year there were nine candidates assessed under the composition/improvisation criteria. Most composition candidates presented folios of a commendable standard with a range of styles and instrumentation. For the most part, compositions written for real instruments had been workshopped and played on real instruments which lead to most writing being appropriate for the scored instrumentation. There were some folios where there was a lack of detail on the score – not much in terms of articulations, dynamics and stave text/symbols.

It is timely to remind all teachers and students of the necessity to carefully read the current Composition/Improvisation Assessment Guidelines and to follow all the directives in this document. There were a few problems which were consistent through many of the composition folios:

- Two copies of both scores and CD are required.
- CDs should be audio CDs rather than data CDs.
- Names need removing from all submitted materials.
- As well as the proforma which lists the works being presented, cover sheets need to be attached to each composition (or to each context statement for an improvisation candidate).
- TASC ID must appear on all work – putting it into a header or footer is a good idea.

Although not in the current guidelines there are a few other helpful things the candidate can do to aid the marking of their folio:

- Name the CD tracks – just by writing on the CD with a permanent marker.
- For works relying on multitrack software, it may be wise to encourage the listener to use appropriate equipment for playback to ensure detail is not missed. For example, if panning is important recommend the use of quality headphones over a smaller speaker in the context statement.

Teachers and students are reminded of the provision for students to present as improvisation candidates. Although this is certainly not the exclusive domain of the contemporary students, it can be a very good option for contemporary students who are conversant with the skill of improvisation.

Using the new improvisation guidelines this year provided the opportunity to show understanding, development and musicality throughout the allotted time. The option to verbalize and demonstrate technique, influences and style was a positive and affirming outcome for both the candidate and the examiners. Re-improvising a short section differently to the original performance also showed that the material was not pre-learned, but rather a true 'in-the-moment' improvisation. Candidates are encouraged to utilise compositional devices, demonstrate a wide melodic range with their instrument and use variations in rhythm, texture and tempo. The context statement needs to complement and give meaning to what the candidate is performing.