

MUSIC

Paper 9703/01
Listening

Key messages

- Write clearly, both in terms of English and handwriting
- Use specific musical examples that are clearly recognisable
- Read the question carefully and make sure the response is entirely relevant
- Follow the rubric of the paper

General comments

The general standard has shown a continued improvement, especially amongst candidates taking the paper for the 8663 syllabus. The best responses were certainly of a very high standard, and there was some very mature thinking and extensive musical experience in evidence in the best work. Many candidates had clearly diligently and keenly studied the Prescribed and Core works, knew them in fine detail, and were able to construct intelligent and focused responses. Some candidates could have provided greater detail in the discussion questions in particular. These candidates' musical experience also required expanding to better inform their responses.

Most papers delved straight into answering the question, where some others unnecessarily included much irrelevant information in lengthy introductions or conclusions, which did not add anything significant to the response. It is also unnecessary to write the question out at the beginning of the response, and any planning should be crossed out; otherwise, it will be marked.

Handwriting was generally legible and the standard of English was mostly good, which greatly aids examiners' understanding. In rare cases where meaning was unclear, either due to expression or illegibility, it was not possible for examiners to award full credit; this highlights the importance of clarity.

The tendency for unasked-for 'blow-by-blow' commentaries was further reduced this session, with candidates managing to highlight significant features instead. **Section A**, with its requirement for a more detailed familiarity with the set works, was sometimes less well-answered than **Sections B** and **C** questions. In some cases, the brevity of responses (e.g. fewer than three sentences) prevented candidates from being able to demonstrate sufficient familiarity; there were also some longer responses which avoided relevant points.

Section A

This section requires close familiarity with the prescribed works; the best responses used vivid commentaries and well-chosen examples to answer the question relevantly. Candidates should be reminded that referring to timings on recordings is not helpful, as the examiner will not necessarily have access to the same recording; relating examples to where they sit in the overall structure or sequence of events, as well as in relation to each other, will make references perfectly clear.

Question 1

There were many detailed responses here. The sectional structure of the music seemed to help focus the responses, and some of the best continued the discussion into the final Presto, though many concluded at the end of variation 5.

Question 2

Again, many candidates knew the music well, and were able to construct effective responses. A number of candidates missed the obvious similarities of metre, and differences of tonality, in pursuit of something a little less tangible at times. Most candidates were aware of the terms Minuet and Scherzo, and understood the salient differences and process of development, though there were misunderstandings in terms of texture, and sometimes misremembered musical detail.

Question 3

This question required a wide range of knowledge, as well as the ability to select and present material and supporting evidence succinctly and with clarity. Some candidates presented what resembled a prepared essay (often centred on Sonata Form) and contrived to use the Schubert (and occasionally some other music) to support their observations.

Section B

Although close familiarity with Core Works is to be commended, the strongest candidates showed familiarity with a wider range of repertoire where it was required by the question. In order to show a well-developed understanding, candidates need to relate musical features and techniques to their effects.

Question 4

This was a reasonably popular question, and a few responses were very well done, but far too many seemed to have missed the essential instruction to describe choruses, and instead tackled anything but! Some responses were very confused, and even some of the better ones omitted the essential clear identification of the two choruses under discussion, sometimes preferring to refer to the full gamut of chorus writing throughout the opera.

Question 5

Very few candidates answered this question. There was usually some attempt to describe the duet in Otello with varying degrees of success. Often, the central question was disregarded, and the focus of responses could have been squarely focused on the similarity or differences in musical features of love duets.

Question 6

Candidates clearly enjoyed studying the Berlioz, and showed great affinity with the programmatic content, making this a popular choice for **Section B**. The best were well able to illustrate the musical depiction of the programme, often in great detail, in some very thorough responses. Most chose 'Un Bal', and this was generally the best-described of the three movements. Candidates were fairly equally split between the other two movements, where attention to detail was less obvious, but the more immediately picturesque and representative events were recognised and mostly well-expressed.

Section C

The best candidates organised their thoughts logically and presented them in an orderly essay, point by point, each illustrated by reference to relevant musical matters, drawn from study of a wide range of repertoire and personal experience.

Question 7

Relatively few candidates opted to answer this question, and few of those were able to list the forces comprehensively. Several attempted to compare Purcell with Haydn or Beethoven, but mostly then found themselves at a loss to find sufficient material to develop a comprehensive response.

Question 8

Candidates were generally aware of word-painting, but seemed to find it difficult to extract and select telling examples. Many of the responses were restricted to Prescribed and Core works, and quite often limited solely to Purcell. There was a degree of duplication in discussion of chromaticism and dissonance.

Question 9

This was a popular choice for **Section C**. One or two candidates were prepared to state their preference, but the great majority tried to offer a more balanced view. Support for the preference was another matter, and some of the reasoning could have been clearer. Most responses centred on convenience or portability, cost, and range of available sounds. There were some very brief responses to this question.

Question 10

Very few candidates knew the difference and were able to explain it, although the requirement for 'examples from more than one genre, period or tradition' signalled to the candidates the likely route a response might take. Most candidates started from a contradictory and confused standpoint which, sadly, was never going to result in success.

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<p>Paper 9703/02 Practical Musicianship</p>

Key messages

- The repertoire selected for Elements 1 and 2 should enable candidates to demonstrate the range of their technical skill and understanding.
- Exercises for Element 3 should normally include at least one given part throughout.
- Submissions for Element 4 should include a short written commentary.
- Centre assessors should provide comments in support of the mark awarded on all working marksheets.

General comments

There was a good standard of work produced for this component with the majority of candidates having prepared thoroughly for the various elements and almost all reaching at least a satisfactory level of attainment. There were some outstanding performances and several accomplished compositions submitted.

Almost all candidates offered **Element 1**. The majority of candidates presented appropriate repertoire that allowed them to perform to the best of their ability and which demonstrated their technical skill and understanding, thus enabling them to access the full range of assessment criteria. There were a number of pianists and vocalists, but standard orchestral instruments, guitar, drums, and instruments from the Chinese tradition were also presented. Repertoire performed included western classical genres, popular idioms and music from candidates' own countries. Most Centres were able to provide appropriate accompanists/backing tracks and suitable venues for the performance. Most DVD recordings were of good quality, with suitable placing of the camera/microphone, but these aspects should be checked carefully before the performance begins in order to ensure that the best possible audio balance between candidate and accompaniment is achieved.

The standard of spoken introductions was, on the whole, good with candidates showing real understanding of the music. Most gave short but well-focused introductions, while others spoke in more depth. The majority were able to say why they had chosen their pieces, some information about the background to the music and a little about the instrumental/vocal techniques demonstrated. However, a number of candidates gave no introduction, or merely named their pieces. The introduction puts the forthcoming programme of music into context for their audience and the assessors. Its relevance and the extent to which its context is reflected in the performance is assessed in **Section E** of the assessment criteria. Candidates must include a relevant spoken introduction if they are to access the full range of marks.

Centres are reminded that each candidate's submission for Element 1 should be recorded as one continuous performance presented on a single occasion and that copies of the music performed should be enclosed with the submission.

For **Element 2**, candidates presented a broad range of music, genres and ensemble types. The majority of candidates had made good progress in their two chosen disciplines and most submissions were clearly documented with DVD recordings of all three assessments for each discipline, as required. Disciplines and repertoire had been chosen to ensure that individual candidates were able to demonstrate a full range of skills. Occasionally, candidates offering 'conducting and rehearsing' included only final performances in their submission, rather than incorporating examples of the rehearsal process as is required. Most Centre assessors made some appropriate comments on the working marksheets. Detailed comments on all three assessments for each discipline showing how marks have been awarded were important aids to Moderators in making their assessment with full understanding of Centre intentions. Copies of the music performed for the final assessment in each discipline should be enclosed with the submission.

Almost all candidates who submitted work for **Element 3** were able to show some understanding of their chosen tradition. Folios were generally neatly presented, but were not always complete. Candidates are required to submit a set of six to eight exercises demonstrating understanding of techniques in an established tradition. The work should be dated and presented in chronological order and teachers should give a clear outline of the course that has been undertaken. Actual repertoire should be chosen for the exercises. The composer should be named, or the music identified as traditional or by region if from folk or indigenous sources. Candidates are not expected to present full texture without any given material and at least one part should be given throughout. The given material should be clearly distinguishable from the candidate's own work. The course should give candidates an opportunity to develop their understanding of one established tradition. Whatever the chosen tradition, the work submitted should be carefully notated and marks should be awarded for the accuracy of the notation.

In **Element 4** composition submissions, a good overall standard was maintained across a variety of styles and genres. While the majority of compositions demonstrated a good level of understanding of techniques and instruments, some were rather short and did not develop ideas sufficiently to access the higher mark bands. Some candidates did not pay sufficient attention to the range and performing conventions of their chosen instruments. A few compositions for large ensembles were very successful and demonstrated genuine understanding of orchestral/band textures, but candidates who wrote for a small number of instruments with which they were really familiar generally did best. Preparatory work on writing for instrumental combinations is essential if candidates are to fully develop their skills in this element. The contrasting nature of the two pieces enabled candidates to demonstrate a range of invention and composing technique in writing for at least two instruments/voices. Several compositions submitted were for solo piano, thus not fulfilling this requirement.

The majority of candidates produced clear, well-written scores although some were incomplete and appeared not to have been checked before submission. Those candidates who do not present a score should provide notes explaining in detail the process of composition. Centres are reminded that all candidates are now required to include a short written commentary stating clearly the origins of the compositional thinking, listening influences, and the on-going compositional decisions. Many candidates were able to make live recordings of their compositions, while other submissions were computer generated. Most were of a good standard, giving a true impression of the musical intentions of the composer, though some sequenced recordings lacked attention to detail. Centre marking for this Element was often a little generous and assessors are encouraged to consider the wording of each section of the assessment criteria very carefully when considering marks.

For the component as a whole, most Centres provided DVD recordings that ensured that the individual items for assessment for each candidate could be easily located and accessed.

Most Centres submitted all the necessary paperwork but Centres should note that completed Working Marksheetworks for each Element presented, the Coursework Assessment Summary Form, and a copy of the MS1 computer marksheet or the CIE Direct Internal Marks Report must all be included with the submission. A high number of arithmetical errors and transcription mistakes occurred when marks were totalled and transferred to the summary sheet and/or the computer marksheet. Centres are encouraged to check these details before submission.

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<p>Paper 9703/03 Performing</p>

Key messages

- Candidates should select focused repertoire that is within their technical capability.
- Candidates should provide a spoken introduction to their performance outlining how the music relates to their chosen focus.

General comments

The majority of candidates had prepared thoroughly for this component and most performed well, with some recitals being of an exceptional standard. There were outstanding performances on voice, piano, flute, clarinet, violin and electric guitar. Music from the Romantic era featured strongly, particularly among pianists, but a range of other focus areas included Haydn piano sonatas, French music for cello and rock music of the 1980s for guitar.

Most candidates chose repertoire which was within their capability and showed their technical ability to good advantage giving them the opportunity to demonstrate the full range of musical skills required by the assessment criteria. Many candidates clearly relished the prospect of performing and entered into the whole event with great enthusiasm and passion for the music they had prepared. Some candidates, however, played/sang through their recital without really performing it. The ability to put the music over to the audience, even if the audience only consists of the Examiner, is a very important part of the performance. Assessment Criterion E: Stylistic Understanding is relevant here, as is Criterion D: Aural Awareness.

As is required, most candidates chose an appropriate focus for their performance. However, some had selected repertoire without due attention to how individual pieces might be linked by a single focus.

The spoken introduction, which each performance should begin with, should outline the focus and show how each piece contributes to this. Some outstanding introductions were presented this session with candidates showing real insight into the music. The best spoken introductions gave details of the chosen focus and specific examples of how this was reflected in each of the pieces performed. Other candidates merely listed the pieces they were about to perform and some offered no introduction at all. The quality and relevance of the spoken introduction is assessed in Criterion E: Stylistic Understanding. The full mark range cannot be accessed if there is no introduction. Candidates may read their introduction if they prefer, rather than speaking from memory.

Most Centres provided competent accompanists and suitable venues for the performance to take place. Backing tracks were used to good effect where appropriate live musicians were not available. The performance space was usually organised in such a way as to give candidates the greatest opportunity to perform to best advantage.

Most Centres presented their candidates' work on DVD recordings of high quality and all had taken care to ensure the candidate could be readily identified. It is important to consider the placement of the camera/microphone to ensure that performers are clearly visible and that good sound balance is achieved. On a few DVD recordings, candidates' fingers/instruments were obscured by their music stand and this should also be taken into account when positioning the camera. The majority of Centres presented the work in a manner that was easy to manage and enclosed all the required paperwork. Centres are reminded that each candidate's recital should be recorded as one continuous performance presented on a single occasion and that copies of the music performed should be included in the submission.

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<p>Paper 9703/04 Composing</p>
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Key messages

- Administration – The coursework submissions for individual components should be sent to the examination board in separate packaging, clearly marked.
- The syllabus makes clear, which components are internally assessed and may be required for moderation purposes and those components that are to be sent to the board for examination.
- Examiners are flexible about an acceptable duration for compositions, recognising that the content may vary widely. The submission must, however, reflect a substantial level of work that is commensurate with a second year of study at Advanced Level.

General comments

Coursework in this session showed a wide variety of approaches with appropriate levels of invention and creativity explored within secure technical frameworks.

Specific comments relating to compositions

The following comments will refer to details where it is thought to be helpful to illustrate some of the composing pathways that candidates embarked upon. This does not endorse any particular approach because the intention of the syllabus is to be fully inclusive and not prescriptive. Investigative curiosity is always to be encouraged in composition.

Commentaries

- Commentaries need to be concise and provide useful information for examiners. Some commentaries gave detail of deep philosophical ideas but did not explain how the music was related to these ideas.
- Successful compositions will have commentaries that reference a range of appropriate listening with the relevance of the listening made clear.
- If candidates use materials generated by a strong interest in world music, the listening should be authentic and appropriate rather than referring exclusively to western classical music.
- When a composition cannot be precisely notated, commentaries must provide comprehensive details of the process of composition. Candidates should not assume that an examiner for composition is able to access a linked project.
- A linked investigation and report (Component 5) will be much more detailed than the commentary for the composition and candidates should aim for a succinct, relevant description in the composing commentary to support an understanding of the composing process.

The scope of submissions

Some compositions had structural ideas at their genesis whilst others were strongly influenced by a specific group of instruments or timbre. A sense of the scope of some of the compositions presented this session are outlined:

- A deeply thoughtful non-musical concept worked out musically using synthesisers and accordion
- Dance suite structure incorporating a range of world music influences
- Programmatic starting point: a Shakespearean text; water – rain, river; candlelight
- Music composed in a symphonic progressive rock genre
- A capella vocal composition/using own lyrics or other texts
- Piano Quintet with a strong Rondo theme

- Sonata form worked out in a small scale symphonic movement
- Guitars, drum kit and strings in a minimalistic layering style
- Electro-acoustic combining the use of a DWS and live elements
- Creative use of sampling incorporating processes that generate an original, unique outcome
- Piano compositions using a structure such as Fantasia and influenced by a candidate's performing experiences of composers such as Scriabin, Chopin or Rachmaninoff
- A short three movement sonata for piano or a single instrument with accompaniment
- Two contrasting video game scenes

Materials, use of materials

Candidates often produced fruitful initial ideas but should use their studies of the ways composers generate interest in the outworking of these materials to guide them in their own work.

The use of modulation or other stylistically appropriate devices such as texture change, melodic extension or variety in instrumentation can be considered in order generate interest as the composition unfolds.

Structure

Some candidates used structures that naturally broke down into smaller sections but care must be taken to ensure a sense of overall coherence in the submission. This can be lost if sections, movements or variations are very short or do not provide scope for progression in the ideas.

Compositional quality is of chief importance rather than the length of the submission. Candidates should nevertheless question if a composition of less than four minutes might be described as 'underweight'.

Use of medium and texture

Successful candidates demonstrated an understanding of the chosen medium, composing for the specific characteristics and qualities of the instruments or voices. Considerable expertise was revealed in the work of candidates choosing to work with various forms of technology in the shaping and production of their music.

Occasionally, candidates using larger forces were able to demonstrate how much their study of orchestral scores, for example, had enabled them to transfer this knowledge to their own work.

Notation and presentation

The following observations emerging from this year's submissions are worthy of consideration:

- The use of the option 'Hide empty staves' in many notation programmes allows the unnecessary printing of pages with multiple empty staves
- Candidates should be reminded of the importance of using the full range of performance details in their scores
- When a composition genuinely stands alone as a recorded submission without a score, the commentary must explain *who* performs the parts and how instructions were conveyed to the performer(s)
- It is not necessary to include an additional sequenced 'performance' of a composition if an expressive, mainly accurate live performance is presented
- Notation of guitar parts should be provided as staff notation as well as tablature
- Technology generated voice parts do not give an adequate representation of the composing intention of candidates using voice(s) and text

Full descriptions of the composing and recording processes in electro-acoustic compositions are mandatory. Quality of editing and expressive shaping through automation, etc. can be shown clearly through screen shots.

If Sampling is used either as the basis for the composition or in part, candidates must provide the following information:

- 1 Details of *what* was sampled
- 2 An explanation of *how* and *why* it was used
- 3 Identification of original material added

Assessment takes into account the musical decision-making and the resultant musical outcomes in but does not credit musical aspects of the samples themselves.

Centres are to be congratulated in the support given to candidates to successfully navigate the practical complexities of music composition.

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<p>Paper 9703/05 Investigation and Report</p>

Key messages

- The requirement for an accompanying CD of recordings to support the submission with a full bibliography/discography as appendix documentation or referenced in footnotes, is mandatory
- Flexibility in the interpretation of the valid possibilities within this component will always be exercised by examiners
- Candidates must ensure that all materials they research as part of this component are legally age appropriate for them and centres should ensure diligent supervision in all aspects of coursework.

This report addresses a range of considerations that are valid for both 9703/05 and 8663/06. Comments that address the link required for 9703/05 are not relevant for 8663/06.

General comments

The level of achievement in many of the submissions was high, with candidates giving full attention to relevant researching and succinct documentation of their findings whilst maintaining an evident enthusiasm for the chosen topic area.

In some less successful submissions, candidates wrote extensively about non-music features: e.g. plot lines of song narratives/dance routines and choreography/multimedia aspects/'visual' members of Asian pop-idol groups that are non-musicians – and this information was not sufficiently balanced by reflections on the way this contributed to the musical aspects of the investigation.

Where a link with component 3 (performing) or 4 (composing) is required, candidates should explain this clearly in the introductory section of their report. Although most candidates linked this component with performance, those that chose to make an in-depth investigation related to their composing, demonstrated how beneficial this was to the development of their own immersing ideas, style and technique.

The nature of this component assumes that a significant amount of listening will be undertaken as part of the research process. In assessment, examiners identify the extent to which candidates are able to show aural awareness as they recognise and select significant features of the music they have listened to.

Candidates often presented their research in a convincing way, explaining clearly how their investigations had contributed to a broadening of their understanding and presented opportunities to explore in greater depth, concepts and possibilities that were not open to them in other components.

Research

The range of music considered in this component was impressive and candidates were motivated to consider a vast range of possibilities from music of different cultures, styles and traditions.

Candidates should ensure that their interests do not take them into areas of listening and viewing that are age-inappropriate. Some radical contemporary music is integrated with explicit depictions of extreme violence, and 'adult' material, for example. Centres have a significant role to play in being fully aware of the scope of candidates' research activities and having conversations about the advisability of their chosen topic area to ensure compliance with the values underpinning an A Level course of study.

Presentation of findings

Some aspects of this session's submissions may usefully inform centres in the preparation of their candidates:

- Some Candidates successfully used a series of answers to focus questions as a way of presenting their material. Others had carefully constructed titles.
- Candidates should be encouraged, for example, when they reference performances, to give full details of the performer(s) as well as the title of the work and composer's name.
- Candidates accessing resources that extended beyond the use of the internet were often able to demonstrate a wider range of investigative skills
- Some Candidates avoided continuous prose in their documenting of analytical information by using tables or diagrams. This often led to a consideration of the *significance* of what had been discovered.
- The study should be self-contained with minimal need for Examiners to have to search the Internet in order to clarify their understanding. Many Candidates presented some carefully edited CDs with highly relevant music examples to illustrate the text, accompanied by a clear track list. Whole pieces were less helpful.
- Candidates should understand the importance of using quotation marks when directly using the words of others. In a very small number of submissions, candidates relied too heavily on reproducing unedited sections of popular Internet sites and could not gain credit for this 'borrowed' material.
- Examiners will always act on presentations that contain plagiarism and candidates should have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in this regard

Concluding remarks

Examiners were encouraged by the many examples of diligent application to a research task conducted across a significant time scale. This enabled candidates to process information and consider a range of options in the presentation of their findings. They were able to reflect on their investigative outcomes and present their findings in persuasive, often captivating accounts.