

# Assessment Report

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### Part A: Commentary

There was a wide range of responses from candidates across all standards in 2020.

Candidates who achieved in the higher range tended to show a sound grasp of musical terminology, a clear and perceptive understanding of musical elements and features and their use, as well as the ability to read, write and interpret musical notation accurately. They were also able to describe the effect on the music of musical features. Familiarity with a range of musical styles enhanced candidates' level of performance. Successful candidates also made meaningful connections between the historical / social / cultural contexts in which music works were written and the use of elements and features within these works. They were able to provide accurate and relevant evidence from the music to support their responses.

Candidates who achieved less well tended to provide generic, pre-prepared, or descriptive responses, and showed a limited understanding of musical terminology. They did not accurately demonstrate understanding of the differences between musical elements and features (e.g. timbre and texture,

octave and unison, jazz rock and Roman numeral notation). A number of candidates provided irrelevant material in their responses by presenting the same evidence for different questions. The lower range of achievement tended to show limited accuracy in both reading and writing musical notation and, at times, not enough musical evidence to support the candidates' responses.

Teachers are strongly recommended to refer to the latest Achievement Standards, Assessment Specifications, as well as to the Aural Skills and Conventions documents, and work through these with their students in preparation for these examinations. These can be found on the [Music subject page](#).

## Part B: Report on standards

### 91275: Demonstrate aural understanding through written representation

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- transcribed some melodic contours and / or rhythmic patterns accurately
- identified isolated chords accurately
- discerned aspects of performance directions without consistently specifying the exact location on a score
- applied their knowledge of elements and features in a general way, such as elements of style, without providing detailed evidence

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not transcribe melodic contours and rhythms accurately
- did not identify chords with accuracy
- did not correctly recognise performance directions / locate them on the score
- had limited knowledge of different styles
- were unclear in identifying differences between elements and features.

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

- notated melodic phrases with accuracy including larger intervals, dotted rhythms and longer melodies

- identified pairs of chords in an extract
- notated performance directions with accuracy
- supported identification of elements and features (e.g. walking bass in jazz, types of texture) with relevant detail based on knowledge of music styles.

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

- notated musical phrases accurately including accidentals
- notated chordal phrases accurately including minor and suspended chords
- notated detailed performance directions with accuracy
- explained the effect of elements and features based on detailed knowledge of music styles and various instruments and ensembles.

### Standard-specific comments

Candidates who had a clear understanding of musical elements and features were more likely to experience success in this standard, particularly when the effect of these elements, features and devices was fully explained. Successful candidates demonstrated familiarity with a range of musical styles and the terminology associated with those styles. They could accurately identify the sound of different instruments and ensembles and apply their knowledge of these instruments to their answers.

Notation skills were important in allowing candidates' responses to be deciphered – unclear or ambiguous notation often marred what may have been a secure response. Handwriting was also sometimes difficult to decipher.

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## 91276: Demonstrate knowledge of conventions in a range of music scores

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- applied strong Level 1 knowledge to aspects of the paper
- analysed the music, but without great depth
- identified basic chords and intervals but not their quality or inversion
- understood the principles of transposition but lacked the detailed knowledge for the instruments provided.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not attempt many of the questions or were unable to use subject specific terminology.

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

- identified chords and intervals but missed the more difficult ones (e.g. augmented 4<sup>th</sup>, 7ths)
- lacked attention to detail, for example: missed accidentals, key signatures, accuracy in transcribing for the cello (Q2d ii), specifics when discussing the use of instruments (Q3a)
- understood the principles of TAB, but not the specifics of the tuning, and also commonly missed allowing for the accidentals
- could make accurate and detailed comments on the written questions.

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

- demonstrated strong analytical skills regarding texture, effect on music, composition devices / features, instrumentation
- possessed strong musical and notational knowledge – understood articulation, clefs, accidentals, and annotated scores well (Q1c)
- accurately transposed with excellent attention to detail.
- understood TAB and knew the correct tuning.

### **Standard-specific comments**

Candidates who responded to the specific details asked in the questions did well. text-based responses ranged from basic to detailed high-level understanding

While many candidates had difficulty applying standard texture terminology to 'non-classical' music, there was little evidence of alternative terminology. e.g. students who failed to identify the opening of the music as 'monophonic' missed out by not describing what was happening in the music.

A number of candidates missed part of Q2 and therefore could not gain Excellence for this question overall. It was unclear whether this was intentional or accidental but indicates candidates must read every question thoroughly.

Candidates should be discouraged from using the abbreviations m for minor and M for major as some handwriting made this difficult to distinguish.

Candidates should be familiar with the order of strings on guitar and bass guitar for TAB notation.

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## 91277: Demonstrate knowledge of two substantial contrasting music works

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- demonstrated a simple understanding of both works, their context, and musical features, and were able to make a simple comparison
- had a detailed understanding of one work, but a limited understanding of the other.

Candidates whose work was assessed as **Not Achieved** commonly:

- had insufficient evidence to achieve the standard
- had strong answers for question 1 but did not complete the rest of the paper.

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

- answered the first question with confidence and detail but did not comprehensively compare typical / atypical musical features.
- included multiple pieces of musical evidence that was not always well-chosen or referred to in the script.

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

- answered both questions utilising substantial works, with stimulating contexts that were well understood and articulated in writing
- demonstrated a clear understanding of musical features and how they were used to interpret and bring life to the compositions studied
- demonstrated a sense of genuine understanding and emotional connection with the chosen works through perceptive writing
- provided written and notated musical evidence which was well-chosen and supported the writer's argument

- planned their answers and wrote in a manner which covered the question thoroughly, yet concisely.

### Standard-specific comments

Candidates who study at least one substantial work from a comprehensive score generally do better in this examination than those who have used pieces with a limited range of study material. While it is exciting to study Contemporary Popular Music, the elements of some of these works were not substantial enough to lend themselves to success in this standard. Note that the standard requires substantial works which is different to significant works.

A combination of methodical analysis, research, and focused listening skills will benefit candidates with this standard. It is not necessary to study an entire album or musical / opera for this standard as there is not enough time to show perceptive understanding of a large-scale work with the examination.

It is vital that two works are both substantial and contrasting in order to achieve this standard to a high level. The pairing of a substantial work with a lightweight work will potentially result in an imbalanced response.

Successful responses in this year's examination included works by Antonio Vivaldi; Miles Davis; Ludwig van Beethoven; Dorothy Buchanan; John Psathas; Gareth Farr; Leonard Bernstein; George Gershwin; John Coltrane; Jenny McLeod; Steve Reichs; the Beatles.

## [Music subject page](#)

### Previous years' reports

[2019 \(PDF, 267KB\)](#)

[2018 \(PDF, 131KB\)](#)

[2017 \(PDF, 57KB\)](#)

[2016 \(PDF, 248KB\)](#)

