

2023 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Music
Level:	Level 2
Achievement standard(s):	91275, 91276, 91277

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91275 Demonstrate aural understanding through written representation

Assessment

Written examination with three questions.

Commentary

Candidates need to be able to identify common orchestral groups and their instruments. Understanding and application of textural terms and compositional devices is also important.

It is recommended that candidates pay close attention to the question. Underlining key words and understanding subject specific terminology in the question may help. For example, if the title of the music is Quintet for Piano and Winds and a candidate identifies the solo instrument as violin, this does not show understanding of wind instruments.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- Identified instruments from an orchestral or rock and pop group
- identified basic metre and tempo markings / changes
- identified changes in dynamics or articulation
- identified at least one textural change
- identified some isolated chords, melodic contours and basic rhythmic patterns
- identified compositional devices
- answered describe and discuss questions with one or more attributes
- made a reasonable attempt at annotating features on a score, but missed key features
- did not link discussions of features to the wider context of the question
- made a reasonable attempt at describing similarities / differences in instrumentation OR timbre in extracts, but were unable to link this to the effect created.

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

- Compensated for difficulties in transcribing melodies and rhythms with highly perceptive descriptions of differences in style and elements / features between pieces
- identified instruments, metre, bar lines, dynamics, tempi and tempo changes with accuracy

- identified pairs of chords
- described textural changes and their musical effect in detail
- used question-specific vocabulary, and were able to begin building links between their observation and the question posed
- made some progress identifying the change in texture of unfamiliar extracts
- showed some ability to begin having insightful commentary, but often followed this up with something unrelated to the question
- accurately identified and discussed the use of at least one common compositional device used in a passage of 20thC music.

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

- transcribed melodies, rhythms and chords with a high degree of accuracy
- identified differences in style and described the effects of these on the music with insight
- identified chordal phrases and cadences successfully
- provided specific, detailed evidence from listening tracks linking their discussion responses to the question
- showed an understanding of how variations of timbre and texture can create different effects across the course of a piece of music
- demonstrated an ability to read and interpret questions, and made use of provided scaffolding to guide the construction of their answers
- showed insight when discussing the application of texture, timbre, instrumentation or compositional devices.

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

- appeared to confuse elements of music, e.g. dynamics and texture
- did not accurately apply terms involving compositional techniques
- confused tempo, dynamic and articulation markings
- identified only one difference or similarity between pieces of music when asked to discuss similarities and differences
- used pre-determined answers that did not relate to the question or the piece of music
- did not use subject or question-specific vocabulary when answering discuss and compare questions
- did not attempt transcription opportunities
- demonstrated a lack of understanding of different types of texture
- were unable to identify common woodwind instruments
- demonstrated a lack of awareness of expected harmonic progressions and cadences in pop songs.

Achievement standard 91276 Demonstrate knowledge of conventions in a range of music scores

Assessment

Written examination with three questions.

Commentary

Understanding of compound time signatures was not evident as would be expected for Level 2 candidates. Extract One was in 6/8 with a dotted crotchet in the metronome marking. Candidates attempted to indicate that the dotted crotchet was unusual to match 3/4 indicating a fundamental misunderstanding of compound time signatures.

Many candidates appeared unable to construct the chords in Question 3 part (c). The most common mistakes involved missing necessary accidentals – particularly the E-flat in F7, and the C-sharp in A7. Candidates frequently added a flat to the F in Dm indicating they were aware the note needed to be lower, but did not know how to do this in context.

Many candidates used “maj” in rock / pop notation, which is unnecessary and at times led to mistakenly notating F7 as Fmaj7 (a different chord).

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- applied level 1 knowledge to this level 2 paper, and added the greater depth of musical analysis needed for achievement at Level 2
- identified basic chords and intervals but often miscalculated their quality
- demonstrated understanding of the basic principles of transposition but lacked the detailed knowledge for the instruments / requirements in this paper. The concept of concert pitch and which way to transpose the music for the question context was a frequent problem
- did not identify the 6/8 time signature in Question One (a)
- notated the required notes correctly to create a 7th chord but did not take account of accidentals to make the chords fully correct
- did not express inversions and frequently answered the correct chord but with no evidence of knowing that not having the tonic at the bottom changed the context of the chord OR misunderstood by putting (e.g.) Bb/D minor.

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

- demonstrated good knowledge of transposition, key signatures, compositional devices, rhythmic and textural processes
- identified chords and intervals but missed the diminished 5th or described it as an augmented 4th or tritone only
- lacked attention to specific detail at times – for example, missed accidentals, key signatures, didn't add lyrics and articulation, miscalculated tab notation
- provided sufficient explanations in their written responses but did not give the level of analytic detail required for excellence in the discussion based questions

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

- demonstrated very strong analysis skills regarding texture, effect on music, compositional devices / features, motifs, and instrumentation
- possessed strong musical and notational knowledge – understood articulation, clefs, accidentals, and tonality
- knew how to construct, analyse, and describe chords including sevenths and inversions understood the concepts of chord progressions and passing modulation
- transposed accurately in all contexts and applied the rules consistently
- showed excellent attention to detail across the paper

- identified the 6/8 time signature in Question One.

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

- did not use subject-specific terminology
- did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge at level 7 of the curriculum to reach the standard for Achieved.

Achievement standard 91277 Demonstrate understanding of two substantial and contrasting music works

Commentary

This year there was an increase in candidates linking statements indicating an attempt at comparison. True comparison requires detail and analyses of the effects of context and musical features.

Choice of Works: The standard calls for the study of substantial works. Substantial refers to the music being of some significance and / or complexity. A substantial work will provide students with more resources for study and give students a greater chance of achieving the standard. These resources will contain information about the musical and extra-musical qualities of the work.

Reference to the score of at least one of the music works is required. This year there was less reference to at least one score in the candidate answers. It is noticeable that candidates studying works without a score are less likely to achieve the standard or not attain the Merit and Excellence Grades. This is because the score provides musical evidence that the students can quote. There is space provided for this in the script and it allows the student to provide well-chosen musical evidence which supports their written response.

Musical evidence should be in the form of musical notation or bar numbers to musical placement. This evidence is used to support their argument. Consequently, the students can write with greater depth and their answers become detailed and more perceptive.

Musical works that contributed to student success included:

- Ghosts of Denniston – Buchanan
- Waiting for the Aeroplane – Psathas
- Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No 3 in Cmin mvt 1
- Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto no. 5
- Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue
- Spring - Antonio Vivaldi
- Symphony No.1 in D Major – Prokofiev
- All You Need is Love – Lennon / McCartney.

Many candidates answered the context question through a social anthropology lens rather than a musical lens. The question asks for specific musical evidence and candidates have difficulty meeting this requirement of the question when viewing the work solely through the anthropological lens and without a score.

A large number of candidates also answered the first question with an understanding that “people and time” related only to the people who were involved in the writing and recording of the composition, not society at large. Some popular music works, however, lent themselves

extremely well to this question and a wide range of social / cultural / political issues were successfully related to the music although in many cases, as previously stated, specific musical evidence was not used to make deeper connections.

There was evidence of student choice in the works chosen this year. While this is an attempt to connect the world of musical understanding and candidate interest, works that were a student's choice needed to provide robust answers for this paper. In most cases, the candidate's responses using these works did not meet the requirements of the standard as neither work discussed had a musical score.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- answered all parts of the paper
- included a simple explanation of the musical element or feature
- chose works that did not allow for substantive answers
- did not include musical quotations either referenced in the score or in terms of musical placement
- did not include a comparison.

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

- attempted comparison
- included musical evidence
- used genre-specific language with understanding
- provided a detailed response but often listed evidence without further explanation and depth
- had in-depth understanding of the context but not the elements of the chosen music works
- studied at least one work with a score.

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

- demonstrated a thorough and perceptive understanding of their musical works
- developed a strong and convincing argument that included comparison and supported their argument with quality evidence
- usually studied works that both had scores
- discussed works with clear similarities and differences
wrote concisely.

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

- did not complete the paper
 - had inconsistencies across the paper
 - were historically inaccurate
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