

MUSIC

Overall grade boundaries

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

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

Many submitted essays lacked a supervisor's report. This is required of schools and is taken into consideration by examiners when assessing criterion K (holistic judgment). A substantial number of extended essays in Music are submitted by candidates with a strong and evident interest in music, but who appear to lack the preparation of traditional music candidates who take the Diploma course. The essays submitted by these candidates tend to focus on contextual/historical/socio-cultural/educational/psychological and scientific topics with only a tangential relation to music.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Music extended essays were varied across the submissions. There were some very specific, sophisticated, focused and well-planned research projects, which had an organized structure, clearly reasoned arguments and meticulous documentation of sources; and, on the other end, several less organized efforts. Some of the weaker essays were at times brief or superficial, and several did not involve research. =The critical reasoning and writing abilities of candidates and their general understanding and preparation for research varied significantly. The selection of topics was ample, with studies including Eastern and Western art music works, popular and traditional music compositions and practices and music for films or theatre. There were also essays on psychological, mathematical, cultural or historical themes with at times a tenuous connections to the discipline of music.

A recurring problem is with regards to essays lacking an appropriate focus on music as a discipline. In addition, candidates did not always demonstrate understanding of the distinction

between an academic investigation and a descriptive, speculative, personal or journalistic approach to reporting.

A large number of candidates demonstrated a strong interest in music but seemed inadequately prepared for the undertaking of an EE. This significantly impacted levels of achievement.

Some of the more successful explorations were: Tadao Sawai's "Uruma" not being a traditional work for Koto; How does the composer of the "Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto" describe the narrative of the story, and In What Ways is this Clearly Chinese?; Duke Ellington's "Black and Tan" Influence on Winston Marsalis "Back to Basics"; Romantic and Impressionistic Ballet Music in Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty; Ravel Daphnis & Chloe; How are the traditions of Hindustani Music (North India) different from those of Carnatic Music (South India)? The Song without words: First three movements of Beethoven's 9th Symphony and their relationship to Schiller's "An Die Freude"; Musical Elements of "Surprise" in Haydn's Symphony 94. The successful essays demonstrated a scholastic approach, good use of reliable sources, well organized research, critical evaluation of data and persuasive argument. Several candidates pursued intriguing and original inquiries or took the opportunity to explore a topic of personal interest in-depth; several others were motivated and enthusiastic yet unable to define an effective research question or strategy. Several candidates appeared generally unprepared; unable to find a formal approach or to pursue basic research, sometimes struggling with writing, critical thinking and reasoning. It was clear that some devoted little time and effort to the task, or pursued predictable topics that lacked challenge and originality.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

It is important that candidates and supervisors read the guidance contained in the EE guide very carefully. Too many submissions overlooked basic requirements. Research questions that did not support music study or analysis were approved and even encouraged by supervisors.

Criterion B: introduction

The introduction further introduces the research question and the particular investigation that is going to be undertaken. This was frequently missed and insufficiently focussed. The section was at times used as an abstract, explaining the research method, or presenting a general context about the composer or works of music that were going to be studied. Contextual information and existing knowledge about the particular inquiry is needed, together with justification of the investigation's worthiness. This is not to be confused with the worthiness of the works or of the composers addressed.

Criterion C: investigation

Investigation marks depend on the overall planning, with attention to the range, quality and use of the sources and the data collected. Note that all important evidence must be available with the essay. Examiners should not be referred to audio sources on YouTube or anywhere other than the essay for its assessment. Points made within the body of the essay must too be substantiated within the body of the essay. Clarification surrounding this issue will shortly be available in the Coordinator Notes. Lack of planning was evident in weaker essays, where sources were often unreliable and had not been critically interrogated. Sole and heavy reliance on Wikipedia, informal blogs, personal sites or hearsay, raised problems of accuracy, validity and acknowledgment. Sources were not always clearly acknowledged. Candidates should be much more meticulous and ensure that the referencing system of choice is applied consistently. Analytical claims and score excerpts were often not referenced. It is important that candidates clearly indicate the origin of each idea and illustration.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

Many essays lacked involvement with existing knowledge and the field of study under investigation. It would have been beneficial to demonstrate background reading and consultation. Only a handful of essays sustained an effective interaction with lines of inquiry.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

Most essays presented ideas in a logical and coherent manner, although in several cases the arguments would deviate from the research topic into descriptive or analytical detail of no clear relevance. There is a tendency for musical description to prevail over analytical enquiry. This limits the quality of the arguments as they shift from an 'investigation' to a 'report'.

Sometimes a series of quotations from secondary sources were presented without an evaluation or a synthesis of the material. The result was often fragmented and only partly effective.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills

This was a weak area in many submissions. A common flaw would be to set a research question and proceed as if it were true without analytical discussion. Statements would be made without substantiation. Several candidates built arguments through quoting analysis from secondary sources. This was generally only partly effective. Paraphrase, appropriately cited, would be a better option.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject:

Several candidates demonstrated adequate use of musical terminology. Some demonstrated misapplications. Others approached matters subjectively, using vague language and speculation.

Criterion H: conclusion

Not all essays delivered a convincing summation of their findings or related the conclusion to the research question, thus missing the section's objective. In some other cases material not addressed in the investigation would appear here producing inconsistencies.

Criterion I: formal presentation

A good number of essays had unnumbered, unattached pages or missed the abstract, table of contents or bibliography. Some failed to cite music scores. Other flaws were: lack of evidence to support claims; no proofreading; uncaptioned illustration and figures, leaving out clefs, key signatures, instrumental parts, bar numbers and location detail in music illustration.

Criterion J: abstract

Some highly effective abstracts were received. Incomplete ones left out the conclusion or the scope of the investigation. Language was, at times, too general. Candidates are required to be specific in this section: list the exact pieces, strategies, elements considered, and specific findings. The section is to be written after the essay is finished, so that it veritably reflects its content consistently.

Criterion K: holistic judgement

Supervisor reports were often helpful to the assessment of this criterion, though not all essays had a supervisor's report.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Please note that extended essays are to be self-contained documents submitted in the manner of an academic journal article. All evidence to support the argument needs to be contained for assessment within the body of the essay.

Several examiners reported receiving essays that referred to audio sources on YouTube as evidence for the investigation. Please note that examiners will assess the essays only with reference to the materials provided in them, and other evidence contained in an external source will not be accounted for.