2024 NCEA Assessment Report

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

General commentary

For 91275 and 91276 teachers should refer to the "more resources" section of the NZQA website for detailed information about the conventions and types of skills being assessed, specifically:

- [Music aural skills and transcription [PDF, 260 KB]](#) – for use with standards 91275
- [Conventions common to scores in any style [PDF, 284 KB]](#) – for use with 91276.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91275: Demonstrate aural understanding through written representation

Assessment

The assessment consisted of a written examination with three questions. Candidates were required to answer all three questions.

Commentary

Candidates should be careful to read all parts of the question so as not to overlook specific requirements. Underlining key words and understanding subject-specific terminology in the question may help.

Giving specific musical information is a requirement at the higher levels of this standard, rather than broad, generalised responses.

Understanding musical articulation is required for this standard. Candidates could benefit from watching videos / live performances of musicians to gain exposure to different forms of articulation, such as slurs / staccato and what these sound like in context.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified some musical features and elements correctly
- made a reasonable attempt at annotating features on a score, but missed key elements
- identified a difference between arrangements of the same piece
- did not link discussions of musical features to the wider context of the question
- identified some of the chords, contours, and rhythmic patterns of a dictated musical piece
- identified a compositional device through listening to a piece of music, but could not describe it

- identified textural and other elements of music in context

- answered cadences or chords in isolation (e.g. chords in boxes linked to cadences did not match)

- did not typically demonstrate understanding of what constitutes a cadence.

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

- identified most musical features and elements correctly

- identified differences and similarities between arrangements of the same piece with detail

- identified pairs of chords and at least one cadence, and notated musical phrases

- identified a compositional device in context with relevant detail

- identified and described texture / textural variety, giving one or more specific musical examples

- linked musical elements and features to musical effect with some relevant detail

- showed some ability for insightful commentary, but did not link directly to musical examples.

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

- identified nearly all musical features and elements with accuracy

- identified chords I, ii, IV, V, and vi, including 7th and sus4 chords, (Roman numeral and rock) and cadences (at the end of phrases), with accuracy

- notated melodic phrases with rhythmic accuracy

- provided specific, detailed evidence linking their discussion responses to the question

- used subject-specific, question-appropriate vocabulary when answering discuss / compare questions

- used the scaffolding provided and demonstrated an ability to interpret questions clearly

- identified and described textural variety in context with accuracy and detail

- linked musical elements and features with the mood or musical effect with detail and insight.

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

- identified some musical features or elements, but did not use subject-specific / question-specific vocabulary for discuss / compare questions, or provide evidence from the extracts

- identified a few chords

- attempted to notate contours and rhythms

- did not attempt transcription opportunities

- wrote sentences that did not make sense or provided irrelevant material

- did not respond to the question properly, such as described tempo when asked for instrumentation / timbre.

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

Assessment

The assessment consisted of a written examination with three questions. Candidates were required to answer all three questions.

Commentary

At this level, candidates should be able to apply their knowledge to a range of notation-based and short answer questions. Candidates should be advised to ensure that they provide appropriate detail and specific musical evidence in their responses. Providing candidates with opportunities to practise musical analysis would support preparation for this standard.

While candidates demonstrated a good understanding of transposition overall, the concept of concert pitch and which way to transpose the music for the question context was problematic, as was dealing with accidentals correctly.

Understanding of compound time signatures is a requirement for Level 2 candidates.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- identified a key correctly without citing perfect cadence or describing the effect of the accidentals
- lacked the specific musical vocabulary needed for an appropriate level of musical analysis
- identified the root note chords, but were unable to identify minor chords, inversions, and 7ths
- identified the quantity of intervals, but often miscalculated their quality
- confused rhythm with articulation
- understood the basic principles of transposition (and which instruments needed transposing)
- did not discuss the complete extract in a questionsuch as only identifying one texture for Question Two (a)
- understood the basic mechanism of TAB, but made some miscalculations with fret numbering
- misidentified the time signatures in Question Three and came up with unusual and unlikely answers, sometimes with a different time signature for each hand / stave
- confused syncopation with swing.

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

- identified the key correctly and described the effect of the accidentals, but did not cite the perfect cadence / V7 chord as evidence
- identified the quantity of intervals, but made one or two mistakes when calculating their quality
- understood the basic principles of transposition, but mismatched this with the corresponding key signatures or made mistakes when dealing with accidentals
- understood TAB notation well
- identified the root note chords, but made some mistakes with 7th, minor chords, and inversions
- gave coherent descriptions of texture and harmony, but did not relate these to the lyrics
- identified some time signatures, but misidentified others as compound time or miscounted beats
- identified features and described where they were used, but were unable to give the level of analytic detail required in discussion based questions.

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

- showed an in-depth understanding of musical elements and were able to name and describe these
- responded consistently to the specific requirements of each question
- gave detailed answers to Question One, showing strong harmonic knowledge and an ability to analyse a score, looking at chromatic movement and chord progressions
- showed an in-depth understanding and application of transposition principles
- showed an in-depth understanding of chords, including 7ths, inversions, and major / minor differentiation
- were clearly competent at transcribing musical notation and had good overall musical knowledge.

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

- did not attempt many questions, confining answer attempts to Level 1 knowledge based questions, such as keys and intervals
- guessed chords from the bass note
- confused some musical elements / terms with others, such as answered a texture question by talking about dynamics, or articulation, when asked about rhythm
- lacked basic musical vocabulary when trying to answer discussion-based questions
- struggled with notation.

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

Assessment

The assessment consisted of a written examination with one four-part question. Candidates were required to answer all parts.

Commentary

This year's responses demonstrated a notable increase in the exploration of programme music. While candidates generally engaged with this genre, weaker responses primarily focused on the narrative, overlooking the significance of musical elements in conveying the story.

When analysing songs, candidates frequently mentioned lyrical content and context without delving into the relationship between text and score, although at higher levels of achievement, prosody / word-painting was mentioned. Musical language was often generalised, using terms like "smooth" and "jumpy" instead of specific musical descriptors.

There was a notable increase in responses demonstrating comparison and contrast across all achievement levels. At higher levels, candidates effectively compared and contrasted similarities and differences, relating them to the use of musical elements within each work.

In the second question, candidates who focused on melody as their musical element generally produced stronger responses. This was due to their inclusion of specific details, such as key, intervals, instrumentation / voice, tempo, articulation, and placement within the work. This level of detail provided robust evidence for comparison.

Candidates are reminded to carefully read the question before answering and to plan their responses to avoid repetition across different parts.

Choice of Works: The standard requires the study of substantial works. There has been an increase in responses focusing on recent popular music songs. These works often have limitations due to popular music restrictions, potentially hindering the candidate's ability to write perceptively or provide well-chosen musical evidence, due to the lack of an accurate score.

Discussion and Analysis: The discussion must include a reference to the score of one of the works. While many candidates provided examples of bar numbers where musical events occurred, this rarely allowed for detailed or insightful analysis. A bar-by-bar account does not connect to a broader context and limits the opportunity for in-depth comparison.

Examples of musical works that have consistently led to student success include:

- Ludwig van Beethoven – Symphony No. 5
- George Gershwin – Rhapsody in Blue
- John Psathas – Waiting for the Aeroplane
- Gareth Farr – From the Depths Sound the Great Sea Gongs
- Jenny McLeod – Childhood
- John Williams – Suite from Jaws
- Pyotr Tchaikovsky – 1812 Overture
- Marvin Gaye – What's Going On

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- included a simple explanation of the musical element or feature
- provided a wider social context, as opposed to one specifically related to the composer
- provided simple musical evidence
- made simple comparisons between works
- wrote prepared answers, which though well-constructed, did not answer the questions clearly, and so limited the grade.

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

- included musical evidence
- used genre-specific language with understanding
- understood the social context within which the composer lived
- gave a detailed response with evidence, but without further explanation and depth
- lacked perceptive comments about musical effectiveness following the evidence.

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

- showed a thorough and perceptive understanding of their musical works
- usually studied works that both had scores
- gave perceptive insights, which linked this to the creation of the piece
- studied works with clear similarities and differences
- wrote concisely and / or directly
- provided well-chosen evidence and linked it to musical concepts.

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

- displayed confusion with the musical elements
- gave generic answers
- did not complete the exam
- were inconsistent across the exam.