

2025 ASSESSMENT REPORT

MSM315120 MUSIC

General Comments

It was pleasing to see a larger number of composition folios in the 2025 Music cohort, which is a new trend. Additionally, the practical exams showcased a wide range of instruments and styles. Overall, it was good to see most candidates performing their programs or presenting their folios at a satisfactory or higher standard. The updated performance guidelines were clearly well adopted which favoured the cohort. It was evident from the overall results that students are better equipped with their practical/composition skill set compared to the theory and aural paper. Students should be encouraged to work on their music literacy skills, particularly regarding Criterion 6.

Practical Component: Criteria 7 and 8

It was excellent to see that most candidates were well prepared for their practical exams, and that the new examination timeslot allocation of 25 minutes enabled the schedule to run to time. It was evident that candidates felt less rushed and were better composed during their exams, which was largely due to accurate predictability of their scheduled assessment. Whilst the occasional candidate did run late, this was due to technical set-ups for contemporary candidates which is to be expected. Furthermore, it was evident this year that many contemporary candidates were familiar with their amp settings and were able to set up quickly and attain their desired tone without strenuous set up time. It is advisable for teachers to encourage this awareness so that amplifier and specific sound settings can be recalled quickly by the student or sound technician between exams.

Students with accompaniment were able to demonstrate their sense of balance best when they had practiced in the space. As such, it is recommended that, wherever possible, students should practice their performances in the same space as their final performance in preparation for the exam. It is important to note that wherever possible, unless the repertoire choice is intended for solo instrument, that accompaniment of some description should be provided. It is very difficult for candidates to demonstrate a strong sense of line, shape and stylistic awareness if the music is written for multiple parts resulting in long sections of counting rests, missing motifs and stylistic elements, etc. In contrast to this, it is a requirement that drummers and bassists perform a solo piece within their repertoire to demonstrate technical proficiency. Whilst this piece does not need to be an 'etude', it does need to demonstrate technical development skills.

The new performance guidelines and proforma documents were generally well acknowledged. Whilst these have been made clearer, there were still instances of candidates presenting limited styles within their repertoire. Students should perform a minimum of 3 contrasting pieces by different composers/artists to demonstrate stylistic awareness and sensitivity. This should encompass a relatively even distribution across the repertoire and candidates are encouraged to avoid extended works that are longer than 5 minutes. Likewise, it is important that contemporary candidates still supply sheet music for the majority of their program. Whilst the new requirement

only requires 2 minutes of playing time to be 'as per score', this should be an annotated extract from the full scoring.

World instruments should also use the contemporary guidelines as many of these instruments do not utilise conventional notation as their primary transcription. However, it is recommended that world instrument candidates may choose to explore non-traditional music written for their instrument to demonstrate a broader sense of stylistic awareness. Where traditional notation is unavailable, it is advisable to use a tutor/contractor to assist with transcription of non-traditional notation for the required 2 minutes.

Scanning of sheet music this year were mostly good. However, it is important that schools check over these as there were still a number of candidates whose sheet music was in the incorrect order, had pages missing, or had pages upside down/sideways. This is particularly difficult to assess when the candidate marks on the proforma that these are the sections that should be 'as per score'.

All campuses provided earplugs where appropriate which was appreciated by the panel. Whilst sound levels for some instruments can be difficult to manage, it is advisable that a space suitable for high level of sound is selected where available as earplugs can impede the frequency response heard by the panel which can have an impact on details such as articulation and expressive devices. We had a number of exams this year within the heavy metal genre that managed to keep sound within exam levels which mitigated need for earplugs.

Folio Component

Composition folios were wide ranging in intent and style this year, and it was pleasing to see an increase across the state in composition specialisation. It is important to note that this specialisation requires consistent tutelage as per the other specialisations to help guide the candidate as they refine their works throughout the year. There were several instances of inaccuracies and inconsistencies within this year's folios that could have been easily amended with consistent oversight. For example, many instances of incorrect rhythmic groupings, form/structure not indicated by musical conventions, dynamic markings incorrectly placed, and inappropriate score ordering. Stronger folios were able to show better control over these elements as well as utilising effective scoring direction (text) for given instruments to indicate how they want the music to be interpreted.

The majority of folios this year did not choose to utilise real instrumentation/live recording as part of the creative process. This resulted in many instances of 'unplayable' phrases and/or voicings for the indicated instruments. Whilst it is appropriate to use MIDI and samples using DAWs in the creation of music, this should be indicated clearly in the Statement of Intent as a purposeful composition choice. For example, EDM, gaming music and several other genres use digital soundscapes as a stylistic expressive device. However, when writing for live ensemble, it is important for the candidate to experience working with the real instruments included in their scoring. This allows for stronger realisation of musical style and is a learning opportunity to extend the candidates knowledge of the available instrumental techniques which can be used to convey different timbres and musical effects. This process also inherently gives the student opportunity to seek feedback from instrumental specialists in the creation and refinement of their works. Strong folios selected to utilise a range of instrumental groups in a live setting, which demonstrated a stronger understanding of instrumental specifics within their chosen repertoire.

Statements of Intent (SOI) are a very important part of the folio, and it is recommended that more time is invested to ensure these accurately represent the creative process. The SOI is used to assess 3 out of 5 elements of Criterion 9 and should be weighted as such. Whilst most SOI's were able to articulate sources of inspiration, the majority were lacking in their communication of how musical elements were utilised to convey musical intent. This does not require an in-depth analysis, but rather a statement of why the musical elements or compositional device was used and an example of where this occurs. It is encouraged that candidates use correct music terminology when describing these aspects within the SOI.

Sound recordings are required to meet the designated lengths of 10-15 minutes as per the External Assessment Specifications. There were several folios this year that fell short of this. As such, it is important that students and teachers ensure that they familiarise themselves with this document and understand all required elements. Similarly, several folios lacked the requirement of including writing for transposing instruments within their set of works or did not include the required two sets of scores as appropriate. This was particularly pertinent for octave transposing instruments, where candidates did not acknowledge the accurate pitch for these instruments.

It is important that candidates listen broadly to a range of music and widely within the style they are composing for. It was clear that some candidates had developed some knowledge about style but demonstrated limitations in understanding, which could have easily been expanded with a few listening sessions. Listening and influences shouldn't be limited to those already experienced; these should be expanded through the development of the folio. It is also highly advisable that works by influential composers should be analysed to further support this development.

Written Component

General Comments

It was good to see a high number of strong responses to this year's theory and aural paper, with several candidates scoring over 90% against Criteria 5 and 6. Whilst there were several strong responses compared to previous years, there were several papers that had been left almost entirely blank. Generally, candidates seemed to be more fluent in Section A of the paper, which assesses aural skills. It was clear from the Section B that many candidates were unaware of compositional devices as defined by the External Assessment Specifications. Interestingly, this year's spread of results had more candidates in the top end, but also more in the below 50% range too, with fewer achieving within the mid-range. It is advisable that candidates have access to a sharpener and eraser as there were several instances of notations that were difficult to due to vague accuracy.

Section A

Question 1

This question had a large mix of responses. The spread of results averaged to 4.5/8. Candidates demonstrated the most accuracy with diminuendo, sequence and whole tone tonality. Whilst Ternary form, diminution and pedal tone had fewer successful responses. Some candidates identified imitation within the diminuendo sample, which was given as a correct response.

Question 2

This was generally well answered.

Question 3

This question proved more difficult for candidates. Many instances of candidates writing one cadence in all answer spots in hopes of achieving a mark. Interrupted and imperfect cadences were often confused for one another.

Question 4

This was generally well answered.

Question 5

This was generally well answered.

Question 6

Candidates who answered this question well often used some form of rhythmic shorthand as part of their transcription process. Several candidates got the correct 'rhythm' for the starts of notes but did not transcribe rests or indicate staccato on crotchets. These samples were still awarded with half marks.

Question 7

This was generally well answered.

Question 8

This question was generally answered poorly. Candidates who answered this question well demonstrated evidence of thinking harmonically. Understanding the key of the excerpt was reflected in candidates accurately identifying notes from the tonic triad, the octave, and the raised 7th. Some candidates seemed to be confused when working in the bass clef.

Question 9

This was generally well answered.

Section B

Question 10

Candidates who were most successful in this question crafted a musical rhythm that reflected the inherent accents/inflections present in the text provided. Further, they ensured a balance between unity and variety in the rhythmic figures employed. Several candidates did not write a time signature which made it difficult to ascertain rhythmic intent.

Question 11

This was generally well answered. Whilst several answers had some pitch errors, they would often get the correct inversion. Several candidates wrote an augmented chord instead of the diminished triad in sample 3.

Question 12

Candidates who answered this question successfully were able to recognise the different rhythmic elements belonging to the different time signatures, what the beat divisions are within each, and rewrite the rhythms to reflect these features. Candidates who changed the rhythms provided were not successful, even if they followed standard grouping procedures.

Question 13

The score analysis question had a mix of results. Candidates who successfully answered this question understood what the possible devices were and could accurately describe, locate and label them on the score. Many candidates confused compositional devices with expressive devices; these are not the same thing. For example, several responses included dynamic markings and descriptions for these, which were not compositional devices as required by the question. Most candidates were able to successfully identify the key of the piece and could define several of the terms required. Most of the intervals were accurate, although the first interval was often mistaken for a perfect 5th. Generally, chord identification was good; however, the cadence identification part of this question was less secure. Many students were able to successfully transpose for Bb instruments, but several forgot the octave transposition required for Tenor Saxophone. Some candidates transcribed the wrong part or bar for this question.

Question 14

This question still seems to challenge many candidates. Candidates who were most successful were thinking harmonically as well as melodically and employed compositional devices as effective tools to create musical statements. Candidates need to understand that copying out the stimulus material is not answering the question. The stimulus material needs to be developed or manipulated in a musical manner that creates unity and variety. Strong responses resolved the musical line using a conventional approach to finishing on the tonic or appropriate chord tone which was indicated through the use of harmony.

2025 Music Exam Answers

Section A

Question 1

Music excerpt 1	Ternary Form
Music excerpt 2	Imitation
Music excerpt 3	Diminution
Music excerpt 4	Diminuendo (Imitation did also feature in this sample)
Music excerpt 5	Sequence
Music excerpt 6	Pedal Tone
Music excerpt 7	Whole Tone Tonality
Music excerpt 8	Ostinato

1 mark per correct response

TOTAL 8 marks

Question 2

Excerpt 1: Possible time signature	5	or	5
	4		8
Excerpt 2: Possible time signature	9		
	8		
Excerpt 3: Possible time signature	4	or	C
	4		
Excerpt 4: Possible time signature	6	or	12
	8		8

1 mark per correct response

TOTAL 4 marks

Question 3

Excerpt 1: is a Plagal Cadence.

Excerpt 2: is a Plagal Cadence.

Excerpt 3: is an Interrupted Cadence.

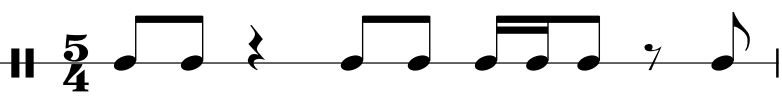
Excerpt 4: is an Imperfect Cadence.

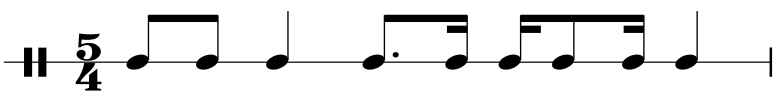
1 mark per correct response


0.5 mark for symbol e.g. IV-I

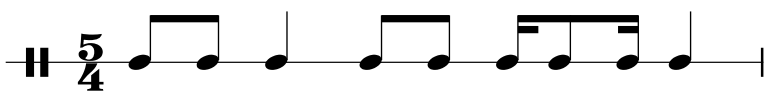
TOTAL 4 marks

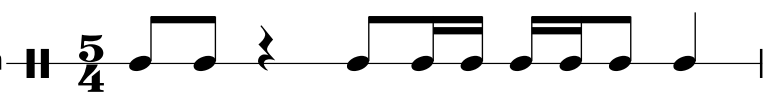
Question 4

Rhythmic Pattern 

Rhythmic Pattern 

Rhythmic Pattern 

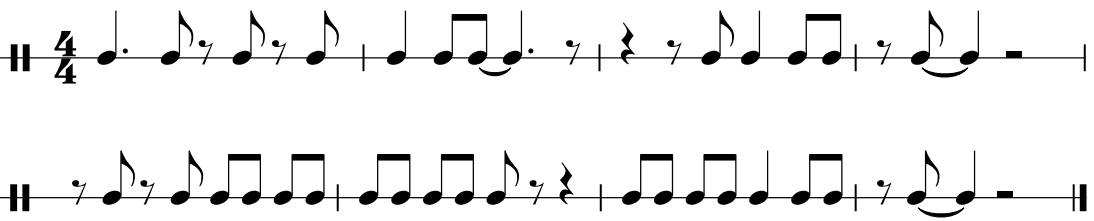
Rhythmic Pattern 

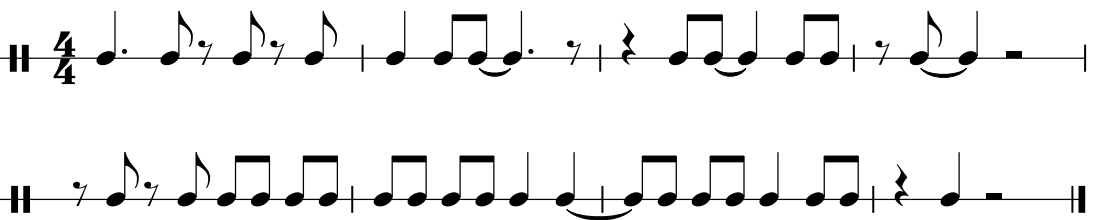
Rhythmic Pattern 

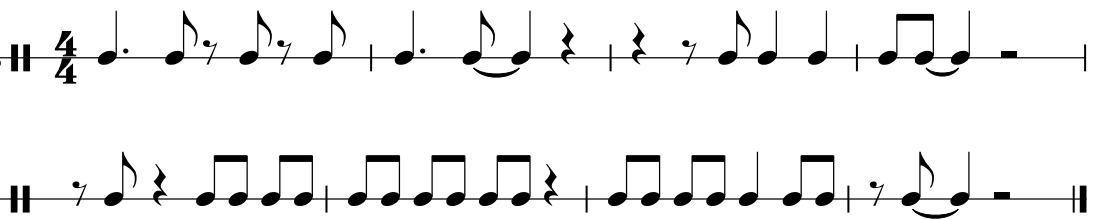
1 mark for each correct response

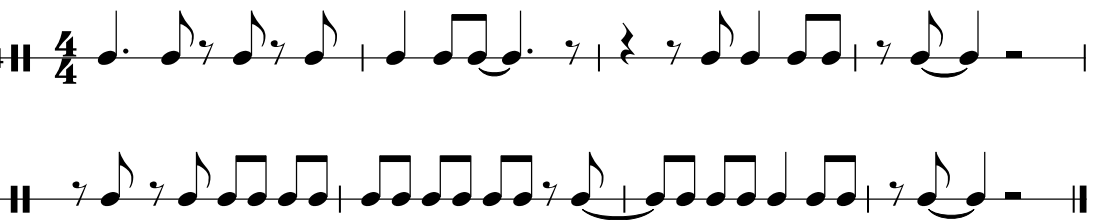
TOTAL 4 marks

Question 5

Rhythm 1 

Rhythm 2 

Rhythm 3 

Rhythm 4 

2 marks for correct response

TOTAL 2 marks

Question 6

Saxophone Rhythm preferred response:

notation alternative

(Audio had clear separation between these 3 notes)

2 marks per bar

TOTAL 8 marks

Question 7

(option 1)

(option 2)

(option 3)

2 marks for correct response

TOTAL 2 marks

Question 8

The musical score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The first system has four measures, and the second system has four measures. The score includes treble and bass staves with various notes and rests.

0.5 mark for each correct note/pitch identified.

TOTAL 6 marks

Question 9

A E F#m C# D E A F#m
 D E C# D E D A

A E F#m C# D Bm A F#m
 E D C# D E D A

A E F#m C# D E F#m A
 Bm E C# D E A A

2 marks for correct response

TOTAL 2 marks

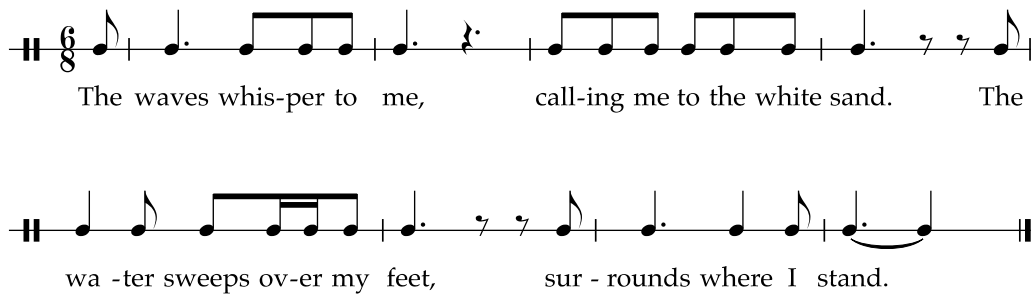
Section B

Question 10

1st possible solution

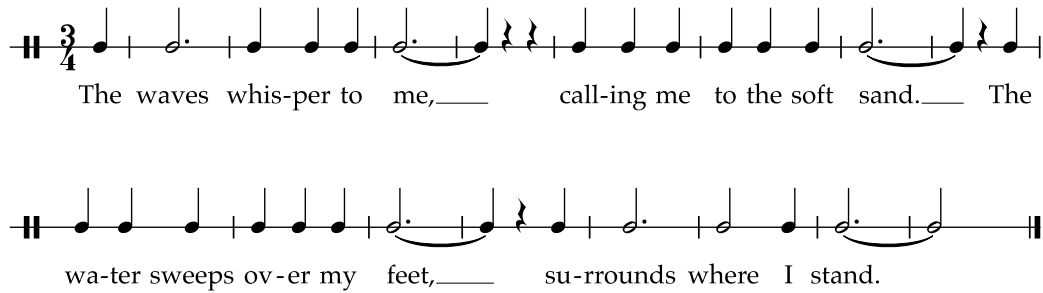
4 The waves whis-per to me,
 call-ing me to the soft sand. The
 wa-ter sweeps o-ver my feet,
 sur-rounds where I stand

another possible option



The waves whis-per to me, call-ing me to the white sand. The
wa -ter sweeps ov-er my feet, sur - rounds where I stand.

3rd possible option



The waves whis-per to me, call-ing me to the soft sand. The
wa-ter sweeps ov-er my feet, su-rrounds where I stand.

2 marks per line of poem text – 8 marks

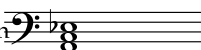
2 marks for appropriate time signature and correct placement of text under notation

TOTAL 10 marks

Question 11

E⁶ 2nd Inversion 

Dm⁷ 1st Inversion 

A^o Root Position 

Bmaj⁷ 2nd Inversion 

1.5 marks for each correct response

(1 mark correct pitch, 0.5 marks correct inversion)

TOTAL 6 marks

Question 12

Note Grouping 1



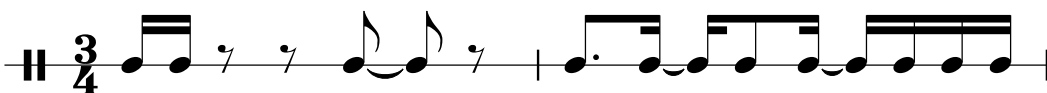
Answer



Note Grouping 2



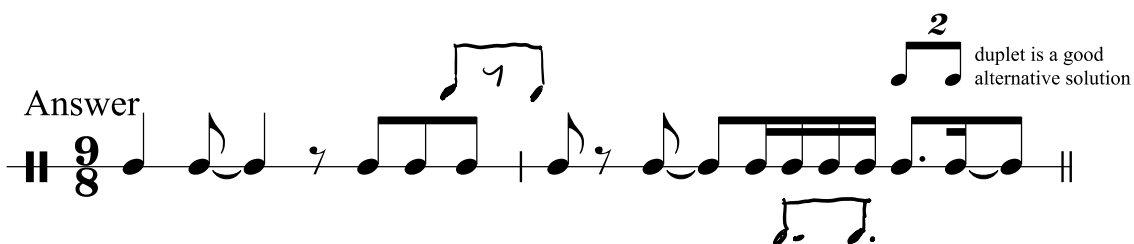
Answer



Note Grouping 3



Answer



1 mark per bar for correct response (0.5 mark for 0.5 bar correct is OK)

TOTAL 6 marks

Question 13

Refer to the score **#190 Revisited** when answering this question.

- a) Name the key of the piece. **D major** **1 mark**
- b) Name the meter. **Simple Triple** **1 mark**

- c) Explain the **meaning** of each marked **Performance Instruction** enclosed within a box on the score.

Performance Instruction 1 (Bar 1): ***Moderately Lively*** 1 mark

Performance Instruction 2 (end of bar 7): ***More Movement (quicker)*** 1 mark

Performance Instruction 3 (Bar 13): ***Held Back- immediately slower*** 1 mark

- d) Name each interval enclosed within a box in the score.

Interval 1 (Bar 3): ***diminished 5th*** 1 mark

Interval 2 (Bar 4): ***perfect octave*** 1 mark

Interval 3 (Bar 12): ***perfect 4th*** 1 mark

Interval 4 (Bar 14): ***minor 6th*** 1 mark

- e) Name each chord enclosed within a box in the score and give its position/inversion.

Chord 1 (Bar 3) ***Em 2nd Inversion*** 1.5 marks (1 mark chord, 0.5 mark inversion)

Chord 2 (Bar 8) ***A 1st Inversion*** 1.5 marks (1 mark chord, 0.5 mark inversion)

Chord 3 (Bar 9) ***Bm Root Position*** 1.5 marks (1 mark chord, 0.5 mark inversion)

Chord 4 (Bar 15) ***C#dim Root Position*** 1.5 marks (1 mark chord, 0.5 mark inversion)

- f) **Name** (0.5 mark) and **describe** (0.5 mark) four (4) different compositional devices that the composer has used in this piece.

Clearly mark **on the music score** (2 marks each) where one example of each of your stated compositional devices appears.

(**Note**; Clear identification on the musical score is important. NO MARKS will be awarded for simply naming and describing any compositional device **without marking clearly on the score** where the named/described device is located).

Range of possibilities:

Device Name: ***Sequence*** 0.5 mark

Device Description: ***The immediate restatement of a motif at a higher or lower pitch in the same voice. It is still a sequence if the restatement of the motif is greater than a tone.*** 0.5 mark

Where to find an example(s) on the score: **Part 1** – bars 1 and 2 are a sequence; **Part 3** – bars 1-4; **Piano** - Left Hand piano bars 5 and 6. 2 marks

Device Name: ***Augmentation*** 0.5 mark

Device Description: ***The restatement of a theme where the notes are of a longer duration (generally double the beat value of the original).*** 0.5 mark

Where to find an example on the score: The **Part 1** line (up to beginning of beat 1 bar 7 has been restated in **augmentation** from the beginning up to and into bar 13 in the **Part 3** part. 2 marks

Device Name: Syncopation	0.5 mark
Device Description: Notes on normally weak beats or a subdivision of the beat are accented or given emphasis. (A temporary displacement of a regular metrical accent where the accent shifts from a strong to a weak beat).	0.5 mark
Identify on score: See Part 3 beat 3 of bar 11 tied to beat 1 of bar 12 on score Also Part 3, bar 15 beats 1-2.	2 marks
Device Name: Imitation	0.5 mark
Device Description: The restatement in succession of identical musical material in two or more parts.	0.5 mark
Identify on score: See Piano LH bar 7 (starting beat 2) which is <u>imitating</u> Part 2 motif starting on beat 1 of bar 7.	2 marks
Device Name: Ornamentation	0.5 mark
Device Description: Where the melody is embellished (or decorated) with ornaments; such as trills, mordents, turns, grace notes, glissandi, slides, pitch bends, drop notes, scoops, flams.	0.5 mark
Identify on score: See Piano RH bar 10 on score and Part 1 bar 12.	2 marks
Device Name: Retrograde	0.5 mark
Device Description: Where a musical theme (or motif) is played backwards.	0.5 mark
Identify on score: See bars 11 and 12 LH Piano .	2 marks
Device Name: Tempo Change	0.5 mark
Device Description: Change in the speed of the beat in a section of music.	0.5 mark
Identify on score: See bar 13 (ritenuto) and a tempo end of bar 14 on score. Also bars 7-8 at ' <i>piu mosso</i> '.	2 marks
Device Name: Inversion	0.5 mark
Device Description: When the intervals of an original musical motif are reversed (turned upside-down)	0.5 mark
Identify on score: See bar 13 Parts 2 and 3 beats 1-2	2 marks
Device Name: Diminution	0.5 mark
Device Description: The restatement of a theme or idea where the notes are of a shorter duration - (generally half the beat value of the original)	0.5 mark
Identify on score: See RH piano bar 11, LH piano bar 12 beat 3.	2 marks
Device Name: Chromaticism	0.5 mark
Device Description: The use of accidental notes outside the prevailing diatonic key.	0.5 mark
Identify on score: See Part 1 bar 7 beat 3 (use of G# as passing note) – out of key but serves good melodic purpose. By definition above, demonstrates chromaticism.	2 marks

TOTAL 12 marks for identifying 4 devices on score

g) Explain the **meaning** of the following terms and/or signs used in this piece:

To get louder 'little by little'.	1 mark
To arpeggiate the chord in the direction of the arrow.	1 mark
Notes should be played an octave lower than written.	1 mark

h) **On the piano part of the score**, clearly mark and name the **two** cadences used at the end of the piece in bars 13-16.

End of bar 13 into beginning of bar 14 is an **Interrupted Cadence (V-VI)** **1.5 marks**

End of bar 15 into beginning of bar 16 is a **Perfect Cadence (V-I)**. **1.5 marks**

TOTAL 3 marks – 1 mark for marking on score correctly, 0.5 for naming.

i) To perform Part 3 of this piece, your ensemble has a Bb Tenor Saxophone player available. In the blank score provided:

i. Write the correct **clef** and **key signature** for this saxophone. **2 marks**

ii. Transpose Bar 4 of the **#190 Revisited Part 3** part so it can be played by **Bb Tenor Saxophone** (maintaining the exact pitch range). **2 marks**



Question 14

Reflection of tonality and harmony **2 marks**

Flow of melody **2 marks**

Use of devices **2 marks**

(deduction 0.5 mark each if device is not clearly labelled)

Phrasing **2 marks**

Connection to stimulus material **2 marks**

TOTAL 10 marks

1st possible solution



Bars 5 and 6 are a **Sequence**

Retrograde of beat 1
(same bar).

Note: the 1st beat of this bar
also uses syncopation

F#m (I) Bm (IV) F#m (I) C# (V)

Bm (IV) F#m (I) C# (V) F#m (I)

Bars 5 and 6 are a **Sequence**

Retrograde of beat 1 (same bar).
Note: the 1st beat of this bar also uses syncopation

2nd possible solution

F#m (I) Bm (IV) F#m (I) C# (V)

F#m (I) Bm (IV) F#m (I) C# (V) F#m (I)

Retrograde of beat 2 bar 4

Syncopation

Note: other options to consider might be to use Bar 2 *or* Bar 3 in **Inversion** (harmonic integrity is maintained).

2nd possible solution

F#m (I) Bm (IV) F#m (I) C# (V)

F#m (I) Bm (IV) F#m (I) C# (V) F#m (I)

Retrograde of beat 2 bar 4

Syncopation

Note: other options to consider might be to use Bar 2 *or* Bar 3 in **Inversion** (harmonic integrity is maintained)

3rd possible solution

(utilising Melodic Minor at bar 7)

Musical notation in treble clef, 6/8 time, key of F# major. The first staff shows four measures with chords F#m, Bm, F#m, and C#. The second staff shows four measures with chords F#m, G#m, C#, and F#m. Brackets under the second staff indicate a 'Retrograde of bar 1' for the first two measures and a 'Sequence of previous bar' for the last two measures.

3rd possible solution

(utilising Melodic Minor at bar 7)

Musical notation in bass clef, 6/8 time, key of F# major. The first staff shows four measures with chords F#m, Bm, F#m, and C#. The second staff shows four measures with chords F#m, G#m, C#, and F#m. Brackets under the second staff indicate a 'Retrograde of bar 1' for the first two measures and a 'Sequence of previous bar' for the last two measures.