# Government of South Australia LogoSACE Board Logo2023 Music Studies Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2023 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.

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.

School Assessment

Teachers can improve the moderation process and the 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%)

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 in 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 with a program of contrasting repertoire that demonstrated strong instrumental or vocal skills along with a highly developed level of understanding of musical elements, style, and conventions in performance. Ensemble students selected and included part-testing of passages that allowed them to demonstrate their strengths
* produced compositions and/or arrangements that demonstrated a good understanding of harmonic concepts such as modulation, varied chord progressions, and different chord types, and showed a range of skills, with scores that utilised correct score conventions, presented in landscape format rather than profile to allow for easier reading by a conductor
* produced well-planned arrangements, intentionally and successfully in a selected style, and utilised their knowledge and skills to diverge from the original work
* presented well organised creator’s statements in which students identified the main elements and techniques employed to develop their works, discussed higher order musical elements, and used musical literacy terms with tables and/or musical examples to inform the text/script.

The less successful responses commonly:

* produced scores of compositions/arrangements that:
* showed limited creativity and development of musical ideas
* were lacking in normal score conventions, such as inappropriate transposition and lack of dynamics or tempo markings
* lacked coherence due to insufficient planning
* were arrangements that were transcriptions of the original that did not demonstrate arranging skill
* performed solo or ensemble works that demonstrated less developed instrumental or vocal skills, a lack of fluency in technique, as well as deficiency in the understanding and utilisation of the appropriate style associated with the chosen repertoire; or where the selected repertoire limited the student’s ability to demonstrate variety in technique, expression, and styles
* presented creator’s statements that lacked detail, were not well organised, did not discuss higher order musical elements, and used ‘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 demonstrate their practical skill and application in manipulating musical elements. If utilising subject adjustments, teachers are reminded that this ‘manipulation’ task remains a requirement for this assessment type.

Compositions and arrangements presented used a range of styles and instrumentation from funk to string quartets. Variations are often included as a task in Assessment Type 2 and many of these were successful works which included a sound knowledge of the capabilities of the instruments used, good use of harmony, and detailed and correctly presented scores.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* supporting students in the planning process prior to undertaking arrangements and/or compositions
* providing theory or aural skills tests for students that allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and skill to the highest level of the performance standards, utilising rhythmic and melodic dictation, compositional technique, and creative questions (including harmonisation) to an equivalent level of those in Assessment Type 3.

The more successful responses commonly:

* created musical works that appropriately demonstrated higher order skills and knowledge, matched to the given task, and demonstrating a 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, in which the student identified the main structural elements, keys and modulations, and the use of the instruments, which they discussed through higher order musical elements
* used annotated scores to effectively demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key musical elements such as structure, compositional devices, harmonic language, and rhythmic motives
* demonstrated 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 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 that were lacking in planning, form, or structure
* responded to music with written work that lacked depth and focused primarily on basic musical elements, such as tempo and dynamics, or on biographical detail of the composer or performer, rather than higher order elements, such as compositional techniques
* demonstrated less than satisfactory completion of complex aural and harmony skills tests, which were less difficult than those that students are expected to complete in Assessment Type 3
* synthesised their findings in less competent written or produced responses, with basic discussion of musical elements, overuse of musical excerpts to pad out the response, and little appropriate explanation.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

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

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

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* providing opportunities for the students to practise each type of question as often as possible to develop their knowledge and skills. This could include both formative and summative skills tests that would allow students to practise their knowledge and skills under exam conditions, at the level of difficulty they will likely encounter, prior to the final examination.

Question 1

Students generally found these five aural recognition questions relatively easy, with over 85% of students answering at least four of the five parts correctly. Less successful students were unable to identify the answer in part (e) as Option 1.

Question 2

Students found this rhythmic dictation question more difficult, though almost two in three students were able to gain at least six out of the possible eight marks. More successful students were able to recognise the crotchet followed by a quaver tied to a dotted crotchet in bar three.

Question 3

Students found this chord recognition question tricky; 50% of students were able to correctly identify and notate the two chords. Successful students correctly identified the first chord as a major seventh chord, and the second chord as an augmented triad.

Question 4

Students performed best on this question across the entire exam, with almost 90% correctly identifying the harmonic minor scale in part (a), and the dorian mode in part (b).

Question 5

These two melodic questions proved to be more difficult with only one in eight students correctly completing both parts. Many students were able to identify some incorrect notes in part (a), but only a few identified all four. In part (b) successful students recognised the melodic minor scale utilised to build the melody, and therefore used the raised sixth and seventh (C sharp and D sharp) in bar 3.

Question 6

This melody completion question was the first creative question in the paper, which students generally completed well, with over 60% of students gaining three or more marks out of the total 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 ensured that bar 4 was completed rhythmically in starting their own response.

Question 7

Students were generally able to respond appropriately to this question, with over half the students gaining at least eight out of the total of ten marks. The more successful students correctly identified the diminished triad in part (a), the two cadences in part (b) and (f), and with the correct common chord progression (1-4-7-3-6-2-5-1) used from their formula sheet in part (d).

Question 8

This question relied totally on the aural skills of the students as no musical score was provided. Students performed better on Question 8 than the previous question, with over two-thirds of students gaining at least six of the eight marks. Less successful students struggled with their understanding of texture (part b) and musical styles (part c), and described features that were not relevant to the questions.

Question 9

In this question, requiring students to analyse an arrangement of a traditional tune, more than three-quarters of students gained at least nine marks out of a possible 12. The more successful students demonstrated an understanding of transposition for the French Horn, answering parts (b) and (e) correctly.

Question 10

Students found this comparative analysis question the most difficult across the whole paper, with just under a quarter of students able to gain at least ten out of the total of twelve marks. More successful students were able to identify the three requested elements (tempo, tonality, and use of thematic material) in each of the variations and compare these with the original theme (rather than the previous variation). Some less successful students mistook tempo for meter and wrote about time signature changes, rather than tempo markings.

Question 11

This question was provided in a minor key. Students were generally able to complete the three parts below the given melody in this question well, with over 55% of students gaining at least 10 out of the 12 marks. The most successful students wrote parts which were lined up under the correct beats of the melody, allowing them 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 A natural to one of their middle parts in bar 1a or 3b to extend the B minor triad to a minor seventh, and/or a G natural to one of their middle parts in bar 2a to extend the A major triad to a dominant seventh.

Question 12

Over half of the students were able to correctly complete this grouping question and correctly added the bar lines.

Question 13

Overall, a number of students provided strong harmonisations for their chosen option, with almost 60% of 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 passing 6/4 chord (Vc) utilised in bar 1, using the first three notes of the melody to effect. Higher-level skills were demonstrated in utilisation of chord inversions, dominant seventh chords, 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 demand to the key of A minor was recognised and correctly facilitated in bar 2, utilising a B half-diminished seventh in bar 1b (or at the start of bar 2) followed by E dominant seventh and A minor seventh. These three chords would all have required appropriate accidentals in the keyboard voicings. Higher-level skills were demonstrated in utilisation of extended and altered-note chords as appropriate.

General

Students are encouraged to use pencil (B or 2B) to write on the examination paper, so they can correct errors clearly, especially in the harmony and other creative responses.