NZQA
New Zealand Qualifications Authority
Mana Tohu Matauranga O Aotearoa

Assessment Report

Level 3 Music 2016

Standards 91420 91421 91423

Part A: Commentary

Level 3 Music candidates who demonstrated a secure understanding of musical elements and features were in a stronger position to achieve success in the external examinations than those who did not. Those candidates whose responses demonstrated an understanding of musical language and literacy appropriate to the requirements of the Level 3 standards were most likely to succeed. It is crucial that careful consideration is given to the choice of “substantial music work”.

Part B: Report on Standards

91420: Integrate aural skills into written representation

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- used appropriate musical language to describe musical and compositional features
- understood and explained basic musical textures
- compared musical passages and outlined some differences and similarities
- transcribed melodic contours and rhythmic patterns accurately
- identified some of the instruments and ensembles heard.

Candidates who were assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- provided unfocused or imprecise responses
- lacked knowledge of basic musical terms, elements and features
- struggled to identify basic instrumental timbres, ensembles and instrumental techniques
- confused the meaning of rhythm, metre and tempo
- misheard contour direction, interval quantity and rhythmic patterns
- labelled chords inaccurately.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- explained musical textures, cadences and tonality in detail
- outlined the structure and function of compositional devices
- discussed how musical contrast was being achieved
- matched melodic patterns with rhythmic patterns with some accuracy
- selected chord indications which showed awareness of harmonic progression
- identified instruments and ensembles correctly.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- provided detailed analysis of musical features and elements
- compared and contrasted musical changes and similarities in a range of contexts
- explained specific compositional devices in detail
- completed highly accurate melodic and rhythmic transcriptions
- outlined harmonic content using primary and secondary chords in root position and inversion.

Standard-specific comments

Candidates need to develop their aural skills by listening to and thinking reflectively on a wide range of music.

Candidates are encouraged to provide as detailed a response as they can. For example, compare the following four responses to the question “How does the tonality of bars 9–16 relate to bars 1–8?”:

- “It gets louder and thicker” (Not Achieved) – the response has focused on musical elements other than tonality.
- “It changes to a new key” (Achievement) – there is an awareness that modulation has occurred but no additional context is given.
- “It changes from the tonic key to the dominant key” (Merit) – this shows understanding of the relationship of the second key to the first.

“It has changed from the tonic key of C minor to the dominant, G minor” (Excellence) – this would be the minimum detail required although additional evidence such as “There is a perfect V–I cadence in G minor” would further secure the grade.

91421: Demonstrate knowledge of harmonic and tonal conventions in a range of music scores

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified chords in root and inverted positions using a range of standard notation terminology
- labelled simple chords using roman numeral notation
- used given harmonic progression to write accurate bass lines
- completed basic cadential progressions by writing missing inner harmonic parts

- differentiated between major, minor and diminished chords
- demonstrated understanding of harmonic contour and voice leading.

Candidates who were assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- struggled to identify the tonality of a given extract and its relationship to the tonic key
- selected inappropriate triads and chords patterns
- used inaccurate terminology to describe harmonic features
- wrote stylistically weak passages containing basic harmonic and rhythmic errors
- overlooked simple modulations and determined cadence points inaccurately.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- differentiated between harmonic and non-essential notes and analysed them in detail
- completed harmonic passages based on given bass lines
- harmonised musical cadence points based on a given melody
- demonstrated understanding of harmonic accuracy through completing inner voice parts
- labelled and analysed pivot chords used in modulating passages.
- demonstrated knowledge of vocal range and harmonic texture.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- demonstrated a secure understanding of chord progressions, cadential writing and modulation
- demonstrated stylistic flair and musical accuracy when completing harmonic extracts
- were aware of limitations to vocal range
- maintained given harmonic textures and compositional style
- used a range of harmonic resources including seventh chords, inversions and nonessential notes
- considered rhythmic content, musical contour and phrasing when adding moving bass lines.

Standard-specific comments

Candidates who have a stronger grasp of musical language, cadences, standard harmonic progressions and voice ranges are in a better position to achieve in this standard.

Where candidates were able to process harmonic content, they set themselves up well for Achievement at Merit or Excellence. Those who struggled to achieve were not as secure in understanding musical elements and applying them to the task required.

Notational skills are also important. Ambiguous note heads and inaccurate rhythmic content often marred what would otherwise have been a secure response.

Note that in 2017, candidates will also be expected to analyse short passages of music. A knowledge of keyboard writing would also be useful.

91423: Examine the influence of context on a substantial music work

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- provided explanations of some key concepts with some relationship to the chosen question
- wrote in very general terms about the contexts and their influences
- supported answers with simple evidence from the work
- wrote short factual paragraphs that were not developed in any depth
- wrote holistic general statements with evidence that was broad rather than specific
- provided responses that were detailed analyses of the work instead of using analytical information to support a response about the influence of context.

Candidates who were assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- wrote about works that were not substantial
- did not respond to the specific question and presented biographical or historical information about their chosen work without any specific purpose
- provided detailed analyses of lyrics without considering the contextual influences or music
- repeated evidence across multiple paragraphs
- did not make use of any planning
- had a limited musical vocabulary.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Merit** commonly:

- explained in detail the relationship of the context to the conception, production and interpretation of the work
- provided specific musical evidence, as appropriate to the work that was presented either descriptively or with musical notation
- planned their responses well to avoid repetition or excess length
- used musical terminology accurately to demonstrate musical understanding.

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement with Excellence** commonly:

- defined their approach to conception, production and interpretation in order to set parameters for the essay's contents
- made perceptive links between contextual influences and the musical work
- showed a depth of understanding of both the context and the work itself and presented material that was comprehensively developed and supported.

Standard-specific comments

Some candidates found this standard challenging due to the choices of material presented as a "substantial" music work. Stand-alone, short popular songs are not substantial enough for this standard.

When discussing the influence of context, candidates should be encouraged to talk about works as a whole (e.g. symphony, sonata, concerto) and draw musical examples from a specific movement. This was done particularly well by students who had studied an album.

This standard is about context. Candidates need to relate any analysis to the overall discussion of the context of the work.

Candidates who have studied musicals should be careful to ensure that responses are not simply plot summaries and that there is sufficient knowledge of the influence of context on the music as well as the lyrics.

Example ‘Substantial music works’ that worked particularly well in 2016 were:

- Bach – “Brandenburg” Concerto No. 5
- Bartok – Concerto for Orchestra
- John Williams – soundtrack from *Jaws*
- Snarky Puppy – “Shofukan”
- Stravinsky – *The Firebird*
- The Beatles – *Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (album)

Music subject page

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