

MUSIC

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-14	15-31	32-45	46-56	57-67	68-77	78-100

Standard level group performing

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-13	14-30	31-51	52-61	62-68	69-79	80-100

Standard level solo performing

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-13	14-30	31-48	49-59	60-71	72-81	82-100

Standard level creating

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-14	15-31	32-47	48-58	59-69	70-80	81-100

Solo performing (HL/SLS)

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-3	4-7	8-11	12-13	14-16	17-18	19-20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

A wide range of submissions, most clearly recorded. Many very impressive programmes that explored interesting repertoire and communicated effectively, demonstrating good attention to detail, expressive nuances and musical understanding. The majority of submissions largely followed requirements and guidelines. There were also some rather weak programmes, where there was tenuous technical control of the pieces selected, and a few programmes with total performing times shorter than those requested.

The large majority of recitals, however, demonstrated appropriate efforts on the part of the candidates, commitment and dedication. Accompaniment of good quality was provided in the majority of cases, where needed; with a limited number of pre-recorded, karaoke-style backing tracks of popular music numbers.

A few submissions were poorly recorded, and some impaired by pieces performed or accompanied using out of tune pianos. Not all recordings were live or delivered for audiences, as requested; a requirement that needs special attention.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Most programmes were thoughtfully selected, demonstrating a range of performing styles and challenges mostly suited to the individual's capabilities. There were clear distinctions and contrast in the repertoire. The guidelines were appropriately followed in most cases. In some programmes the candidates attempted pieces beyond their technical development, struggling to attain control and unable to deliver the musical content in a consistent manner. There were a few unaccompanied submissions where one was required, an aspect that shows an improvement from previous sessions.

Criterion B

There were some magnificent performances where the achievement in technical and musical aspects clearly surpassed what might be expected at this level. Some areas that may be improved are: formality and degree of rigor in technical training; breath control, pitch and intonation issues, rhythmic accuracy and steadiness, particularly for vocalists; as well as quality

of tone, resonance and dynamic shading in several media. Making musical sense out of the structure of a piece was also an aspect not always clearly delivered.

Criterion C

Stylistic character was generally understood and demonstrated. Vocalist performances have room for improvement as diction, consistent tone quality- and timbre variance can be more clearly understood and informed. Pop, folk, jazz, operatic or art song repertoire, for example, require clearly differentiated approaches. Drum set and electric bass performers are commended for selecting pieces thoughtfully to demonstrate stylistic range and contrast.

Criterion D

There was impressive musical understanding and communication in a good number of submissions showing commendable preparation. In some other cases, the absence of an audience impaired submissions. Some candidates demonstrated musical understanding and communication despite technical inconsistencies.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Many centres demonstrate commendable preparation of their candidates for solo performing. Others, however, have room to be much more effective, rigorous and demanding in leading candidates to attend to technical development, stylistic and expressive aspects. Pitch, intonation and rhythmic accuracy issues often impair vocal and string performance. Vocal candidates would benefit from a structured and informed approach to vocal production and technique. Strive to provide scheduled, regular opportunities for performance and feedback. Please ensure the candidate submissions are recordings of live presentations. Provide live accompaniment of good quality to pieces that require it.

Further comments

A few 6/MSP forms did not include all timings, or these had been manipulated to fit time requirements.

Several examiners expressed concerns regarding a noticeable trend from candidates towards the submission of edited or studio-produced performances instead of recordings of live musical deliveries in front of an audience.

Group performing (SLG)

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-3	4-7	8-12	13-14	15-15	16-17	18-20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There was a wide and interesting range of groups submitted, including choirs, string ensembles, symphonic bands, jazz bands, rock bands and wind ensembles. There was also evidence of creative thinking in some submissions that allowed students to present a performance in a less traditional group such as keyboard ensembles and various trios or quartets. There were fewer world music groups than in previous years. Generally, the standard was high and groups were well rehearsed, with just a few instances where the repertoire chosen was too challenging for the performers in the ensemble.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Overall, ensembles played a variety of repertoire, suitable to their abilities, and the contrasts of styles presented were generally appropriate. Candidates and their teachers seem to be investigating and performing a wide range of repertoire.

Criterion B

Technical precision from groups was generally sound, although there were perhaps fewer really outstanding groups in this respect. At times, the levels awarded by teachers for this criterion were too lenient, particularly where intonation was a major issue in the performance.

Criterion C

Where ensembles submitted a varied performance, presentations generally demonstrated a solid understanding of the appropriate musical style of the pieces. Phrasing, articulation, balance and dynamics were addressed in most cases.

Criterion D

Musical communication remained a strong positive overall. Ensembles and their directors showed good evidence of collaboration and a shared intent to meet the demands of the music, with many moving performances.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Continue to encourage and inspire students to develop the discipline for practice of fundamental musicianship. Solid rhythmic training, proper breath support, tone production and an agile technique will serve the candidates for the rest of their lives. Continue to advocate for arts education and the many positives that the arts induce, especially – in group performance – the balance of individual accountability and functioning as a member of a larger group.

Further comments

It seems that the outcome requirement in reflections is being systematically misunderstood even though it is stated clearly in the guide.

Creating (HL/SLC)

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-5	6-11	12-16	17-19	20-23	24-26	27-30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

After compositions, the order of preference was music technology, arrangement, improvisation, stylistic techniques. There was a slight increase in candidates opting for arrangement and improvisation in this session. Stylistic techniques remains the least favourite option, and it has to be said there were few high scorers in this component. Compositions presented were in a wide variety of styles and instrumental combinations. Candidates generally scored well when they were writing for instruments they were familiar with, or where they had access to real musicians who could play their compositions. Some candidates seemed not to understand fully the composition task, in that they said (in reflections) that they felt limited by the available sounds from their composition software, as if they considered the playback to be the final object, and not the composition (score) itself.

Music technology submissions were mostly songs or dance pieces, although there were some more adventurous submissions incorporating field recordings. Most successful entries here were those that made creative use of the technology with competent recording and effective production. There were several examples of songs that might well have fared better presenting a score rather than a recording as they showed little evidence of sound manipulation beyond the basic mix. There was an increased use of programmes such as Garage-Band and Logic-Pro.

It should be remembered that the music creating portfolio requires students to present work that is all their own and the many available plug-ins (drum loops, bass riffs etc.) should not be

incorporated in the students' final work. In fact, higher-scoring submissions in music technology showed flair and individuality in their handling of software. A common weakness of otherwise well-crafted music technology pieces, particularly those in 'metal' style, was the lack of melodic content. These pieces often sounded like well-produced backing tracks for songs.

There was a slight increase in the number of arrangements presented in this session. More successful arrangements were those that made creative decisions in their treatment of the music, putting the original material into a new context whilst leaving its identity discernible, going beyond transcribing the notes into a new instrumentation and created something new. Improvisations too were more present this session and most had the candidate in a group situation or playing with a backing track.

Stylistic techniques were the least favoured option, yet there were some good examples of creative writing using serial technique and some idiomatically effective songs. Weaker entries in this component showed insufficient grasp of the stylistic requirements (rules).

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

High-scoring entries showed evidence of harmonic understanding, working bass lines, countermelodies, effective texture and development and/or variation of the thematic material. Lower-scoring creations seemed to have adopted a hit-and-miss approach to harmony without any rationale other than whether it sounded acceptable on playback.

Criterion B

A greater attention to form was evident, although less present was development of the material, that is, compositions were often well organised into sections, but pieces presented in sonata form might stay in the same key from start to finish. Songs, as usual, were often well structured, following standard song forms but once again, often using straight repetition (perhaps with different words) resulting in the songs having a lack of direction.

Criterion C

Some good examples of idiomatic writing for instruments, and fewer examples of MIDI scores with implausible instrumental parts. Many candidates stated in reflections how they had written for instruments they knew, or had sought to understand how to write for. In technology creations there were cases of very competent and intelligent use of available software. Songs presented as music technology did not often score highly here as they often limited themselves to competent recording of voice and guitar or piano.

Criterion D

Some excellent scores were presented showing mature understanding of the task. Some easy marks were lost through carelessly omitting initial tempo or dynamics indications. In general, more phrase markings were needed. Candidates employing keyboard input should be especially careful to check that the printed score is correct rhythmically and that bar lines are

in the right places. With improvisations, it should be remembered that examiners are listening for the candidate's creative input, and the contribution of others present on the recording is only of interest in terms of the candidate's interaction with it. Improvisations were mostly in rock/blues/jazz formats, therefore tonal and often in conventional solo formats. More free, open improvisations were less common. This in general led to more competent-sounding results but with less spontaneity and risk-taking.

Criterion E

High-scoring submissions had breadth, development of ideas, direction and identity. These were present in all of the available options but the most effective examples were either compositions or music technology.

Criterion F

Reflections continued to be weakest in outcome, often limiting themselves to a declaration of satisfaction and not saying what had been learned, or what might have been done better. Successful reflections address the three required elements, intention, process and outcome, with clarity and intelligence. Less successful reflections lacked useful information and merely presented a description of the finished piece or were too subjective, relating personal events and feelings.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Candidates should be made aware that as well as structuring their pieces logically they need to show how they can develop material in order to give their music a sense of growth and direction. Simple variation of instrumentation, register, or harmony can add new dimension to a work. Candidates could learn to think of copy and paste as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Candidates' reflections should address the required elements stated in the *Music guide*, with the outcome including what has been learned from the creating process.

Further comments

It seems that the outcome requirement in reflections is being systematically misunderstood even though it is stated clearly in the guide. Candidates are very often just saying how the music has come out and how they are satisfied.

Paper one (Listening paper) (HL)

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-11	12-23	24-31	32-39	40-46	47-54	55-100

Paper one (Listening paper) (SLS, SLG, SLC)

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-8	9-17	18-31	32-38	39-45	46-52	53-80

General comments

Individual comments from examiners suggest that many candidates had performed well on Section B questions this time round, particularly with regard to the pop/jazz and world music questions. On the other hand, many examiners also found the overall standard of achievement disappointing and, as in previous years, the chief cause of concern was the substitution of learned information for critical engagement with the specific questions posed, particularly in Section A. The frequency with which certain information was duplicated moreover suggested that much of it derived from revision aids, perhaps internet-based. This implies a persistent problem of attitude towards the examination, which views it as an obstacle to be overcome by shrewd adaptation of ready-prepared answers, rather than as a challenge to demonstrate one's skills in spontaneous critical reflection.

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Among the areas of difficulty cited were: lack of in-depth analytical understanding of the Rossini prescribed score; problems locating evidence precisely, particularly owing to different editions of the Rossini score; inadequate use of/justification for terminology; lack of analytical discussion (Section A); and difficulties demonstrating 'understanding rather than recall' or 'providing relevant content'. The meaning of the term 'Western art music' in Q1 also created specific difficulties for many candidates (see below).

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates appeared to fare better in Section B generally, particularly in identification of musical features, and particularly in the world music sections. Many also displayed detailed knowledge of the Gershwin prescribed score in Section A.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1

Candidates generally revealed a detailed familiarity with the score, and they seemed primed to offer precise examples. The strongest responses were also clear about the meaning of 'Western art music', with several candidates presenting arguments clearly and in a balanced way and/or focusing on Gershwin's attempt at fusing WAM and jazz. On the other hand there was often confusion over this same term, despite the fact that it is standard terminology, and actually appears in the section describing the listening paper in the *Music guide* (p. 27). It was often understood in a geographical sense, or equated with jazz/popular music or the 'Classical period'.

Question 2

Higher-scoring candidates discussed various textures, recognised doublings, etc., while others displayed ingenuity in interpreting the term 'relationship' to suit their purposes. Common weaknesses here were: describing vocal and/or instrumental parts in isolation, rather than the relationship between them; repeating the same point with reference to more than one movement; and a frequent lack of appropriate analytical tools and terminology ('doubling', 'harmonic support', 'homophony/polyphony' etc.).

Question 3 Higher Level Well-prepared candidates were able to produce a number of comparisons and contrasts, with the more advanced amongst them proving adept at finding significant links. Common problems here were: including pulse, metre, tempo (and even instrumentation – 'rhythm section') under the heading of rhythm; incorporating other irrelevant material (pitch, timbre, dynamics etc.) in the hope of scoring extra marks; and finding significant links between the works.

Question 4 Higher Level/Question 3 Standard Level

This was a more popular choice than question 5 (HL)/question 4 (SL), possibly because the score facilitates analysis. Common strengths here were identification of the theme and variations form, and knowledge of the context. On the other hand, many candidates clearly did not understand variation form, focusing only on melodies or motifs rather than other features such as harmony. Further recurrent problems were inaccurate locations, misreading of the time signature, and incorrect transposition of the clarinet part.

Question 5 Higher Level/Question 4 Standard Level

Many candidates demonstrated good aural analysis skills here, for example, identifying the pitches in the opening *ostinato* or describing the overall ABA form. Often, however, responses lacked detail or revealed unfamiliarity with the musical style/context (referring, for example, to 'atonality' or 'expressionism').

Question 6 Higher Level/Question 5 Standard Level

Candidates were usually good at identifying the main elements (key, metre, instrumentation etc.), the verse/chorus structure, and the general (Latino/Hispanic) context. More specific identification of the context or recognition of the fusion elements, however, generally proved more difficult, with *mariachi* a popular guess at the former.

Question 7 Higher Level/Question 6 Standard Level

Again, many candidates were able to recognise the African context, the 'call and response' structure, and key elements such as instrumentation. However, some made use of theoretical concepts/terminology inappropriate for this culture – for example, 'B major' (rather than 'pentatonic'), 'chord progressions', 'modulations', or even 'singing out of tune'.

General comments on Section B:

Candidates generally seemed to fare better in this section than in Section A, with many adopting a structured approach to the questions. Most proved capable of identifying basic musical features such as medium, metre, tempo, tonality, and large-scale structural detail. However, examiners also identified a number of common weaknesses here, including: a lack of skills in musical analysis; failure to address aspects of the excerpts other than structural detail; not substantiating claims with precisely located evidence; supporting contextual observations with prior knowledge, rather than reference to the extract itself; limiting aural perceptions to recognition of instruments/voices; providing descriptions rather than discussion; and segmenting the music into units too small to provide a clear picture of overall form.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Listen to as many different types of music as possible.
- Introduce students to basic tools of analysis and familiarise them with common forms.
- Practise by writing analyses of the music heard; in particular, concentrate on specific details rather than generalisation.
- Practise skills of critical analysis justified by precise evidence.
- Find different ways of analysing music, perhaps through moving/dancing the rhythms, exploring the texture through group movement/dance, or shaping the phrasing through space.
- Introduce students to basic historical periodization of music.
- Emphasise that higher marks are not achieved by (i) generalised information learnt by rote and brought to the examination room or (ii) irrelevant material provided in the hope it will earn extra marks. Particularly in Section A, candidates should aim instead to engage creatively with the specific question.
- Encourage candidates to support their points with specific score references/timings. They should, however, be discouraged from using page numbers in references to scores, owing to the different editions in use.
- Persistent errors should be addressed with regard to the following terms: syncopation (not the same as offbeats/'oom-cha' rhythms); homophony (not the same as 'melody and accompaniment'); polyrhythm (does not mean simultaneous use of different

rhythms); hemiola (does not mean 'two against three').

- Scripts should be legible; many candidates lost marks because of indecipherable answers.

Regarding Section B specifically, note that:

- answers need not be in the form of a structured essay, as in Section A
- any discussion of elements at the beginning should be limited to those which apply globally (for example, tempo), in order to avoid generalisation (or duplication when the same specific details are repeated under structure)
- the best approach for the body of the answer (apart from discussion of context and overall features) is usually to give an outline of the structure with timings.

Musical Links Investigation (HL, SLS, SLG, SLC)

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-14	15-17	18-20

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range was very wide this year – from MLIs which were informed and showed academic rigor to essays of 300 words which appeared not have understood the course requirements. Some candidates showed thought in selection of pieces and creativity when choosing links. Overall, candidates showed that they had engaged with the task that they had been set and only a small number submitted work that failed to reach any of the required standards. However, there appeared to be a trend where it seemed that either the students had been given the recommended amount of class time to handle the MLI by a teacher who is trained or informed, or the MLI task seemed to be an extension of a more practical music programme (for example, band) and the teacher lacked training, which leads to large numbers of MLIs with similar weaknesses in both choice of musical cultures and musical links. The most common drawback was the selection of links offering little scope in investigations (for example, 'meter both duple' or 'both use grace-notes'). Too often links lacked focus, but where they were clearly identified, candidates were able to provide in-depth study, resulting in some interesting scripts.

Often distinct cultures were chosen, but the examples were not necessarily fully representative of them. A lack of understanding of the use of oral traditions was also evident in some work – and occasionally confusion arose as to the culture itself, when a transcription was used.

Analysis seems to be the weakest area of work submitted. It is frustrating to see candidates doing some good analysis and then not making relevant comparisons between their pieces. Evidence appears to be troubling for some, with many candidates relying on CD reference numbers but without split tracks. CD reference numbers alone are not evidence. There were some scripts that were very difficult to read, usually Prezi or website formats

(sometimes PowerPoint) because the printed version was very dark or contained extremely small print.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A

Although there was a wide variety and some imagination shown in the choice of distinct cultures, there are still candidates who do not clearly understand the difference between culture and genre. There were a number of instances where folk music was transcribed, for example, for choir in a Western choral tradition, but was being passed off as folk music. There were some well thought-out and probing links, but also a great many open-ended links – for example, rhythm – with no specifics, or non-musical links such as mood or purpose. It is important that the links chosen are significant to the work to allow for sustained investigation.

Criterion B

Criterion B was the weakest, with many candidates showing only minimal analysis, focusing on just the two links and not analysing any other musical elements. Most can describe what they see or hear but some seem unable to use it as evidence to support their links. Some seem to stop at description with timings as an end point and many state obvious similarities like conjunct melodies or duple meter while not supporting the musical link with effective evidence. The comparison between pieces was not well done at times, with a mere description of each piece given, then a paragraph comparing them. The better submissions used excellent comparative language and often discussed the links referring to both pieces throughout the investigation. Many candidates chose works that allowed for direct comparison of the chosen elements, but very few referenced any contrasts. It is important to remember that the MLI task asks candidates to compare and contrast musical elements. It is noted that tables of musical elements with basic information and no supporting examples are beginning to appear in lieu of in-depth analysis. In addition, tables of general characteristics (usually unrelated to the specific pieces chosen) are used, often applying to the style rather than the actual music under investigation.

Criterion C

Musical terminology is being widely used in most scripts; however, its use does not always show knowledge or understanding in relation to the pieces being discussed. In the higher levels there was confident and appropriate use of technical terminology. Many misused the term 'harmony' in place of 'texture' and a number also seemed to be confused by texture. In some scripts, the use of terminology was not convincing and seems to have been inserted merely for meeting the assessment requirements.

Criterion D

The omission of clefs and key signatures in musical examples is still an issue – not only as being incorrect in the layout of the example, but technically it invalidates any point that might be made, particularly if referring to pitch or harmony. Many schools seem to struggle with students understanding the citation procedure properly (and this is not music-specific). Some

candidates do not seem to know the difference between primary and secondary sources and it was sometimes difficult to verify statements as no primary source was stated. Images also need to be referenced, as do musical examples. The rules regarding acknowledgement of another's work, especially scores, do not seem to be thoroughly understood. There is a worrying trend for YouTube comments to be used as reliable quotes. The use of Wikipedia bibliographies as a candidate's reading list, rather than an acknowledgement of the exact page, was also apparent in a number of cases.

Criterion E

While the format of the script encourages creativity in presentation, and there were a number of excellent examples in this respect, candidates should be constantly aware of the academic requirements and rigors of the component. Those candidates who did not fulfil the criterion generally did not present an active engagement with the intended audience and showed a lack of engagement in their own understanding. Radio scripts were the least creative, with little use of audio clips, showing a lack of understanding of the medium.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Ensure candidates give equal analysis to both pieces as well as full analysis of the pieces, not just focusing on the two links. Encourage the candidates to analyse pieces themselves rather than relying on existing versions, some of which are not always correct. Candidates should be encouraged to discuss the music itself and not just interpretations of performances or social history. Stress the importance of a reference for, or copies of the primary source. Whole pieces on a CD or embedded in a PowerPoint do not enhance an MLI – the *Music guide* states that 'relevant supporting may include a CD recording of musical extracts illustrating points raised'.

Further comments

Cover sheets were not always properly filled out and often seem to be completed at the last minute; in a number of instances teachers had omitted to sign the form. Please ensure that candidates' names and numbers are clearly on each page and that the script pages are numbered. It is vital that the inclusion of a paper copy is stressed. Examiners received a number without the paper copy which then had to be requested. There are at times discrepancies between the 6/MLI form and the links stated in the body of the work. Examiners have noted that there is usually a direct correlation between the care in filling out the 6/MLI form and the final quality of the work. It seems that not enough teachers or students have read through the *Music guide* carefully and not enough seem familiar with the criteria for MLI as they apply to the process of completing it. Teachers should be encouraged to read and give feedback on the draft as it appears.