

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9703/01 Listening</p>
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Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they use specific musical examples that are clearly recognisable.
- It is important that candidates read the questions carefully and make sure the response is entirely relevant and focused.
- Candidates should not refer to track timings; bar numbers should be memorised, as scores are not allowed.

General comments

The strongest responses were certainly of a good standard and there was some mature thinking and musical experience in evidence. Candidates were generally familiar with the Prescribed and Core works. However, some candidates could have provided greater detail in the discussion questions. These candidates' own musical experience also required expanding to better inform their responses.

Responses were generally more successful when they were efficiently expressed, entirely relevant and avoided repetition. Handwriting was entirely legible and the standard of English was mostly good.

Section A, with its requirement for a more detailed familiarity with the set works, was sometimes less well-answered than **Section B** and **C** questions, and there was sometimes a lack of consistency across the three sections.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

This section requires close familiarity with the prescribed works. The strongest responses were thorough commentaries supported by well-chosen examples and these answered the question relevantly. Some candidates needed to provide more formal detail, as well as describing with more clarity what was being heard.

Question 1

Many candidates responded to this question, but some found it challenging to clearly articulate the nature of the variations of the two themes, and more detail was needed in general. Some descriptions became confused.

Question 2

Knowledge of sonata form was generally good, with occasional details missing, but candidates found it more challenging to describe the form's use in the movements from the Set Works, particularly in relation to key relationships.

Question 3

A very small number of candidates chose to respond to this question. Nonetheless, it was answered and candidates showed clear knowledge of the variations and recognisable descriptions. Variations were clearly related to the theme.

Section B

Close familiarity with Core Works was often shown and the strongest candidates also showed familiarity with a wider range of repertoire where it was required by the question. Here, examples should still be clearly located, but it is also important to explain how effects have been achieved to demonstrate understanding. The most successful responses were firmly focused on the question and did not refer to extraneous matters.

Question 4

The imagery of the river was generally well known, but links to the river's journey were not always made clear. More successful responses were able to link specific musical features to imagery in a convincing way.

Question 5

Most responses to this question dealt with the obvious instances of percussion, which seemed clearer in descriptions of the third movement, and a little vaguer in relation to the fourth movement, even though percussion is arguably more prominent in the fourth. Where the programme was well-known, descriptions were more convincing.

Question 6

The selection of 'contrasting' pieces was key here (as the Core Works, *Clair de lune* and the nymphs in *Vltava*, are quite similar), and there was generally a good focus on musical features. More could have been drawn from examples of different incarnations of 'night' as it is not always calm.

Section C

Stronger candidates organised their thoughts logically and presented them in a well-organised essay, point by point, each illustrated by reference to relevant musical matters. These essays drew from study of a wide range of repertoire and personal experience. The very strongest responses included a wide range of examples, showing excellent contextual knowledge. To be thorough or even comprehensive, candidates needed to consider the questions from multiple angles; for the top band, arguments must be logical and convincing, with no confusion. Weaker responses were extensive, but were sometimes confused, with the question not being properly addressed or understood.

Question 7

Patronage was generally well-defined. The finer details of the experiences of composers of the First Viennese School were less well covered, but there were some stronger observations about modern day practices.

Question 8

There was some consideration of classical improvisation (e.g. cadenzas and figured bass realisations), but few examples from around the world that would be considered small 'c' classical (e.g. raga). This emphasised the need for a varied listening experience in preparing for examination at this level.

Question 9

Generally, this question was answered as expected, and candidates considered things such as tempi, dynamics and articulation, and some also considered variations in instrumentation. There was some reference to personal interpretation.

Question 10

This question was the most popular choice in **Section C**. The strongest responses dealt with all three of composers, performers and audiences, considering what 'new' music might mean. Some glossed over one or more of these, perhaps misunderstanding the focus of the question. Nonetheless, there were some well-informed observations supporting logical arguments.

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

In this session, the work seen was generally of a good standard and there were some outstanding performances. The majority of candidates presented Elements 1 and 2, with a very small number offering Element 4. There were no Element 3 submissions.

Most Element 1 marking was accurate, with some polished performances across a wide range of genres and styles, including opera and jazz. Most candidates could have prefaced their performances with some relevant contextual detail about the pieces. This was sometimes limited to the names of pieces and their composers. Candidates were generally well prepared and played or sang pieces which were well within their capabilities. Some candidates responded very well to an audience. Occasionally performances would have benefited from careful tuning of the instrument before the recording commenced, but there was a sense, across the entry, of enthusiasm for performing and a willingness to view an assessed examination as more than just a filmed rehearsal.

Element 2 revealed a wide variety of musicianship, with jazz bands, school choirs and smaller ensemble groups, some clearly candidate-led, often seen. Several candidates showed themselves to be equally adept on more than one instrument, and there were also one or two examples of accompanying from versatile candidates who had not offered an accompanying instrument in Element 1. Some submissions were a little difficult to navigate either because the DVD was all one track, or the recording (usually of larger groups) did not always consistently focus on the candidate. In these situations, some identifying markers would have been useful.

Marking in Element 2 was a little variable. Some centres submitted work where there was no real extension of skills between Elements 1 and 2. In order to achieve high marks, candidates should be presenting disciplines which extend their musicianship beyond that demonstrated in Element 1. There should also be 3 recordings for each discipline made over a period of at least 6 months. When recordings had all been made on the same day, assessing progress was not reliable. Conversely, one or two candidates had not attained a good standard in the work that had been submitted but their marks were sometimes a little severe. In an element which was clearly evidence-based, it was important to consider the criteria carefully and to find a mark which best fitted individual circumstances.

There were a very small number of Element 4 Composing submissions. In most cases, there was clear evidence of progress across the two compositions, with some imaginative use of harmony and a creative approach to scoring. The strongest submissions were coherent, convincing and memorable, with a sense that the composer had developed a vivid and personal creative piece.

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

Key messages

- Candidates should select focused repertoire that is within their technical capability.
- The recorded balance between candidate and live accompaniment/backing track should be checked prior to the start of the performance.

General comments

There was a good overall standard of work produced for this component this session with all candidates performing to at least a satisfactory level. There were outstanding recitals on piano, flute, clarinet, saxophone, bassoon and bass guitar.

While most candidates chose repertoire appropriate to their technical ability and of a length suitable to meet the requirements of the syllabus, others did not give due attention to these aspects of their submission. Where the music selected for performance was too technically demanding, candidates often struggled to play/sing the correct notes and rhythms. They were therefore unable to fully demonstrate the wider musical aspects of performance as considered in Assessment Criteria C, D and E (Realisation of performance markings and/or performing conventions, Aural awareness and Stylistic understanding). Candidates are advised to choose repertoire that is well within their current level of proficiency so that they are able to give a rounded performance. Some candidates presented recitals which were shorter than the minimum time expected. Where the performance is very short, candidates are often unable to access the full range of mark bands in Assessment Criteria B (Technical control) and E (Stylistic understanding) as insufficient evidence has been presented.

For this component, candidates are required to present repertoire within a chosen focus. The wide range of appropriate choices this session included: the violin music of Paganini, swing jazz for clarinet, classical sonatas for piano and 21st century love ballads for voice. However, some candidates performed a disparate group of pieces which were only linked in a very general way such as 'music through the ages' or 'instrumental techniques'. Candidates should develop in-depth stylistic understanding of a chosen specific focus which they are then able to demonstrate in their performance.

All candidates presented a spoken introduction, but some did little more than name the pieces they were about to perform. There were also some detailed introductions which demonstrated that candidates had undertaken appropriate research into their chosen focus in order to inform their performing decisions.

Most centres provided suitable venues for the performances to take place and many candidates chose to have an audience. Whether or not an audience is in attendance, candidates should present their recital as a continuous performance recorded on a single occasion.

Where appropriate, most candidates were ably accompanied by piano or small combo. Backing tracks were used to good effect where live musicians were not available. Centres are reminded that, where the repertoire is intended to be accompanied, this should be included in the performance. It is entirely appropriate to use piano reductions of orchestral (or similar) accompaniments.

Recordings were, on the whole, of good quality. Centres should check the recorded sound balance between the candidate and any accompaniment before the examination performance begins so that the placing of microphone(s) can be adjusted if necessary. The camera should be placed to make it possible for the examiner to see the candidate's face, hands and instrument clearly. Most centres positioned the camera in an appropriate manner, but some candidates were obscured by their music stand and others were too far away to facilitate any close scrutiny. Centres should ensure that, in all matters relating to performance space,

accompaniment and positioning of microphone/camera, the set-up should allow candidates the greatest possible opportunity to perform to their best.

DVDs/USBs were well packaged and suitably labelled, making candidate identification straightforward. As is required, all centres provided copies of the music performed. Centres are reminded that all the materials for each component should be packaged separately for submission.

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

- The contents of the composing folio should be carefully checked before submission.
- Centres should ensure the recording is undamaged and continues for the whole of the intended length of the track.
- Centres should ensure that different components are packaged separately before despatch.
- Centres should encourage candidates to read the mark scheme and syllabus content for themselves to ensure they understand how they can maximise their achievement.

General comments

The range of achievement in this creative component was often impressive and there were some imaginatively sequenced performances. Stronger candidates often showed evidence of observing and absorbing the compositional techniques of composers of music studied elsewhere in the course or as part of their own research or independent personal listening.

In the composing of this session, candidates who were familiar with a range of varied listening experience demonstrated a more secure understanding of how to handle the elements of composing work. This ranged from the larger framing of the structure for example, to the handling of smaller scale ideas such as rhythmic and melodic features.

Candidates who chose to submit a commentary in place of a score did not always provide sufficient detail in their accounts. If it is straightforward to notate the composing work by conventional means, this approach should be taken.

Candidates were able to submit work in any style and were free to explore resources of their own choice within the guidelines of the syllabus. Generally, candidates worked with a wide range of musical ideas and structures. Most candidates understood that the substance and quality of the work was the priority.

Many compositions were thoughtfully structured with clear attention to contrast and continuity and a pacing of events that gave an organic sense of structure to the whole. Sometimes candidates showed less confidence in the way sections of the work were linked together and often these sections would have benefited from further work to focus on establishing more convincing links and transitions. For some candidates, the composing of shorter but related pieces worked well.

Candidates showed real perception and skill in their understanding of the potential of a range of instruments. There was some limitation in the number of resources used together, with many candidates avoiding full orchestral scores and this was frequently positive as candidates were more able to explore in depth the potential of solo sounds and ensemble textures when writing for up to five or six instruments. Occasionally, writing for larger instrumental groups demonstrated some effective orchestration skills. There were several well-shaped vocal compositions and the live performances confirmed the candidates' understanding of the expressive potential of a specific voice.

In the areas of notation and presentation candidates needed to pay close attention to detail. Some important points are:

- Always include a full score; separate parts alone are insufficient.
- Articulation markings and phrasing often give an indication of how well an instrument is understood: articulation for woodwind and brass and phrasing or bowing for string parts, for example.

- Scores should contain a range of expressive detail but should not be overloaded unless this is vital for the musical style.
- When writing for piano, candidates should think about whether some pedal indications are helpful.

If there are any sections of improvisation in a composition it is essential to indicate in the commentary *who* is performing the music. Candidates must explain how their improvisational ideas have been communicated to the performer in the absence of notation. Some candidates provided a helpful sketch to outline the improvised part. Others, who may have ability on a range of instruments had 'overdubbed' a drum part, guitar parts, etc. themselves, using specific software to enable this type of recording.

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

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure that they allow time to review their work.
- Candidates should be encouraged to be careful in their choice and use of language to ensure it is relevant and appropriate. The use of colloquial expressions cannot stand alone in description of the qualities of a piece of music without additional explanation.
- Centres are reminded that tracks should be provided in CD format.

General comments

Many of the submissions showed a high degree of enthusiasm in the presentation. Candidates who choose this component were required to show the highest standard of research but had freedom to explore music topics of interest to them beyond the knowledge and understanding gained in the other components.

Aural familiarity

Most candidates met the requirements of the syllabus in the production of edited audio extracts. Most were clearly referenced and linked to the report text to support a point being made.

Successful candidates ensured that detailed track lists were provided, including not only the composer and title of the piece but also giving details of the performers / conductor etc.

The provision of recorded extracts is a requirement of the syllabus and the evidence of aural discernment they provide gain credit in the assessment. For this reason, it is important that the recordings are checked before despatch.

Contextual understanding

Candidates were often successful in establishing a useful balance between important contextual material and discussion of more directly musical matters.

The quality of sources should always be evaluated, and care should be taking in using material downloaded from the internet. Candidates should not use information from the unpublished/non-peer reviewed research of others. They should be encouraged to investigate primary sources of information wherever possible.

Analytic / technical vocabulary and demonstration of link

The majority of submissions made a link with performing, Reports demonstrated effective research and investigation of the music. Some candidates would have benefitted from including an additional reflective approach, summarising how their analytical investigations had impacted on their performances. A minority of reports linked to composing showed how a study of relevant music could substantially influence candidates' understanding of compositional techniques and stylistic features, for example.

Communication of findings

Candidates should understand of the authenticity process in relation to their work. References must be detailed and accurate to enable the reader to access and verify the source of the information. Communication of aural information must be provided directly in audio format as part of the submission.

By compiling a detailed discography, evidence of the wider range of listening as part of the research can be made. Some candidates thought the track list and discography amounted to the same thing and these candidates missed the opportunity to demonstrate a wider listening experience as part of their research.