

MUSIC

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 28	29 - 36

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There were many impressive essays, with an interesting range of topics. Most were based on music, and well planned, with some thoughtful and industrious research, some with an excellent range and use of sources, confident & engagingly written. Some effectively tackled complex issues, such as: “To what extent do Mozart’s *Haydn Quartets* demonstrate an influence from Haydn string quartets?” or “Dynamics of Tension & Release in two preludes and fugues from J.S. Bach’s *WTC book II*”. Others impressed with analysis or comparing/contrasting works of contemporary composers. Generally most essays were suitable, focused on specific music pieces; with variable degrees of success in adhering to the general guidelines and fulfilling the assessment criteria to the full. The weaker essays demonstrated inadequacies in the application of research methods, topic definition, selection & use of sources, research strategy and relevance of argument. Some provided a general analysis of pieces, but with no real rationale for the choice of topic, nor with a specific research question in mind.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A: research question

There was generally effective definition in the research questions. Most of them indicated a precise range of music to be used in the research. A few essays had questions that were too broad for effective treatment, and some articulated questions that did not correspond with the research undertaken. Some research questions were not articulated in the introduction, or were inappropriate for a music extended essay.

B: introduction

This was a mixed area, and not always effectively addressed. There was too often little or no attempt to relate the question to pre-existing knowledge, thus not effectively setting the context of the research question. Similarly, information on the relevance of the research was sometimes lacking and personal reasons for involvement were presented instead.

C: investigation

Many essays were well planned with a good range of sources, both primary and secondary. Some others were limited relying on a few, not always reliable internet sources. Some included irrelevant data (unrelated interviews or irrelevant musical analysis). Other essays were weak in this area, demonstrating little understanding of research methods, and not carefully selecting relevant material that was relevant to the research question.

D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

This was mixed, with many essays showing a very good knowledge and understanding of the music under study. Others were less successful, and showed mixed or limited musical evidence for these qualities.

E: reasoned argument

Ideas were generally logical and coherent, demonstrating variable degrees of argumental development. Others were not so effective or relevant, especially essays that were not musically based, often relying on a narrative and purely historical approach to the topic in hand, often interlaced with superficial and/or unsupported comments. In a few essays candidates extrapolated the findings of their research (of at most one or two specific pieces) as if sufficient to draw general conclusions on a composer's style as a whole, which subtracted validity from the research argument.

F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

There was poor to very effective application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject. Often analysis would be effectively applied, but with little evaluation of the evidence acquired by the analysis. Low marks were awarded here to those essays that did not place music at the heart of their analysis.

G: use of language appropriate to the subject

Marks awarded here varied according to whether an effective understanding of musical terminology was apparent. Some essays were excellent, and demonstrated a high level of skilful application of musical terminology. Fewer marks were awarded to those essays which used such language, but inaccurately, or essays that did not place music at the heart of their analysis.

H: conclusion

There were generally appropriate conclusions, though some introduced new material, or comments and evaluations that were not evidenced in the preceding discussions in the essay. In a few instances, no conclusion was included.

I: formal presentation

A well attended area generally, though a few essays failed to provide any references, and sometimes inappropriately presenting the research as if it is the sole candidate's findings. Bibliographies sometimes included material that was not used in the essay, and vice versa. CDs were sometimes included as a substitute for examples in the essay body, which meant that the examiner was called upon to do the analysis, and not the candidate.

J: abstract

Abstracts were not always complete or sufficiently clear. Several were too brief and general, with the precise scope of the investigation and the conclusions were sometimes only hinted at. It is important that abstracts contain specific information on each of the three components required, to effectively summarise the essay.

K: holistic judgment

Most essays displayed some level of initiative, depth of understanding and insight. The best essays were exceptional in this respect, and showed a writing and research competency beyond the candidates' years.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Candidates may be reassured that getting well acquainted with a specific work of music is a sufficient research topic in and of itself. Revealing the work, in context and with detail is sufficient. However, the best essays will show a rationale for the choice of topic, with a research question that allows for an exploration of the music from a specific angle. Candidates will have asked of themselves 'what do I want to find out about this music, how do I go about it, and what resources will I need to support my evaluation of the research?'. The use of more specialised sources is to be encouraged, and candidates should be meticulous about tracking the variety of sources consulted and referencing them throughout the essay.

Some essays lose marks due to a lack of compliance with the component's formal guidelines. Please ensure candidates check these, perhaps self-evaluating their work in accordance with the guidelines and assessment criteria before handing in the completed essay.

The abstract should clearly communicate what the investigation is about, and its precise scope and findings. Candidates should be encouraged to write it only after they have written the essay; and to test its clarity and effectiveness by reading it to others to see what is communicated. Too often the abstract is written in the form of an introduction to the essay, and this is to be avoided.