



2007 Music Group performance GA 3: Aural and Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the paper was consistent with the guidelines in the sample examination material on the VCAA website <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au> and comprised of a total of 103 marks apportioned across three sections. Students had to answer nine of the ten questions, with the option of responding to either Question 9 (Part-writing) or Question 10 (Improvisation) in Part C.

To achieve a high mark, students needed to achieve equal results across the areas of focus in Section A (Music Language and Aural perception). Many students were not able to do this due to errors in the use of basic notational skills. It was pleasing to note that responses to the 'music language' questions (Questions 1 and 3) of Section A continued to improve noticeably. Students' use of relevant terminology also improved from previous years, although there were still some significant problems in this area. A number of students used pen for their Section A answers; this is not advisable, especially for transcription tasks such as Questions 2, 4 and 5.

Examination Technique

Students who achieved high scores had clearly used the reading time well to consider and plan their responses, especially to questions in Sections B and C. Other students appeared not to have read the questions thoroughly, which impacted on their ability to focus their answers appropriately. Many students' responses were either 'generic' or directly relevant to questions found on previous papers, especially the 2006 exam. Such responses invariably did not answer the questions on this examination. It is strongly recommended that students do not attempt to 'second guess' what will be on the paper and/or prepare responses beforehand then attempt to 'reshape' them for the questions asked.

Many students planned their responses well; for example, through a series of key words linked by arrows, which helped jog their memory and keep them 'on task'. Many of the high-achieving students highlighted and/or underlined exactly what was required in each part of each question so that, once they had read and analysed the question, they only needed to re-read the highlighted/underlined components in order to present a succinct, salient, focused and well-organised response. Most of the stronger students used dot points for most responses, which assisted them in presenting clear, deliberate and cogent comments and arguments.

Teachers need to ensure that all students develop the required skills, irrespective of the instrument(s) they play or the music styles they have selected for performance, particularly in relation to aspects of key knowledge that are less familiar to them. For example, while singers might use their performance experience to write perceptively about characteristics of melody, they may need to spend time developing skills in learning and using music language associated with harmony, rhythm, articulation patterns and expressive devices. While drummers might be able to identify and describe features of rhythms easily and effectively, they may need to develop skills in analysing and describing characteristics of melodies, harmonies and textures. In the same way, guitarists who habitually use TAB may need to focus on developing skills in reading and writing pitch notation and single-line players may need to focus on identifying and analysing relationships between parts. Students who generally perform fully-notated music may need to develop their ability to identify and describe the role and relationship between composed and improvised elements of specific arrangements, such as embellishment or fills at the end of phrases or motifs that are derived from a melody and used as the basis for an improvised solo.

The most common areas of weakness included:

- a lack of sound theoretical knowledge, especially regarding the notes of scales set for study, the names of consecutive intervals in scales, the notes of chords and the qualities of chords, especially when presented aurally
- fundamental problems with the diatonic implications of tonalities, especially in harmony-supported and/or harmony-based contexts (see Questions 2 and 4)
- limited aural skills, including difficulty identifying tonic pitches and holding them 'in the ear', identifying intervals within a melodic context, and notating rhythms on their own and in melodies (pitch and rhythm), especially from within score-based settings (see Questions 2 and 5)
- limited ability to use the other (not-to-be-transcribed) parts of the printed score in transcription questions (see Questions 2 and 5) in order to optimise the likelihood of responding correctly
- confusion about the notes in chords, whether with or without 7ths, in both theoretical and aural contexts (see Questions 3 and 5)



- confusion about or misunderstanding of basic terminology, particularly ‘articulation’, ‘expressive devices’, ‘motifs’, ‘relationship between parts’, ‘texture’ and ‘tonality’. Many students approached issues of ‘dynamics’ from the perspective of ‘dynamism’, ‘liveliness’ or ‘energy’ rather than relative volume and/or volume-based relationships. Most students who wrote about ‘expressive devices’ placed them within the context of the use (or not) of electronic effects and/or digital audio processing devices. Limited understanding of ‘texture’ as a musical characteristic was evident in the majority of instances where students chose to write about textural aspects or considerations. These terms and concepts, which are taken directly from the study design (see the Appendix on pages 99–102), need to be defined and discussed and used more regularly in teaching and learning programs
- not using the reading time wisely, so that questions were not thoroughly understood and responses were not focused appropriately.

Students should:

- be aware of the requirements of various question types; for example, the requirements of ‘identify’, ‘describe’ and ‘discuss’. Only ‘identify’ allows students to simply name or make a list. ‘Describe’ requires the demonstration of **knowledge**, especially with respect to salient characteristics, components or elements. ‘Discuss’ requires the application of knowledge to demonstrate **understanding**, invariably demanding a higher level of insight. The relative marks available for each response type should provide an indication of the level of depth and/or breadth necessary
- respond to all required questions, even if only through a series of brief points. In 2007 about 13 per cent of students did not complete Section C, which had a detrimental effect on their overall score for the examination
- write all responses clearly and legibly. Students should use a fairly sharp pencil for Section A and aim to use accurate spelling and grammar when writing responses for Sections B and C
- avoid making value judgements and/or presenting their opinions about the study design and/or their teachers. Such responses often featured a viewpoint that students should not have to play pieces that they don’t like and/or don’t wish to play. This is not the appropriate forum for such comments and observations
- use the 15 minutes of reading time productively and ensure that they have read each question carefully.

Advice

When undertaking transcription questions, students are advised to do their rough work on the blank manuscript paper provided and then transfer a neat, legible copy of their final response to the space provided for the answer.

If students do their rough rhythmic transcription work using ‘stick notation’ (stems and flags without note heads) or slashes across lines representing rhythmic subdivisions/segments of each beat, they need to be very careful when they transfer their work across from the rough work page to the answer space. Often, a student’s rough copy was more accurate than the response on the staves provided for the answer. It is not advisable for students to write their final answer using stick notation unless it is perfectly clear at all times. Dotted rhythms, in particular, tend to become confused with this style of notation. In addition, the rhythmic transcription of many students who used stick notation was not internally consistent; that is, it moved around between the different notational styles that are in common usage. Students should use only one type of notation.

Students who have difficulty with precise, pitch-based notation (that is, the **exact** notes) in melodic transcriptions should still attempt to express the contour/shape of the melody, even if a line graph is used. Although this approach cannot result in full marks, marks may be awarded for a written expression of the melody’s relative contour. It is possible to gain marks for the melodic transcription question by notating the rhythm with complete accuracy and using a line graph to present a **precisely plotted** contour of the melody. Nevertheless, if students can plot contour precisely and transcribe rhythms accurately, they are advised to use proper, pitch-based notation in order to maximise their marks.

Where possible, students should have access to appropriate aural training software and a computer music sequencer, especially to program rhythms, chords and chord progressions for aural training (and perhaps improvisation training) and to realise their harmonisations (for those who select the part-writing option in Unit 4).

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

For each question, an outline answer (or answers) is provided. In some cases the answer given is not the only answer that could have been awarded marks.



Section A – Music Language and Aural perception

Part 1: Intervals, scales and melody

Question 1 – Music language – Scales and intervals

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	7	11	7	9	8	8	7	7	8	10	5	9	6	5.8

B Dorian

- scale notes: B – C# – D – E – F# – G# – A – B
- intervals: B – C# = Major 2nd; C# – D = minor 2nd; D – E = Major 2nd; E – F# = Major 2nd; F# – G# = Major 2nd; G# – A = minor 2nd; A – B = Major 2nd

G Minor pentatonic

- scale notes: G – Bb – C – D – F – G
- intervals: G – Bb = minor 3rd; Bb – C = Major 2nd; C – D = Major 2nd ; D – F = minor 3rd; F – G = Major 2nd

C Harmonic minor

- scale notes: C – D – Eb – F – G – Ab – B – C
- intervals: C – D = Major 2nd; D – Eb = minor 2nd; Eb – F = Major 2nd; F – G = Major 2nd; G – Ab = minor 2nd; Ab – B(natural) = Augmented 2nd; B – C = minor 2nd

To respond to this question successfully, students needed to know:

- the notes of the set scales
- how to label the consecutive intervals of the scales correctly
- how to identify both ‘quality and number’ for each interval
- that a pentatonic scale has only six notes (with the octave – which is necessary in order to label the last interval)
- that the minor pentatonic scale has two minor 3rd intervals: first note to second note (tonic to the 3rd) and fourth note to fifth note (5th to the 7th).

Students should avoid labelling minor 2nds and Major 2nds as ‘semitones’ and ‘tones’. ‘Semitones’ and ‘tones’ should not be used in this context as their use is not consistent with other interval types.

The interval between the 6th and 7th degrees in the harmonic minor scales (A-flat to B-natural in this instance) is an Augmented 2nd, not a minor 3rd. Enharmonics cannot be acceptable in this forum because it is crucial that students come to understand that two consecutive notes – A to B, B to C, C to D, etc. – are labelled as a ‘2nd’; notes that are three letter names apart (inclusive) – that is, A to C, B to D, C to E, etc. – are labelled as a 3rd, and so forth. Even though augmented 2nds and minor 3rds sound the same (at least in equal temperament), they are not the same interval and rarely have the same function when used in context.

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Question 2 – Aural perception – Melodic transcription

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	3	14	22	17	12	9	10	8	4	3.5

Flute

Guitar

Piano

D Am C G Em Bm Am C D

Bass

Many students had significant difficulty with this question, indicating that they needed more practise with melodic transcriptions in four-part contexts. Many students clearly did not understand the relationships between melody and harmony and did not use the notes or chords of the other parts to their advantage. The ability to read the notes in bass clef would almost certainly have been useful for many students, even if only to confirm that the all of the chords were in root position when they were sounded (beats one and three in bars one to three and beats one, two and three in bar four).

Many students were not able to recognise the three intervals greater than a second: the downbeat crotchet to the semiquaver on beat two of bar two to be transcribed (bar three of the excerpt); the ascending minor 3rd ('E' to 'G'); and the last three notes of bar two of the transcription – the ascending and descending Major 3rds ('D' to 'F#' to 'D'). In addition, some students wrote intervals as large as a 5th, and sometimes more than one of these.

Students also needed to ensure that the durations of the notes in each bar added up to what was required by the 'four-four' time signature. Some students wrote all crotchets, all minims, or notes indicating 'four-two' as the time signature. Many students notated only the rhythm of the melody. Some drew its general contour as a simple line graph across the staff, often without note heads. To achieve high marks, it is not advisable to use this method.

The most common areas of weakness included:

- a limited understanding of the notes in chords and the direct relationships between melody, diatonic harmony and scales/tonalities
- a limited awareness of the characteristics of logical melodic structures and/or intervallic function in melodic contexts
- weak intervallic skills, especially when the melody was not moving by step, particularly in the second bar to be transcribed
- a limited awareness of rhythmic issues and/or an inability to transcribe rhythms in common (4–4) time
- limited (or no) use of the guitar part (in steady quavers) to establish placement of notes regarding durations, and to 'unpack' and place syncopations
- not answering the question in a systematic way; for example, rather than attempting to notate pitch and rhythm simultaneously, one note at a time, students could try to notate the entire rhythm first.



One successful approach to answering this melodic transcription question could have been:

- noting that the excerpt was in 'D Mixolydian'. The chord progression, in particular, made this abundantly clear, especially the 'minor dominant' (v – A minor) and the 'Major sub-tonic' (VII – C Major) chords
- establishing which notes of the melody to be transcribed were missing across the parts in order to confirm that the transcribed note completes the harmony as notated (see, for example, the 'G' on beat two of the first bar to be transcribed and the 'G' on beat two of the second bar to be transcribed, both of which 'completed' the notated chords under them – the 'C Major' and 'E minor' sonorities, respectively, of the piano part)
- using the notes of the guitar part, especially to confirm, for example, the 'D' of beat three of the first bar to be transcribed and all of the notes from beat two to the end of the second bar to be transcribed.

Part 2: Harmony

Question 3 – Music language – Structure of chords

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	19	16	16	24	25	2.2

- First chord: F minor – 'F', 'Ab', 'C'
- Second chord: A-flat Major 7 – 'Ab', 'C', 'Eb', 'G'
- Third chord: F-sharp half diminished (m7/b5) – 'F#', 'A', 'C', 'E'
- Fourth chord: B-flat suspended 4 – 'Bb', 'Eb', 'F'

Many students did not know (or could not write) the notes in these chords. Many seemed to be confused about chords with 7ths. To answer this question, students needed to know:

- the fundamentals of how chords are constructed, what comprises them and how they differ
- the intervallic and structural characteristics of all chords prescribed for study in order to be able to write them accurately above given tonics
- the notes that comprise the keys from which the chords are taken. For example, a large number of answers for the (Bb) 'suspended 4' chord did not include the flat for the 'E' and some students did not add a flat to the 'A' of the F minor chord; hence it was Major, not minor
- the notes that comprise the (F#) 'half diminished (m7/b5)' chord. For example, the 7th of the chord (a minor 7th – a Major 2nd below the octave) was often very confused. It was common for a (fully) diminished 7 chord (with an 'Eb') and occasionally a diminished chord with a Major 7th (an 'E#') or a 'diminished octave' (an 'F-natural') to be written.

In addition, some students presented inverted chords; that is, they wrote notes below the given notes. This was only accepted if all of the notes of the particular chord were correct, which was very rare.

A number of students wrote all of the chords on **both** staves. Sometimes they were all correct, but sometimes the lower (bass) staff was dealt with as if it was in treble clef so answers were very confused (especially the second, third and fourth chords, where these students attempted to write 'Fb Major 7', 'D# half diminished' and 'Gb sus 4' sonorities).

Following is an outline of one efficient way of teaching how to write the various chord types prescribed for study.

- Primary Triads: two have major thirds and two have minor thirds. The two with major thirds have a perfect 5th ('Major') or an Augmented 5th ('Augmented'). The two with minor thirds have a perfect 5th ('minor') or a diminished 5th ('diminished').
- Suspended 4 chords have no third. They have the note a Perfect 4th above the tonic (root) note and the note a Perfect 5th above the tonic (root) note.
- Thorough understanding of the key signatures for all tonic (root) notes is often useful, especially to check for the correct 3rd, (4th) and 5th of the particular chord.
- Regarding chords with 7ths: for chords that have just a '7', it is the note a 'minor 7th' above the tonic (root) note. If not, the '7' will be preceded by either 'Major' (or a symbol denoting this) or 'diminished' (or a symbol denoting this). So:
 - a 'Major 7' chord is a Major chord (triad) with a 'Major 7th'
 - a 'minor 7' chord is a minor chord (triad) with a 'minor 7th'
 - a 'Dominant 7' chord is a Major chord (triad) with a 'minor 7th'
 - a 'half diminished (m7/b5)' chord is a diminished chord (triad) with a 'minor 7th'

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- a (full) ‘diminished 7’ chord is a diminished chord (triad) with a ‘diminished 7th’ (aurally a Major 6th, but must be written as a 7th because these sonorities are based upon rules of ‘tertian’, not ‘quartal’ or ‘secundal’, harmony – that is, ‘standard’ sonorities that are constructed in 3rds)
- a minor chord with a Major 7th is called a ‘minor/Major 7’ (not prescribed for study)
- an Augmented chord with a minor 7th is an ‘Augmented 7’ (not prescribed)
- an Augmented chord with a Major 7th is an ‘Augmented/Major 7’ (not prescribed)
- a chord with a Major 3rd, a diminished 5th and a minor 7th is called a ‘(Dominant) 7/flat 5’ (not prescribed).

Question 4 – Aural perception – Recognition of a chord progression

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	8	22	16	8	7	4	11	24	3.6

1. D minor 2. Bb Major7/ Bb maj7/ BbΔ7/ BbM7/Bb⁽⁺⁷⁾ 3. E diminished/Edim/E^o 4. A (Major)

or

1. *i/I* (D) minor 2. VI maj 7/VI^{Δ7}/VI⁽⁺⁷⁾ 3. *ii dim/ii^o/II dim./II^o* 4. V

or

Harmonic Grid

	1.	2.	3.	4.
Bass Note	D	Bb	E	A
Character/ Quality/Type	minor	Major 7	diminished	Major

The progression could only be selected from those prescribed for study and those with four chords were printed on the paper. The progression was in a minor key (so perhaps slightly more difficult); however, it was disappointing to note the low mean score for this question.

If the first chord of the progression was correctly identified as being minor, the number of progressions from which to choose was then reduced to four. If any of the bass notes were correctly ascertained with reference to the tonic note (whether the submediant, the supertonic or the dominant), the number of options was reduced to only two. If the penultimate bass note was identified as that of the supertonic, the answer was clear. Students might then have listened for the (major) 7th of the submediant (second) chord to verify that the answer was indeed the I – VI maj 7 – ii dim – V progression printed on the page. Alternatively, they might have listened for the submediant major 7 chord a step earlier in the process to glean the solution even more quickly.

The following three issues were common in many students’ answers.

- A large number of answers did not relate to the symbols of the progressions from which the answer was to be selected, probably indicating that a high percentage of students did not know what the Roman numbers of the chord progression represented.
- A number of students put the mediant (F or F# in the bass) or supertonic (E in the bass) as their second chord, even though none of the eight possible answers had either III+/iii or ii/ii^o as the second chord of the progression.
- Many students identified non-diatonic bass notes, commonly leading on to the labelling of non-diatonic chords; that is, chords not from D minor, or even D Major.

Some students answered using two or more of the answering methods, often resulting in contradictions. Students should use the blank manuscript paper provided in the examination booklet for their rough working out and then transfer their answers to their preferred and/or most appropriate method of response – the lines **or** the grid – **not both**. The question requires that the answer be written in one of three places, only. Simply circling a chord progression from the list given does not fulfil this requirement.



Part 3: Rhythm

Question 5 – Aural perception - Transcription of rhythms

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	9	14	15	13	9	8	8	10	14	3.9

Trumpet

Alto sax

Bass

Snare drum

The image shows four staves of musical notation. The top staff is for Trumpet (treble clef, key signature of one sharp, 3/4 time). The second staff is for Alto sax (treble clef, key signature of one sharp, 3/4 time). The third staff is for Bass (bass clef, key signature of one sharp, 3/4 time). The bottom staff is for Snare drum (percussion clef, 3/4 time). The notation includes various rhythmic figures such as crotchets, quavers, and dotted quavers, with some figures appearing in unison across multiple instruments.

The mean score for this question was disappointing. Students appeared to have difficulty simply because the excerpt was in ‘three–four’ time. A series of problems were consistently evident.

- Many students did not have a total of three crotchet beats in one or both of the relevant two bars. Indeed, most commonly they had four crotchet beats.
- Some students did not attempt to divide their response into two bars of three beats each.
- Some students lost track of the pulse, which resulted in all manner of oddities.
- Many students had trouble with syncopations on the third beat of both bars, especially the third beat of the first bar to be transcribed. This was despite it being presented in rhythmic unison by the trumpet. Regarding the third beat of the second bar to be transcribed, many students appeared not to realise that the ‘tim-ka’ (dotted-quaver/semiquaver) figure was presented on beat one of the bar by both the alto saxophone and the bass guitar (by at least one instrument on beat one of bars one, two **and** three).
- A number of students wrote the ‘tika-tika’ (four semiquavers) figures (beat one of bar one to be transcribed, from the alto sax, and beat two of bar two to be transcribed, from the trumpet) incorrectly, despite the ongoing pattern (with four semiquavers on beat one of all four bars) from the snare drum. Similar comments relate to the ‘ti-tika’ (quaver/two semiquavers) figure on beat two for the alto sax and the ‘ti-ti’ (two quavers) figure on beat one for the trumpet.
- Many students did not recognise that every rhythmic figure to be transcribed appeared somewhere else in the excerpt, and most of them appeared more than twice.
- Many students ‘augmented’ the rhythm (often inconsistently) such that their transcription was primarily in a kind of ‘three-two’ time (mostly crotchets and quavers, sometimes minims and crotchets) and/or entirely as crotchets. Hence the alto sax bar sometimes had 10 crotchets and the trumpet bar had eight. Presumably, these students were using crotchets exclusively to indicate the number of sounds that they heard, not their durational or temporal differences.
- Although marks were not lost directly, many students did not use common notation conventions such as groupings of beats with two or more sounds (that is, every figure to be transcribed). It was clear that a significant percentage of students continued to be very weak with basic skills of rhythmic notation.

Generally, students who aligned their answers vertically (to the rhythms of the other parts) achieved higher marks. Although not imperative, this approach helps students overcome several of the problems identified above, especially



pulse-related matters. It was clear that some students needed much more practise with rhythms presented in four-part contexts.

Part 4: Characteristics of a pre-recorded work

Question 6 – Aural perception and evaluation of the characteristics of a pre-recorded work

Question 6a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	13	19	68	1.6

The structure is a binary song form (verse/chorus) with an introduction and instrumental break; that is, Introduction – (extended) verse – chorus – instrumental break.

Question 6b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	16	35	31	16	2.4

Melody

- simple, repeated phrase from piano with a narrow range (the last one is altered at the end)
- the phrase is part of the rhythmic ‘groove’

Rhythm

- syncopated rock groove (snare on two and the ‘a’ (fourth semiquaver) of two, and on four)
- kick drum on one and the ‘and’ (second quaver) of three
- the bass line is often ‘across’ the kick drum part, especially in the first two bars of the first phrase - both syncopated and ‘straight’

Harmony

- the harmonic progression is created by the bass part
- inversions and moving lines from bass
- the second piano delivers harmonic ‘shaping’, fairly sparse, sometimes lines suggesting chords (but include suspensions), sometimes light chords

Tonality

- B minor
- (root) progression: Bm – A – G – D / Bm – A – G – G / Bm – A – G – D / Bm – A – Em – G

Texture

- fairly sparse
- polyphonic in character; that is, it is more ‘horizontal’ than ‘vertical’ (not block-chord homophony)

Expressive devices

- repetition is used as an expressive device, which creates a hypnotic effect
- narrow pitch range
- accent on the first beat of each bar (especially the first beat of the excerpt)
- piano parts are dominant
- features ‘understatement’ from the pitched instruments

A large number of students made a good effort at describing the characteristics of this segment. Students who gained high marks expressed their observations in appropriate music language. Most students wrote about two of the dot points and, as might be expected, the greatest number of students focused their attention on melody and rhythm. Some students wrote about three or four of the dot points, which was acceptable. Students who dealt with all of the dot points or attempted to describe too many characteristics for each probably used valuable time that could have been better spent on other questions, especially given that the question was worth only four marks.

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Question 6c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	1	2	9	27	29	19	12	3.9

Piano

- presents ornament(s)/embellishment(s)
- syncopated, broken sonorities leading to light triad (generally ‘outlining’)
- a reminder of the approach in the introduction – a kind of unifying role

Violins one and two

- present the melodic phrase (albeit simple)
- split to a more vertical or harmonised scoring towards the end, which features an ascending line

Viola

- presents the melodic phrase with the violins in the first section of the excerpt
- continues the melody after the ‘split’

’Cello

- harmonic underpinning with melodic elements
- motion drives the excerpt forward, particularly in the earlier section of the excerpt
- featured in the crescendo at the end

(Reverse-gated) electric guitar and (reverse-gated cymbal)

- dramatic effect
- crescendos into the next section (students did not hear the next section)

A large number of students did not truly ‘describe’ the role or function of their selected instruments; that is, they did not demonstrate adequate knowledge and/or awareness of the selected instrument’s purpose within the excerpt. Students should be encouraged to learn about the roles of instruments and instrumental parts within musical ensembles as this is critical to developing an understanding of virtually all music in ensemble settings.

Many students gave generic answers; for example, they described the role of a piano in an ensemble (harmonic ‘beds’, counter melodies, arpeggios, etc.) rather than the role of the piano in this **particular** work. Students who referred to how the chosen instruments related to other the instruments in the segment tended to gain higher marks, even though the question did not require this approach.

A number of students wrote about only one instrument, usually just ‘the strings’ or synthesiser. Dealing with the strings as a single instrument was accepted, but many of these students did not deal with the piano (or anything else) as a second instrument.

Question 6d.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	3	5	7	12	16	18	19	12	8	4.8

	Verse	Chorus
Melody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivered by the vocalist • limited register • features phrase repetition – both melodically and rhythmically • introspective in character – almost speech-like • contour is generally downwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • likewise delivered by the vocalist • higher register • more leaps, which are a feature • contour doesn’t go below the tonic note
Rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drums use the ‘feel’ outlined above (syncopated snare and ‘uncommon’ kick placement) • bass has more sustain • guitar is fairly understated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bass is more ‘rhythmical’ and busy • drum feel is essentially the same – more use of hi-hat coupled with ‘ringing-semiquavers’ chords from the guitar



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> harmonic rhythm of the piano is fairly subdued, supporting/underpinning the crotchet and minim chords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> piano is somewhat busier, but nevertheless comparatively subdued
Tonality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B minor: essentially as per the introduction: Bm – A – G – G / Bm – A – G – D / Bm – A – G – G / Bm – A – Em – G 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Major: progression: A – G – D – D / A – G – D / F# – G / A – G – D – D / A – G – D / F# – G /
Expressive devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocals are comparatively introspective lower register softer and with more elements of the ‘lachrymose’ (sighing/crying) more sliding and bending between notes in this section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocals are more dynamic and declamatory, and louder open hi-hats and ringing guitar make the segment sound more ‘heroic’
Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not overly dense, although not sparse (rhythmic) homophony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> noticeably more active and texturally dense (rhythmic) homophony

Most students attempted to address the differences between the sections of the segment (the verse and the chorus), as per the requirements of the question. Although there were some outstanding answers to this question, it was often poorly handled, especially by students who dealt with elements other than melody and rhythm. Future students are advised to focus their responses only on elements that they are very familiar with.

Following are some issues which were observed in students’ responses.

- Melody was dealt with fairly well. A high percentage of students who wrote about this element addressed more sophisticated and relevant melodic considerations, both with respect to pure (linear) melody and more subtle aspects related to vocal delivery styles, registers and timbral characteristics.
- For the most part, rhythm also was dealt with well. Assessors noted, however, that a large percentage of students presented their responses on rhythm as if the drummer was the only person dealing with the issue. This limited their scope significantly.
- Tonality was usually dealt with as if students were describing the differences of either the timbre or the nature/quality/mood of the sections of the segment (verse and chorus) and/or the singer’s voice. In other words, these students wrote about the ‘tone’ or ‘mood’ of the music (for example, ‘What is the tone of the writing?’), as if dealing with a poem and/or the tonal or ‘quality of tone’ characteristics of the singer (the timbre, emotional inflection, nuances, etc.). This second consideration was acceptable (see melody, above), but it should not have been presented under the heading ‘tonality’, as it is not an issue of tonality, but rather an issue of characteristics or qualities of tone, essentially timbre or vocal texture.
- Many of the students who described alterations to the timbre (or quality/nature) of the vocals (commonly under the heading of ‘expressive devices’) did so very well. Descriptions of expressive devices, however, were often focused on electronic devices (pedals, effects, etc.), which were not abundant in the segment. Comments such as, ‘there weren’t really any expressive devices’ were often seen. If students believe that there isn’t much (or anything) to write about one of the dot points, then they shouldn’t write about it. In addition, these students’ understanding of the given term/element/dot point is probably not correct, as questions are not set if it is believed that there is insufficient material in the excerpt for students to write about.
- Texture was usually interpreted in terms of ‘rough’, ‘smooth’, ‘thick’, ‘thin’, etc. This was acceptable. Unfortunately, a very high percentage of students wrote that one part of the segment (verse or chorus) was thicker, smoother, rougher, etc. than the other, which does not constitute a description and could not be awarded high marks. A description requires more than the identification of differences of quality, type or nature.

Students must have a sound knowledge and a good understanding of the terminology set for study in order to answer questions such as this. In particular, all elemental terms (‘melody’, ‘rhythm’, ‘harmony’, ‘tonality’, ‘texture’, ‘structural characteristics’, ‘role of instruments’ and ‘expressive devices’) must be well understood prior to this examination. For descriptions of the terms related to this question, students and teachers are referred to pages 47 and 56 of the study design as well as the ‘Appendix – Music performance’ found on pages 99–102.



Section B – Aspects of performance

As part of their responses, students were asked to provide information about two works they had prepared for performance and/or performed; the instrumentation, including voice(s), of their group or ensemble; its general style; and one type of venue at which their group had presented a performance. Some students did not provide much, if any, of this information. The information is requested to familiarise assessors with the nature of the ensemble, especially its repertoire, general style/genre and instrumentation, and the type(s) of performance difficulties or scenarios that the given ensemble might be likely to experience. In some instances, this information is essential for assessors to make valid judgements about responses to the questions and, therefore, it is important that the information be given. Students need to be reminded **not** to identify by name the members of their group, the school hall and/or the location of the performance venue. In addition, students **must** identify two **contrasting** works. Not doing so compromises a student's ability to answer some of the questions. This consideration has particular bearing on questions where the preparation and/or performance of 'convincing stylistic performances' form the basis, focus, intention and/or infrastructure of the question.

Section B focuses upon the whole of Outcome 2 of Unit 3 of the study design. Generally, responses to both Questions 7 and 8, but particularly Question 7, were noticeably better presented than in previous years.

Question 7 – Aspects of performance – Presentation of and preparation for performance

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	2	1	3	4	6	9	12	15	14	10	11	7	5	7.2

Students needed to establish a link between each of the relevant styles and the performance techniques used to realise the stylistic characteristics.

Descriptions may have incorporated some of the following considerations:

- ornaments and embellishments
- pitch and tuning issues (for example, microtones, scordatura and 'drop' tunings)
- bends, multi-phonics
- doubling (or not) of lines
- use of improvisation (if appropriate)
- use of effects (sound enhancement/alteration devices such digital delay, reverb, echo, distortion and overdrive)
- relevant analytical considerations essentially unique to the style
- comparative role/prominence of instruments/voice(s) at given times
- experimentation with different interpretative emphases
- use of mutes and other sound reduction devices (if an appropriate balance could not be attained).

There were some excellent responses to this question, indicating that students had spent time working through issues and considerations relevant to the realisation of various characteristics of their selected style of work. Students who answered this question well focused upon the issue of how their ensemble prepared and performed convincing stylistic performances of **both** of the works identified. These excellent responses made it clear that the respondents knew exactly what constituted convincing/authentic/correct interpretations and then went on to explain, in the language of music and musicianship, exactly how their ensemble achieved the desired outcomes. This resulted in some very fine discussions of interpretation, stylistic nuance, instrumental performance techniques, approaches to arranging, and so on.

Unfortunately, a number of students did not perform particularly well on this question. Most of the difficulties experienced by these students seemed to do with an inability to explain the stylistic characteristics of the works (what exactly constitutes funk, hip-hop, soul, reggae, etc.), often coupled with an inability to describe or explain – especially using musical language and concepts – the applied (preparatory and performance) processes undertaken by their ensemble to achieve convincing stylistic performances. Given that this capability is a major component of the study design, perhaps greater emphasis upon it is needed throughout the teaching and learning.

Other issues in students' responses included the following.

- Some students left Questions 7 and 8 blank but had completed the information requested on page 14. No marks were awarded for doing so.
- The key words '**how**' and '**you**' were apparently not considered by a significant percentage of students, who made broad, generic comments about their group's performance techniques. These students often focused their responses on stagecraft and visual performance presentation issues. This was acceptable, provided their response referred to at **least two** of the dot points. Unfortunately, often this did not occur.



- Many students discussed rehearsal techniques (both group and individual) without getting to the essence of the question: the notion of preparing and performing convincing stylistic performances. Reciting one's rehearsal diary (assuming one was kept) **might** be a good start to answering this question, but only if the diary included the preparation and performance of convincing stylistic performances as one of its learning domains.
- Many students did not deal at all with the issue of stylistic performances.
- Many students wrote about only one of their chosen works and/or only one of the dot points.
- Some students tried to address all four dot points for both works. For a handful of students this approach resulted in truly outstanding responses. However, in many other instances it was not very successful and, in either case, almost certainly would have expended a disproportionate amount of writing time.

Question 8 – Aspects of performance – Performance environment

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	1	4	6	13	15	16	14	15	7	5	5.8

Optimising the performance with relation to issues regarding acoustic properties and outcomes was the most important element of this question. Strong responses established a link between the evaluation, the process and the outcome.

Issues other than the dot points that students could use included:

- structural materials
- seating capacity of the performance space
- 'fly-space' above a proscenium stage
- use of graphic (or parametric) equalisation
- intonation and tuning
- use of acoustic baffles to try to eliminate down resonant frequencies, false accentuation of frequencies and timbres
- use of sound enhancement/alteration devices (for example, digital delay, reverb, echo, distortion and overdrive)
- changing instruments (especially electric rather than acoustic guitar or bass)
- mutes
- tempo alterations
- balance
- use and/or selection of microphones.

Responses to this question ranged from extremely good answers that demonstrated excellent understanding of a range of sound production and/or sound reinforcement considerations, to vague and unconvincing comments. The very best responses almost always presented a brief technical evaluation of salient acoustic properties within the performance venue and then went on to deal specifically with the issues, at least one of which was selected from the three dot points given. Many students demonstrated appropriate knowledge of the acoustic properties of the instruments and/or sound reinforcement equipment (especially amplifiers) within their ensemble and how this knowledge might be used to optimise the performance environment. Some students skilfully described their experimentation with technology and/or the positioning of instruments, equipment and/or performers within their ensembles, again with the clear purpose of optimising the sound production of the performance. Most importantly, excellent responses showed that the optimisation task had been undertaken and completed both competently and thoroughly.

Following is a list of several of the common problems experienced by students.

- A significant number of students wrote about both of their nominated works for Question 8, despite the instruction clearly stating that students were to write about **one** of the works.
- Many students did not provide enough detail about any of the issues discussed.
- Often it was unclear exactly what was being written about. There was a lot of 'stream of consciousness' style of writing, which was frequently without substance and lacking in focus.
- Many students attempted to write about all three of the dot points. This was not a requirement, and frequently one or more of the dot points did not fit the nature of their ensemble very well and/or the student did not know very much about the particular dot point. The statement 'In your response consider at least one of the following' meant exactly that. Also, if students chose to write about more than the minimum number of issues or considerations (which is often a good idea), the extra issues did not have to be selected from the dot points provided – other issues and/or considerations could be introduced and written about. Students simply had to address **at least one** of the dot points.



- Many students identified and described the acoustic aspects of the space within which they had performed but failed to go on and deal with how their group sought ‘to ensure effective sound production and/or sound reinforcement for (their) performance’. Hence, these students did not address the question; they simply told assessors that they had done what they were meant to do (that is, they evaluated the acoustic properties of the performance venue, as per the study design). As mentioned above, the very best responses took this approach, but then they proceeded to answer the question, rather than stopping at an evaluation of acoustic properties.
- Some students identified difficulties or issues to be addressed but did not describe them in sufficient breadth or depth. A lot of responses were very short and contained virtually no explanation; for example, ‘we used a PA and foldback wedges so that we could hear ourselves’. This answer is not really a description, nor does it give an indication of how the use of a PA and monitors would ensure **effective** sound production and/or sound reinforcement for the performance. The notion of **how** or **why** the equipment was used and the nature of its relationship to the performance space also needed to be dealt with.
- Many students who wrote about ‘placement of equipment’ spent too much time describing the equipment itself without actually answering the question.
- A high percentage of students identified and wrote about the venue for their GA 2 performance assessment. Although this is acceptable, it may not be wise, unless their performance was at their home school and/or presented in a space which they had already evaluated thoroughly. The selection of that particular performance space tended to make it difficult for students to both demonstrate that the venue’s evaluation had been done very thoroughly and mount a convincing argument that the necessary experimentation and real-time analysis required ‘to ensure effective sound production and/or sound reinforcement for (the) performance’ could have been accomplished in the time available prior to the examination itself. Although these things are possible – and no doubt many of the students indeed did an evaluation of their exam venue, as they should – their ability to present a response with sufficient breadth and depth was almost certainly compromised by the speed at which the evaluative work would have needed to be done during the set-up and sound check time prior to the performance assessment itself. This evaluative task (and the related aspects of Area of Study 2 of Unit 3) is intended to provide students with practise and experience in evaluating acoustic properties of performance venues with a view to enhancing any performance, but especially their performance exam. It is not intended that they should undertake this particular Area of Study alongside and/or as an element of their GA 2 performance assessment.
- A high percentage of responses clearly had been prepared beforehand. Almost invariably these responses would have been good for some of the questions from previous exams, but almost always failed to answer this particular question very well.

Students and teachers are directed to Area of Study 2 of Unit 3 of the study design and the key knowledge and key skills of Outcome 2 (see pages 45–6 of the study design). The Area of Study states that ‘the performance conditions students are likely to encounter are also considered’ and ‘students *evaluate* the venues, instruments and equipment they will use, along with their own performance strategies, thus determining ways to utilise the performance environment to its best advantage’. In order to address questions about these matters successfully, students must evaluate/analyse and, often, proffer solutions that demonstrate awareness of the issues and the need to develop strategies to solve the perceived problems; ensure effective sound production/sound reinforcement; and/or optimise performance(s).

Section C – Part-writing or Improvisation

Question chosen	0	9	10
%	13	49	38

Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	22	4	8	10	13	10	15	10	7	3.7

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	36	24	40	1.1

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	24	3	7	8	10	8	8	8	8	5	5	3	3	4.6

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This year, the overall standard of responses from Part-writing (Question 9) students and Improvisation (Question 10) students was very similar. In fact, for the first time since these areas of study have been included in the study design and examined, results for the Improvisation students were slightly higher than those for the Part-writing students. The mean score for the Improvisation option was 10.9 out of 22, while the mean score for Part-writing was 10.4 out of 22. For the most part, students of both options demonstrated reasonable insight into a sufficient number of the aspects that they were asked to identify, describe or discuss. It was disappointing to note the high percentage of students who did not attempt this section (100 students, or 13 per cent).

Section C requires students to provide an in-depth description or discussion of exactly what they have done and/or how they have done it. Many students did not complete the information requested at the beginning of the question. A number of students indicated that they had not studied characteristics of arrangements or (to a lesser extent) characteristics of improvisations, despite these being specific requirements of Area of Study 2 and Outcome 2 of Unit 4 (see pages 52–54 of the study design). Questions in this section of the examination are intended to verify the teaching and learning of the School-assessed Coursework (SAC) related directly to Outcome 2 of Unit 4.

As in previous years, a number of students wrote answers that clearly had been prepared beforehand and were more appropriate responses to somewhat similar questions from previous examinations. Students must analyse the components of the question, establish precisely what is required and address the components directly with respect to the demands of the task(s) – it is almost always obvious when answers have been prepared beforehand.

Generally speaking, questions are constructed in order to allow students to write about what they have actually done. With reference to questions such as 9c. and 10c., at least one of the three dot points had to have been dealt with by all students, at least at some level. Subsequently, questions such as these allow students to write about a second technique that **they** did when ‘developing and realising (their own) harmonisation’ or ‘realising (their own) improvisation’. Attempts to ‘push’ a response into a list of dot points almost invariably resulted in weak responses and/or an impression that the student did not deal with and/or address the particular dot point about which they are writing. Students should not attempt to write about anything that they have not done and hence probably do not really understand.

Question 9 – Part-writing

Question 9a.

The following list of broad characteristics could have comprised the basis of descriptive responses.

Melody

- contour
- range
- sonic position (tessitura)
- instrumental combinations to create different tone colours, densities and/or sonic effects
- issues related to instrumental ‘doubling’
- contrary versus parallel motion between parts, both in the same register and in different registers
- stepwise (conjunct)/leaping (disjunct) motion
- the general and specific interrelationships between melody, harmony and rhythm

Harmony

- consistent/regular changes of harmonies
- chordal ostinati
- harmonic cycles created via the use of additive rhythms
- extended segments (phrases) with regular or irregular subdivisions
- multiple rhythmic strata aligned to harmonic ‘macro events’
- harmonic density (for example, how many instruments should deliver the chords? Is there a point that might be reached where there are too many chording instruments involved?)

Rhythm

- syncopation
- variation
- polyrhythm
- additive
- motivic

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- phrase relationships (balanced and unbalanced)
- the use of different inversions in the chording instruments in order to ‘spread’ the sonority across registers
- the ‘groove’; the role of rhythm and the ‘rhythm section’ (if used)

Relationship between parts

- parallel harmonisation
- contrary motion
- conjunct versus disjunct motion
- polyphony
- direct imitation
- call and response
- homophony
- ‘free-part’ style
- heterophony (for example, simultaneous variation)

The very best responses made it clear that an analysis of the characteristics of arrangements had been thoroughly and appropriately completed, with an obvious emphasis on the aspects and/or components of arrangements that are mandated from within the Area of Study. However, a significant percentage of students did not demonstrate adequate knowledge of arrangement characteristics and/or techniques; hence students could not describe relevant issues with much detail or appropriate depth. Disturbingly, many students confirmed this by writing comments such as ‘we never did this’ on their examination scripts. It is essential that the study design be read, analysed and understood (by students **and** teachers) in order to maximise results for this examination.

A reasonable percentage of students wrote about their own works. Some students managed to link their own harmonisation/arrangement back to the question successfully; however, many students who adopted this approach could not. In addition, studying one’s own arrangement characteristics and/or approaches to arranging music is not an altogether appropriate approach to learning about arranging or how to arrange.

Although a large percentage of students scored well on this question, shallow answers were fairly common. Many responses, although not incorrect, were superficial and/or very obvious, and frequently failed to demonstrate much knowledge or understanding of either arrangement characteristics and/or the discipline of arranging. For example, simply stating that ‘the melody is above the harmony’ and ‘the rhythm is swung’ was not a sufficient response. Although these are characteristics of an arrangement and deal with two of the dot points from the question, they are simple identifications, not descriptions, and could not be awarded high marks.

Question 9b.

Most students responded reasonably well to this identification question; however, some students had trouble writing about the melody that **they** harmonised. Indeed, some students gave the impression that they had not actually done the arrangement because they could not describe even two features or characteristics of the melody that they harmonised to create their arrangement. This observation was particularly clear in the many responses where students presented non sequiturs, dealt with contradictory concepts and/or processes and/or used contradictory terminology.

Question 9c.

Following is a list of issues/considerations, other than those given on the paper, upon which students could focus.

Basic arrangement techniques

- instrumental combinations to create different tone colours, densities and/or sonic effects
- issues related to instrumental ‘doubling’
- contrary versus parallel motion between parts, both in the same register and in different registers
- harmonic density (for example, how many instruments should deliver the chords? Is there a point that might be reached where there are too many chording instruments involved?)
- the use of different inversions in the chording instruments in order to ‘spread’ the sonority across registers
- the ‘groove’; the role of rhythm and the ‘rhythm section’ (if used)
- the general and specific interrelationships between melody, harmony and rhythm

Relationship between parts

- parallel harmonisation

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- contrary motion
- conjunct versus disjunct motion
- polyphony
- direct imitation
- call and response
- homophony
- 'free-part' style
- heterophony (for example, simultaneous variation)

Harmonic rhythm

- consistent/regular changes of harmonies
- chordal ostinati
- harmonic cycles created via the use of additive rhythms
- extended segments (phrases) with regular or irregular subdivisions
- multiple rhythmic strata aligned to harmonic 'macro events'

Voice leading

- Particularly with instrumental or vocal arrangements where voice leading was an issue, such responses should have given some consideration to the use of non-traditional consecutive intervals (particularly 5ths and octaves). This does not mean, however, that the use of such consecutives was incorrect.
- The notion of voice leading within the accompaniment could also be presented; for example, similar considerations regarding the parts of chording instruments, especially piano/keyboards and guitars.

Students needed to refer to at least one of the dot points given and exhibit an understanding of their relevance to, impact on and/or relationship to the development and realisation of **their own** arrangement. Many students wrote about all three of the dot points, often not particularly well. Questions of this type give students an opportunity to write about matters which might be unique to or special about their own approach to harmonising and arranging, this is why students are given the option to write about a variety of considerations. Many students, nevertheless, attempted to write about categories/dot points which did not apply particularly well, or even at all, to their own work.

Question 10 – Improvisation

Question 10a.

The following list of relevant characteristics/aspects/elements/features could have been used by students.

- call/response
- blue notes
- elaboration (runs, decorations, melismas, etc.)
- scale-based approaches (pentatonics, blues scale(s), be-bop scales, modes, directly diatonic, non-western, hybrid, etc.)
- exploring the instrument's range (for example, adding upper and lower octaves)
- imitation/variation
- long tones
- chromaticism
- rhythmic variation/development
- use of silence
- contour imitation
- thematic transformation
- dynamics
- instrument specific techniques ('growls', 'pull-offs', 'tapping', vocalised 'interjection', slides and bends, etc.)
- textural issues (cymbal rolls, playing the drums with hands, using instruments out of standard context (such as buzzing the mouthpiece without the trumpet), multiphonics, etc.)
- augmentation
- diminution

The very best responses clearly showed that analyses of recorded improvisations had been thoroughly and appropriately completed, with an obvious emphasis on the aspects and/or components of improvisation. However, a significant percentage of students did not appear to have specifically studied the improvisatory techniques and/or characteristics about which they wrote, and such students could not describe relevant issues with much detail or appropriate



knowledge. Disturbingly, many students confirmed this latter observation by writing comments such as ‘we never did this’ on their examination scripts. It is essential that the study design be read, analysed and understood (by students **and** teachers) in order to maximise results for this examination.

A reasonable percentage of students wrote about their own works, despite the first sentence of the question stating ‘during Unit 4 you analysed recorded improvisations’. Although students may have recorded their own improvisations and then analysed them, study of the characteristics and/or approaches to one’s own improvisations is not an altogether appropriate approach to learning about improvising or how to improve. Further, the Area of Study mandates the analysis of ‘the work of professional...improvisers’.

Although a large percentage of students scored well on this question, shallow answers were fairly common. Many responses, although not incorrect, were superficial and/or very obvious, and frequently failed to demonstrate much knowledge or understanding of either improvisatory characteristics and/or the discipline of improvising. For example, simply stating that ‘the improvisation is over the changes’ and ‘the style is swing’ was not a sufficient response to this question. Although these are characteristics of an improvisation and deal with two of the dot points from the question, they are simple identifications, not descriptions, and could not be awarded high marks.

Question 10b.

Most students responded reasonably well to this identification question; however, some students had trouble writing about the source material over which they were to have improvised. Indeed, some students gave the impression that they had not analysed the source material because they could not convincingly describe even two of its features or characteristics. This observation was particularly clear in the many responses where students presented non sequiturs, dealt with contradictory concepts and/or processes and/or used contradictory terminology.

Question 10c.

Following is a list of issues/considerations, other than those given on the paper, upon which students could focus.

- call-response
- blue notes
- elaboration (runs, decorations, melismas, etc.)
- scale-based approaches (pentatonics, blues scale(s), be-bop scales, modes, directly diatonic, non-western, hybrid, etc.)
- exploring the instrument’s range (for example, adding upper and lower octaves)
- imitation/variation
- long tones
- chromaticism
- rhythmic variation/development
- use of silence
- contour imitation
- thematic transformation
- dynamics
- instrument specific techniques (‘growls’, ‘pull-offs’, ‘tapping’, vocalised ‘interjection’, ‘scoops’, slides and bends, etc.)
- textural issues (cymbal rolls, playing the drums with hands, using instrument outside ‘standard’ context (for example, buzzing the mouthpiece without the trumpet) multiphonics, etc.)
- augmentation
- diminution

As always, there were some excellent responses to this question, demonstrating some very fine teaching and learning of improvisation. The most outstanding responses were characterised by considerable musical literacy and an awareness of the improvisatory genre, especially the jazz idioms. These students’ discussions of two performance techniques were always very comprehensive and contained insightful, accurate and articulate details of how they used the selected performance techniques in their own improvisations. Usually, high-scoring responses included the name of the song, the instrument that the student played, **notated** melodic and/or rhythmic motifs that were obviously from the particular song (that is, it was possible to ‘scat’ the melody and/or rhythm and confirm that it was indeed from the song in question) and very lucid discussions about issues of motivic development and/or the use of at least two expressive elements. In fact, although this was not necessary, many of these excellent responses addressed all three of the dot

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points, and a few of them went on to discuss other elements or considerations that were particularly significant in the piece over which they had improvised.

Nevertheless, a large percentage of students did not deal with this question particularly well. There were a number of very short responses that lacked detail or insight. Generally speaking, this was probably because of confusion about the notion of developing rhythmic or melodic motifs (indeed perhaps even the meaning of the term ‘motif’); limited ability to discuss the application of expressive elements (for example, phrasing, articulation, dynamics and silence) in improvisatory contexts; and perhaps a belief that performance techniques fall exclusive within the domain of technical facility rather than processes that are used when performing. It appeared that these students were not sufficiently familiar with the terminology of the study design. Also notable was that most of the weaker students seemed unaware of the characteristics and requirements of a formal discussion, as required by the question.

Yet again this year, some students wrote about how ‘cool’ or ‘wicked’ they were on stage and/or the number of (often unmusical) activities in which they were engaged during a performance; for example, playing with the guitar on their shoulder and/or with their teeth. Although Jimi Hendrix and others did this when improvising, it is stagecraft rather than a true performance technique. As this consideration very rarely addresses the question adequately, students should avoid mentioning it.

Once again, a small percentage of students stated something like ‘an improvisation is not meant to be done this way – you’re just supposed to make it up on the spot’. Comments such as this are not appropriate and do not demonstrate knowledge or understanding of improvisatory issues in music. The study design requires fairly ‘formalised’ teaching of improvisation, including analysis, evaluation of techniques and approaches, and structural and developmental discernment. In any case, even a ‘make it up on the spot’ approach almost always demands that developmental decisions are made prior to delivering each segment (even each phrase or each note), otherwise the improvisation is very likely to lack musical logic and/or be fairly chaotic or incoherent. It is particularly important for students to be highly familiar with all of the terminology, concepts and components of the study, especially those that are essentially applied and/or process-based.

Average marks

Section A		51.7%
Section B		59.1%
Section C	Part-writing *	47.3%
	Improvisation *	49.5%
	Combined #	42.1%
Whole exam		52.6%

* – Percentages do not include the 100 students who did not attempt Section C.

– Percentages include the 100 students who did not attempt Section C.