# Government of South Australia LogoSACE Board Logo2024 Music Studies Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2024 assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers are also encouraged to utilise the resources provided on the SACE website. This includes the calibration activities provided in PLATO, which is helpful in both providing ideas for designing assessment tasks and in applying the performance standards to the students work.

The Subject Renewal program has introduced changes for many subjects in 2025, these changes are detailed in the change log at the front of each subject outline. When reviewing the 2024 subject assessment advice, it is important to consider any updates to this subject to ensure the feedback in this document remains accurate.

# School Assessment

Teachers can improve the moderation and online process by:

* thoroughly checking that all grades entered in school online are correct
* ensuring that students are clearly identified at the start of videos of ensemble performances and that part-testing is included in the evidence provided for ensemble performance students
* providing pdf copies of the sheet music used by the students for both solo and ensemble performances
* providing audio (in mp3 format) along with scores for both student arrangements and compositions
* indicating which LAP applies to which group of students where two or more schools are grouped
* submitting the source material for arrangements (this is not a requirement but is useful to ascertain the arranging skills and knowledge of each student).

Assessment Type 1: Creative Works (40%)

Students present a portfolio consisting of their own creative works, which may be a performance or performances, a composition or compositions, or an arrangement or arrangements and a creator’s statement in which they reflect on their creative works. Students apply their musical understanding, skills, and techniques to develop, refine, and present their works. The creative work or works may be in a single style or in a variety of styles. In the creator’s statement, students provide evidence of their learning, through a reflection on the musical influences on their own creative works.

The more successful responses commonly:

* documented and compared practice and refinement of skills with the final performance using annotated examples
* used short before and after videos
* used substantial pieces that were well constructed and selected for the specific instrument
* had clear and appropriate scoring.

The less successful responses commonly:

* tended to be short
* were poorly written for the selected instrument
* lacked musical terminology
* did not provide examples of a wide variety of practice techniques or compositional skills utilised in the lead up to the final presentation.

Assessment Type 2: Musical Literacy (30%)

Students complete two or three literacy tasks, allowing students to manipulate musical elements, apply and refine musical literacy skills including aural perception and notation, deconstruct and analyse musical works and/or styles, and synthesise their findings.

At least one task should be a practical application of students’ skills in manipulating elements of music using standard notation, in a composition or arrangement of approximately 2 minutes. This could be, for example, a harmonisation or melodic extension task. If utilising subject adjustments, teachers are reminded that this ‘manipulation’ task remains a requirement for this assessment type.

Compositions and arrangements presented were imaginative, of a high standard, and demonstrated a wide range of musical knowledge and skills at a high level. Tasks that allowed students to prepare a set of short pieces allowed a larger scope for demonstrating their learning. Multi-modal presentations were effectively used.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* creating explicit opportunities to present the synthesis of ideas in written or multimodal works
* supporting students in the planning process prior to undertaking arrangements and/or compositions.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* demonstrated a wide range of musical knowledge and skills at a high level
* demonstrated a thorough understanding of the elements of music
* illustrated understanding clearly with examples form the score or recordings
* presented clearly identifiable synthesis of ideas in written and multimodal works.

*The less successful responses commonly:*

* lacked depth and breadth, presenting limited or short exercises
* lacked evidence from the score or recording
* were limited in their discussion of musical elements
* failed to use musical terminology.

# External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

This year, 95 students sat the Music Studies examination.

Question 1

This year there were more multiple-choice questions in this opening question, but they were shorter. This allowed a single mark to be awarded for each question. As is often the case, this was a successful question, with most students being able to either select the correct option or eliminate the incorrect options. Common incorrect answers include the third option for (c), and the fourth option for (i).

Question 2

Many responses were confused by the tied note going into bar 2 which caused many errors in bar 2. The dotted quaver, semiquaver on beat one in the last bar also created many errors.

Students are encouraged to make sure the number of beats in each bar is correct.

Question 3

This question was done quite successfully. If students got a close, but incorrect chord, they were still awarded a mark if the notes were consistent with the name.

Question 4

For part (b), both B major (the played scale) and B flat major scale were accepted as correct answers. Students do not need to write a key signature when the question asks for accidentals.

Question 5

This was the most challenging question in the exam, containing melodic dictation questions.

In part (a), most students were able to correctly identify the fragment played in the second bar. For part (b), students are encouraged to notice that exercises in a minor key, with an ascending phrase that ends on the tonic, often use the melodic minor scale to approach the tonic note. Many students were able to identify this ascending scale but failed to add the necessary accidentals, D# and E#, which created the melodic minor scale. Students are encouraged to practice transcribing music and composing with pencil and paper (without a computer) to hone skills needed for this question.

Question 6

Many students wrote successful answers to this, using motives from the first half, and developed them further, with logical implied harmony, and an appropriate cadential ending. Many students noticed that bar 4 was incomplete and also ended their melody with a 3 beat bar which acknowledged the anacrusis.

Question 7

Several students incorrectly wrote about the oboe part in this question, instead of the clarinet. The most common error in the response to (b) was that students did not take the clarinet notes into account and consequently left off the 7th in their chord name. In part (c), Cm/A was marked correct, but really should be named as A half dim. The Plagal (often spelt incorrectly, with no loss of marks, but worth mentioning) cadence in part (d) was frequently identified correctly. Students who failed to answer (j) correctly most often likely misread the question which asked for the relationship between the keys, not a long description of the keys used.

Question 8

While this aural-only analysis was of an unusual genre, and one which it is likely many students would not have encountered, this question still received a wide variety of satisfactory responses. Definitions of simple musical terms such as rhythmic effect, tempo, pitch, and meter caused some confusion.

Question 9

This was one of the most successfully answered questions in the exam. Unsuccessful responses to (c), had some added unnecessary chord extensions instead of triads. In (e), many students understood the clarinet transposition, but students who were not as successful failed to add the key signature or the accidental.

Question 10

The tabular format assisted the understanding of this style of comparative analysis, which consequently led to this also being one of the most successfully answered questions. Many unsuccessful responses did not identify the modal characteristics of some variations.

Question 11

As with previous years, this question was done well. Having the opening given, hopefully set students on the right path to successful answers.

Unsuccessful responses tended to not see the music here as both horizontal (smooth and interesting part writing) and vertical (correct notes with the chords).

Students should be reminded that if the question asks for non-chord notes in each part, this includes the bass part, so just plain bass notes would not have attracted as many marks.

Students generally used passing notes successfully, but some students need to be careful with the effect that accented passing notes create with other parts, as sometimes they can be inappropriate. When adding several passing notes in different parts students must be aware of the passing chords created by these unessential notes which could create either a dissonant or consonant chord, depending upon the notes used. Students are encouraged to line up their beats so that the harmony used can easily be seen.

Few students added an extension but those that did add the extension correctly added a dominant 7th (F7) to the end of the penultimate bar. The question asks for the extension to be added to bars 2 – 4, rather than writing a 7th on either of the chords in bar 1. It can be helpful to add the chord extension label, as well as suspensions, if used, in the given chords.

In the future, it is hoped that student will be awarded part of the marks allocated for this style of question for creative aspects such as using imitation and development of motives in the melody part.

Question 12

Bars 2 and 3 were the most successfully answered parts of this question.

Question 13

In the interests of being as practical as possible, markers are looking for an overall understanding rather than specific, perhaps arguable details. For example, students will not be penalised if they do not do their piano writing in the exact "Bryce" format in the jazz harmony, with two voices in the left hand, three in the right (although this is normally easier to see the part movement); similarly with the traditional harmony, in the final cadence, students will also not be penalised for an unresolved leading note in an inner part, as is very often done in reality, nor exposed octaves/fifths. Successful students had an overall grasp of the concepts of the harmony they studied, with a musical, rather than purely mathematical, approach to this question, while also demonstrating technical facility.

Option A

Several students were able to add the cadential six-four correctly. The incorrect responses either omitted an example of this progression or placed it in the middle of a phrase rather than at the cadence. The second inversion chord must be placed on a strong beat.

Many students wrote a dominant 7th chord but failed to resolve it correctly. The 7th should resolve to the 3rd of the next chord. It is possible to omit the 5th in one of the chords to allow correct voice leading in the added parts by some rules i.e. the leading note to tonic, although as stated, this was so commonly done in practice, that this was not expected here.

The end of the first phrase needed to be harmonised with a standard cadence. Many responses failed to do so.

Many students added far too many passing notes which caused errors in parallel 5ths or 8ves, or dissonant chords. Passing notes in the given melody do not need to be harmonised with a new chord.

Most students wrote chord symbols or Roman Number Analysis under the stave which correctly identified the chord used.

Option B

Most students chose this option and generally wrote good solutions.

Many responses demonstrated satisfactory chord selection, harmonic rhythm, chord voicing and voice leading. These responses recognised the passing modulation (aka secondary dominant) to D minor in bar 2 and also recognised that the anticipated note (D) did not need to be harmonised until the second minim. There is no need to write chords on weak beats that are tied to the next chord.

Most students recognised the opportunity to create a passing modulation in bar 3.

The least satisfactory responses failed to add chord extensions. Far fewer added an altered note.

Students who successfully used passing modulations to go to keys other than D minor and B flat major, respectfully (such as in bar 2, going to B flat major, assuming the C# makes the dominant 7th augmented, or in bar 3, going to G minor) were awarded marks appropriately; however, in some cases this more difficult option can make the solution harder to work as a whole.

General

To make their answers clear, it is helpful if students use either pencil or erasable pen so that errors can be corrected clearly, especially in music notated answers.