2022 Music Studies Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2022 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 should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

Across the Assessment Types for this subject, students can present their responses in oral or multimodal form, where 6 minutes is the equivalent of 1000 words. Students should not speed-up the recording of their videos excessively in an attempt to condense more content into the maximum time limit.

From 2023, if a video is flagged by markers/moderators as impacted by speed, schools will be requested to provide a transcript and markers/moderators will be advised to mark/moderate based on the evidence in the transcript, only considering evidence up to the maximum word limit (e.g. up to 2000 words for AT3).

If the speed of the recording makes the speech incomprehensible, it affects the accuracy of transcriptions and it also impacts the ability of markers/moderators to find evidence of student achievement against the performance standards.

School Assessment

Teachers can improve the moderation process and the online process by:

* 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 sheet music for both solo and ensemble performances
* providing audio along with scores for both student compositions and arrangements
* indicating which LAP applies to which group of students where two or more schools are grouped
* submitting the source material for arrangements, even though this is not required, as these are extremely useful in helping to ascertain the student’s arranging skills and knowledge.

Assessment Type 1: Creative Works (40%)

This assessment task allows students to apply their musical understanding, skills and techniques by presenting a folio of their own creative works, which could include performances, compositions or arrangements.

The students also present a creator’s statement, in which they provide evidence of their learning as they reflect on their creative works.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* allowing students to view examples of solo and ensemble performances and discussing these performances in light of the performance standards as provided the Subject Outline
* supporting students in the planning process prior to undertaking compositions and/or arrangements.

The more successful responses commonly:

* performed solo or ensemble works demonstrating strong instrumental or vocal skills along with a highly developed level of understanding of musical elements, style and conventions in their performance
* produced compositions and/or arrangements that demonstrated a range of skills and with scores that utilised correct score conventions. Scores were presented professionally through utilising landscape format rather than profile, which shows considerations for easier reading by a conductor or director
* produced well-planned arrangements intentionally and successfully in a style diverging from the original work used
* presented well organised creator’s statements which discussed higher order musical elements, making good use of musical literacy terms along with tables and/or musical examples to inform the text/script, as well as a mature understanding of the refinement process before final submission.

The less successful responses commonly:

* produced scores of compositions/arrangements showing limited creativity and development of musical ideas. These scores were usually lacking in normal score conventions, such as inappropriate transposition and lack of dynamics, tempo markings etc. or works that lacked coherence due to insufficient planning
* performed solo or ensemble works demonstrating less developed instrumental or vocal skills, lack of fluency in technique and some deficiency in understanding the music and style they were utilising
* presented poorly organised creator’s statements which lacked details and failed to discuss higher order musical elements, using ‘cut-and-paste’ musical examples which failed to inform the text/script.

Assessment Type 2: Music Literacy (30%)

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

At least one of the three tasks should be a composition or arrangement, allowing the students to demonstrating their practical skill and application in manipulating musical elements. Compositions and arrangements presented used a range of styles and instrumentation from funk to string quartets. Variations are often included as a task in AT2 and many of these were successful works which included a sound knowledge of the capabilities of the instruments used, a good use of harmony and detailed and correctly presented scores.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* providing theory/aural skills tests for students. These allow students to develop and demonstrate their knowledge and skill to the highest level of the performance standards, thus utilising rhythmic and melodic dictation, compositional technique and creative questions (including harmonisation) to the same or similar level of Assessment Task 3
* supporting students in the planning process prior to undertaking compositions and/or arrangements.

The more successful responses commonly:

* created musical works that clearly demonstrated higher order skills and knowledge appropriately matched to the given task and a high range of techniques, such as well-planned and organised arrangements utilising a style and instrumentation with which the student was obviously familiar
* responded to music with written work, such as analyses, which were enhanced through the discussion of higher order musical elements. Annotated scores were used effectively to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key musical elements such as structure, compositional devices, harmonic language, rhythmic motives
* demonstrated a highly developed understanding of and response to music through competent completion of complex aural and harmony skills tests
* synthesised their findings in well written or produced responses, which began with an opening paragraph that outlined the purpose and intent of the document/presentation and included thoughtful discussion of musical elements with the helpful use of musical excerpts where appropriate.

The less successful responses commonly:

* created musical works that did not demonstrate a working knowledge of the instruments included or the style used, or which were lacking in planning, structure or form
* responded to music with written work, such as analyses, which were lacking in depth and focussed mainly on basic musical elements, such as tempo and dynamics, rather than higher order elements, such as compositional techniques
* demonstrated a less developed understanding of and response to music through less than competent completion of complex aural and harmony skills tests at difficulty levels below that expected in Assessment Task 3
* synthesised their findings in less competent written or produced responses, which included basic discussion of musical elements with overuse of musical excerpts to pad out the document with little appropriate explanation.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination (30%)

The total number of marks for the examination is 120, and these were evenly distributed (40 marks for each) between the three areas of knowledge and skills being assessed: aural recognition and dictation, compositional techniques recognition and analysis, and creative music notation.

The students also were provided a formula sheet and a number of the questions were given with the student’s ability to use this sheet in mind. Teachers should ensure all students are familiar with and able to utilise the formula sheet to solve problems in different contexts.

Question 1

Students generally found these five aural recognition questions relatively easy, with over 80% of students answering at least three of the five parts correctly.

Question 2

Students found this rhythmic dictation question somewhat more difficult. However more than one in three of the students were able to gain at least six marks out of the possible eight. The most successful students were able to recognise the tie between quavers at the end of bar one and the start of bar 2, and also recognise the triplet in bar three.

Question 3

Students also found this chord recognition question tricky, with less than 20% of students able to correctly identify and notate the two chords. More successful students correctly identified the first chord as a minor triad in second inversion, and the second chord as a half-diminished seventh in root position.

Question 4

This question was the most successful in the whole paper for the students, with over 55% correctly identifying the major scale in part (a), and the minor pentatonic scale in part (b).

Question 5

These two melodic questions proved to be more difficult with very few students correctly completing both parts. While many students were able to identify some incorrect notes in part (a) few identified all six. In part (b) successful students recognised the perfect fifth interval between the two initial notes to be identified, and were then able to notate chromatic notes in the remaining section using the correct accidentals.

Question 6

This melody completion question was the first creative question in the paper, and students generally did well, with almost 50% of students gaining either three or four marks out of the total of four. The more successful students made use of the rhythmic motives present in the given four bars, used a discernible cadence to finish their melody, ensured their melody had appropriate range and contour, and completed bar four with a crotchet or two quavers along with a minim in bar 8 to account for the anacrusis.

Question 7

Students generally found this set of questions relatively easy, with just over half the students gaining at least eight out of the total of ten marks. The more successful students correctly identified the similar and contrary motion in part (b), the imperfect cadence in part (d) along with the correct description of the rhythmic approach of the two hands in part (f) (left hand playing crotchets to keep the beat while the right hand plays the syncopated melody).

Question 8

This question, which relied totally on the aural skills of the students with no musical score provided, was a little more difficult, with under 45% of students gaining at least six of the eight marks on offer. Less successful students struggled with contrasting different sections of the music, instead describing what they could hear in just one section of the music.

Question 9

In this question analysing an arrangement of a traditional tune almost 55% of students gained at least eight marks out of the total of twelve. The more successful students recognised the change in time signature, the change of rhythm groupings, and the use of triplets and rests in part (a). They also were able to find the compositional techniques in part (c) in the score and correctly identify the instruments and bar numbers. Less successful students struggled to correctly transpose the alto saxophone part into concert pitch in part (e).

Question 10

In this comparative analysis question just over 40% of students were able to gain at least eight out of the total of twelve marks. More successful students were able to identify the four requested elements (meter, tonality, texture and use of thematic material) in each of the variations and succinctly provide the requested information in their answer.

Question 11

Students were able to complete the three parts below the given melody in this question generally well, with almost two-thirds of students gaining at least 8 out of the 12 marks. The most successful students wrote parts which were lined up under the correct beats of the melody, enabling students to see if the harmony being created was consonant or dissonant, especially when non-chord notes such as passing or auxiliary notes were added. Additionally, the added parts used smooth voice leading. Successful students also added an F natural to one of their middle parts in bar 1b to extend the G minor chord to a seventh, and/or a B flat to one of their middle parts in bar 3a to extend the C minor chord to a seventh.

Question 12

Almost half of the students were able to correctly complete these grouping questions, correctly notating the given notes in both 3/4 and 6/8 time.

Question 13

Overall, a number of students provided strong harmonisations for their chosen option with 30% of the students gaining at least 18 marks out of the total of 24.

Option A

The most successful students selected and spelled their chords carefully and applied correct voice leading in the parts. Strong chords were used at cadence points, and a dominant seventh chord utilised in bar 4, using the G quaver in the melody to effect. Higher-level skills were demonstrated in utilisation of chord inversions and second inversion chords as appropriate.

Option B

The most successful students selected and spelled their chords carefully and applied correct smooth part writing in the chord voicings. A modulation by permission was recognised and correctly facilitated, such as a modulation to A major using B minor seventh in bar 2b, and an E seventh and A major seventh chord in bar 3. Higher-level skills demonstrated in utilisation of extended and altered-note chords as appropriate.