

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9703/11 Listening</p>

Key messages

- Use specific musical examples that are clearly recognisable
- Read the question carefully and make sure the response is entirely relevant and focused
- Choose appropriate repertoire for comparison, focusing on music and not lyrics

General comments

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

Most papers delved straight into answering the question, where some others unnecessarily included much irrelevant information in lengthy introductions or conclusions, which did not add anything significant to the response. Where candidates answered a question with a response more suited to a different question, it was not possible to give full credit.

Introductions, especially where they contained material not directly relevant to the question, tended to detract from the quality of a response, not least because the time taken to write them could have been more productively spent providing more detail in examples; responses were generally more successful when they were efficiently expressed, entirely relevant and non-repetitive.

Handwriting was generally legible and the standard of English was mostly good.

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

The quoting of track timings is not helpful, as examiners do not have access to the same recordings used in any given examination session. Tempi vary wildly between interpretations of the set and core works; it is more sensible for candidates to refer to the structure of a piece of music when locating examples, and /or describe the music clearly and chronologically.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

This section requires close familiarity with the prescribed works; the best responses used vivid commentaries and well-chosen examples to answer the question relevantly. Some responses seemed to be written on a first or second hearing of the set work, and needed to provide more formal detail, as well as describe with more clarity what was being heard.

- 1 This question was generally well handled. The accuracy of the commentary was important, as well as the balance between detail and what was significant.
- 2 Some candidates missed the crucial wording of the question, which asked for a comparison between the Menuet and the Trio in Mozart's movement, and only briefly a comparison with Beethoven's. Some chose to compare the whole of Mozart's work with the whole of Beethoven's. Most candidates knew the essential points for comparison, with a few covering all significant similarities and differences.
- 3 Candidates answered this question quite well on the whole. The piano's role in the three variations was well understood, as was its relationship to the other instruments. Less successful was candidates' ability to relate the variations to the Theme.

Section B

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

- 4 Questions about Berlioz are usually very popular with candidates. Generally, there was a good understanding of the effects of dynamic contrasts, and an ability to locate significant examples. Some candidates drifted too often from a focus on dynamics, referring as well to instrumentation, tempo and texture; such observations indicated familiarity with the music, but could not contribute to evidence of understanding in relation to the question.
- 5 Usually, candidate responses to this question were a little uneven, with either the Debussy or the Smetana known better than the other. It was necessary to offer an opinion, which needed to be supported by the musical understanding; the most successful responses were more logical in this regard.
- 6 This was a less popular question, as tends to be the case with questions that do not specifically mention a Core Work. It was not well answered on the whole, with weaker responses not considering a variety of night-time moods or scenes.

Section C

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

- 7 Most candidates went for the obvious reference to patronage, which was more or less successful depending on the accuracy and depth of historical understanding. Comparisons with the modern day were generally stronger, with candidates able to draw on their own experiences.
- 8 Relatively few candidates chose to answer this question. A limited understanding of syncopation was in evidence, and surprisingly little reference to World Music styles. Specific musical examples were most helpful in illustrating different syncopations.

- 9** The interpretation of 'authenticity' tended not to relate to historically accurate performance, although candidates were able to do well even without this understanding. The better informed candidates were able to give especially pertinent examples to support their points about authenticity.
- 10** Those who answered this question were generally well informed about the trumpet, its development and its various roles. Occasional confusion arose over dates, as well as the distinction between, and chronology of, the keyed and the valve trumpets. Stronger responses included a wide range of specific musical examples to illustrate points.

MUSIC

<p>Paper 9703/12 Listening</p>
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General comments

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Most papers delved straight into answering the question, where some others unnecessarily included much irrelevant information in lengthy introductions or conclusions, which did not add anything significant to the response. Where candidates answered a question with a response more suited to a different question, it was not possible to give full credit.

Introductions, especially where they contained material not directly relevant to the question, tended to detract from the quality of a response, not least because the time taken to write them could have been more productively spent providing more detail in examples; responses were generally more successful when they were efficiently expressed, entirely relevant and non-repetitive.

Handwriting was generally legible and the standard of English was mostly good.

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

The quoting of track timings is not helpful, as examiners do not have access to the same recordings used in any given examination session. Tempi vary wildly between interpretations of the set and core works; it is more sensible for candidates to refer to the structure of a piece of music when locating examples, and /or describe the music clearly and chronologically.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

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- 1 This question was generally well handled. The accuracy of the commentary was important, as well as the balance between detail and what was significant.
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Section C

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

- 7 Most candidates went for the obvious reference to patronage, which was more or less successful depending on the accuracy and depth of historical understanding. Comparisons with the modern day were generally stronger, with candidates able to draw on their own experiences.
- 8 Relatively few candidates chose to answer this question. A limited understanding of syncopation was in evidence, and surprisingly little reference to World Music styles. Specific musical examples were most helpful in illustrating different syncopations.

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<p>Paper 9703/13 Listening</p>
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Comments on specific questions

Section A

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- 1 This was a fairly straightforward question, and was slightly more popular among candidates as a result. Candidates were differentiated through the level of detailed knowledge they possessed about the movement. Most were able to outline the basic structure, but few were able to provide the level of detail needed for the highest bands.
- 2 There was some good commentary on different textures in Beethoven's *Clarinet Trio*, with the key to success being careful selection of examples. Some candidates were not focused on texture, and referred to all sorts of other musical features, showing some familiarity with the music.
- 3 The strongest responses to this question were able to negotiate the means of comparison with a clearly structured essay. The basis for comparison initially could have been the structure. Most were able to identify the Menuet versus the Scherzo, and weaker responses could have been improved by giving more details about how Beethoven innovated on the form.

Section B

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

- 4 About a quarter of candidates opted for this question, which was generally well answered. Most candidates focused on the *idée fixe*, which was a perfectly logical approach, but very few were able to give a high level of detail in describing the movements selected.
- 5 This question was very popular, with over half of candidates opting to respond. The best answers focused consistently on the use of the orchestra, and where other features were mentioned, they were framed in terms of the instruments. Weaker responses needed to focus more consistently on the orchestra, and select significant moments. An understanding of the intended images was also helpful for candidates to make convincing links between instruments and effects.
- 6 This question was least popular, as it required candidates to refer to music outside the core works. Of those who answered the question, very few managed to suggest *different* night-time moods and scenes, and most focused on the general idea of 'night', or even 'moonlight', which is just one aspect of night. It is important for candidates to be familiar with works outside the core, as it improves their understanding of how composers create effects.

Section C

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

- 7 This was a very popular question, with almost half of candidates opting for it. There was a good range of perspectives offered on the issue of 'old' and 'new', and the best responses were nuanced in their consideration of all the possible angles.

- 8** Given the study of the set works, and presumably some other examples of these sorts of pieces, candidates should have been able to describe a range of formal structures and give examples. A few candidates managed to offer a broad enough overview, and fewer still gave some excellent examples in support of definitions.
- 9** About a fifth of candidates opted for this question, which was not well-answered on the whole. Greater consideration could have been given to other traditions, which would have made for more complete responses.
- 10** This was the least popular question, but those who answered it were able to consider the question from a range of viewpoints, with some reference to copyright and patronage.

MUSIC

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

Key messages

- Centres should include photocopies (which will be later destroyed) of the music for Element 1 and for the final assessment in Element 2.
- There should be three separate assessments of each Element 2 discipline, completed over a period of not less than 6 months.
- Element 3 exercises should include one given part throughout, and the source of the exercise should be a named composer, not the candidate.
- Centre assessors should provide comments in support of marks awarded on all Working Mark Sheets.
- Centre assessors should check recordings for playability before despatch, preferably on more than one machine.
- Centre assessors should check paperwork and addition of marks before despatch, using the checklist provided with the assessment forms.

General comments

The wide variety of work submitted across all four Elements demonstrated that most candidates had played to their strengths, with much evidence of skilled music-making. Almost all work reached a satisfactory level of attainment and there were some accomplished performances in Elements 1 and 2. Most Centres included all the paperwork required, but there were some missing Working Mark Sheets and some arithmetical errors or incorrect transcription of marks onto the MS1. Centres should refer to the checklist provided with these forms on the website, which also gives details of suggested formats for video and audio recordings.

In Element 1, candidates were mostly well prepared and there were many confident and highly skilled performances, across a wide variety of traditions. Many Centres invited an audience to the recording, which is to be encouraged if candidates feel it is helpful. The mandatory spoken introduction is assessed in Criterion E of the mark scheme. Merely naming the pieces to camera will not access the higher mark bands: candidates should briefly explain the principal features of each piece that are characteristic of its place in the repertoire. This short introduction does not need to be done from memory. Recitals should be recorded as one continuous performance, but it is acceptable to retune between items. It is worth doing a sound check immediately before recording to ensure that the assessed performer can be clearly heard – some accompaniments were excessively loud. Total playing time, not including the spoken introduction, should be between 6 and 10 minutes, and candidates should perform more than one piece. Some repeats in the music may be omitted in order to fit the time limit, although this should not compromise the integrity of the music. It is also expected that the majority of candidates in Element 1 will perform solo music, with an accompanist or backing track if the tradition of the music or genre demands it.

Element 2 revealed the diversity of music-making across the world, and there were many outstanding examples, including string quartets, rock bands, live music theatre, jazz groups, and many examples of World Music. Centres are reminded that there must be **three** Element 2 recordings submitted for each discipline, and these should be spaced out so that candidates have time to develop their skills. There were many excellent examples of large ensembles and choirs submitted this year but ideally at least one of the assessments should have candidates performing an individual part without any doubling. When recording large group ensembles, the candidate must be both visible and musically identifiable, so it is helpful if the camera focuses solely on each candidate being assessed for at least some of the recording. This is particularly important if the candidate is not submitting Element 1. Some of the best practice in larger instrumental ensembles used a camera placed near the candidate's music stand.

Teachers should ensure that there is a real extension of skills across the two disciplines. For example, candidates who offer 'Performing in an Ensemble' and 'Accompanying' but work with groups of musicians in

both Elements may be demonstrating similar skills and marks may therefore have to be adjusted by the Moderator. Centre assessors' comments are vital in this Element and Moderators consider them very carefully. The mark scheme places much emphasis on progress and many assessors rightly award their candidates very high marks. However, assessment must also take into account the difficulty of the music performed. Candidates playing music that is extremely simple in the final assessment should not be placed in the top band of the assessment criteria, even if they have worked very hard. The final recording should be of a complete piece, rather than an excerpt.

There was a wide variety of work submitted for Element 3, and Moderators saw some excellent submissions where there had been a significant learning journey. There is considerable freedom to construct a course that suits the candidate, but it must be noted that free composition in a pastiche style will be unlikely to achieve high marks. Regrettably, there were several examples of this, and teachers are advised to familiarise themselves with the requirements of this Element before starting their teaching programme. In each exercise, candidates should work with a given part, which should be from named music by a composer, rather than something they have written themselves. The assessment criteria focus largely on harmony and tonality (including modulation), a command of bass line or melodic construction (which need not be Western), an ability to infer the harmony implied in the given part and the continuation of a given texture. Teachers should therefore ensure that the course enables access to all aspects of the mark scheme. Many Centres provided a detailed scheme of work (which is mandatory), and it is always helpful to see evidence of teacher marking. One Centre colour-coded their exercises so it was very easy to differentiate between the given part and the candidate's work.

In Element 4, the best compositions were imaginative and well-structured, with evidence of careful selection, refinement and editing. There were some delightful examples of song-writing and programme music, and some skilled pastiche compositions. However, some submissions struggled to achieve a good balance between repetition and contrast, and many candidates would have benefited from greater teacher input relatively early in the course. Active listening and aural awareness are essential parts of the compositional process and candidates should be encouraged to be self-critical from the outset. Live, or partially live, recordings can be beneficial in allowing candidates to try out aspects of their music on real instruments, rather than simply relying on technology. The more familiar teachers are with the development of the work, the more secure the eventual assessment.

Most candidates used a score-writing program and in assessment there was often a tendency to place such pieces automatically in the higher mark bands of Criterion E (Notation and Presentation), even if there was little evidence of dynamics, expression or idiomatic instrumental writing. Centre assessors are reminded that the recording and the score/detailed notes are of equal weighting in Criterion E. Candidates should be encouraged to utilise features such as phrasing and articulation marks from the outset and to check these rigorously before burning the CD. Preliminary listening, from a variety of sources, should be outlined in the commentary, which ideally should give insight into compositional thinking and stylistic development. Some were merely a statement of the title and a brief note about the instrumentation. If a musical score is not provided (although there are relatively few traditions where this is completely inappropriate), the commentary must provide a particularly vivid and detailed musical explanation of the composition. This should, if appropriate, include specific information about technical procedures.

MUSIC

Paper 9703/03
Performing

Key messages

- Candidates should select focused repertoire that is within their technical capability.
- In the spoken introduction to their performance, candidates should demonstrate their understanding of their chosen focus.

General comments

The majority of candidates had prepared thoroughly for this component and some recitals were of an exceptionally high standard. There were outstanding performances on piano, harpsichord, oboe, violin, viola, cello, electric guitar and percussion. Focused repertoire chosen by candidates ranged from Baroque keyboard works to the music of Ravel, Sondheim and Guns N' Roses. A number of candidates chose music based on the folk culture of their own country.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate their technical ability well by performing a programme of music which was within their capabilities. Some chose repertoires which were too challenging and so were not able to show full aural awareness, stylistic understanding or a real sense of performance. While most recitals were of the required length, a few were very short limiting the opportunity for candidates to demonstrate a range of technical skill and understanding.

Almost all candidates had thought carefully about the repertoire for their performance and were able to demonstrate appropriate stylistic understanding of their chosen focus. However, sometimes, there was no obvious focus linking the pieces performed. Understanding of clearly focused repertoire must be shown for candidates to access the higher mark bands in assessment criterion E: Stylistic Understanding.

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

Most Centres provided competent accompanists and suitable venues for the performance to take place. Some candidates performed to an audience, large or small. This often contributed to the sense of occasion. Most performances were presented on DVD recordings of good quality and Centres had ensured that individual candidates could be readily identified. In most instances the camera had been placed suitably, ensuring that the performer and their fingers/instrument were clearly visible. Care should be taken when placing microphones to ensure that a good sound balance is achieved between the candidate and any accompaniment.

Centres are advised to check the DVD recordings are complete and that the DVDs function correctly before submission. Copies of the music performed by each candidate should be submitted with the recording.

Centres are reminded that submissions for the different components of the examination should be packaged separately as they are required by different examiners.

MUSIC

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

- Ensure consistency of labelling and presentation of written and recorded examination documents.
- Candidates should not model their submissions too closely on a single piece they have studied/listened to.
- Candidates should show some independent creativity in the composing decisions they make whilst informing themselves from a wide and varied range of listening.

General comments

Examiners were grateful to the majority of centres who were very well organised, carefully presenting work for assessment and conscientiously following all the syllabus requirements in regards to both the process and content of the composing work and the administration requirements of this component. A clearly labelled CD with accurate track list is essential. Successful centres ensured the accurate labelling and submission of discreet components separately as required by the examining board.

The commentary required for each composition

The syllabus explains clearly that there is no requirement for a lengthy commentary. It is important that candidates refer to musical interests, enthusiasms and/or listening as this gives examiners insight into the aural world with which the candidate is familiar. A lengthy description of what is already demonstrated in the score and recording is not required.

Centres are encouraged to engage their candidates in helpful discussion about their use of the term 'song' and its meaning in their commentaries. In popular culture, 'song' is increasingly misleadingly used to describe any piece or movement of music, but in academic studies at A Level, the conventional distinction between a composition for voice(s) and an instrumental piece is important to preserve to ensure clarity.

The commentary in place of a score

When the style of music composed cannot be notated in a conventional way, (e.g. electro-acoustic music that might be graphically notated and described in a commentary) it is important to give full details of the compositional process and the way the music is assembled using software, or communicated to performers for performance. Some candidates successfully use various software programmes to convey their compositional intentions. It is inappropriate to include the un-scored 'improvisations' of other performers because there is too much ambiguity in terms of the credit due to the performer as opposed to the candidate. Group 'compositions' are not permitted.

Listening influences

Many candidates were captivated and motivated by a range of listening experiences. Some illustrative examples included:

- The work of a single composer: Messiaen - *Turangalîla-Symphonie/Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*.
- Metal / Progressive metal, e.g. *Foo Fighters/Toska*.
- Performance repertoire, e.g. violin duet, Bartok, Prokofiev – with particular influence on harmonic language incorporating the music of Kodaly.
- Anime/video film scores – these in addition to the influence of more conventional film scores.

Some candidates were rather influenced by a single minimalistic piano work that might have had considerable commercial success, for example, but the emulation of which did not allow for the demonstration of a sufficient range of knowledge, techniques and skills at this level. Similarly, candidates should be wary of presenting music of an unvarying mood that may be modelled on a favourite anime score. The question here might be whether or not the music can stand alone without the visual storyline. As with the previous example, candidates must also think of the assessment criteria and be conscious of the need to meet a range of criteria in order to succeed in this context.

Materials

Candidates presented musical materials that demonstrated imagination and constructive skill. Some examples of the ideas presented this session included:

- Programmatic ideas: literary influences featured strongly this session following the experiences and feelings of characters, for example, in ancient or contemporary texts from a range of traditions.
- Rock instrumental genre: compositions here drew heavily on personal instrumental expertise and were often multi-tracked by the composer to ensure performing and compositional authenticity.
- Film music: successful ideas were carefully shaped following a period of consideration and exploration of this genre; some scores lacked a nuanced and sophisticated response.
- Influence of time and place: Three Latin jazz movements/three baroque pastiche dances/childhood – three viewpoints.

Use of Materials

Many candidates chose the language of western tonal harmony to frame their ideas but only a minority demonstrated skill and understanding in the use of it. Candidates who considered development, extension and transformation of their initial ideas were able to shape a more organic whole.

Some candidates used the technique of quotation or 'borrowing' from the ideas of another composer. If this is a literal quotation it must be correctly acknowledged in the commentary. This is a practice composers have legitimately used from time to time. Whilst candidates do not get credit for the borrowed material in its initial form they will receive credit for what they do creatively with the material.

Structure

With guidelines that suggest a single composition of no longer than eight minutes many candidates benefitted from thinking carefully about the sections or structural design to contain their ideas in order to build a piece that justified its length. There is the possibility that a submission may consist, for example of 2 or three songs but these must be 'conceived as a whole' and be clearly related to one another. An effective single song of less than three minutes was not able to access the full range of marks because it would be considered an underweight submission. Some candidates managed this with skill and sensitivity. Where two instrumental pieces were presented, for example, with no apparent unifying factor, candidates are unable to access the higher mark bands under 'Structure' because they have modified the syllabus task.

Some compositions built up interest with additional layers of material but a piece of six – eight minutes will invariably demand conscious development of materials or the use of contrasting ideas and techniques. In several compositions, candidates did not always consider the rich possibilities of modulation available to them.

Using theme and variations, candidates need to explore a range of variation techniques including minor and major treatments, and alternative time signature and rhythmic possibilities. Some compositions 'rambled' when materials that could sustain a three minute piece, were awkwardly stretched into a longer piece.

Use of Medium and Texture

Many candidates used performing expertise and personal understanding of instruments to beneficially inform their work. Some recognised the role of creating an atmospheric production ambience in the context of anime scores. Materials in this genre are often quite simple; candidates are reminded to think carefully about the range of skills and expertise in creative work at this level. If a composition is not intended for 'real instruments', but for synthesised emulations that cannot be reproduced 'live' the score must indicate this clearly.

Notation and Presentation

Candidates who recognised the need to develop their technology skills in order to produce an expressive sequenced recording found that the time spent was well rewarded. Others chose instead to record a live performance, particularly where the straightforward combination of piano and a single instrument, for example, made this a reasonable route to take.

The use of a mixed recording approach also worked well for many candidates – live voices over a synthesised backing tracking or live piano and voice with synth string worked particularly well. Some candidates annotated the score with helpful signposts as to the plot of narrative compositions.

The layout of scores submitted by candidates looked more professional with good use of the ‘hide empty staves’ facility, together with legible but economical use of the music on the page. Submissions consisting of one bar per page, single sided for 100 pages are now less common.

Successful candidates showed attention to the quality of their audio recordings, questioning the ubiquity of mp3 default with its compressed format. CD quality is recommended for its ease of access, as it is so widely compatible with most players.

Centres are once again to be commended for the support given to candidates particularly in the realisation of their compositional ideas in live performance.

MUSIC

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

Key Messages

- Candidates should be reminded that the investigation and report should involve study of pieces of music, not just a subject loosely associated with the theme of music in general.
- The report should be accompanied by a CD of recorded examples of the music being investigated.

General comments

There was a wide variety of reports, with both a range of subjects and levels. A few candidates failed to note that there should be no overlap in the music chosen with Paper 1 (the 18th and 19th century Viennese tradition or music associated with Night).

Many reports did not reach the suggested length of approximately 2500 words with some very short reports. There were also cases of plagiarism, despite both the candidate and teacher signing a declaration that the work was that of the candidate. Candidates varied in their quality of referencing, some providing a detailed bibliography, noting in the text when referring to a specific source, while others referenced little or nothing and did not provide a bibliography at all.

The most successful projects were often those where the candidate had a personal link to the music they were studying. This was sometimes via the instrument they played and could involve solo or ensemble repertoire, or music from a particular culture, representing their family background. They then carefully selected pieces of music in order to illustrate the judgements they wished to make.

Weaker investigation and reports often had titles such linking music with specific areas of life and made very little reference to actual pieces of music. Candidates here were sometimes able to gain significant marks for B: Contextual understanding, but could be awarded less credit in all the other areas. Several candidates decided to investigate video game music, with varying results. The more successful investigations had a clear focus and included many carefully chosen examples to illustrate this focus.

Other candidates began promisingly. However, initial promise was sometimes unfulfilled, as candidates only briefly mentioned specific pieces of music, with perhaps just one or two points on each, or only mentioning the titles of the pieces in passing.

Finally, candidates for whom the primary mode of investigation (syllabus page 14) was listening, were consistently more successful than those candidates who had read about music on various websites.

Candidates and teachers are encouraged to read through the reports carefully before submitting them to ensure they are clear, free of error and meet all of the requirements for the task.