

Music Extension subject report

2025 cohort

January 2026





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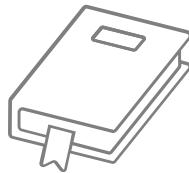
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Introduction



The annual subject reports seek to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement of internal and external assessment processes for all Queensland schools. The 2025 subject report is the culmination of the partnership between schools and the QCAA. It addresses school-based assessment design and judgments, and student responses to external assessment for General and General (Extension) subjects. In acknowledging effective practices and areas for refinement, it offers schools timely and evidence-based guidance to further develop student learning and assessment experiences for 2026.

The report also includes information about:

- how schools have applied syllabus objectives in the design and marking of internal assessments
- how syllabus objectives have been applied in the marking of external assessments
- patterns of student achievement
- important considerations to note related to the revised 2026 syllabus (where relevant).

The report promotes continuous improvement by:

- identifying effective practices in the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessments
- recommending where and how to enhance the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessment instruments
- providing examples that demonstrate best practice.

Schools are encouraged to reflect on the effective practices identified for each assessment, consider the recommendations to strengthen assessment design and explore the authentic student work samples provided.

Audience and use

This report should be read by school leaders, subject leaders, and teachers to:

- inform teaching and learning and assessment preparation
- assist in assessment design practice
- assist in making assessment decisions
- help prepare students for internal and external assessment.

The report is publicly available to promote transparency and accountability. Students, parents, community members and other education stakeholders can use it to learn about the assessment practices and outcomes for senior subjects.

Subject highlights: Composition

96.25%

agreement with
provisional marks
for IA1



97.44%

agreement with
provisional marks
for IA2



100%

of students
received a
C or higher



Subject highlights: Musicology

100%

agreement with
provisional marks
for IA1



100%

agreement with
provisional marks
for IA3



100%

of students
received a
C or higher



Subject highlights: Performance

132

schools offered
Music Extension
(Performance)



90.91%

agreement with
provisional marks
for IA1

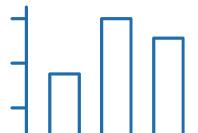


100%

of students
received a
C or higher



Subject data summary



Unit completion: Composition

The following data shows students who completed the General subject.

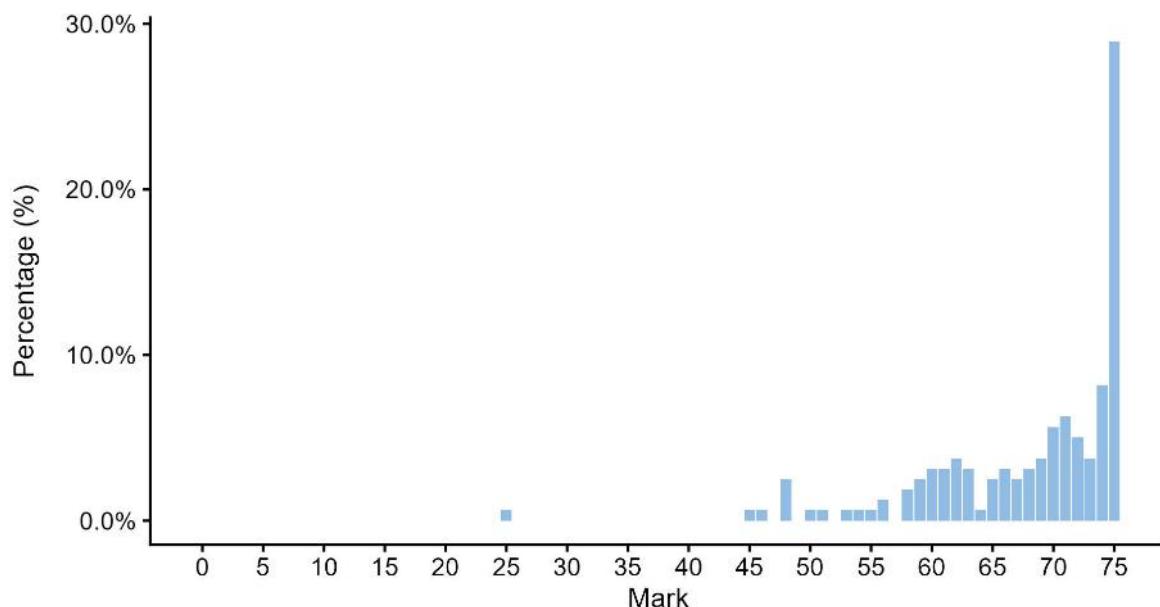
Note: All data is correct as at January 2026. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered Music Extension (Composition): 80.

Completion of units	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	159

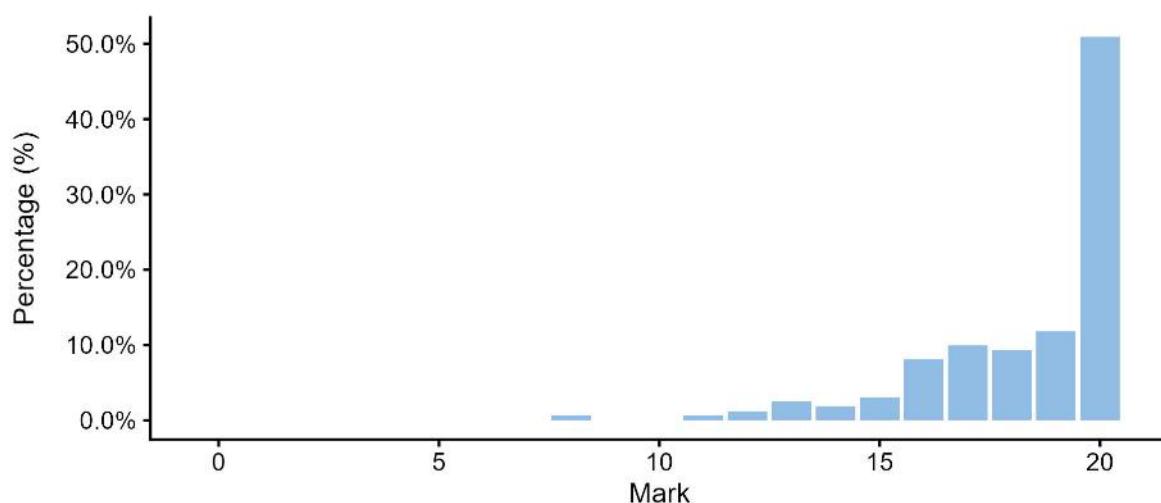
Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

Total marks for IA

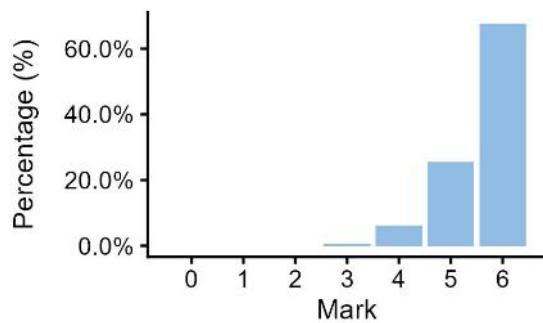


IA1 marks

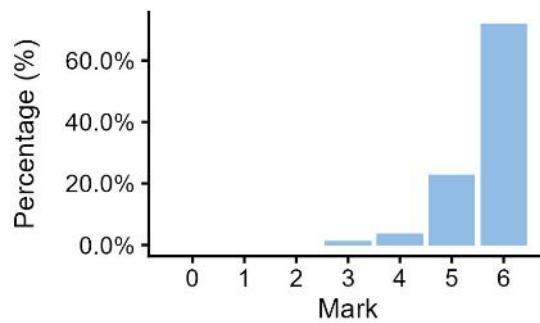
IA1 total



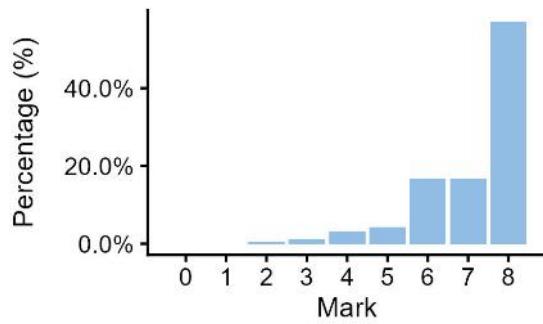
IA1 Criterion: Applying techniques and processes



IA1 Criterion: Manipulating music elements and concepts

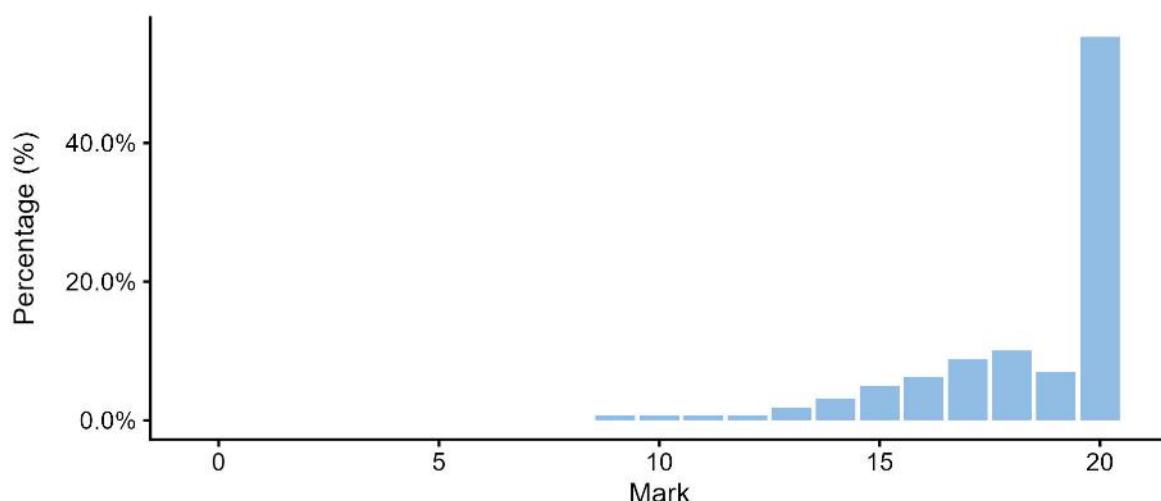


IA1 Criterion: Communicating meaning

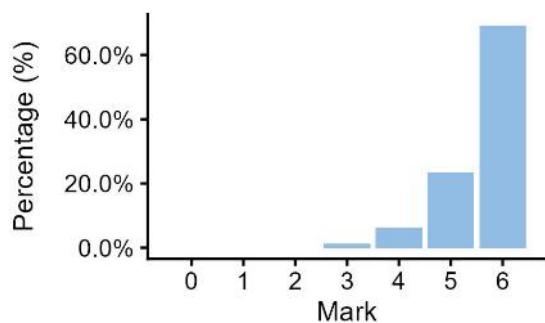


IA2 marks

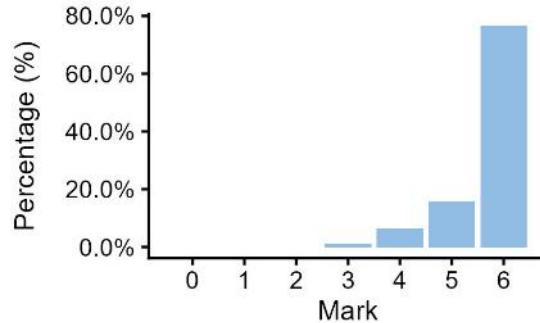
IA2 total



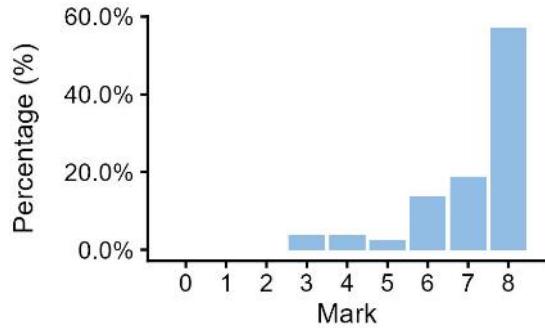
IA2 Criterion: Applying techniques and processes



IA2 Criterion: Manipulating music elements and concepts

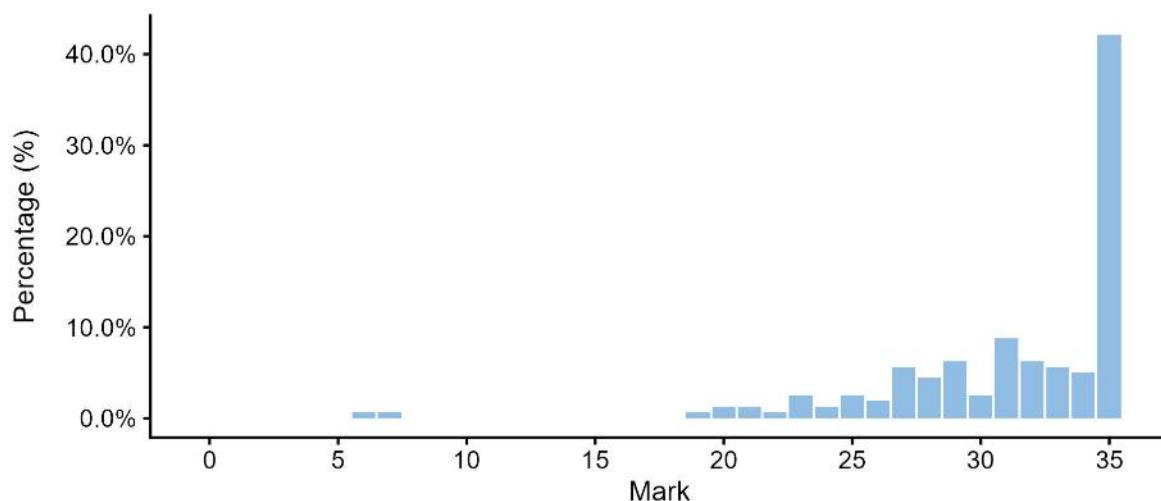


IA2 Criterion: Communicating meaning

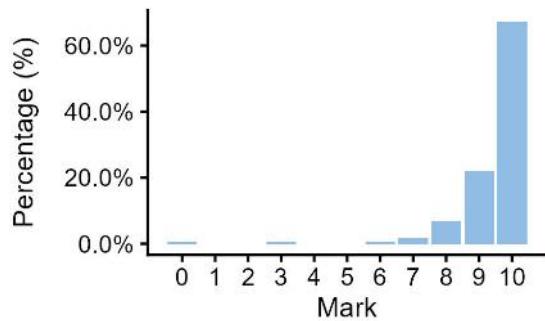


IA3 marks

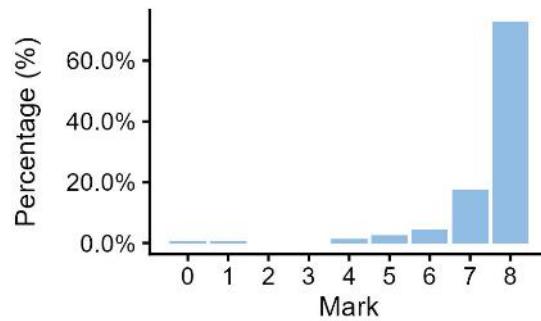
IA3 total



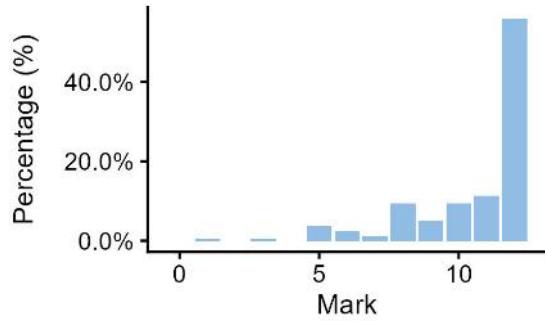
IA3 Criterion: Applying techniques and processes



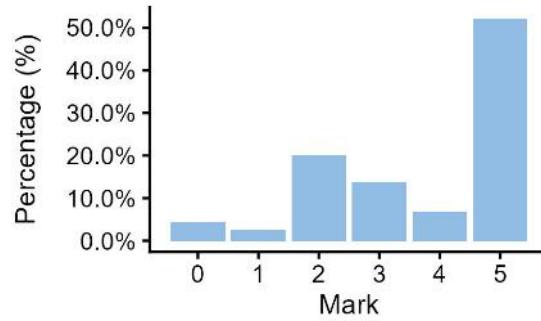
IA3 Criterion: Manipulating music elements and concepts



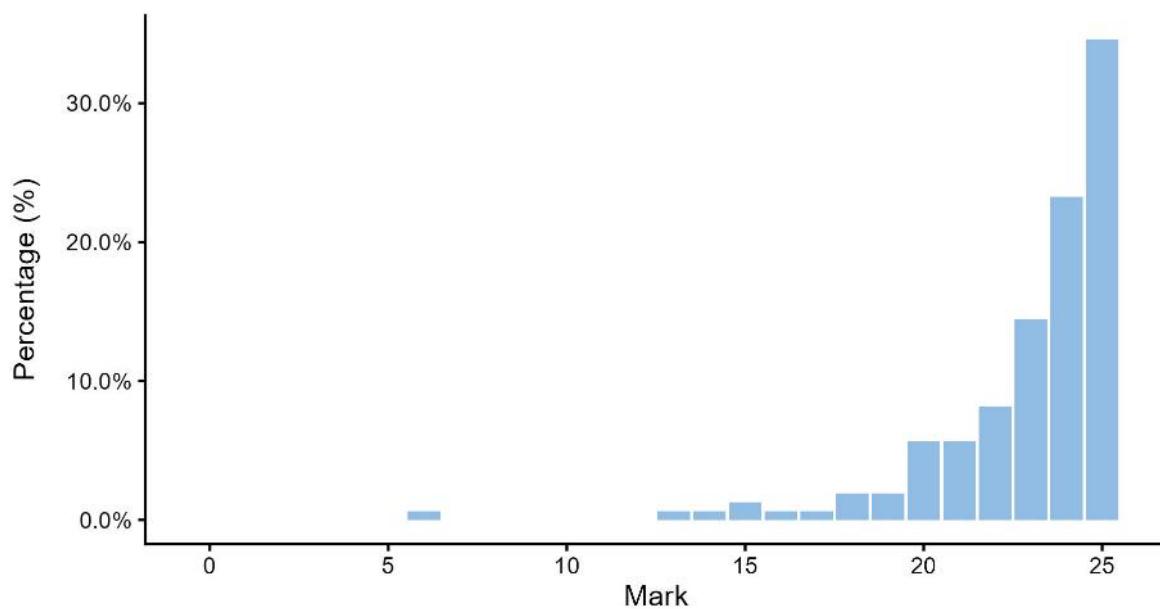
IA3 Criterion: Communicating meaning



IA3 Criterion: Evaluating best practice

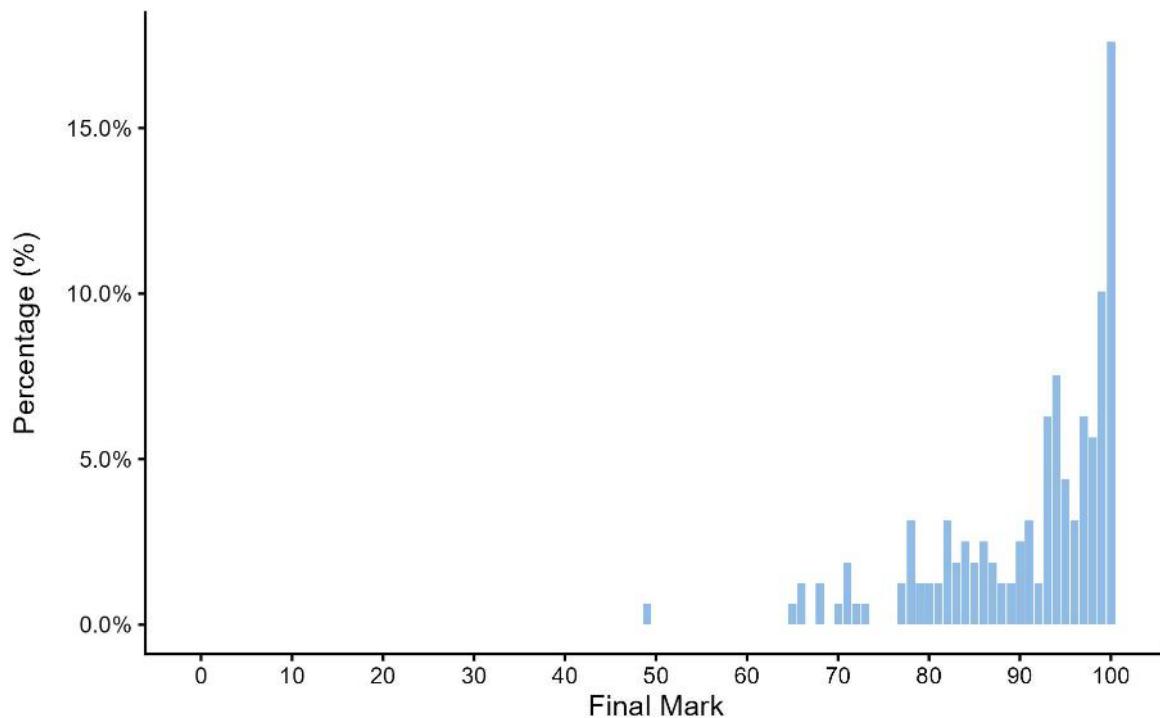


External assessment (EA) marks



Final subject results

Final marks for IA and EA



Grade boundaries

The grade boundaries are determined using a process to compare results on a numeric scale to the reporting standards.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Marks achieved	100–87	86–68	67–44	43–17	16–0

Distribution of standards

Number of students who achieved each standard across the state.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Number of students	115	40	4	0	0
Percentage of students	72.33	25.16	2.25	0.00	0.00

Unit completion: Musicology

The following data shows students who completed the General subject.

Note: All data is correct as at January 2026. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered Music Extension (Musicology): 7.

Completion of units	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	8

Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

There were insufficient student enrolments in this subject to provide useful analytics.

External assessment (EA) marks

There were insufficient student enrolments in this subject to provide useful analytics.

Final subject results

Final marks for IA and EA

There were insufficient student enrolments in this subject to provide useful analytics.

Grade boundaries

The grade boundaries are determined using a process to compare results on a numeric scale to the reporting standards.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Marks achieved	100–87	86–68	67–44	43–17	16–0

Distribution of standards

There were insufficient student enrolments in this subject to provide useful analytics.

Unit completion: Performance

The following data shows students who completed the General subject.

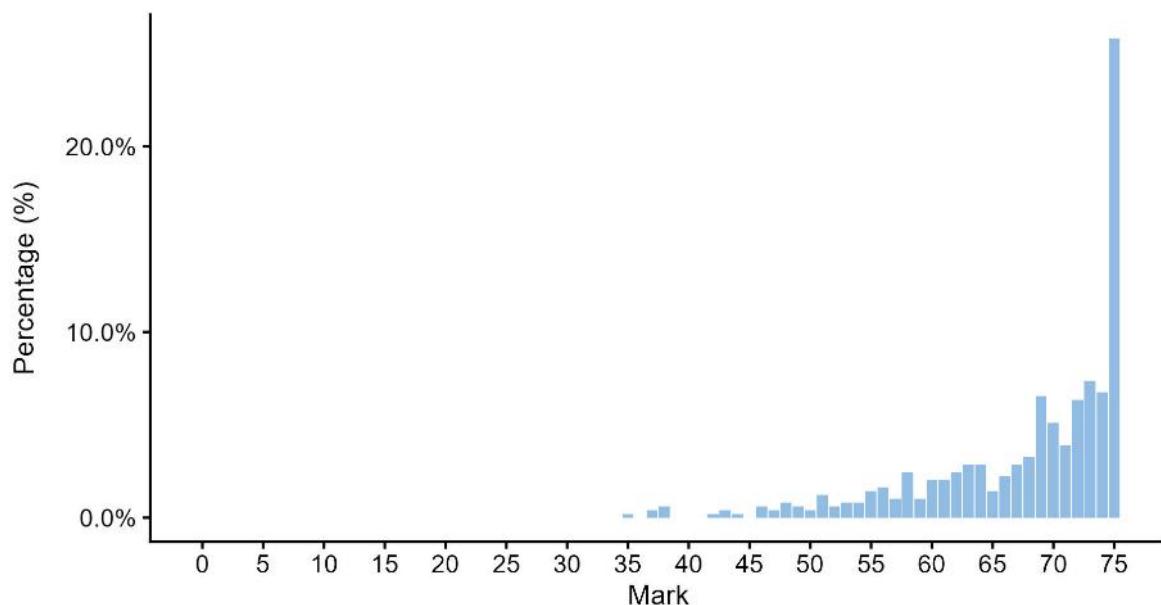
Note: All data is correct as at January 2026. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered Music Extension (Performance): 132.

Completion of units	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	484

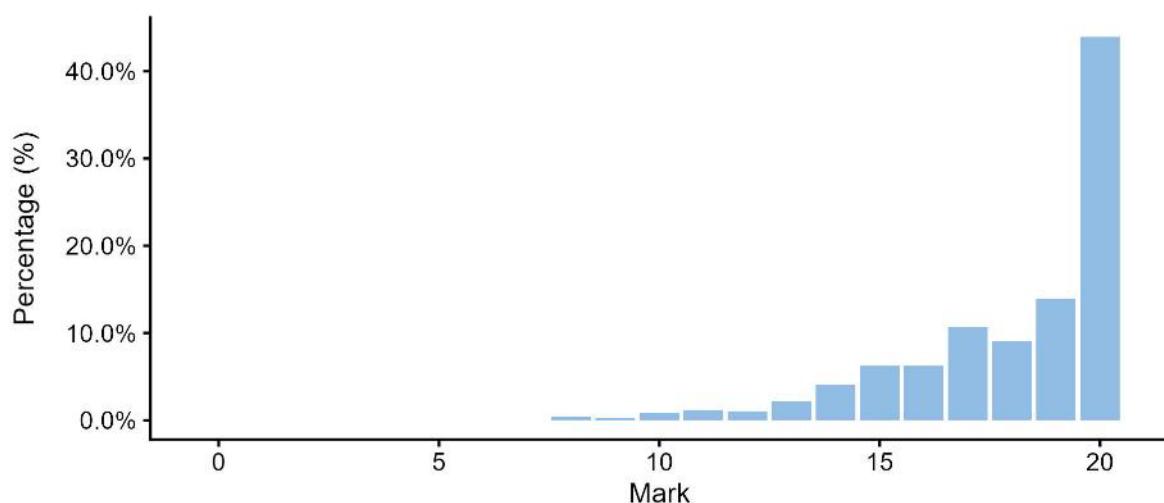
Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

Total marks for IA

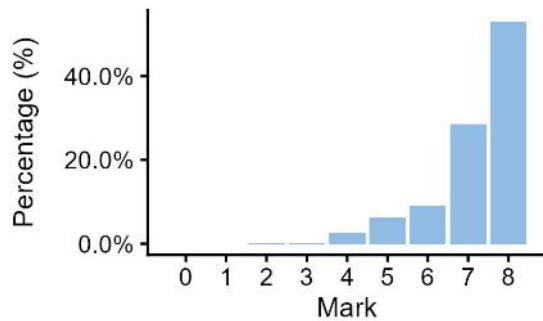


IA1 marks

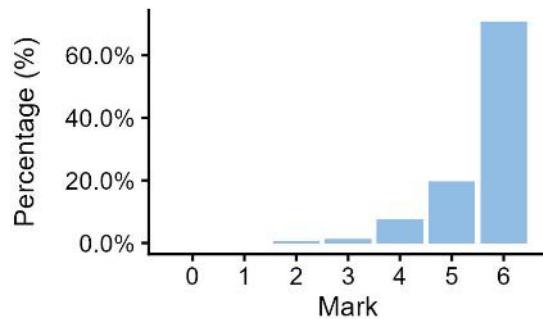
IA1 total



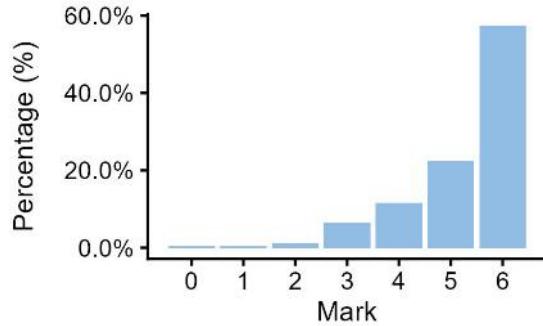
IA1 Criterion: Applying technique



IA1 Criterion: Interpreting music elements and concepts

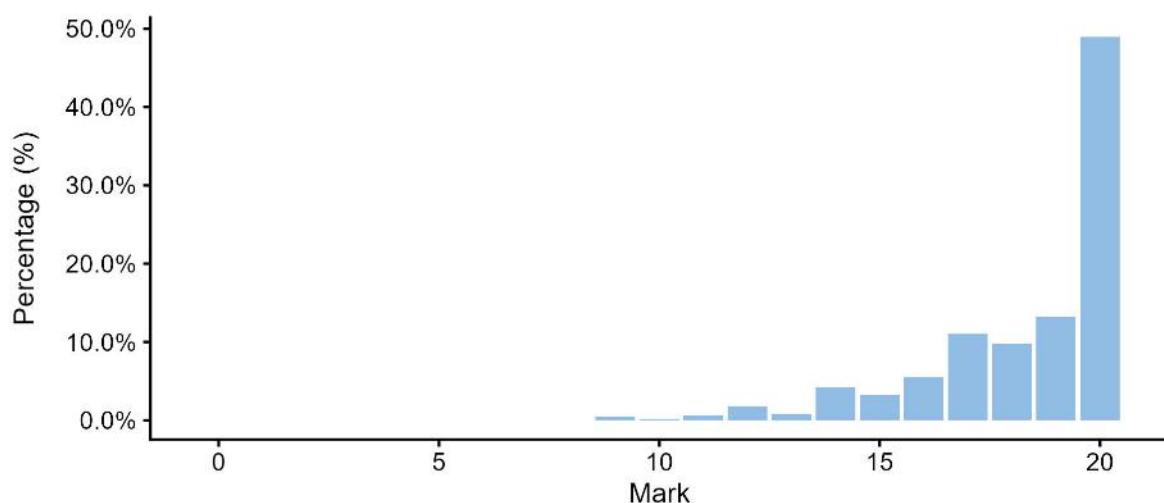


IA1 Criterion: Communicating meaning

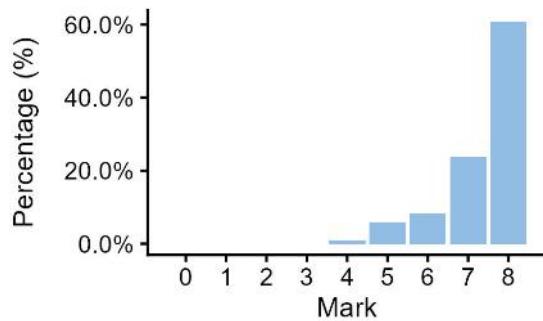


IA2 marks

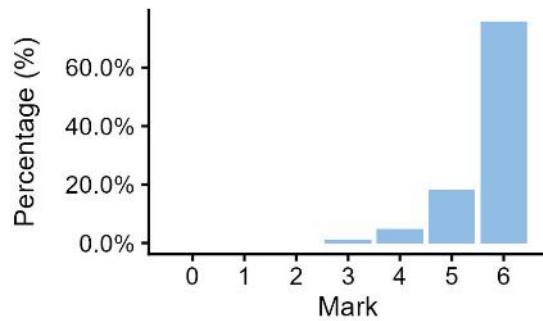
IA2 total



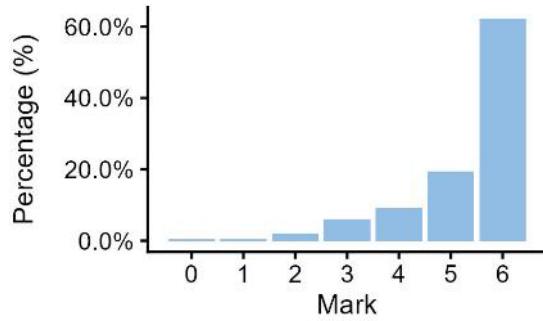
IA2 Criterion: Applying technique



IA2 Criterion: Interpreting music elements and concepts

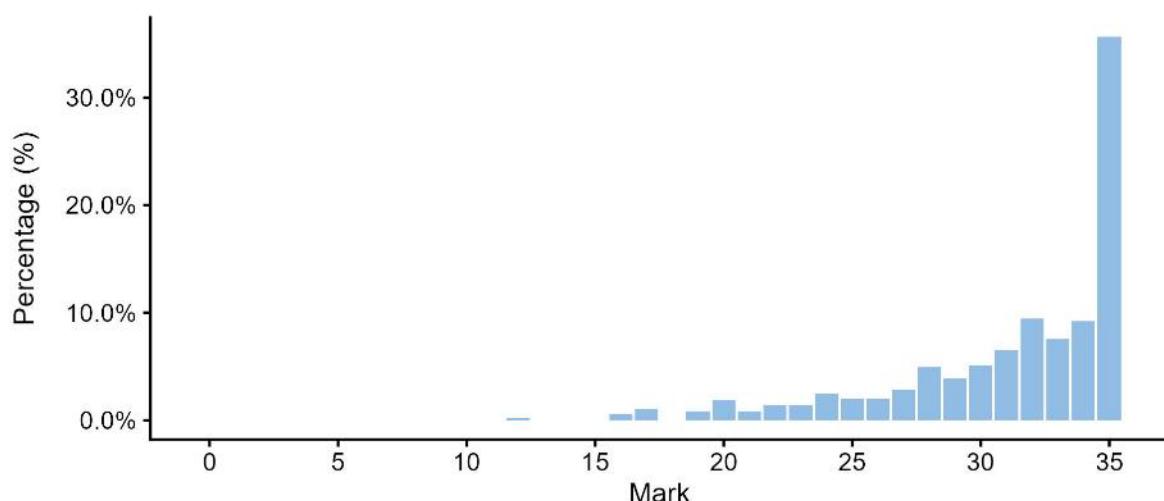


IA2 Criterion: Communicating meaning

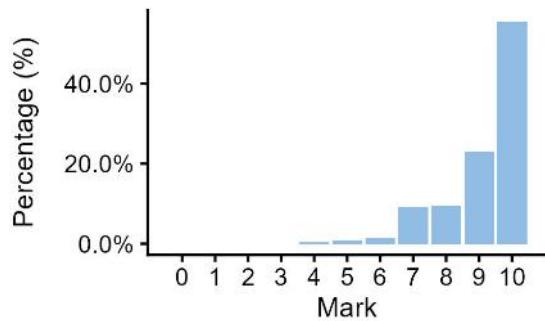


IA3 marks

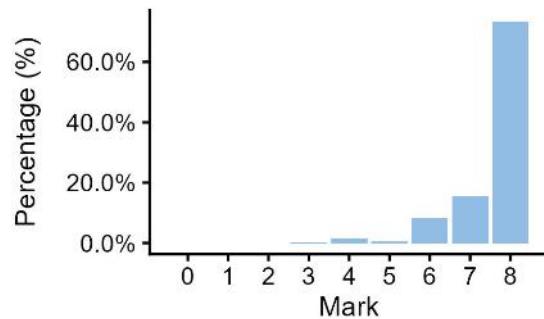
IA3 total



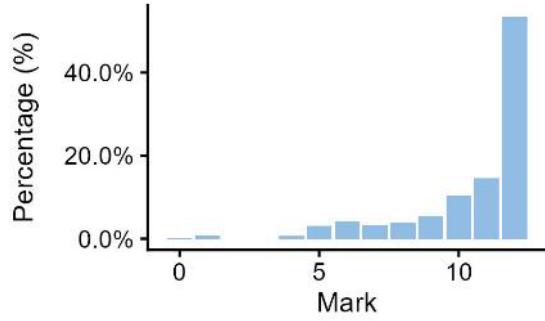
IA3 Criterion: Applying technique



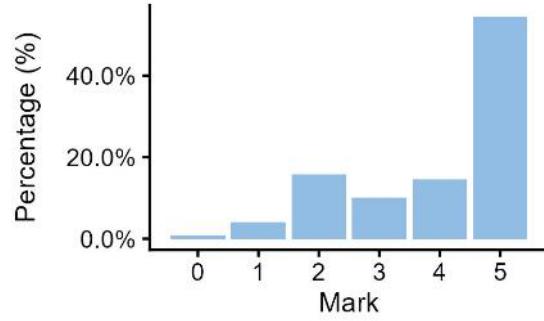
IA3 Criterion: Interpreting music elements and concepts



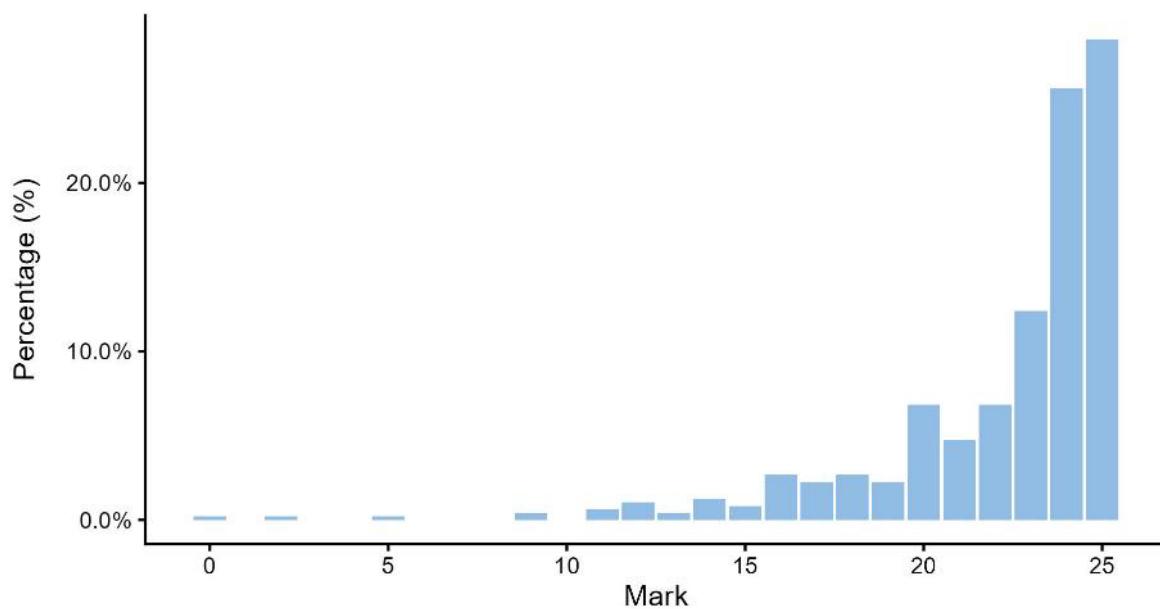
IA3 Criterion: Communicating meaning



IA3 Criterion: Evaluating best practice

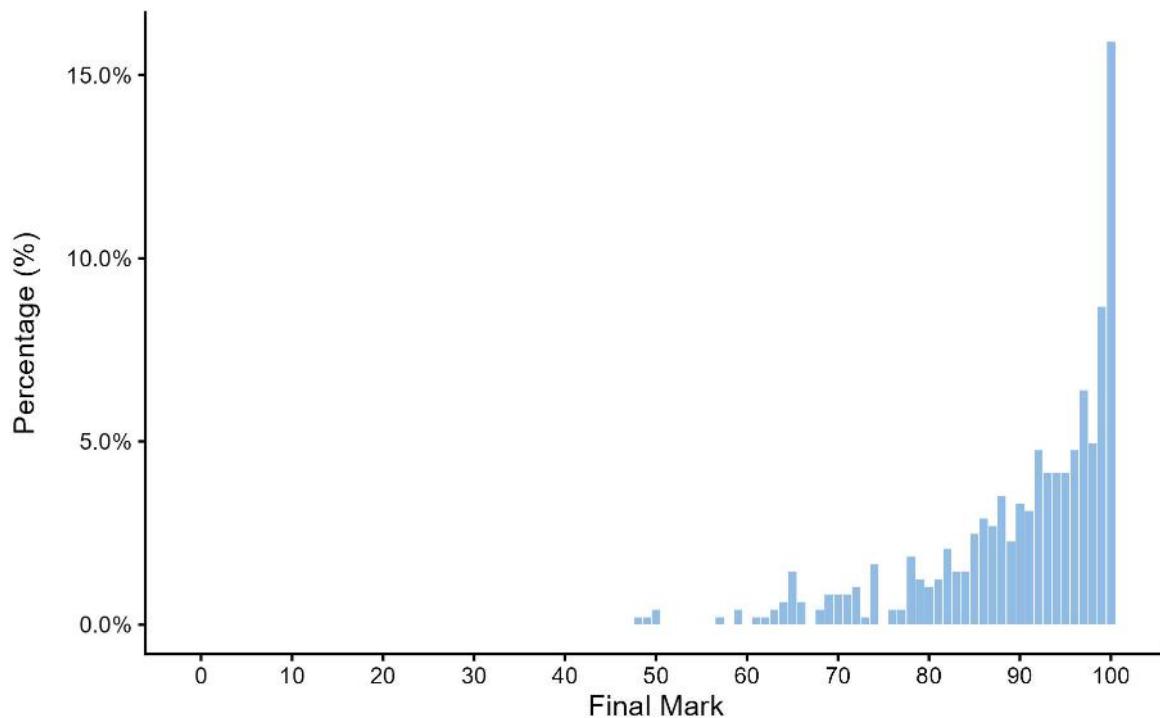


External assessment (EA) marks



Final subject results

Final marks for IA and EA



Grade boundaries

The grade boundaries are determined using a process to compare results on a numeric scale to the reporting standards.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Marks achieved	100–87	86–68	67–44	43–17	16–0

Distribution of standards

Number of students who achieved each standard across the state.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Number of students	352	108	24	0	0
Percentage of students	72.73	22.31	4.96	0.00	0.00

Internal assessment



This information and advice relate to the assessment design and assessment decisions for each IA in Units 3 and 4. These instruments have undergone quality assurance processes informed by the attributes of quality assessment (validity, accessibility and reliability).

Endorsement

Endorsement is the quality assurance process based on the attributes of validity and accessibility. These attributes are categorised further as priorities for assessment, and each priority can be further broken down into assessment practices.

Data presented in the Assessment design section identifies the reasons why IA instruments were not endorsed at Application 1, by the priority for assessment. An IA may have been identified more than once for a priority for assessment, e.g. it may have demonstrated a misalignment to both the subject matter and the assessment objective/s.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0*, Section 9.5.

Percentage of instruments endorsed in Application 1

Composition

Internal assessment	IA1	IA2	IA3
Number of instruments	127	127	115
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	91	91	84

Musicology

Internal assessment	IA1	IA2	IA3
Number of instruments	46	46	38
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	93	93	92

Performance

Internal assessment	IA1	IA2	IA3
Number of instruments	146	146	140
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	88	92	81

Confirmation

Confirmation is the quality assurance process based on the attribute of reliability. The QCAA uses provisional criterion marks determined by teachers to identify the samples of student responses that schools are required to submit for confirmation.

Confirmation samples are representative of the school's decisions about the quality of student work in relation to the instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG) and are used to make decisions about the cohort's results.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v7.0*, Section 9.6.

The following table includes the percentage agreement between the provisional marks and confirmed marks by assessment instrument. The Assessment decisions section for each assessment instrument identifies the agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks by criterion.

Number of samples reviewed and percentage agreement

Composition

IA	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Number of additional samples requested	Percentage agreement with provisional marks
1	80	159	0	96.25
2	78	157	0	97.44
3	78	153	0	80.77

Musicology

IA	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Number of additional samples requested	Percentage agreement with provisional marks
1	7	8	0	100.00
2	7	8	0	100.00
3	7	8	0	100.00

Performance

IA	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Number of additional samples requested	Percentage agreement with provisional marks
1	132	451	0	90.91
2	131	449	0	90.08
3	129	438	3	75.97

Internal assessment 1 (IA1)



Composition 1, Investigation 1 and Performance 1 (20%)

In IA1, students select their specialisation and commence their apprenticeship, working on individual goals.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions		
	Composition	Musicology	Performance
Alignment	12	2	15
Authentication	0	1	2
Authenticity	0	1	1
Item construction	2	2	2
Scope and scale	1	0	2

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided an authentic context that had real-world links and allowed students to complete the task in the most appropriate way
- were aligned to the syllabus without additional conditions or expectations
- for the Composition specialisation, allowed for student choice in genre and style, including emerging genres and styles.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include, in their entirety, the syllabus assessment objectives relevant to the specialisation, so students can have clarity about the cognitive processes being assessed
- only refer to assessable components in the task section. Use the scaffolding to include other examples of best practice, e.g. reflective and other supporting documentation
- for the Performance specialisation, allow students to perform in a context relevant to them, rather than at a pre-defined event or with additional conditions, e.g. performing to a live audience.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions		
	Composition	Musicology	Performance
Bias avoidance	0	0	0
Language	0	0	0
Layout	0	0	0
Transparency	0	0	0

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- formatted the task clearly, including headings and lists that made it easy for students to understand the different components of the task
- used language that was appropriate for students, while still ensuring that the syllabus requirements were met
- described the context and task succinctly, including only information necessary to ensure that students could understand what was required in the task.

Practices to strengthen

There were no significant issues identified for improvement.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- The assessment objectives have changed for each specialisation.
- The conditions for length have changed across all specialisations with maximum lengths stipulated, except for Composition, which has a minimum response length.
- The 2026 syllabuses for the Composition and Performance specialisations require students to complete a statement of intent that analyses and evaluates their own work to communicate the intent. They are not required to express the meaning communicated in the work; this objective has been removed from these specialisations.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
Composition					
1	Applying techniques and processes	98.75	1.25	0.00	0.00
2	Manipulating music elements and concepts	97.50	1.25	1.25	0.00
3	Communicating meaning	97.50	0.00	2.50	0.00
Musicology					
1	Applying literacy skills	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	Expressing meaning	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3	Investigating music	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Performance					
1	Applying technique	95.45	3.79	0.76	0.00
2	Interpreting music elements and concepts	95.45	2.27	2.27	0.00
3	Communicating meaning	94.70	0.76	4.55	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- for Composition
 - in the Applying techniques and processes criterion
 - at 5 marks, the response demonstrated application of idiomatic compositional devices to control how ideas were introduced, developed, contrasted and resolved in a composition that was cohesive, sounded finished and was stylistically consistent
 - at 6 marks, these compositional devices were purposefully embedded and used intentionally to shape the composition, demonstrating command

- in the Manipulating music elements and concepts criterion at 6 marks, the manipulation of music elements and concepts relevant to style and genre was not only explicit but consistent throughout, reflecting a deep understanding, intent and control of how compositions are constructed
- in the Communicating meaning criterion, the statement of intent examined the role and intention of the music elements and concepts used in the composition through sequenced and connected ideas that critically evaluated their use, showing awareness of how compositional practices are used to communicate meaning and intent
- for Musicology, in the Investigating music criterion
 - the annotated bibliography investigated the use of music elements and concepts and ideas about music from a wide range of sources including original manuscripts, performance recordings, interviews, concert programs, scholarly articles by musicologists, documentaries, podcasts, blogs, magazine articles and other online platforms
 - at 8 marks, the selected sources were each examined for their relevance and value to the topic of investigation. This included an examination of the credibility of the source, the detail of evidence provided, examination of gaps or biases in the source, and the degree to which the source contributed to a greater understanding of the topic
- for Performance, in the Communicating meaning criterion
 - the statement of intent examined the performance choices in the work and evaluated how these choices communicated meaning
 - at 5 marks, these choices were reflected in a performance that sustained the chosen expressive devices and performance choices
 - at 6 marks, these expressive devices and performance choices demonstrated synthesis, communicating nuances within the score and insight into the composer's or stylistic intent.

Practices to strengthen

When making judgments for this IA for the 2026 syllabus, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the ISMGs in the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- For Composing, in the 2026 syllabus
 - the statement of intent must focus on analysing and evaluating the musical elements and compositional devices used in the student's own composition. It should not be a general analysis of the composition's style or genre
 - the Statement of intent criterion is separate from the Resolving music ideas criterion, and the highest performance level (a mark of 3) requires that the
 - analysis of music elements and concepts, and compositional devices in the student's composition is detailed and specific
 - evaluation of these music elements, concepts and compositional devices shows insightful judgments communicated in a thoughtful and informed way
 - while the resolution of music ideas in the composition is marked separately from the statement of intent, the composition will communicate the meaning analysed and evaluated in the statement of intent.
- For Performance, in the 2026 syllabus
 - the statement of intent analyses and evaluates the student's own performance choices. It should not be a general analysis of the repertoire

- the Statement of intent criterion is separate from the Realising music ideas criterion, and the highest performance level (a mark of 3) requires that the
 - analysis of choices made in the student's own performance is detailed and specific
 - evaluation of these performance choices shows insightful judgments communicated in a thoughtful and informed way
- the realisation of musical ideas supports the meaning and performance choices outlined in the statement of intent and aligns with the repertoire. For the highest performance level (5 marks), the student's performance reveals subtleties of meaning through a sustained and perceptive integration of expressive devices.

To further ensure reliable judgments are made using the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- for Composition, in the Manipulating music elements and concepts criterion
 - notated scores will demonstrate explicit manipulation of music elements and concepts through (but not limited to) sustained use of dynamic, tempo and articulation markings, showing sensitivity to the genre/style and stylistic nuances
 - audio recordings will demonstrate explicit manipulation of musical elements and concepts through (but not limited to) sustained use of dynamics, tempo, articulation and production techniques that reflect stylistic appropriateness and sensitivity to genre-specific nuances
- for Musicology, in the Applying literacy skills criterion, a controlled structure of information is considered to be achieved when the music idea of the investigation is clearly stated at the beginning and consistently referenced throughout each annotation through the application of written literacy skills
- for Performance
 - responses are marked using evidence that meets the assessment conditions for response length. This involves marking from the beginning of the performance up to the point where the response meets the required length, excluding evidence after that point
 - the audiovisual recordings of student performances ensure that the placement of the camera provides a clear line of sight to authenticate student work and support application of technical skills such as posture, finger position and the use of pedal (for relevant instruments). This also includes positioning the camera so that music stands do not block the visibility of performers.

Additional advice

Schools should:

- support students to select appropriate performance repertoire that
 - reflects their technique and skills
 - enables the demonstration of technical skills, interpretation of music elements and concepts, and use of expressive devices needed to achieve the highest performance-level descriptors
 - initiates best practice, including metacognition and reflective practice commensurate with their technique and skills
- ensure performance videos do not include pausing or editing, such as different camera angles, alternate shots and/or transitions
- support students with performance set-up to enable students to demonstrate skills. This may include a sound check to ensure audio balance between the backing track and student

instruments, appropriate venue selection, use of a suitable recording device and appropriate positioning of the camera and accompanist. Additionally, checkpoints could be used to evaluate and refine the performance set-up.

Samples

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of the Communicating meaning criterion at 8 marks, as the statement of intent examines music elements and concepts, and compositional devices including texture, timbre, tonality and harmony, and evaluates how these communicate ‘weightlessness and ascension’ and ‘trepidation and melancholy’. The resolution of the composition, including the score, communicates subtleties of meaning using notation conventions supported by the audio.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Video content: (2 min, 7 secs)

<https://youtu.be/7Jmjtz7tNQc>

Excerpt 2

Beyond the Clouds, aims to capture the spirit of classic films such as *The Never-Ending Story* and *E.T.*, where the thrill of flight and the magic of fantasy converge. The composition invites listeners to experience the exhilaration of rising gracefully above the clouds, taking in the breathtaking views below. To convey the imagery and emotional nuances of this theme, various musical elements and concepts have been employed.

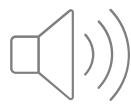
The first of these, texture and timbre, have been used to mimic the feeling of flying to great heights and marvelling at the sights. For example, the thin texture in the beginning of the piece, followed by gradual layering to bar 22, simulate the ever-increasing elevation – both physical and emotional. Furthermore, the dense texture and wide-spanning chords from bars 14 to 26 symbolise the growing grandeur and vastness of the skies. The rich, warm, ethereal timbre of the harp is designed to capture the essence of a fantastical flight while light cymbal swells give the feeling of air rushing past. The flute's high, airy tones evoke wind, weightlessness and ascension, with passages of delicate flourishes and rapid runs adding an element of excitement. Long, sweeping melodic lines in the strings give the impression of soaring and gliding effortlessly.

Other music elements that have been used to capture the mood and experience of flying are tonality and harmony. In the first few bars, the use of the Dorian mode generates a slight feeling of trepidation and melancholy as one flies through the dim veil of clouds. This transitions to a brighter, major mode at bar 8, symbolising breaking through to clear skies above. From bars 14 to 26, various chordal extensions (such as 7ths and 9ths), suspensions and dissonances have been incorporated to create a rich and lush harmonic landscape, that immerses the listener in the wonder, awe and anticipation of flying through the celestial expanse. Non-diatonic chords and subtle dissonances at bars 31 and 34 create a feeling of hovering and add a touch of suspense and uncertainty before resolving to the home key of A major. Here the listener experiences a feeling of contentment and fulfilment, signalling that they have reached their destination.

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying techniques and processes criterion at 6 marks, as compositional devices including repetition, contrast, motif, call and response and variation integral to the work show understanding and command in a unified and cohesive work
- the Manipulating music elements and concepts criterion at 6 marks, as the composition manipulates music elements and concepts including structure, texture, harmony and mixed metre to make the style explicit and consistent, and embodies compositional practices (as examined in Excerpt 2 from the statement of compositional intent).

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Audio content: (2 min, 53 secs)

<https://youtu.be/oxc3DCrFrBQ>

Excerpt 2

Throughout the composition, I aimed to communicate a feeling of uneasiness about the future. One way in which I chose to do so was through the manipulation of metre throughout the song's various sections. While the verses and the bridge of the song are in 4:4, the chorus is in 7:8. This time signature is very unusual for a more pop-oriented song, which effectively creates a sense of discomfort. Removing an eighth note from each bar surprises the listener and keeps them on-edge, communicating an agitated and uneasy feeling. Furthermore, the composition's final chorus uses a three-time tag where the second bar uses 6:8 – further inducing this surprise and uneasiness. Another way in which an uneasy feeling was incorporated was through the use of pitch. Across the piece, the chord progressions often diverge from the key signature of C major. The chords of the verses utilise both the flattened and natural seventh, as well as the sharpened and natural tonic. This chromaticism helps the verses to feel unresolved. This is amplified by the verse melody, where phrases end on the dominant instead of the tonic. This combination of unresolved harmony and melody provides an unsettled feeling, lending itself to an uneasy sound.

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying literacy skills criterion at 4 marks, as Excerpt 1 clearly articulates the investigation and music ideas being explored and signposts the relevance and value of consulting a range of sources for the investigation, which also relates to the criterion of Investigating music
- the Expressing meaning criterion at 8 marks and Investigating music criterion at 8 marks, as Excerpt 2 highlights the key findings from the source, linking them directly to the relevance and value of the source to the topic.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Introduction

From my experience, interpreting ornamentation in eighteenth-century music presents significant challenges for modern performers due to the ambiguous nature of the notation, confusion with later performance practices, and performers' general unfamiliarity with the evidence on the matter. Appoggiaturas, in particular, are frequently misunderstood in my opinion – not only in terms of their execution but also regarding their intended expressive and compositional functions. There are also variations across different nations and specific time periods within the eighteenth century. I believe it is important for performers to familiarise themselves with the relevant historical and scholarly perspectives on appoggiatura (among other things) to create an informed interpretation that does a composer and work justice; a unique invention that is a good balance of personal and historical authenticity. This annotated bibliography compiles some influential sources on the performance and interpretation of appoggiaturas in the eighteenth century and an evaluation of their findings, relevance and limitations.

Excerpt 2

Mozart, L. (1951). *A treatise on the fundamental principles of violin playing* (K. Editha, Trans.; 2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1756).

In this 1756 treatise, Leopold Mozart offers a comprehensive guide to playing the violin for beginners. He details music history, the anatomy of notation, bow technique, fingering, realisation of ornaments, and stylistic choices. This work explains appoggiaturas in detail and is hence relevant to the topic of research. Like Tromlitz (1791), he classifies appoggiaturas into long or short, and occurring on downbeats or before downbeats. Mozart's view and example figures on appoggiaturas generally corroborate with Quantz (1752) and Tromlitz (1791); however, he goes into more detail about exceptions to the rules. For example, he says that a short appoggiatura should be used 'if it be foreseen that the regular harmony...would be offended by the use of a long appoggiatura.' This highlights the importance of understanding that rules regarding appoggiaturas were seen as guidelines in the eighteenth century rather than laws, emphasizing the need for performers to consider harmony and composition when realising ornaments. Furthermore, he explains how the long appoggiatura should be realised by starting softer, growing in volume then decreasing in volume toward the principle note if time permits (similar to *messa di voce*). In my experience, aspects such as these are rarely considered by modern performers today. This corroborates with other sources of the time and reinforces the general consensus of appoggiaturas in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying technique criterion at 8 marks, as technically complex passages, including both fast-moving sequences and double stops, are executed with command
- the Interpreting music elements and concepts criterion at 6 marks, as articulation, phrasing, dynamics and tempo demonstrate a thoughtful incorporation and awareness of stylistic characteristics, reflecting an individual understanding and interpretation of style
- the Communicating meaning criterion at 6 marks, as the performance synthesises these expressive devices and other performance choices to communicate subtleties of emotion and climax, as examined and evaluated in the performance statement (Excerpt 2).

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1



Video content: (3 min, 14 secs)

https://youtu.be/i8m_IT-jgo

Excerpt 2

To emphasise the deep emotional expression of the Romantic era, I increased my volume in the passages with more elements from the period, such as dramatic rubato and specific articulations (b.20-23, 83-90, 331-334) and lowered it in the less integral sections (b.24-34, 146-161). I also used dynamics to shape each phrase, ensuring to crescendo to a climax within every passage. This helped capture the emotion and expressiveness within each section. Additionally, I added several unwritten glissandos and pauses to further capture the virtuosity of the Romantic era (b.23, 73, 314-315).

To alter the timbre between sections I utilised different bow techniques. In the first movement, I used more bow pressure and heavier strokes, creating a richer timbre (b.1-207). In the second movement, I used less pressure and a floaty bow stroke, creating a delicate timbre (b.208-372). This emphasised the musical range and diversity of this era. Additionally, in the more emotional sections, I altered the timbre to be sombre and muted by moving into higher string positions (b.55-61, 174-180, 202-207). In contrast in the more animated sections, I changed strings (b.62-70, 181-187), creating a resonant and bright timbre, and therefore encapsulating the musical freedom of this period.

The following excerpt has been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying technique criterion at 8 marks, as the performance demonstrates technical skills integral to the work with command of articulation, phrasing, triplet rhythms and expressive devices, including crescendos, throughout
- the Interpreting music elements and concepts criterion at 6 marks, as the shaping of phrases and use of articulation demonstrate an individualised interpretation while maintaining a nuanced sense of the Classical style.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1



Video content: (2 min, 10 secs)

https://youtu.be/uQxeA_rWP08

Internal assessment 2 (IA2)



Composition 2, Investigation 2 and Performance 2 (20%)

In IA2, students continue their apprenticeship, working on individual goals and becoming more independent.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions		
	Composition	Musicology	Performance
Alignment	10	2	9
Authentication	0	1	0
Authenticity	2	1	0
Item construction	1	1	2
Scope and scale	1	1	2

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided an authentic context that had real-world links and allowed students to complete the task in the most appropriate way
- were aligned to the syllabus without additional conditions or expectations
- for the Composition specialisation, allowed for student choice in genre and style, including emerging genres and styles.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include, in their entirety, the syllabus assessment objectives relevant to the specialisation, so students can have clarity about the cognitive processes being assessed
- only refer to assessable components in the task section. Use the scaffolding to include other examples of best practice, e.g. reflective and other supporting documentation
- for the Performance specialisation, allow students to perform in a context relevant to them, rather than at a pre-defined event or with additional conditions, e.g. performing to a live audience.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions		
	Composition	Musicology	Performance
Bias avoidance	0	0	0
Language	0	0	0
Layout	0	0	0
Transparency	0	0	0

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- formatted the task clearly, including headings and lists that made it easy for students to understand the different components of the task
- used language that was appropriate for students, while still ensuring that the syllabus requirements were met
- described the context and task succinctly, including only information necessary to ensure that students could understand what was required in the task.

Practices to strengthen

There were no significant issues identified for improvement.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- The assessment objectives have changed for each specialisation.
- The conditions for length have changed across all specialisations with maximum lengths stipulated, except for Composition, which has a minimum response length.
- The 2026 syllabuses for the Composition and Performance specialisations require students to complete a statement of intent that analyses and evaluates their own work to communicate the intent. They are not required to express the meaning communicated in the work; this objective has been removed from these specialisations.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
Composition					
1	Applying techniques and processes	97.44	2.56	0.00	0.00
2	Manipulating music elements and concepts	97.44	2.56	0.00	0.00
3	Communicating meaning	97.44	2.56	0.00	0.00
Musicology					
1	Applying literacy skills	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	Expressing meaning	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3	Investigating music	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Performance					
1	Applying technique	91.60	7.63	0.76	0.00
2	Interpreting music elements and concepts	96.95	2.29	0.76	0.00
3	Communicating meaning	96.18	2.29	1.53	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- for Composition, in the Applying techniques and processes criterion
 - at 5 marks, the composition correctly applied idiomatic compositional techniques in a way that not only developed the work but resulted in a unified and cohesive work
 - at 6 marks, the application of compositional devices was integrated and interconnected, showing creative decisions grounded in technical understanding of the style, genre, form or meaning

- for Musicology, in the Investigating music criterion
 - at 6 marks, the response investigated a range of primary and secondary sources for the use of both music elements and concepts, and ideas about music
 - at 7 marks, the investigation of a range of primary and secondary sources included some that were examined for relevance and value, contributing to a well-informed understanding of the musicological investigation
 - at 8 marks, the investigation examined all sources for relevance and value, leading to well-supported findings
- for Performance, in the Interpreting music elements and concepts criterion
 - at 5 marks, the performance demonstrated an awareness of style characteristics and nuances through expressive interpretation that reflected a clear understanding of the music
 - at 6 marks, the performance demonstrated insightful understanding of the piece, including style characteristics. There was clear, purposeful interpretation of musical elements and concepts, effectively capturing the style and genre, and revealing a strong sense of ownership and a personal, individualised interpretation.

Practices to strengthen

When making judgments for this IA for the 2026 syllabus, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the ISMGs in the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- For Composition in the Manipulating music elements and concepts criterion, some performance levels now have a mark range. Where there are two descriptors, the work must demonstrate both to be awarded the highest mark for that mark range.
- For Musicology in the Investigating music criterion, the 7–8 mark performance level in the 2026 syllabus requires the investigation to consult a 'discriminating' range of sources. This means that the sources consulted have been selected because they are highly relevant, credible and reliable (e.g. scholarly articles, primary sources, expert analyses) and support the investigation about the use of music elements and concepts and ideas about music.
- for Performance
 - in the Applying technique criterion, some performance levels now have a mark range. Where there are two descriptors, the work must demonstrate both to be awarded the highest mark for that mark range, e.g.
 - at 6 marks, the performance will demonstrate refined and synthesised technical skills specific to the chosen genre/style, however control throughout the performance may not be sustained as the result of minor stumbles
 - at 7 marks, the application of technical skills in performance will be refined and synthesised, and sustained without interruption in a polished performance
 - in the Interpreting music elements and concepts criterion, the 5-mark performance level requires the performance to show interpretation of musical elements and concepts that is sensitive to the genre and style, with this interpretation sustained and consistently supported by perceptive use of stylistic nuances.

Additional advice

It is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- For Composition, the Communicating meaning criterion in the 2020 syllabus has been split into two criteria in the revised 2026 syllabus, Resolving music ideas and Statement of intent.

- For Performance, the Communicating meaning criterion in the 2020 syllabus has been split into two criteria in the revised 2026 syllabus, Realising music ideas and Statement of intent.
- The statement of intent for Composition and Performance should analyse with detail and specificity the compositional or performance choices and, in doing so, evaluate these choices, showing insightful judgments about how these communicated intent.

Samples

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying techniques and processes criterion at 6 marks, as the composition applies a range of compositional devices with command, including unity, variation and contrast, to develop motivic ideas while maintaining cohesion
- the Manipulating music elements and concepts criterion at 6 marks, as music elements and concepts such as harmony, rhythm and articulation are synthesised in a manner that embodies the compositional practices of composing for marimba, evident in both the notated score and live performance recording
- the Communicating meaning criterion at 8 marks, as the statement of compositional intent (Excerpts 3 and 4) examines and evaluates music elements and concepts used to convey the expressed meaning of 'floating within the clouds'. Subtleties of this meaning are then communicated in the resolved composition, depicting floating, wind and a thunderstorm.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1



Video content: (2 min, 54 secs)

<https://youtu.be/txZIRUmoitw>

Excerpt 2

Cloudbound

Written for Solo Marimba

Composed by [REDACTED]

Larghetto - Freely

10 rit. a tempo

18 Freely

24 Allegro - Freely
Swell Dynamics

28 rit.

32 (rit.) a tempo

Excerpt 3

“Cloudbound” is a marimba solo that explores the idea of floating within the clouds. It embodies the serenity, as well as the danger contained within thunderclouds expressed through many different compositional devices and musical elements.

A serene, weightless mood is conveyed through soft dynamics (pp, p, mp) and rolled chords creating a light timbre. Although the piece begins in Eb minor, major chords like D \flat and B appear in the floaty section. This adds to the emotional nature, as well as the light feeling using these musical elements.

Excerpt 4

Steady time then follows, as a gradual crescendo to forte occurs. Using expressive devices depicts the clouds growing more dangerous. At bar 111, the use of *subito pianissimo* mixed with an Ab in the highest register possible creates a feeling of calm before the storm. This continues to build in dynamic, while the pitch lowers in octaves and adds Eb to create a powerful sound with a perfect 5th.

After a cadenza, the use of semi-quavers and demi-semi quavers playing a descending Ab minor scale with an added G natural conveys the frantic nature of the storm clouds. This leads into a section that utilises expressive devices, pitch, duration and timbre. Played at *fortississimo* (fff), an Eb3 and Eb2 are played in octaves using semi-quavers and demisemi-quavers, as well as perfect 5ths involving Eb as the root, and Ab as the root of the harmonies. This section also utilizes the marimba’s low, woody, booming timbre to evoke thunder. All of this conveys the feeling of a rumbling storm cloud with thunder and lightning, and frantic panic.

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying techniques and processes criterion at 6 marks, as the composition demonstrates command of compositional devices such as theme, development and contrast that are integral to depicting different aspects of *The Tawny*’s character
- the Manipulating music elements and concepts criterion at 6 marks, as the response demonstrates the embodiment of compositional practices through the structured use of melody, harmony and timbre. Additionally, specific and deliberate choices in tempo, articulation and dynamics are evident throughout the notated score
- the Communicating meaning criterion at 8 marks, as the statement of compositional intent examines and evaluates music elements and concepts, and compositional devices, such as instrumentation and timbre, and expresses the meaning these characteristics communicate. The composition sustains these and other music ideas to communicate subtleties of meaning.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Video content: (3 min, 7 secs)

<https://youtu.be/UulGiCchujM>

Excerpt 2

A viola solo is introduced on the upbeat of bar 17, chosen for its rich, subdued tone, which falls nicely between the bright tone of the violins and the depth of the cello. It becomes *The Tawny*'s inner voice, mysterious yet expressive, complementing the visual flow of lines around the beak and eyes. Beginning at bar 33, the orchestration progressively increases, layering woodwinds, brass, and percussion in a rising wave of texture and tension. These instrumentation reflects the rich colour of *The Tawny*. At bar 45, the main theme returns with greater texture, accentuated by the resonant strike of the bass drum.

A ritardando and decrescendo in bar 60 bring in the B section, a contrasting, slower passage that reveals the façade. Solo lines from the horn, oboe, viola, and violin provide counter-melodies, symbolising *The Tawny*'s contemplative nature beneath the vigilant face. At bar 95, glistening semiquaver arpeggios in the violins evoke a spark of restless yet gracefulness in *The Tawny*.

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying literacy skills criterion at 4 marks, as the introduction clearly states the aims of the report, and the investigation as a whole articulates ideas with clarity through a controlled structure
- the Expressing meaning criterion at 8 marks, as the response expresses consolidated ideas about the influence of both Wagner and Strauss on Schoenberg, enabling new understandings about Schoenberg's use of instrumentation and orchestration
- the Investigating music criterion at 8 marks, as the response examines primary sources for their value to the aims of the report by deconstructing repertoire from each composer to find commonalities and evidence of influence.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Introduction

This report aims to explore the links and evolution of horn orchestration from Wagner and Strauss in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*. It will be divided into two main sections:

1. The evolution of compositional techniques and the links of influence between composers.
2. Musical analysis of *Gurrelieder* and comparison to similar sections of works by Strauss and Wagner.

Excerpt 2

Wagner and Schoenberg

Wagner's influence on Schoenberg's early compositions, specifically *Gurrelieder*, is undeniably strong. The size of the ensemble, and the instrumentation required to perform it being heavily Wagnerian. Examples of such inclusions are the quartet of Wagner Tubas, the bass trumpet and auxiliary instruments such as the contrabass trombone. Another clear influence is the story of *Gurrelieder*, that shows a clear similarity to the many of fantastical stories that appear Wagner's operas. An example of this is *Waldemar*'s redemption upon finding his love and the Dutchman's curse being similarly lifted in Wagner's *Der Fliegende Hollander*. The final and perhaps largest link between Wagner's works and *Gurrelieder*, is the voicing, harmony and orchestration of the piece. Places that most clearly convey this link include, the opening prelude before *Waldemar*'s entrance, being almost identical to the waves of the *Rhine* in the prologue to *Das Rheingold* and Waldemars knights' choruses being reminiscent of the hunting party's choruses in *Götterdämmerung*.

Excerpt 3

Analysis of Wagner and Strauss' influence on Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*

Wagner's Influence

Wagner's influence on Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* can best be seen in the overall style, harmonic elements and orchestration.

In the opening of *Teil 1*, the flutes open the piece with a non-tuplet ostinato that continues without interruption throughout much of the prelude. In bar 3, the piccolos and 3rd horn exchange in a call and response offbeat melody, the short jabs of sound juxtaposing the blanket of sound created by the flutes. This opening is reminiscent to the prologue of Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, though Wagner's opening has a more flowing connected sound, representing the river *Rhine*. Comparatively the *Gurrelieder* opening creates an image akin to bird calls in a forest at dusk similar in effect to Wagner's in the creation of a scene. In *Das Rheingold*'s opening, the 8 horns of Wagner's orchestra are used to create a matt of intertwining sound that flows up and down, evocative of a river. Underneath this, the rest of the orchestra builds layers of texture and sound until the singers enter. In *Gurrelieder*, the build-up of the orchestra happens from the ostinato in the flutes and the flurried scales in the harps and upper strings, while the horns take on a similar, if more ancillary role. While the bird calls in the 3rd and 5th horns continue, all the other horns take a similar role to the rest of the orchestra, slowly building the tension through swelling chords, and the augmented version of the bird calls in the 1st horn such as in 2nd bar of Figure 1.

App.1 Opening of *Gurrelieder*App.2 Opening of *Das Rheingold*

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying technical skills criterion at 8 marks, as the performance demonstrates command of breath control, tone and intonation throughout the work, with consistency and clarity evident in both staccato and legato passages
- the Interpreting music elements and concepts criterion at 6 marks, as the performance demonstrates an individualised style through the careful use of phrasing, articulation and rubato to balance both the requirements of a study and the Romantic era style
- the Communicating meaning criterion at 6 marks, as the performance statement examines and evaluates performance choices, such as the use of articulation, to communicate specific moods. These choices are then synthesised in the performance to communicate subtleties of meaning.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1



Video content: (2 min, 30 secs)

https://youtu.be/MY88d9UyP_s

Excerpt 2

I incorporated varied articulations throughout the performance to evoke a playful and Romantic mood. In bar 13, I employed sharp staccato at the end of each slur to drive the music, creating a lighter atmosphere, a buoyant, almost dance-like feel. Contrastingly, I used tenuto 2 bars later to sustain and propel the phrase (bar 15). However, in between bar 25 - 29, I applied slurred tonguing to connect notes fluidly, producing legato phrases with a warm, singing tone. The various articulation techniques successfully highlighted my phrasing abilities, and transitions between intended moods.

Internal assessment 3 (IA3)



Composition project, Musicology project and Performance project (35%)

In IA3, students work independently, demonstrating their abilities and the results of their goal setting and reflective writing.

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions		
	Composition	Musicology	Performance
Alignment	20	3	27
Authentication	0	0	1
Authenticity	1	0	2
Item construction	7	1	0
Scope and scale	0	0	1

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- provided an authentic context that had real-world links and allowed students to complete the task in the most appropriate way
- were aligned to the syllabus without additional conditions or expectations
- for the Composition specialisation, allowed for student choice in genre and style, including emerging genres and styles.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include, in their entirety, the syllabus assessment objectives relevant to the specialisation, so students can have clarity about the cognitive processes being assessed
- align the assessment objectives correctly with the different components of the task. For IA3, students are required to *evaluate* two techniques and/or strategies of best practice. This aligns to the reflective statement. In 2026, this cognitive process of *evaluate* will also be assessed in the statement of intent
- only refer to assessable components in the task section. Use the scaffolding to include other examples of best practice, e.g. reflective and other supporting documentation

- for the Performance specialisation, allow students to perform in a context relevant to them, rather than at a pre-defined event or with additional conditions, e.g. performing to a live audience.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions		
	Composition	Musicology	Performance
Bias avoidance	0	0	0
Language	0	0	0
Layout	0	0	0
Transparency	0	0	0

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- formatted the task clearly, including headings and lists that made it easy for students to understand the different components of the task
- used language that was appropriate for students, while still ensuring that the syllabus requirements were met
- described the context and task succinctly, including only information necessary to ensure that students could understand what was required in the task.

Practices to strengthen

There were no significant issues identified for improvement.

Additional advice

When developing an assessment instrument for this IA, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- The conditions for length have changed across all specialisations with maximum lengths stipulated, except for Composition, which has a minimum response length.
- For the Performance specialisation, students are still required to submit a statement of intent.
- For the Performance and Composition specialisations
 - the 'evaluate' objective is assessed in two criteria
 - the statement of intent, where students evaluate the choices they made in the performance, or their use of music elements, concepts and compositional devices
 - the reflective statement, where they evaluate two techniques and/or strategies of best practice
 - the 'apply literacy skills' objective is also assessed in two criteria — in the statement of intent and in the reflective statement

- the statement of intent requires students to analyse and evaluate their own work to communicate the intent. Students are not required to express the meaning communicated in the work; this objective has been removed from these specialisations.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
Composition					
1	Applying techniques and processes	93.59	3.85	2.56	0.00
2	Manipulating music elements and concepts	97.44	0.00	2.56	0.00
3	Communicating meaning	96.15	3.85	0.00	0.00
4	Evaluating best practice	85.90	14.10	0.00	0.00
Musicology					
1	Analysing music	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	Investigating music	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3	Synthesising information	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4	Evaluating best practice	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Performance					
1	Applying technique	93.80	6.20	0.00	0.00
2	Interpreting music elements and concepts	98.45	1.55	0.00	0.00
3	Communicating meaning	98.45	1.55	0.00	0.00
4	Evaluating best practice	82.95	14.73	2.33	0.00

Effective practices

Reliable judgments were made using the ISMG for this IA when:

- the ISMG was applied by matching the evidence to the descriptors, starting with the lowest performance-level descriptor and moving up
- for the Evaluating best practice criterion, the reflective statement used referencing conventions for the two techniques and/or strategies of best practice to move above 2 marks.

Practices to strengthen

When making judgments for this IA for the 2026 syllabus, it is essential to consider the following key differences between the ISMGs in the 2020 and 2026 syllabuses:

- In the revised 2026 syllabuses for all specialisations, the reflective statement must include referencing conventions for the two selected techniques and/or strategies to be awarded 4 marks or higher.
- For Composition, in the 2026 syllabus
 - the Applying compositional devices, Manipulating music elements and concepts, and Resolving music ideas criteria have mark ranges to allow for fine-grained decisions. Where a performance level has two descriptors, the work must demonstrate both to be awarded the highest mark
 - the statement of intent is marked separately from the resolution of music ideas.
- For Musicology, in the 2026 syllabus
 - some performance levels have a mark range to allow for fine-grained decisions. Where there are two descriptors for a mark range, the response must demonstrate both to be awarded the highest mark
 - in the Analysing music criterion
 - for 6 marks, the response should analyse *pertinent* music elements and concepts and ideas about music, i.e. focus on key music elements and concepts together with clear music ideas that are relevant and appropriate to the context, enabling detailed and specific analysis without exceeding assessment conditions
 - for 8 marks, the analysis of both music elements and concepts and ideas about music must be detailed and show specificity. This means the analysis should not only provide detail but also specificity in the evidence to support the analysis
 - in the Investigating music criterion for 6 marks, the investigation of ideas about music must come from a range of sources and make connection to the chosen question, issue, design, challenge or hypothesis.
- For Performance, in the 2026 syllabus
 - the Applying technique, Interpreting music elements and concepts, and Realising music ideas criteria have mark ranges to allow for fine-grained decisions. Where there are two descriptors, the work must demonstrate both to be awarded the highest mark
 - the statement of intent is marked separately from the realisation of music ideas.

To further ensure reliable judgments are made using the ISMG for this IA, it is recommended that:

- teachers familiarise themselves with the
 - [Cognitive verb framework](#) for definitions and when discussing key verbs in the ISMG and syllabus

- revised descriptors in the ISMG and their meaning in the context of composition, musicology and/or performance.

Additional advice

Schools should:

- for Performance
 - where possible, ensure teachers are present to sound check and record performances to ensure quality recordings
 - consider that checkpoints and formal draft feedback may be an appropriate opportunity to establish recording quality for students learning remotely
 - when recording the performance
 - position the camera in an appropriate position to capture the performance. Audio editing or transitions in camera angles created by post-production film editing are not permissible. If necessary (and possible), use multiple devices to capture each student separately if performing in an ensemble
 - ensure the student is clearly visible throughout to demonstrate application of technique including posture, hands, feet and stage presence
 - use amplification of voice to support balance where students choose to sing and accompany themselves
 - if students use a backing track, ensure their voice or instrument is clearly audible and the performer's part is removed.
- for Composition
 - advise students that notated scores should include all relevant tempo, dynamic, articulation and other relevant expression markings to resolve the music ideas and demonstrate a polished work
 - consider the recommendation for notated scores to be accompanied by the MIDI audio reference track.

Samples

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying techniques and processes criterion at 10 marks, as compositional devices integral to the work, such as unity and variation, are used with subtlety, showing understanding and command
- the Manipulating music elements and concepts criterion at 8 marks, as the consistent manipulation of music elements and concepts, such as melody, harmony and timbre, embodies the compositional practices of the chosen style. For instance, the intentional use of added note chords in the verse and chorus provides pivot notes and allows for stylistic passing notes to embellish the guitar part
- the Communicating meaning criterion at 12 marks, as music elements and concepts and compositional devices are examined for their role in communicating the intended meaning of the work (Excerpt 2). Music ideas are then resolved in the composition to communicate these subtleties of meaning, such as the use of unresolved harmony to mirror the emotions of the narrator

- the Evaluating best practice criterion at 5 marks, as metacognition that informed best practice in this composition is evident through the reflection on the use of 'shapes' to inspire more interesting guitar parts (Excerpt 3).

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1



Audio content: (3 min, 3 secs)

<https://youtu.be/FDIOXNfdzPM>

Excerpt 2

The piece I have composed is called *Try*, about the vulnerability, anticipation, and disappointment involved with waiting on another person to "try". I aim to communicate this meaning through musical elements.

Regarding timbre, I chose acoustic guitar and soft vocals to create an intimate character, reflecting the vulnerability of the lyrics.

The piece is in the key of E major. The verse and chorus chords alternate between IV6 and Vadd9. The simplicity of this harmonic progression is countered by the complexity of the chords. This repetition, and the repetition of C# and F# in both chords, creates tension and expectation, reflecting the anticipation felt by the narrator and repetition of the story. A \flat IIImaj7#11 chord is played at 2:18. This dissonant, non diatonic chord adds a mysterious character to the harmony, and reflects the disappointment of the narrator as their expectations are not met. C# and F# are still present in this chord, creating an implied suspended harmony, maintaining the anticipation. The piece never resolves to the tonic to increase tension, mirroring that felt by the narrator, and to convey the lack of conclusion achieved in the song. The simple vocal harmonies throughout create a further sense of intimacy and vulnerability. In the chorus, they serve as an echo of the melody, showing the repetitive nature of the singer's feelings and desires.

Excerpt 3

In terms of songwriting, I employed a strategy inspired by an interview of Elliott Smith, in which he describes his approach to writing guitar parts. He says, “*I don't really think about it in terms of language, I think about it more like shapes*” (2000). He also describes how he focuses more on sequences of chord changes than riffs, creating “*implied melody*”. I applied this to the development of my compositions, which usually begin with the creation of a chord progression on guitar. This practice allowed me to create untraditional chords with colourful extensions, from which I could write interesting accompanying vocal melodies. I found this practice inspiring, as it freed me from traditional chord conventions, which I find limiting, and allows me to write more unique and interesting guitar parts from which I can create, subsequently, more interesting songs.

Reference

Musician.com. (2000). *Elliott Smith Gives A Songwriting Lesson*.

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying techniques and processes criterion at 10 marks. The composition uses original motifs, supported by selective incorporation of well-known motivic ideas. It applies compositional devices such as unity, contrast and accompaniment with understanding and command to create a cohesive song
- the Manipulating music elements and concepts criterion at 8 marks, as music elements and concepts such as melody, harmony, instrumentation and texture are manipulated to embody the compositional practices of a title-sequence song for film, inspired by a specific franchise
- the Communicating meaning criterion at 12 marks, as the statement examines music elements and concepts, including rhythm and harmony, and expresses the characterisation communicated through the composition (Excerpt 2). The resolution of the composition then communicates the subtleties of this meaning in a sustained manner
- the Evaluating best practice criterion at 5 marks, as the reflective statement demonstrates metacognition that informed the development of a signature style, including an exploration of how established composers are influenced by others and seeking inspiration in specific areas such as harmony. It includes referencing conventions to support the strategy (Excerpt 3).

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Audio content: (2 min, 59 secs)

<https://youtu.be/goTuCGcwTF0>

Excerpt 2

No Sun Above was written as a title-sequence song for an imagined James Bond film. It paints Bond as controlled on the surface yet hollowed out beneath.

The opening features sustained soft piano melody, overlayed with gently bowed violins and cello in their upper registers. This combination creates a delicate timbre, heightened by soft dynamics and subtle rubato, symbolising the mystery and emptiness of Bond's character. The verse begins with the entry of drums, establishing a stabilised tempo. Here, a swung hemiola-style rhythm is created between the left/right hands of piano, with the darkness of pulsing B1's in the bass-clef along with strong punchy chords in the right representing Bond's strength and determination.

As hemiola-style vocals enter, harmonies build to ascend the listener, mixing 7ths, 9ths, 3rds and 5ths to create both dissonance and beauty. In the chorus, the male vocal has a guttural tone, belting a melody of A4, G#4, and F#4 — high in the male register. This acts as a battle-cry for Bond, with lyrics revealing his inner grief and struggles.

The instrumental breakdown opens with the main motif, 'E4/F#4/G4/F#4/E4/C4/E4', arch-shaped contour and unexpected drop to C natural creating both familiarity and tension, making it an anchor as the surrounding textures shift and build. Diminished layers of instrumentation highlight vulnerability, while a distorted synth sustains an E6. The chord structure weaves in the signature Bond harmony, using a chromatic rise of B3/C4/C#4/C4. This motion symbolises Bond's climb toward control and pulls back to the same unresolved cycle. Heavy drums maintain an intense rock-pattern, with open hi-hat and frequent fills to drive momentum forward, mirroring the rising tension in Bond's character. The iconic Bond chord (EmMaj9) is then played on piano, isolated from other instruments to represent Bond's isolation of character in moments of fragility.

The bridge features temporary tonicization to Emaj, with complex chords including Gmaj/Cmaj/Dmaj/Amaj all presented as major chords. One chord in particular, Bb major, creates harmonic tension and a sudden shift between keys, as it sits a tritone away from E major. This unexpected brightness symbolises brief moments of clarity and control.

The song ends with the same texture as the opening – cynical piano accompanied by soft strings. This time, vocals sing delicately over the top, leading to a resolution in E minor – the tonic. Finally, piano plays a strong signature chord (EmMaj9) to symbolise Bond's return to composure while hinting at unresolved tension.

Excerpt 3

To develop my signature style, I listened widely to many music styles. My regular playlists were supplemented with new music. Matla (2021) thoughtfully insists "Listening more often builds a mental palate of ideas and sounds that can later be fused together to create something unique". Blogging on my e-Portfolio allowed me to clearly identify my focus on harmonic vocabulary with other music elements considered subsequently. Realising this, I prioritised building my harmonic style. Harmony plays a crucial role in communicating emotional meaning, and I used it deliberately to serve the narrative and refine a style recognisably mine (Valverde, 2024). Prior to MEX, I struggled to incorporate elements from music I admired due to fear of plagiarism. This in turn hindered my flow causing frustration. However, inspiration from other composers, for example, Hans Zimmer's admiration for Morricone, shows how important influence is for creativity (Predota, 2020). This was expertly demonstrated in *No Sun Above*.

Reference

Matla, S. (2021). *The Necessity of Intentional Listening*. <https://www.edmprod.com/listening>

The following excerpt has been included to provide evidence of the Evaluating best practice criterion at 5 marks, as:

- the reflective statement demonstrates metacognition involving the use of a citation manager. The student evaluates how the use of the manager allowed for their efficient formulation of discriminating conclusions while completing research
- referencing is included to support the technique.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

To organise sources effectively I have used the citation manager Zotero. Using a citation manager is best practice because it allows research to be stored in one location so it is easy to find, organise and use (SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, 2025). In Zotero, notes and annotations can be made to citations. This allowed me to track the important information in each source when dealing with a large number of sources, and to establish links between them. With this I was able to formulate discriminating conclusions in my research investigation without having to memorise or struggle to find what I was looking for. Zotero can generate in-text citations, reference lists and bibliography instantaneously which saves time and ensures academic integrity since no citations are missed (Education Centre of Australia, n.d.)

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Communicating meaning criterion at 12 marks, as the performance statement examines performance choices, such as articulation, dynamics and management of transitions, and clearly expresses the meaning communicated in each section of the work as a result of these choices (Excerpt 1)
- the Evaluating best practice criterion at 5 marks, as the reflective statement presents two strategies, rhythmic deconstruction and developing limb independence, demonstrating metacognition through reflective thinking and evaluation of the effectiveness of these strategies (Excerpt 2).

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Electric Sunrise by Plini is a progressive metal piece defined by the use of individualised rhythms and expressive devices that trace an emotional journey from stillness to intensity. The piece's evolving textures reflect the transformation of morning light gradually building momentum and vibrancy, symbolising the morning's infinite potential. I articulated the ride cymbal with legato notes played at mezzo piano to portray the calm beginning (0:12-0:30). This lighter dynamic created an airy timbre aligned with the sparse rhythmic texture, symbolising the quiet atmosphere before dawn. As the rhythmic density increased, I effectively added accented notes and flares contrasting with the weaker notes (0:31-1:08). This symbolises the little energy outbreaks, helping me successfully execute a crescendo to forte at the end of the intro, in tandem with the rising melodic contour of the guitar (1:03-1:09). This represents the intensifying emergence of sunlight across the horizon. While transitioning to the main groove, I successfully utilised staccato on toms and choked cymbals, injecting sudden rests, which enhanced the emotional build-up toward climactic phrases (1:10-1:19) and symbolised the sun's incremental rise and energising effect on the world below. In the main grooves, I played on the trash cymbal, adding a metallic, textured layer above irregularly placed crash cymbals (1:20-1:31, 3:55-4:17). This polyrhythmic layering symbolised the unpredictable, diverse energy of the waking world. I maintained clarity in my double kick patterns throughout the guitar riff and solo sections by applying the heel-toe technique (1:44-2:26, 3:22-3:47). This allowed me to effectively produce evenly spaced sixteenth notes with a firm, punchy articulation, complementing rapid guitar strikes and reinforcing the 4/4 groove. This heightened the drive and motion, reflecting the unstoppable momentum of the sunrise once it broke through. I successfully propelled the drum groove during the guitar riff by utilising up-down accenting for the rhythmic ostinato on the hi-hat (1:44-2:11). This steady pulse symbolised the gathering energy of a new day. I effectively softened to piano during the break with light finger-driven strikes, creating a delicate texture suited to the guitar's introspection (2:26-3:19). As the solo emerged, I increased to mezzo piano through more wrist involvement to successfully maintain a sense of clarity (2:53-3:21), symbolising the moment of calm reflection before the day's full energy unfolds. In conclusion, these performance choices across expressive devices, duration, timbre and texture enabled me to embody the meaning of *Electric Sunrise*, capturing its narrative of light, growth, and the boundless potential of a new day.

Excerpt 2

To effectively evoke clarity arising from the use of complex rhythms and to sustain a cohesive groove, I implemented practice strategies targeting rhythmic deconstruction and limb independence. Firstly, I broke down polyrhythmic structures with slow, focused repetition. Inspired by Troy Wright, drummer for Plini, I successfully studied his approach to precisely navigate complex time signatures. In the 13/8 sections, I grouped the eighth notes as 3+3+3+3+1 to align my ride cymbal with the guitar. As faster sixteenth-note subdivisions developed, I adopted Wright's interpretation of a 2/3 polyrhythmic feel, allowing me to effectively overlay two ride hits over each group of three eighth notes, while maintaining a steady quarter-note hi-hat pedal, creating a three-against-four texture. I practised slowly, gradually increasing to the original 276 BPM, which helped embed the complex groove in muscle memory. By using this technique while maintaining an offbeat feel across two bars with precise note placement, I could confidently complete phrases, knowing the groove would resolve on the third bar, and symbolising that while the beginning of a day may feel chaotic, consistency brings it into focus. The second technique was orchestrating limb independence to build layered grooves, which I successfully refined through reference to Troy Wright's live performances (Wright, 2019) and breakdown videos (Chontos, 2022). During the main grooves, I successfully arranged the kick to follow the 13/8 guitar rhythm, my right hand as overriding quarter notes on the trash cymbal, and my left hand to maintain a 4/4 half-time snare backbeat. To solidify this coordination, I committed to practising one hour daily, isolating each limb to reinforce timing and control. Although these parts don't mathematically align every bar, this strategy developed physical instinct, helping me maintain an effective balanced groove. At the same time, each limb operated in a different rhythmic space, symbolising the tension and release when navigating uncertainty with trust and patience.

References

Chontos, J. (2022). Electric Sunrise // Plini // Drum Lesson JARED CHONTOS.

Wright, T. (2019). Troy Wright - Live with Plini - NYC.

The following excerpts have been included to provide evidence of:

- the Applying technique criterion at 10 marks, as integral technical skills such as control of tone, intonation and ensemble skills are applied with understanding and command throughout the chosen repertoire
- the Interpreting music elements and concepts criterion at 8 marks, as an individualised interpretation of music elements and concepts is evident through the intentional, expressive shaping of stylistic phrasing
- the Communicating meaning criterion at 12 marks, as the performance statement examines performance choices, including the use of rubato and vibrato, expressing the intended meaning (Excerpt 2). These choices are then synthesised and sustained in the performance, communicating subtleties of despair, fragility and 'helplessly drifting along wind currents'
- the Evaluating best practice criterion at 5 marks. The reflective statement evaluates how integrating slow practice with filmed practice provided more objective self-assessment, demonstrating metacognition. References are provided to support the evaluation (Excerpt 3).

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s occurred throughout a response.

Excerpt 1

Video content: (3 min, 8 secs)

<https://youtu.be/FgXIBILOjw0>

Excerpt 2

My performance of Doppler's *Fantasie Pastorale Hongroise* aimed to highlight the expressive contrast and stylistic phrasing, conveying the vast complexities of emotion inherent in the Romantic era.

In Sections 1 and 3, I utilised rubato to evoke darkness and despair through slightly dragging on descending phrases and releasing on ascents. My choice of phrasing allowed me to highlight Doppler's Romantic idiom with dramatic flexibility and expressivity, demonstrating intentional shaping of tempo and dynamics. Simultaneously, I incorporate fast and shallow vibrato to bring a nuance of fragility. In section 2 of the piece, notes marked with tenuto are also played accented by slightly tonguing them to create the feeling of a falling feather helplessly drifting along wind currents. At bar 27, the demisemiquavers are played with an accelerating tempo as the scale ascends; then, as it descends, the tempo gradually slows. This creates feelings of welling tension before the climax at bar 28. In this section, the song breaks away from the 4th-5th octave and rises between the 6th and 7th. In this section, the notes are played with a sharper sounding tone and tight shimmering vibrato, enhancing the soaring intensity. Additionally, in high registers, I place my tongue at the bottom of my mouth as if I'm yawning to give the note a more resonant sound.

Excerpt 3

Also aiding my performance was practising each passage slowly before gradually speeding up the tempo. During these steps, the phrasing, dynamics, and clarity of each note during fast runs were refined, creating a quality performance. Slow practice and tempo management are also found to improve muscle memory development, solidify technical fluency and prevent mistakes (Allingham & Wöllner, 2022). While developing the piece slowly, I also record myself before progressing in tempo to gain an outside perspective on what I actually sound like and adjust accordingly to reach my creative vision. By doing so, I can also simulate performing and give myself immediate feedback when other people are not available (lynspiteri33, 2022).



External assessment

External assessment (EA) is developed and marked by the QCAA. The external assessment for a subject is common to all schools and administered under the same conditions, at the same time, on the same day. The external assessment papers and the external assessment marking guide (EAMG) are published in the year after they are administered.

Examination — extended response (25%)

Assessment design

The assessment instrument was designed using the specifications, conditions and assessment objectives described in the summative external assessment section of the syllabus. The examination consisted of one paper (45 marks).

The assessment required students to choose from two extended response questions with a specified stimulus. Questions were related to the cold of winter and intensity and/or freedom.

The stimulus included one main score-based and aural/visual work, which was designed to elicit an opportunity to demonstrate the assessment objectives. Two additional score-based and aural works were provided as reference only.

Assessment decisions

Assessment decisions are made by markers by matching student responses to the EAMG.

Effective practices

Overall, students responded well when they:

- responded to three key moments of their choice from the specified stimulus
- examined more than one music element and/or concept within each key moment
- evaluated how music elements and concepts were manipulated to convey the focus concept/s of the chosen question
- organised their response in key moments.

Practices to strengthen

When preparing students for external assessment, it is recommended that teachers consider:

- strategies to support students to
 - select key moments that allow them to show both depth and breadth of analysis. Each key moment should be appropriate in length to allow opportunity to provide a detailed examination that unpacks multiple aspects of music elements and concepts
 - examine music elements and concepts for the purpose of communicating meaning in an interconnected manner, rather than analysing each element discretely
 - articulate details, such as (but not limited to) chord names, scale degrees, notes (including octave numbers), note values and articulation markings
 - make insightful judgments about the manipulation of music elements and concepts that unpack layers of meaning from the concept/s identified in the question

- justify ideas by providing specific bar numbers or time codes from the score or recording, including the beat/s of the bar
- use planning strategies to logically structure responses in a familiar essay format
- use time management strategies to sustain the quality of the response.

Additional advice

- The external assessment objectives in the 2026 syllabuses have been revised to:
 - analyse music to examine and consider the constituent parts and relationships between music elements and concepts, and compositional devices
 - apply written literacy skills, using music terminology relevant to genre/style, and use language conventions to communicate ideas
 - evaluate the use of music elements and concepts, and compositional devices to justify a viewpoint.

Samples

Extended response

The following excerpts have been included to illustrate effective student responses in one or more of the syllabus assessment objectives.

Criterion: Examining music elements and concepts

Effective student responses:

- deconstructed multiple aspects of music elements and concepts accurately throughout each key moment
- consistently provided details such as naming notes (including octave numbers), chords, note values and articulation markings.

These excerpts have been included to demonstrate:

- detailed deconstruction of the use of the music elements of pitch, expressive devices and duration
- naming of specific articulation markings, note values, notes and chords. **Note:** The score did not include chord symbols.

Excerpt 1

The piece starts immediately with cello and piano playing F^3 and F^4 in unison to signify the beginning of winter. The delicate playing alongside piano (p) dynamics allows for the atmosphere to be created. ~~The~~ Cello ~~plays~~ utilises detached articulation (as written - détaché) to form a marching beat, symbolising the repetitive nature of this event and how we must prepare for the cold. In bar 2, F^2/F^1 is gently played to beautifully represent how ~~into~~ the darkness of winter creeps in slowly.

Excerpt 2

This begins with the modulation from F minor to D minor, achieved through the descending ~~one~~ B major appoggiato in bar 71 followed by the D minor appoggiato on the second ^{upright} D of the third ~~D~~ beat of the bar. This VII in F minor going to the new i of D minor sets the groundwork for the difficult journey to follow. Immediately in bar 72, the cello has repeated semiquavers and staccato quavers on a D5, ~~acting~~ followed by E b 5 falling to a G4 in bar 73.

Criterion: Examining relationships

Effective student responses:

- made connections between music elements and concepts in each instance
- made connections between the identified music elements and concepts for the purpose of finding meaning in relation to the chosen question.

These excerpts have been included to demonstrate:

- examination of multiple music elements and concepts, including articulation, melodic contour, timbre and tonality
- connections made for the purpose of finding meaning, linked to the question.

Excerpt 1

It is marked piano and détache, and in combination with the cello rising a minor third on the second dotted crotchet beat of the bar, it creates a harsh, yet ^{uneasy} ~~soothing~~ atmosphere.

Excerpt 2

To accentuate this feeling, the listener is given no room to breathe through constant, short melodic blocks passed between the piano and cello. These are ascending in contour, such as from ~~F#-A#-B#~~-A#-B# in the piano at bar 9, opening with bright timbre and follow the F minor Scale.

Criterion: Evaluating the use of music elements and concepts

Effective student responses:

- made thoughtful, considered judgments about the purpose of the examined music elements and concepts to communicate meaning. These judgments unpacked insightful layers of subtle meaning that extended beyond restating the meaning identified in the question.

These excerpts have been included to demonstrate:

- a judgment about the use of timbre and expressive devices to convey an isolated voice 'calling out in the cold wasteland', an insightful meaning drawn from 'the cold of winter' (Excerpt 1)
- judgments that reveal several layers of meaning extending from the concept of 'intensity' (Excerpt 2).

Excerpt 1

After

the lone piano establishes the frigid environment with the opening motif, tonic sustained, arco cello eases in with a crescendo from ppp in 28 to a noticeable but relatively soft mp. This conveys a lonely voice/figure calling out in the cold wasteland, isolated and at the whim of the environment.

Excerpt 2

The piano dynamic in the cello as well as its narrow range and smooth, stepwise contour create a sense of tightness, hinting at emotions of reservedness or anxiety.

This is further reinforced by the sequence's continuous return to the tonic F every beat, creating a heartbeat-like pulse that adds weight to the part and possibly representing ~~as~~ a weighing conscience or thoughts that won't go away.

Criterion: Justifying the use of music elements and concepts

Effective student responses:

- provided convincing examples from the score and/or recording to support their judgments, selecting the most suitable examples rather than examples that were only relevant
- provided specific bar numbers or time codes and beats of the bar throughout.

These excerpts have been included to demonstrate:

- the use of credible examples to support judgments relating to intensity, using both bar numbers (and beats of the bar) and time codes.

Excerpt 1

Bar 131 plays semiquavers but alternates to the next tone of the E minor arpeggio (Beat one is the tonic, beat two is median and beat three is the dominant). The use of the tonic arpeggio grounds the listener to the key so when the scalic passage in 132 and 133 occurs, the chromatic tones (D \sharp and C \sharp) are more intense.

Excerpt 2

Accompanying this cello melody is a piano which plays dissonant ascending ~~patterns~~ notes and chords. At 0:03 a G is played and held over two bars which creates a major second dissonant clash with the cello melody that is centered on an F. Previously at 0:00 the piano plays ^{successfully} an F, so this upwards movement to the G builds intensity.

Criterion: Expressing ideas

Effective student responses:

- thoughtfully synthesised information in a focused conclusion specific to each key moment that was clearly connected to the meaning in the question
- referred to the layers of meaning unpacked in their evaluation, rather than simply restating the question.

These excerpts have been included to demonstrate:

- a clear and logical conclusion for a key moment that synthesises the layers of meaning provided in the paragraph (Excerpt 1)
- a concluding paragraph that synthesises the conclusions of each key moment, clearly linked to music elements and concepts and the concept provided in the question (Excerpt 2).

Excerpt 1

Thus, through masterful manipulation of pitch, duration, and expressive devices, ^{The Piano Guys} ~~in their piano~~ successfully convey the cold of winter; a sense of frigidity, trembling, and the endurance of the isolating and seemingly endless cold of winter in bars 1-2.

Excerpt 2

Hence, all three key moments demonstrate powerful images of a cold ^{brutal} ~~brisk~~ winter through the effective manipulation of melody, tonality, duration and more. This is achieved through the uneasy atmosphere of key moment 1, the demanding journey in key moment 2, and the dramatic coda of key moment 3.

Criterion: Applying literacy skills

Effective student responses:

- were organised using recognised essay and paragraph structures to provide a sustained, cohesive flow of information
- responded in paragraphs for each key moment where the examination and evaluation of connected music elements and concepts was addressed chronologically, rather than separating music elements into discrete paragraphs.

This excerpt has been included to demonstrate:

- a clearly stated topic sentence that establishes the focus and purpose of the paragraph
- cohesive organisation of the examination and evaluation of connected music elements and concepts.

The first key moment of the piece, bars 1-2, successfully foregrounds the cold of winter; that is, a sense of frigidity, trembling, and the endurance of ~~the~~ ^{the} isolating and seemingly endless cold of winter through masterful manipulation of musical elements such as pitch, duration, and expressive devices. The opening of the piece begins with piano playing an octave F natural semibreve tied to another semibreve, establishing the F minor tonality of this opening section, and a ~~cellist~~ solo cellist. The cellist plays with 'détaché', or with ~~detachment~~ ^{at a piano dynamic} 'detachment', a quaver F natural followed by a quaver rest, then another F natural. This sense of detachment, ^{and separation,} combined with anticipation and delay in this opening melodic line, crafts a sense of frigidity and isolation associated with the cold of winter, foregrounded from the opening of the piece.