

2025 NCEA Assessment Report

Subject:	Music (Making Music and Music Studies)
Level:	3
Achievement standard(s):	91420, 91421, 91423

General commentary

The three examinations provided candidates with suitable opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Candidates who received higher grades attempted all parts of each question. They were well-prepared, demonstrating familiarity with the requirements of each examination. Their knowledge of elements and features was applied appropriately and with confidence. They did not provide pre-planned answers in the Contexts examination but used the knowledge they had to select an appropriate question and write a succinct, relevant answer.

Report on individual achievement standard(s)

Achievement standard 91420: Integrate aural skills into written representation

Assessment

The examination had three questions based on different genres of music.

Commentary

Candidates who gained Achievement or above were confident in using musical notation and terminology. Their responses indicated that they had read the questions and developed appropriate vocabulary to analyse music aurally.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- responded using simple descriptive language to answer most questions
- notated contours and / or rhythmic patterns, rather than phrases
- used and understood some basic terminology
- gave simple descriptions of elements and features in the music
- identified individual chords, but not inversions
- did not always indicate major or minor chords.

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

- explained the effect of elements and features of the music using appropriate terminology and / or technical terms
- identified chord progressions and some inversions or 7th chords

- notated melody and rhythm clearly with accuracy of contour or rhythmic groupings.

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

- *there were no candidates who achieved at the Excellence level in this standard in 2025.*

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

- did not use basic terminology to provide descriptions of music
- drew contours only for melodic transcription
- struggled to identify chords, including the difference between minor and major
- did not write notation clearly
- used incorrect elements or features to respond to a question
- provided vague or irrelevant written responses.

Achievement standard 91421: Demonstrate understanding of harmonic and tonal conventions in a range of music scores

Assessment

Three questions provided opportunities for candidates to demonstrate analysis and realisation skills using knowledge of elements and features.

Commentary

The exam offered opportunities at the appropriate level in all three questions including more challenging aspects which were successfully handled by candidates at the Excellence level. It was important that candidates completed all parts of a question in order to gain Achievement or higher grades. The practice of writing memorised notes on the spare pages proved helpful for many candidates.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- attempted all parts of each question
- analysed the root of isolated chords and inversions correctly
- showed evidence of reading and writing notes accurately in the bass clef
- identified basic tonal and harmonic features
- recognised isolated chords correctly while omitting added notes.

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

- completed all questions
- analysed consecutive chords accurately including tonality of chords and some added notes
- identified and described tonal and harmonic features
- recognised consecutive chords correctly with some added notes and stylistic appropriateness
- included at least one passing note when required.

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

- demonstrated consistency in the skills required in all questions
- analysed all chords with a high degree of accuracy included added notes
- identified pivot chords correctly

- analysed the effect of tonal / harmonic features with insight
- understood the concept of 'harmonic rhythm'
- recognised chords with a high degree of accuracy and detail including suspensions
- produced realisations that were stylistically appropriate, selecting effective chords when required.

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

- did not complete all / any parts of a question
- demonstrated inconsistency in their range of skills
- produced errors when reading or writing notes in the bass clef
- did not identify appropriate tonal or harmonic features
- did not complete the bass part when realizing chords.

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

Assessment

Four options provided a range of topics for essay responses.

Commentary

Candidate responses indicate that it would be beneficial for more attention to be given to how to write succinctly within an essay format in preparation for this standard. It is important to note that this standard contributes to UE literacy. While good use was made of the planning page, many candidates wrote over the recommended word limit, which in most cases did not improve their overall grade.

Evidence of pre-prepared responses often hindered the capacity to respond specifically to the question, particularly when responses were pre-structured with a paragraph on each of conception, production and interpretation. Many responses talked in detail about historical and social contexts without talking about the studied work.

Some candidates were unable to provide in-depth responses as their works were not substantial – this was particularly apparent for short, stand-alone songs.

Candidates should be careful to ensure that extensive quoting of song lyrics, long retelling of storylines and a general discussion about societal issues should be avoided. These things should be used purposefully and succinctly to support the response to the question rather than be the main body of the response. It is important to demonstrate knowledge of the influence on the context on the music as well as the thematic content of the plot / lyrics / social history.

It would be good to see more candidates exploring substantial New Zealand works for this standard.

Grade awarding

Candidates who were awarded **Achievement** commonly:

- provided responses that had some relationship to the question being answered
- provided large amounts of factual and musical detail that generally did not support the response to the question
- wrote generalised statements about the contexts and their influence on the work
- presented responses that were musically analytical but did not use this to support a response to the influence of context

- wrote factual information that was not developed in any depth
- supported responses with simple musical evidence and very little musical terminology.

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

- provided clear and detailed explanations of the influence of context on the conception, production, and interpretation of the work
- provided relevant, specific musical evidence that supported key points, presented descriptively or as musical quotations on the manuscript provided
- planned their essay to ensure that it responded specifically to the question
- used accurate and purposeful musical terminology throughout their response.

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

- showed an in-depth understanding of both the question and the influence of context on the work
- made insightful links to wider contextual understanding
- structured and clearly defined the parameters of their responses
- provided in-depth, clear, and insightful discussion supported by relevant and perceptive musical evidence.

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

- wrote about works that were not substantial
 - presented pre-prepared responses that did not respond to the question
 - provided in-depth analyses of song lyrics or storylines, unsupported by musical or contextual evidence
 - demonstrated limited ability to use musical terminology
 - used very broad evidence that did not specifically support their response
 - provided detailed biographical or contextual information that was unsupported by any musical information
 - discussed societal and social issues in depth but without relating this to the influence on the studied work.
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