2005   Music Performance Group GA 3: Aural and written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The format of the 2005 paper was similar to previous examination papers and comprised a total of 117 marks. There were nine questions, eight of which were to be answered, with students having the option of responding to either Question 7 (Part-writing) or Question 8 (Improvisation).

A revised *Music*: *Group Performance VCE Study Design* has been implemented in 2006. It should be noted that most of the significant elements of the 2001–2005 Study Design are still present. With this in mind, most of the comments that follow are directly relevant to examinations for 2006 and beyond.

The overall results for this examination were only slightly lower than those for 2004, which had been the highest marks in the history of this version of the Study Design. As in previous years, many students were unable to achieve equal results across the four areas of focus within Section A: Aural comprehension (that is, melody, harmony, rhythm and characteristics of a pre-recorded work), although results continue to demonstrate steady improvement in most areas. Music literacy was still an issue, although this area also continued to improve. Basic notational skills remained the most serious weakness for a significant number of students. The formal study of music notation conventions is included in the music language section of Outcome 3 in Units 3 and 4 of the revised Study Design. The use of relevant terminology seemed to have improved somewhat, although there were still problems in this area. Once again, a number of students continued to use pen in Section A: Aural comprehension, which is not a good idea, especially for transcription tasks.

Examination Technique
Effective time management requires planning. The questions worth the most marks (Questions 7c./8c., 9a. and 9bii.) were often completed hurriedly. Completing Sections B and C in exact order may result in too little time remaining to respond fully to the various parts of Question 9, especially Question 9bii. Students should use the reading time wisely to plan how to best use their examination time.

Many students did not read the question stems (or indeed the questions themselves), which often affected the student's ability to focus their answers and avoid giving responses that were obviously prepared prior to the examination date. It is strongly recommended that students do not attempt to 'second-guess' what will be on the paper and/or write responses beforehand then attempt to 'push' them into the specific requirements of the given question. Students who adopt this approach almost invariably fail to answer the question, and answers of this type are totally obvious to assessors.

When constructing responses, many of the high-achieving students made notes that featured the most significant elements and/or concepts of their responses. These were intended to jog their memory while writing the answer, thus keeping them on task. Many of these same students highlighted (and/or underlined) exactly what was required as well as the various parts 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 tended to use dot points in their responses, and commonly presented clear, deliberate and cogent comments and arguments. This was seemingly a useful time management skill given that these students completed the examination thoroughly and within the time allotted.

While students base some responses on their experience of playing specific instruments and/or in particular styles, care should be taken to develop skills in all required areas of music, particularly those which are less familiar to the student. This might include developing knowledge of pitched notation for drummers/percussionists or harmony for single-line players.

The most common areas of weakness included:
- a lack of basic theoretical knowledge, especially regarding the correct names of intervals and the qualities of chords (despite all chords prescribed for study having been listed on the paper)
- an inability to recognise notated rhythmic figures and/or an inability to notate rhythms correctly
- failure to apply consistent musical grammar, including inconsistent naming of intervals and/or chords
- confusion or misunderstanding of terminology – 'resonation', 'resoluting' and 'dynamical' are not considered to be appropriate music terminology
- difficulty identifying tonalities (scale forms) and intervals within a melodic context
- a lack of understanding of each section of the paper and/or exactly what each question required.

Other concerns
- Several students did not attempt to answer some of the questions, especially in Section A.
- Confusion or lack of awareness about the meanings of terms was a common problem. Terms that did not seem familiar to many students included 'tone colour', 'texture', 'dynamics', 'articulation', 'voicing', 'voice leading', 'motifs' (melodic and rhythmic), 'contrast' and 'contour'. 'Rhythmic relationships' and/or 'treatment of rhythm' were sometimes dealt with as if they were about the 'rhyming' relationships of a song's lyrics. Many students approached 'dynamics' as though it were referring to 'liveliness' (energy) rather than issues of relative volume and/or volume-based relationships. It was clear that these terms and concepts needed to be defined and used more regularly in teaching and learning programs.
- Although less common than in previous years, a few value judgements, particularly about the standard or quality of musicianship, were written in the responses for some questions, especially Question 6. Students are reminded that this examination is not an appropriate forum for comments about their love of or disdain for a particular style of music, or a particular performer or ensemble.
- Some students' responses were difficult to read due to the use of blunt pencils. Students should be aware that pencil sharpeners **are** allowed in the examination, and they should be used if needed.

Section A
- Students should write as clearly as possible, especially when notating on a stave. Notes should be either on a line or in a space – not both – and should not be so large that they cover two spaces. Students should use a pencil (and an eraser) rather than a pen when notating music. As students are not allowed to use liquid paper or correction tape during exams, most students who answered Section A with a pen almost inevitably wound up with a fair mess – especially for the questions with melodic and rhythmic transcription.
- When undertaking transcription questions, students should perhaps be 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. (Assessors will look at the 'rough work' anyway, just in case there are any errors in transferring from the page of manuscript paper to the stave(s) for the final 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 should be very careful when they transfer their work across from the 'rough work' page to the answer space. Very often, students' rough work was more accurate on the manuscript page than on the stave(s) where the answer(s) was to be presented. It is not advisable for students to write their final answer using 'stick' notation unless it is perfectly clear at all times. In particular, dotted rhythms tend to be unclear with this style of notation.
- If a student has difficulty with precise, pitch-based, mensural notation (that is, the **exact** notes) an attempt should be made somehow to express the contour/shape of the melody, even if a line graph is used. Although this approach cannot result in full marks, marks are available for a written expression of the melody's relative contour. It is possible to attain a mid-range score 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.
- 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 (perhaps improvisation training, too) and to realise their harmonisations (part-writing students).

Sections B and C
Students should use the reading time wisely; many students seemed not to have read the questions thoroughly and/or did not focus their responses within the appropriate part of particular questions. Many students did not appear to know the requirements of different response formats; for example, the differences between 'identify', 'describe', and 'discuss'. 'Discuss' does not mean identify or simply make a list, nor does 'describe'. 'Describe' essentially requires the demonstration of **knowledge**, especially with respect to salient characteristics, components or elements, whereas '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.

As always, there was some truly atrocious handwriting, very dubious spelling, and/or noticeably poor grammar and literacy skills, which make the task quite onerous for assessors. Students are reminded that this is a formal examination that requires care regarding issues of syntax, spelling and (especially) legibility.

Section A: Aural comprehension

Part 1: Intervals and melody
Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	14	31	29	18	9	**1.8**

- Perfect 4th
- Major 3rd
- Minor 3rd
- Major 2nd (tone/whole step)

Few students correctly identified all four intervals. Again this year, many students wrote only 'ascending' ('up'/'asc') or 'descending' ('down'/'des'), or arrows up or down. Marks were not available for simply recognising the directions (upward or downward) of the intervals. Quite a few students were able to identify number but not quality, especially with respect to the Major and minor 3rds. A number of students were confused about interval nomenclature; for example, calling the Perfect 4th a 'Major 4th'. A significant number of students continued to write 'M's that appeared to be deliberately ambiguous. Students are strongly urged to write Major/Maj/Ma or minor/min/mi for intervals of 2nds, 3rds, 6ths and 7ths.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	18	1	81	**1.6**

MAJOR

It was very pleasing to note the high percentage of students who identified the major tonality correctly. Unfortunately, some students did not answer the question at all. Perhaps some were not aware that the question had two parts. Students are strongly advised to attempt every question, especially where only a simple circle is necessary to present the answer. There are no penalties for incorrect responses.

Question 2

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

Some students continued to demonstrate evidence of thorough preparation for this question. Students should continue to look for relationships between melody and harmony and use this knowledge when transcribing melodies. In addition, a rudimentary ability to read notes in bass clef (and treble clef notes with ledger lines) would generally enable them to score more highly.

A large number of students had problems with any intervals greater than a second (see bars one, three and four), especially descending intervals. In situations where there were leaps of a 3rd or greater, every note in the entire melody was a member of the underpinning chord. Even the descending diminished 4th (see bar four) featured the root note and the 5th of the chord under it (the 'G Augmented' sonority). When a 'D' was written, the raised leading note of the harmonic minor tonality ('D#') was frequently overlooked. This was odd, especially when the clarinet (as indicated by the notated part) played the same 'D#' on beat one of bar four as was played by the oboe on beat two of that bar. It might be expected that subsequent playings of the excerpt would then have alerted students to the very same relationship between beat four of bar one and beat one of bar two (the 'D#' to 'E').

Some students did not ensure that the values of the notes in each bar added up to what was required by the 'four–four' time signature, while other 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 went on to draw its general contour as a simple line graph across the stave, often without note heads. Although this was acceptable (see comments above), high marks could not be achieved using this method.

Generally, low-scoring responses demonstrated:
- limited understanding of the notes in chords and the direct relationships between melody, diatonic harmony and scales/tonalities
- limited awareness of the characteristics of logical melodic structures and/or intervallic function in melodic contexts
- weak intervallic skills, especially when the melody is not moving by step

- limited awareness of rhythmic issues and/or an inability to transcribe rhythms in common time
- a lack of a systematic approach to the question; for example, perhaps notating the rhythm first.

It is clear that students need more practice with melodic transcriptions in four-part contexts. Nevertheless it was pleasing to note that most students attempted to answer the question and that most students obtained some marks, even if only by means of a transcription of the rhythm, or perhaps the rhythm plus a fairly accurate 'line graph'.

Part 2: Chords and harmony

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	7	13	17	18	12	9	9	10	6	**3.6**

1. minor chord
2. Augmented chord
3. Dominant 7 chord
4. (Full) diminished 7 chord
5. Suspended 4 chord
6. Major chord
7. minor 7
8. Major 7 chord

Students need to be able to identify the primary chords (those without 7ths) as a starting point for this task. The 'Augmented' chord was frequently identified as 'diminished' while the '(full) diminished 7' chord was often identified as 'Augmented'. Many students also seemed to be unfamiliar with the structure and sound of the 'Suspended 4' chord.

Students should listen carefully to determine the presence or absence of 7ths. An ability to recognise the various chord characters/qualities/types is essential to all aspects related to an understanding of harmony. All students should be able to identify all of the chords set for study.

Part 3: Rhythm
Question 4

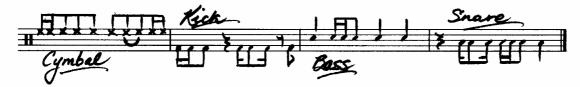| Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	11	15	13	12	8	6	7	8	18	**3.9**

The mean score for this question was almost a whole mark below that of 2004, which was disappointing. Problems that were consistently evident included:

- having other than a total of four crotchet beats in one or the other or both of the relevant two bars
- not attempting to divide the response into two bars of four beats each
- losing track of the pulse
- an inability to notate the 'tim-ka' syncopation (dotted quaver/semi-quaver) accurately (beat one of the second bar to be transcribed). Many students appeared to have heard the syncopated figure but had no idea how to write it
- incorrectly notating the 'ti-tika' (quaver/two semi-quavers) on beat four of the first bar to be transcribed (despite it featuring on beat four of the first bar of the excerpt in both the flute and trombone parts), as was the 'tika-ti' (two semi-quavers/quaver) of beat two of the first bar to be transcribed (which appeared on beat one of that bar in the flute part)
- incorrectly notating the 'syn-co-pa' (semi-quaver/quaver/semi-quaver) figure on beat three of the first bar to be transcribed, even though the same figure was presented by the flute at the same time – the two lines were in rhythmic unison
- not notating the triplet quaver figure as a triplet/hemiola (that is, no '3' was written), even when properly positioned and grouped/barred in such a manner that it could be viewed as comprising beat four of the second bar to be transcribed
- augmenting the rhythm (often not consistently) so that the transcription was primarily in four–two time (mostly minims, sometimes dotted minims) and/or entirely as crotchets
- not grouping beats, which made it difficult for students to check this work against the same pattern notated in another part. (Note that marks were not directly affected by this.)

It was observed generally that students who aligned their answers vertically (to the rhythms of the other parts) achieved higher marks. Although certainly not imperative, this approach helps students overcome several of the problems identified above, especially pulse-related matters.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	7	10	12	8	18	17	11	12	3	**4.0**

Notate altered rhythms on this stave.

It was very pleasing to note that the average score for this question was higher than in 2004. Most students at least attempted the question and were able to identify correctly the bars with the rhythmic differences. Nevertheless, although a fair number of students did very well, many experienced clear difficulties with this question.

Issues common to many responses included:
- not noticing that almost every altered rhythmic figure to be notated appeared somewhere else within the printed notation
- neglecting to circle the entire bar where the rhythms were different, as per the instructions. Even though the transcriptions usually clarified to which parts the student was referring, this was not always the case
- noting that a rhythmic alteration occurred in the correct bar, but circling the wrong figure (despite the instruction to '**circle** the **entire bar** with the altered rhythms'). This instruction was incorporated so that students could be awarded full marks for part a., even if part b. for the given bar was notated inaccurately
- use of very unusual groupings, especially given that every rhythmic figure appeared elsewhere on the page. Although marks were not deducted for groupings, students should be made aware of 'standard practice' in this regard for all time signatures/metric orientations
- unfamiliarity with the layout and details of this type of question.

Part 4: Characteristics of a pre-recorded work

The entries immediately following each part of the question are only a guide to possible responses and the various aspects/issues presented are certainly not exhaustive. These are examples of salient points and/or aspects of the question's components. A brief discussion about student responses follows each segment.

Question 6a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	0	4	96	**2.0**

- digital keyboards
- strings
- electric bass
- drums

- percussion
- guitars (distorted rhythm/riff guitars with wah-wah, etc.)

Most students scored full marks for this question. Some students identified more than two instruments; however, no extra marks were available. It was once again surprising to note that a number of students identified the vocals as one of the instruments, despite the question stating '**Do not** identify **vocal parts** in your answer.' A few of these students then went on to describe the voice in part b. of the question. A few students identified only one instrument.

Question 6b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	1	7	27	37	27	**2.8**

Most students did well on this question, as can be seen in the statistics.

A large proportion of students did not truly describe the role or function of their selected instrument; that is, they did not demonstrate knowledge and/or awareness of the given instrument's purpose within the excerpt. Many students simply described and/or labelled the instrument, an audio effect or the digital audio process being used. Students should be encouraged to learn about the roles of instruments and instrumental parts within musical ensembles as this issue is critical to developing an understanding of virtually all music in ensemble settings. Students should learn to recognise similar musical roles across styles and/or ensemble types; for example, melody, lead, bass and accompaniment. Quite a few students attempted to describe the role or function of both of the instruments identified in part a. Although some of these answers were quite good, these students had effectively wasted their time, as no extra credit marks were available. Many students gave generic answers here; for example, describing the role of a drum kit in **any** band or ensemble rather than its role in this particular work.

Question 6c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	3	14	20	23	24	13	**3.9**

Initial mood ('darker')
- comparatively limited pitch range
- lower register
- short phrases
- small interval distances
- melody largely driven by rhythm of the text
- repetitive and varying syncopated rhythmic motifs

Second mood ('brighter')
- vocals become more 'instrument-like', eventually abandoning text altogether
- rhythmic orientation moves towards longer phrase structuring
- 'vocalise' approach used to 'sail' into higher register(s)
- wider intervals
- harmonisation

Many students presented good responses to this question. Those who did particularly well described each mood separately, commonly dividing the page in half to feature first a musical analysis and then a subjective description for each section respectively.

The question required students to understand and identify basic elements of music: pitch, timbre, rhythm, texture, duration, harmony and tempo. Stronger responses noted that the voice changed register and/or timbre in the second section and then focused on the purpose(s) of doing so from a mood-based perspective. Many commented on the change in accompanying instrumentation but few identified the change of note durations (rhythmic intensity) of the vocal melody or the change in the specific nature of the delivery of the lyrics.

Although many students did not present a great deal of musical detail in their responses, most answers featured at least a rudimentary awareness of the general nature of the two moods. Unfortunately many students seemed to be unable to label the two moods appropriately. Many wrote that the first mood was 'loud' and the second was 'louder', or perhaps 'scary' and then 'really scary'. This was acceptable if justified (perhaps contextualised with respect to issues of relative

aggression, for example) but commonly such justification was not given. Many students struggled to deal with issues of vocal characteristics and wrote instead about the other instruments, which was not required for the question.

Question 6di.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	10	30	40	21	**1.7**

- repeated syncopated keyboard figures
- counter rhythms from accompanying instruments
- 'funky' bass line
- drums and percussion in two-bar syncopated figure (perhaps 'looped')
- fragmentary/syncopated/repetitive vocal rhythms
- the feel is 'propelled' by the nature of the snare part and the complexity of the interlocking rhythms (use of combinatorial rhythm to create a 'macro-feel')

Students who scored well made at least three different statements that were supported by musical evidence. Some even notated rhythmic patterns on the page to support their comments. Many students, however, continued on from question 6c. and discussed the melody and vocals without addressing **rhythmic** features in any sense. Some students mentioned relative speed or simple versus complex beat patterns but did not explain or seek to describe them. Some students mentioned that the drums played a 'syncopated feel' but did not attempt to describe its features – it was simply labelled as a complex or difficult rhythm and left at that. Very few mentioned specifics of a 'funky' kind of feel or even the repetitive nature of the rhythmic parts.

Most students tried to label what the drums were doing stylistically, or what the rhythm section was doing, but did not discuss rhythmic **features** per se. Many students seemed to believe that rhythmic features are the sole domain of drummers and percussionists, an issue that desperately needs to be addressed. 'Rhythmic features' and the style and/or specifics of what the drums play are often different issues.

There are many musical terms that students should have been able to apply, but many lacked a useful musical vocabulary. For example, many students identified the metre and went on describe, or even define, a common time signature, clearly believing it to be a rhythmic feature. Students should be aware of differences and relationships between metre, beat/pulse and rhythm.

Question 6dii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	12	33	37	18	**1.6**

- longer note lengths in the vocals
- vocals more independent of the rhythm section
- bass more sustained – not 'funky'
- drumming defines the groove more specifically
- less syncopation from the piano sends
- 'standard' rock-ballad approach to the groove

Some students answered this question rather better than part i. Many students described the different instrumentation in each section, and perhaps how it was used, but made no reference at all to rhythm or rhythmic features. When asked to describe 'rhythmic features', many students seemed to believe that this meant they had to describe what the drums were doing. Students need to be aware of the rhythmic features of other parts.

Section B: Part-writing OR Improvisation

Question chosen	None	7	8
%	6	59	35

Part a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	12	3	5	9	10	17	13	12	9	8	**4.8**

Part b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	12	3	5	7	9	15	15	15	10	9	**5.0**

Part c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	20	2	6	7	8	8	9	11	8	7	7	4	3	**5.1**

There were many strong responses to both Question 7 and Question 8. Responses for this section should be based on work undertaken during Unit 3, but should reflect an understanding of all aspects of the key knowledge and skills rather than those focused upon in specific School-assessed Coursework tasks.

A disturbingly large number of responses clearly had been prepared beforehand and did not answer the given question particularly well. This is not a sensible approach. The most important things to do are: analyse the components of the question on the examination paper, establish precisely what is required, and address each requirement directly.

Some students did not seem to know the meanings of the musical terms from the Study Design. For example, many students who wrote about 'tone colour' confused it with 'tone'. Students who dealt with 'dynamics' consistently confused the term with 'pitch' or else wrote about issues of 'energy'. Students who dealt with 'implied harmonies' or the 'harmonic implications' of their harmonisation/arrangement frequently did not go further than mentioning that all of the chords used were in root position, usually without identifying what the chords were. Very few students seemed to know the meanings of 'voicing' and 'voice leading' even though many tried to write about them (see Question 7c.). Few improvisation students seemed to know the meaning of 'motifs', 'articulation', 'contour', or sometimes even 'tonality'. Students should not attempt to write about terms, elements, approaches or concepts unless they are certain that they know what the term means.

Question 7a.
Responses to this question were highly context specific. The three characteristics that students selected were expected to be clearly relevant to their harmonisation, and at least two of the three components of the particular characteristic being discussed were to be presented in considerable detail. Assessors looked for thoughtful, relevant and original answers – not responses that clearly had been prepared beforehand.

Many students answered this question well, using appropriate musical (and analytical) terminology to describe the melody or melodic excerpt. The best of these responses were written about a melody that the student knew intimately and which they had spent a fair amount of time analysing and working with. Strong answers featured issues such as the contour, tonality, rhythmic elements and harmonic implications of the melody or melodic excerpt (as per the prompts at the end of the question), including leaps versus steps, disjunct versus conjunct motion, the scale of the melody (although 'tonality' was frequently confused with 'texture' or 'mood'; for example, 'the tonality is sombre'), and the chords implied by the melody. Some students actually notated their melody, identified three of its characteristics and described these thoroughly (in the language of music), which was a highly successful approach.

Many students seemed somehow confused by the question and described three characteristics of their harmonisation or arrangement rather than three characteristics of the melody or melodic excerpt that they used for the harmonisation. This was despite the answer space on the paper being segmented into 'Characteristic 1', 'Characteristic 2' and 'Characteristic 3', making it very clear that each section was there for students to present a description of a characteristic of the melody or melodic excerpt. Many students made comments that could not be considered useful descriptions – for example, 'I used slow rhythms' or 'the melody was recognisable and it flowed well'. On their own, neither of these presents useful knowledge regarding melodic characteristics.

Question 7b.
Students had to demonstrate how the three elements of music they had chosen to write about were relevant to **their own** arrangement. At least two characteristics had to be presented in a very detailed way. A large number of responses for this question were obviously prepared beforehand. Most of these lacked detail and/or failed to describe the planning of the student's own work clearly. That is, although they were sometimes highly sophisticated, the prepared responses were very generic and could be applied to the harmonisation/arrangement of virtually **any** melody. Responses that clearly had been prepared beforehand were not viewed very favourably by the assessors.

This question gave students an opportunity to describe the manner(s) in which they approached their part-writing task. Although the question was generally handled well by many students, the planning issue often required further exploration, with more depth and discernment. Many students reiterated what they had written for Question 7a., albeit in greater detail, especially when they had (incorrectly) discussed the harmonisation process in their 7a. response. Other students focused their response on the nature of the finished harmonisation/arrangement rather than its planning.

Better responses focused on decisions that were clearly relevant to the planning of the arrangement. Less successful responses commonly included a general description of one of the dot points (for example, 'articulation') with virtually no reference to the use of (or planning the use of) articulation in the student's own material. This may indicate that although some students had been given melodic excerpts to harmonise, they had not been expected to analyse and understand the excerpts, plan their treatment and then proceed to harmonise/arrange them with respect to the range of broader musical contexts and harmonisation/arranging procedures and issues represented by the dot points.

Most students selected three issues from the dot points listed and were able to comment on how they had used these elements of music, although frequently the issue of planning was not addressed. Many students dealt with only one or two of the points listed. A significant number of students added points they wished to cover, making no reference at all to any of the three points given. Students should understand that when a question asks them to describe their own work, they must describe what **they** did, not what they might have done, think they should have done, or what somebody else once did.

The following terms and their meanings often caused problems for students.
- 'Tone colour' was frequently referred to as an instrumental technique, a chord selection issue, or in terms of 'tone' ('quality of sound') and 'colour' (as in 'shades of pigment' or 'thickness' of paint).
- 'Texture' was often confused with 'feel', which sometimes related to mood (for example, 'what I wanted it to feel like') and sometimes related to tactile considerations such as 'I planned my parts in a way that creates smoothness'.
- 'Rhythmic relationships' were often not dealt with appropriately. When they were, students often identified rhythms between parts, and harmonic rhythm was mentioned only occasionally. Students often wrote something like 'I used rhythmic imitation for interest', but gave no description of issues relating to the dot point (for example, rhythmic patterns, note values, overlap, imitation, fragmentation, diminution, augmentation, etc.). Issues of tempo and time signature were often referred to either incorrectly or without relevance to the issue of 'rhythmic relationships'.
- 'Dynamics' were often described as 'taking care of themselves' as a result of the register selected for the instrument. Very few students mentioned issues of terracing or dynamic layering, the notion of creating tension via dynamics, or using dynamics to create climaxes, etc. Too many students referred to the planning of 'dynamism' (that is, the notion of making an 'energetic' harmonisation).
- 'Articulation' was often referred to as a 'non-issue' and something that tended to take care of itself, or students had decided that, in line with the style of the piece, it would either be all legato or all staccato. If a particular issue or element does not seem particularly well suited to a student's own work or experience, they should not write about that issue or element. Assessors cannot award marks to students who write 'I didn't think about that', or 'I didn't have to worry about that'.

Question 7c.

Technique	Possible points for discussion	Comments
chord selection	- implied harmonies - selection of the given harmony via placement of the note as a member of the triad (as the root, 3rd or 5th) or as an extension of the harmony (as the 7th, 9th or 11th, for example)	Most students wrote about this technique. They discussed the placement of notes of the melody or melodic excerpt provided in order to create consonant harmonies. Few students discussed note placement within chords in detail. It was common for students to write little more than, 'my chords were chosen according to the main melody', or 'my chords included the root, third and fifth'.
voicing	a description of the logic behind placement of pitches in relation to one another; for example, register, range and tessitura (the use of exact terminology was not a requirement of the question)	Some students clearly identified which voices they had labelled for each part and some referred to chord voicings, but few mentioned or reasoned why they had selected in a particular manner.

voice leading	• linear or conjunct motion, relative motion and/or contrary motion • ways that particular parts/lines were voiced to make them prominent • tension/release issues (especially regarding suspensions), etc. • use of consecutive intervals including use/non-use of consecutive 5ths and or octaves • parts of chording instruments (piano/keyboard, guitar) • use of 'non-traditional' consecutive intervals (particularly 5ths and octaves), especially with instrumental or vocal arrangements where voice leading was perhaps an issue. (This does not mean, however, that the use of such consecutives was to be deemed as being somehow incorrect.) • voice leading within the accompaniment; for example, similar considerations regarding the parts of chording instruments, especially piano/keyboards and guitars	When selected, this technique was generally not answered very well. Most students confused it with chord selection and/or the voicing of parts, rather than dealing with any of the issues outlined under possible points for discussion.
the relationship(s) between parts	• parallel harmonisation • contrary motion • conjunct versus disjunct motion • polyphony • direct imitation • call and response • homophony • segmented relationships (S+B and A+T, for example) • ornamentation • 'free-part' style • heterophony (for example, simultaneous variation)	Some students responded to this technique very well, although many were not able to convey an understanding of how this is a technique that pre-supposes process. As a result, many could not get past comments such as 'there was a relationship between the parts'.
treatment of rhythm	• consistent/regular changes • ostinati • cycles created via the use of additive rhythms • extended segments (phrases) with regular or irregular subdivisions • multiple rhythmic strata aligned to harmonic 'macro events'	Most students who wrote about this technique dealt with it reasonably well. Nevertheless, many could not articulate the notion of treatment of rhythm in any kind of systematic or process-based fashion.
use of digital technology	• transpositions • ability to listen and then edit and adjust • harmonisation drafts • melodic experimentation with playback capabilities • alterations to registers, assignment of parts, etc. • printing of parts and score; etc.	It appears that most students used digital technology to assist with their harmonisation/arrangement as required by the Study Design. Most students said that they had selected notes and assigned instruments via input into a computer program and usually referred to the fact that it was very useful to be able to hear their harmonisation played back in order to alter any 'off-sounding' notes. Students who answered well commented on the ability to select and alter parts, print individual parts, complete

		transpositions more easily, add and/or explore dynamics and articulations, alter rhythms, explore more complex rhythms and harmonic extensions, and hear individual parts on their own. Nevertheless, responses on the use of digital technology were often limited to statements such as: 'I used the computer to find the mistakes and print out the parts', which does not give any indication of issues related to techniques of harmonisation.

Most students who wrote about three techniques, as per the question, selected all three from the list of six provided, rather than discussing other techniques or approaches. Some students wrote about only two techniques, rather than three. Many students did not write about any of the dot points given, even though the question required them to write about at least two. Some students wrote about listed techniques they clearly didn't understand and/or perhaps didn't even use in their harmonisations/arrangements – especially 'voicing' and 'voice leading', which were commonly confused.

The question was framed specifically to give students an opportunity to demonstrate the scope of their learning and understanding of harmonisation/arranging techniques by discussing techniques that they had used. It often appeared that many were not truly aware of techniques or processes of harmonisation. In order for students to achieve high marks for these questions, it is imperative that they know the meanings of terminology from the Study Design.

Question 8a.
To score high marks for this question, students had to exhibit a sound understanding of issues relevant to the selected characteristics, especially with respect to their impact on and relevance to improvisation. The three characteristics that students wrote about should have been clearly relevant to the student's own improvisation, with at least two of them being described in a detailed way. Assessors looked for thoughtful, relevant and individualistic answers, not responses clearly prepared beforehand.

There were some outstanding responses to this question. High-scoring responses were obviously written by students who were musically literate in their improvisatory genre (especially the jazz idioms), and they presented detailed descriptions of three characteristics of the source material with considerable stylistic expertise. Importantly, these were genuine descriptions, not simply identifications. Most of the very high-scoring responses came from students who mentioned the name of the piece upon which they had improvised.

Unfortunately, many students misinterpreted the question and attempted to describe one characteristic of each of the three source material types rather than three characteristics of one source material type. Other students dealt with only one or two characteristics. A common approach was for students to describe characteristics of what they had done for their improvisation rather than focus on describing characteristics of one of the source material types, as per the question. Some students appeared not to have read the question correctly and presented responses that were not related to any of the source material types; for example, they wrote about issues of note selection or scale usage, which would have constituted a far better response to Question 8b. than 8a.

Question 8b.
Most students dealt with at least two of the required three points for this question. Unfortunately, many students simply re-presented their answer for Question 8a., often devoid of any new information or insights. Students should be aware that if they feel as though they are writing the same thing as they did for another question, they probably **are** and they should re-read both questions to clarify exactly what was asked.

Of the points listed, contrast and scales/modes were discussed most often, but rarely in terms of their impact on the planning of the improvisation. Many students stated how important it was to know their scales so as not to play wrong notes. Only the more outstanding students discussed tonality and harmonic progression(s), linking these to the musicality of their potential performance and displaying real familiarity with their improvisations. Very few students identified the scales they used or gave examples of the kinds of rhythmic or melodic motifs they developed. Most of the strong responses dealt noticeably well with 'influences drawn from analysis of other arrangements' and/or 'stylistic characteristics of the selected mainstream style'.

Musical element	Comments
scale/modal forms and/or tonality	Many students referred to using a blues scale or a pentatonic scale when planning their improvisation. Few discussed the notion of 'playing the changes' from within a diatonic framework. Often it was not clear whether the student knew **why** particular scale(s) or mode(s) might be used. The use of modes only seemed to be understood by a handful of students, almost all of who appeared to be wind players. However, scales and modes generally seemed to have been learnt in only one key, which indicates that students had learnt or were taught only what they needed for the task rather than a holistic approach to learning techniques for improvisation.
harmonic progression(s)	Many students re-presented the chord progression of the source material (see previous question) but frequently failed to address the notion of its relevance to the planning of their improvisation.
developing and/or using melodic motifs	Answers that focused on this point were often somewhat vague and showed that the student did not really understand what motifs are and/or their potential role(s) in improvisatory contexts. The better responses explained that motifs or fragments from the 'head' of the piece (melodic and rhythmic) were used to build their improvisation, and commonly went on to describe several ways that they might consider doing so.
developing and/or using rhythmic motifs	Few students chose to discuss rhythmic motifs, frequently because they had incorporated discussion of the rhythmic aspects of motifs within their description of melodic motifs. Those students who did write well about this point presented very strong descriptions that almost always included notation of the rhythm(s) to be developed and description/notation of the various possibilities. Many students achieved full marks for this part of the question because they used notation effectively to describe structure and variation of rhythmic motifs.
Contrast	Most students who wrote about this point had difficulty dealing with it suitably, often simply stating that 'louds' and 'softs' are the only issues of contrast that are relevant to improvisations. Other students simply wrote that they used (or planned to use) contrast because it would make their improvisation 'interesting'. Students need to be aware of the existence of various matters of contrast(s) such as timbre and timbral effects, register, pitch bending (slow versus fast, for example), velocity/intensity, phrase lengths, accents, contour, variety of note lengths, etc.

Too many students simply stated something like, 'an improvisation is not meant to be planned so I just made it up on the spot'. Such comments are neither appropriate in this forum nor do they demonstrate an understanding of the scope of the key knowledge and skills for this outcome of the Study Design. Some students seemed to believe that planning an improvisation meant 'writing it out', which is incorrect. In addition, even genuinely 'making it up on the spot' almost always demands that a range of decisions be made prior to delivering each segment, or even each note, otherwise the improvisation will almost certainly lack coherency and musical logic. Students are strongly cautioned against this type of approach (and teachers should not adopt such a position). It is especially important for students to be very familiar with the terminology and the procedural learning components of the study (the applied/process-based components).

Although not a requirement of the question, almost all outstanding responses included the name and key of the song and the instrument that the student had used to prepare and perform the improvisation.

Question 8c.
Responses for this question were highly context specific. Students were expected to exhibit a reasonable degree of understanding of issues relevant to the selected techniques with respect to their impact upon and relevance to **their own** improvisation(s).

Relevant performance techniques, in addition to those presented on the examination paper, might include:
- call/response
- scale-based approaches (pentatonics, blues scales, be-bop scales, modes, directly diatonic, non-western, hybrid, etc.)
- imitation/variation
- long tones
- chromaticism
- rhythmic variation

- contour imitation
- thematic transformation
- dynamics
- instrument-specific techniques ('growls', 'pull-offs', vocalised 'interjection', 'tapping', slides and bends, etc.)
- textural issues (cymbal rolls, playing drums with hands, using instrument out of 'standard' context, etc.)
- augmentation
- diminution.

There were many outstanding and very imaginative responses to this question, which often featured sophisticated and appropriate terminology and demonstrated considerable understanding and experience in the use and development of various performance techniques in improvisatory scenarios. The 'use of non-standard/creative ways of playing the instrument' and the 'use of different registers of the instrument or voice' were the dot points most commonly discussed, usually reasonably well. A large proportion of students wrote about techniques not from the list presented, all of which were relevant and, for the most part, well presented.

There were, however, a number of papers with very short responses that lacked detail. Students who wrote about 'use of articulation' often did not appear to know how this might help them realise their improvisation. It was unfortunate to note that far too many students did not take notice of the second sentence of the question, 'Your answer **must** refer to **at least two** of the following', and did not discuss two performance techniques from the list. Unfortunately, some of these students wrote three clearly outstanding discussions, but could not be awarded full marks for the question because they didn't follow the instructions. It is crucial for students to read the questions thoroughly and follow the instructions exactly.

Section C: Aspects of performance

Students were asked to provide information about two works they had prepared for performance and/or performed; the line-up of their group or ensemble; the style of the group or ensemble; and one venue at which their group had presented a performance. Some students did not provide all, or any, of this information. The information is requested so that assessors can get a feel for the nature of the ensemble – its repertoire, genre/style and instrumentation – and for the type(s) of performance scenarios or difficulties that the given ensemble might experience. In some instances, this information is essential for assessors to make valid judgements about student responses. However, students must ensure that they do not give the actual names of group members or the school or town in which the venue was located.

Although there were some very good responses to the three parts of Question 9, it was rare for one student to present excellent responses to both Question 9a. and Question 9bii. Generally speaking, responses to Questions 9a. and 9bii. lacked detail. A number of students did not complete Section C, perhaps because they had run out of time. Once again, students are advised to answer first those questions that are worth the most marks. It was almost always clear when a student had adopted 'good' examination technique by starting with Section C (after completing the aural component) because the last four questions (Questions 9a., 9bi., 9bii. and 7c. or 8c.) were answered thoroughly and competently.

Most assessors commented that there were some interesting songs discussed in the responses, including original compositions.

Question 9a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	9	2	3	9	8	11	14	13	12	8	6	4	2	**5.9**

Relevant strategies include:
- rehearsal/preparation schedules and organisational issues
- advice from 'experts'
- issues related to acoustics
- placement of the instruments/players relative to each other (for enhanced hearing, visual contact, etc.)
- placement of monitors ('foldback')
- use of graphic (or parametric) equalisation
- intonation and tuning
- instrument maintenance
- use of acoustic baffles

- use of sound enhancement/alteration devices (for example, digital delay, reverb, echo, distortion, overdrive, etc.)
- placement of amplifiers.

Responses to this question ranged from extremely good answers that showed excellent understanding of the technical considerations relevant to a successful performance in a certain type of venue, to somewhat vague and insignificant comments that lacked conviction.

The most common technical considerations relating to sound production that were identified and described were:
- rehearsal/preparation schedules and various other more general organisational issues
- issues related to acoustics
- the positioning of members and/or instruments and/or equipment in the ensemble
- use of public address (P.A.) systems, microphones and/or amplifiers, especially with respect to maintenance issues and the availability of 'spares'.

The best responses that focused on issues of acoustics demonstrated a clear awareness of the acoustic properties of materials used in the construction of the given performance venue. Many students were able to demonstrate knowledge of the acoustic properties of instruments within their ensemble and, importantly, how this knowledge could be used as a strategy to minimise musical problems in performance. Some students skilfully described their experimentation with the position of instruments within their ensembles and how their sound had been affected by moving instrumentalists into different positions. Most importantly, all of the excellent responses were focused directly upon **strategies** that **their** ensemble used to minimise musical problems in performance.

Unfortunately, a number of answers focused on issues related to only one or two strategies. Many students were not able to provide enough detail for this question; they **identified** strategies but were not able to describe them with sufficient breadth, depth and/or relevance. 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'. Although this is a worthwhile strategy, it does not describe **how** doing so might minimise musical problems in performance. Many students made sound production/sound reinforcement the basis for all three of their strategies. Although this is of course possible, few of the students who adopted this approach delivered a worthwhile third strategy.

Many students overlooked the need to place the description within the context of their own group or ensemble. Such answers usually focused on issues of technology and it was clear to assessors that they were almost always prepared beforehand – they read like textbook definitions that students attempted to fit to the question. Many students identified and described the acoustic aspects of the space within which they had performed but failed to link this to how this awareness was or could be used to minimise musical problems in performance.

9bi.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	19	3	8	8	61	2.9

Despite this question offering students four marks for simply identifying approaches for realising stylistic characteristics, some students were not able to articulate these. Often it seemed that students were somehow confused by the word 'realise' and/or did not know how one might adopt an approach to achieve particular stylistic attributes. It appeared that some students were not even aware of the need to know about or understand stylistic attributes – these elements are at the core of Units 3 and 4. In this outcome, students must learn about relevant stylistic characteristics that will assist them to develop successful performances.

9bii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Average
%	32	4	7	5	7	7	8	8	7	6	5	2	2	4.1

When responding to this question, students needed to establish a link between each of the selected styles and the strategies used to make their performances 'authentic' or consistent with each of the styles identified.

High-scoring responses often referred to:
- rhythmic interpretation
- articulations, ornaments and embellishments
- pitch and intonation issues

- phrasing
- dynamics and contrast
- bends, multi-phonics
- use of improvisation
- use of effects (sound enhancement/alteration devices such digital delay, reverb, echo, distortion, overdrive, etc.)
- (planned) interaction with the audience ('working the crowd')
- historical/conventional and/or personal interpretation of works within the context of the performance style(s)
- extra-musical elements
- analytical considerations
- comparative role/prominence of instruments/voice(s) at given times
- experimentation with different interpretative emphases
- formalisation of the arrangement, especially labelling of sections and the nature of musical elements (for example, density, variation, dynamics, etc.)
- isolation of technical challenges and potential problems with a view to reducing, eliminating or at least dealing with them in performance
- listening to different recordings of the work and/or the various ways to present original composition(s).

There were some excellent responses to this question which clearly showed that students had spent time working through relevant issues and considerations of realising the various characteristics of their particular styles. Students who answered this question well often mentioned rehearsal strategies that included listening to other performances of the same works and playing other music in the same style in order to realise nuances of the style.

Most students successfully identified at least two approaches, but sometimes neglected to relate them to the works they had performed. For example, 'rehearsal' and 'use of specific equipment' were often selected for discussion (from Question 9bi.), but students rarely explored how a selected approach enabled the realisation of a particular characteristic of the style(s). More common were simplistic statements about rehearsing the music over and over or addressing issues of balance; for example, 'We had a guitarist who always played too loud so we had to get him to turn down all the time'. These observations did not address the styles of the pieces nor did they articulate approaches used to ensure the realisation of the stylistic characteristics of the works prepared and/or performed.

The most successful approach was to start from the perspective of stylistic characteristics, identify approaches for realising these characteristics and then discuss them systematically for Question 9bii., always linking them to the notion of ensuring the realisation of the stylistic characteristics of the contrasting works already identified. Students should be encouraged to research and identify the stylistic characteristics of all pieces in their performance programs. The maintenance of rehearsal journals, where this information can be kept and referred to, would help students come to understand how they can realise stylistic correctness in their performance preparation and performance practice.

Average Marks

	Section B (%)	Section C (%)	Sections B & C (%)	Whole exam
All papers	49.7	46.1	47.9	51.5
Improvisation responses	50.5	37.9	44.4	49.8
Part-writing responses	54.1	56.5	55.3	55.2

Note: Approximately 50 students did not attempt either Question 7 (Part-writing) or Question 8 (Improvisation). Absent students are not included in these figures.