

Subject: Music

Level: 2

Standards: 91275, 91276, 91277

Part A: Commentary

Overall candidates were generally well prepared and were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in the examinations. There were a number of challenges in the papers, particularly 91275 and 91276, that were met by some but not all candidates. While Achievement with Merit was attained by many, often answers were lacking sufficient detail, accuracy of terminology, and depth of discussion to move to Excellence level.

In 91277, choice of works was critical to candidate success. Works without a score made it difficult for candidates to be specific with their evidence and candidates who present contemporary popular music in this standard tend to be at a disadvantage. It is vital that a combination of two substantial, contrasting works is used in order to achieve this standard to a high level.

Candidates should read questions carefully and attempt every part of the assessment. Candidates should also read and be familiar with the Conventions and Aural documents that can be found on the NZQA [Music Subject Page](#).

Part B: Report on standards

91275: Demonstrate aural understanding through written representation

Examination

The examination consisted of three questions of which candidates were required to respond to all three.

Question One was in three parts and required general perception, recognition of structure and chord recognition.

Question Two was in three parts and required the candidates to apply their understanding of compositional devices, transcription, and chord recognition.

Question Three was in two parts and required a comparison of two versions of a piece and an understanding of texture and timbre. The questions covered the requirements of the 2022 Assessment Specifications which were:

- identification of chord progressions and cadences
- transcription of melodic lines from the upper or lower parts of a texture
- understanding of the use of elements and features, such as instrumentation and timbre; terms, signs, and performance markings; melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic features; and textural, structural, and compositional devices.

Observations

Candidates were given a range of music to respond to.

Many of the simple tasks such as labelling **dynamics** in the correct place were relegated to a final playing as this was last on the list of elements and features to be identified.

Candidates discussing **form** and identifying differences or variations often suggested things “heard” that did not exist in the audio recording. This suggests that candidates found this difficult.

Often correct cadences were identified but did not have the correct corresponding chords. In both rock / pop and Baroque chord identification, the V7 chord was not often identified accurately and differentiated from the V or dominant chord.

Melodic transcription was generally poorly completed – some candidates made obvious attempts to provide melodic contour marks for themselves to follow. The rhythmic patterns seemed to be less consistently accurate than the melodic contour lines.

Candidates were usually aware of **compositional devices** and their terms, and applied these to the music with a range of accuracy. Candidates performing at a higher level were better able to discuss compositional devices and their effects on an extract in context.

Although questions were laid out well and were clear in their explanation and requirements, at times these were not understood or followed. Often helpful scaffolding was provided; how the candidates used this scaffolding often determined the success of the response.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified some instruments, tempo and tempo changes, time signatures
- identified melodic contours, and/or rhythmic patterns, individual chords, some articulation, and occasional dynamics
- answered either cadences or chords in isolation (e.g. chords in boxes linked to cadences did not match)
- identified musical elements and features such as texture, timbre, and compositional devices.
- answered describe and discuss questions with one or more attributes
- were able to identify at least one unusual chord in excerpts.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- used pre-prepared answers that did not apply to the question
- answered only part of the question
- confused different elements and features
- did not use subject or question-specific vocabulary when answering discuss and compare questions
- frequently misinterpreted questions, or provided answers which were specifically excluded by the question (i.e. discussing differences in instrumentation when the question said “not instrumentation”)
- did not attempt transcription opportunities
- did not provide evidence from extracts for their reasoning
- demonstrated a lack of understanding of different types of musical form
- were unable to identify similar-sounding passages in context to use as reference points in extracts
- demonstrated a lack of awareness of expected harmonic progressions in pop songs.

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

- identified instruments, time signatures, bar lines, tempo and tempo changes, articulation and dynamics with detail

- transcribed melodic phrases with minor errors
- identified compositional devices within a piece of music
- discussed the use of elements and features within a musical context with some detail
- used question-specific vocabulary and were able to begin building links between their observation and the question posed
- generally provided correct cadences, identifying pairs of chords
- made some progress identifying the form of unfamiliar extracts
- showed some ability to begin having insightful commentary
- provided cadences and chords which matched and were able to identify and explain why a chord was unusual in context.

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

- analysed the musical effect of compositional devices, elements and features within the musical context
- accurately identified instruments, time signatures, tempo, and tempo changes
- notated barlines, dynamics and articulation accurately
- convincingly transcribed melodies and rhythms to a high degree of accuracy
- provided cadences and chords which matched, and were able to identify and explain the effect of an unusual chord in context
- listed relevant points and wrote up the answer convincingly and clearly, relating the selected points to the musical context with accuracy
- used subject-specific, question-appropriate vocabulary when answering discuss and compare questions
- provided specific evidence from lyrics or listening tracks linking their discussion responses to the question.

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

Examination

The examination consisted of three questions of which candidates were required to respond to all three.

Question One was in four parts and required candidates to apply their understanding of intervals, time signatures, transcription, musical elements and compositional devices.

Question Two was in three parts and required candidates to apply their understanding of vocal types, guitar tablature, chords, keys, and cadences.

Question Three was in four parts and required candidates to apply their understanding of transposition, transcription, and musical elements.

The questions covered the requirements of the 2022 Assessment Specifications which were to refer to music score extracts and respond to questions using appropriate musical notation and written evidence. Genres specified for 2022 were Piano Duet, Accompanied Vocal, and Wind Quintet.

Observations

There was a wide range of knowledge and understanding among the candidates, ranging from those with almost non-existent Level 2 knowledge to those whose knowledge exceeded what is generally expected at Level 2. Overall, candidates were generally very well prepared and able to demonstrate their knowledge in the examination. Some areas that candidates found challenging were identifying voice type, transposition, notating a score, identifying more complex chords.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- had a good level of Level 1 knowledge which they applied but little specific Level 2 knowledge
- could answer Question One parts (a) and (b) well (often Excellence) and also the guitar TAB (Question Two (b)) question
- had basic knowledge of and were able to identify simple compositional devices and textures
- required more knowledge when notating a score, e.g. in Question One (d) – e.g. basic knowledge on musical conventions and score notations such as pause signs, location of dynamic markings etc.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- had low to non-existent Level 2 knowledge overall, but could provide some Level 1 evidence.

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

- showed understanding of what was required but made mistakes in applying it or had gaps in their knowledge - for instance, being able to identify the chords in Question Two (c) but unable to identify / describe the slash chords correctly, or
- did not notate the time signatures across all parts in Question One (b), or
- thought that the oboe and flute were playing the melody in Question Three (c) and identified a homophonic texture.

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

- had an extremely high level of knowledge overall, often superior to what is normally seen from Level 2 students
- provided excellent written evidence
- demonstrated extremely accurate transcriptions and identifications.

91277: Demonstrate knowledge of two substantial contrasting music works

Examination

The examination consisted of one question in two parts. Candidates were required to respond to both parts. Part (a) required candidates to apply their understanding by making a comparison of the context of the two works studied. Part (b) required candidates to apply their understanding by comparing the use of a significant musical element or feature in the two works studied.

The questions covered the requirements of the 2022 Assessment Specifications which were to provide extended written responses, supported by specific musical evidence, to questions referring to two music works they have studied.

Observations

In preparing for this examination, there seems to be increasing confusion between substantial works and significant works and while it is exciting to study Contemporary Popular Music and musical performances through a socio-political lens, this does not necessarily align with the requirements of the standard. Students who have studied and prepared at least one substantial work from a comprehensive score generally do far better in this exam than those who have used pieces with a limited range of study material. Even though a score is only required for one work, it is vital that a combination of two substantial, contrasting works is used in order to achieve this standard to a high level. The pairing of a substantial work with a lightweight work can result in a lack of comparative and perceptive answers. It is pleasing to see candidates highlighting key words in the question and responding to this with concise, flowing, and perceptive writing. Spare paper is not required to answer this exam to a high standard. Works by (but by no means limited to) Ludwig van Beethoven, Dorothy Buchanan, John Psathas, Gareth Farr, George Gershwin, Jenny McLeod and the Beatles, were successful this year. Candidates who had studied movie music or musical theatre could not provide perceptive answers in most cases and most fell short in providing a clear context for the piece.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- answered all parts of the paper
- provided musical evidence or general musical evidence
- made a simple comparison between works which may have been implicit as opposed to explicit.

Candidates who were awarded **Not Achieved** commonly:

- did not answer all parts of the paper
- reused the same musical evidence in each question
- used a social anthropology lens rather than a musical contextual lens and argued with limited musical contextual references.

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

- displayed a good understanding of the context but not the elements of the chosen music works
- linked their writing to musical evidence
- were inconsistent in the quality of answers
- made some comparisons between their works.

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

- had a thorough and perceptive understanding of their musical works
- provided musical evidence and linked this to a perceptive understanding of their chosen works
- developed a strong and convincing argument, including comparison, and supported their argument with quality evidence
- displayed a good understanding of both the context and musical elements of the piece and were able to make connections between these
- made clear and explicit comparisons which guided their writing.