

Assessment Report

New Zealand Scholarship Music 2025

Performance standard 93305

General commentary

Scholarship music in 2025 was consistent with previous years, the main difference was having candidates declare their use of AI, with roughly a third of candidates declaring that it had been used in some way.

In general terms, the overall standard of submissions was higher this year in the quality of the composition portfolios.

Candidates do not need to read their NSN before they begin as part of their introduction (this can lead to unnecessary hesitation and nerves), it can make the start of the performance very awkward and unnatural. A clearly labelled file is all that is required.

Performance recordings need to be aware of the camera angle – ensure the whole performer can be seen; especially in instances where their technique needs to be observed (e.g. pedalling on the piano).

Videos should be set to one fixed camera only and multiple performances from different events cannot be edited together. Performances are required to be completed in a single recording. An audience must be present, they do not need to be visible in the video, but evidence of an audience must be obvious (e.g. through clapping).

Candidates are reminded of the importance of engaging with the audience – it is expected that a submission has an introduction to the audience and acknowledgement of them at the end (bowing, acknowledging an accompanist if used). Performers need to demonstrate a connection with the audience from the beginning of the performance to their exit from the 'stage'.

Critical reflections should include a detailed reflection on the actual performance itself (not just the lead up to the performance). A well prepared and presented scholarship portfolio and critical reflection is original and submitted specifically for Scholarship Music. Musical examples used in the critical reflection should have clefs and time signatures. Often these are cut and pasted in from scores and lack clefs and metre markings and so become less meaningful. It is important that videos submitted for portfolios are edited to remove any unnecessary dialogue between performers and their teachers, audience, or accompanist before the performance begins or once it ends.

Report on performance standard

Candidates who were awarded **Outstanding Scholarship** commonly:

- submitted a performance portfolio that was prepared to specifically meet the requirements for this scholarship including:
 - a carefully planned and authentic performance in front of an audience with appropriate stage etiquette (introduction of their pieces, engagement with the audience, strong communication with their accompanist and / or other performers (where applicable))
 - a varied performance repertoire demonstrated at an advanced level of technical ability and musical awareness / understanding of the works
 - a high level of communication consistently demonstrated throughout the whole performance, noting Interpretations of the pieces demonstrated a high level of musicality
 - expressive and mature playing that is highly musical; not just technically accurate
- provided a composition portfolio that was well presented and carefully chosen to meet the guidelines of the scholarship criteria
- provided highly creative compositions that were well structured, and carefully considered instrumentation
- provided original thematic material that was well developed, and demonstrated exceptional quality in style
- provided recordings of the works (both visual scores and recordings) that demonstrated an exceptional level of quality
- provided a critical analysis that was insightful, highly reflective, and authentically analysed the whole process (e.g. from planning to performance/final completed work) and well as future steps
- produced a critical reflection which was well supported by references to a wider body of knowledge (eg. other performances, literature) as well as highly relevant annotation and / or links made to the score(s)
- produced writing that was consistently of exceptional quality and effectively utilised appropriate terminology, well-informed conclusions, insights, and overall
- provided a critical reflection which was original and did not draw from material from past exemplars or show evidence of AI use (i.e. sources are legitimate and correctly referenced).

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- presented a performance demonstrating advanced technical skills and understanding of their chosen works is demonstrated throughout the entire performance
- presented well-prepared performances with a consistently high level of communication presented throughout
- were succinct and confident when providing an introduction, clearly communicating with the audience, accompanist, and / or other performers
- demonstrated originality and comprehensive understanding of elements, characteristics, and performance techniques throughout the portfolio
- showed strong understanding of the technical demands and capabilities of the instruments chosen
- presented highly accurate and detailed visual representation of the works, applicable to the genre
- produced recordings of the work(s) at a high quality

- produced an in-depth critical discussion that clearly analysed the effectiveness / success of the work in regard to the musical contribution of significant elements used
- produced a high quality comprehensive, substantial written response that was consistent throughout and made strong, applicable links to the score
- submitted a critical reflection that was reflective, original, and made relevant links to their portfolio and external sources throughout
- Produced critical reflection that was comprehensive, insightful, and with effective and convincing communication that was unique and linked strongly to their specific portfolio material with relevant annotations.

Candidates who were **not awarded Scholarship** commonly:

- submitted a portfolio that did not sufficiently meet the specified guidelines, e.g. a performance portfolio that did not meet the required duration of 15 minutes
- submitted a portfolio did not meet the criteria (e.g. performance video was edited and not one recording made specifically for Scholarship music, the compositions submitted were collaborative works instead of just their own work, elements of the musicology portfolio were not completed)
- did not demonstrate a high level of technical ability on their chosen instrument (performance), submitted works which lacked advanced instrumentation writing skills and thematic development (composition), did not demonstrate an advanced understanding of their chosen works – analysis included errors and / or a lack of comprehensive detail (musicology)
- produced a commentary that described rather than reflect and analyse their work(s) for their critical analysis submission and / or discussed aspects of their musical background and achievements as a performer / composer / musician that is not relevant nor required for a critical analysis
- produced a critical reflection was not substantial; falling well short of the 3,000 word limit with minimal evidence, and a lack of detail relevant to their chosen portfolio material with little to no sources used and referenced correctly
- produced a critical reflection which lacked originality and drew on structural elements and / or wording from exemplars and / or showed use of AI generated material (either declared or undeclared).