



FEDERAL EXAMINERS' ADVICE TO DIPLOMA CANDIDATES

1. Practical Examinations 2003

LMusA, FMusA

Candidates should strive to project consistency of musical character and emotion. The absence of which can be due to technical limitations or insufficient accuracy of notes, rhythm or dynamics. Awareness of grammatical elements such as the structure and shape of phrases, the relationship between different textural layers and the overall design of the works being performed will help towards achieving consistency. The initial learning phase should incorporate these elements in order to give the performance coherence and conviction.

Candidates should lift their sights beyond merely "getting through" the performance to a more comprehensive involvement in the expressive, structural and stylistic dimensions.

A successful outcome is usually the result of careful planning as to when the examination should occur. It is not the wish of the Board to encourage young performers to attempt Diplomas prematurely and without sufficient experience and insight into the rigours of performance of interpretatively difficult concert repertoire, but rather to encourage presentations of substance which have the essential elements of mature, reliable technique and an understanding of stylistic idiosyncrasies within differing historical periods. A full realisation that these elements are inextricably linked would greatly assist in the refinement of presentations.

Lack of rhythmic control manifested as fluctuating pace, imprecise rhythmical figurations, non-observation of note / rest value or a gradual and compulsive increase in tempo resulting in mistakes or loss of control will reduce the effectiveness of a performance.

An integral part of understanding the concept of works as a whole is to study their form. This engenders good phrasal line, direction and rhythmical flow, an awareness of cadential repose, tonal and dynamic / climactic interest. To have this foundational knowledge invariably informs performances and provides the performer with another interpretative "tool".

It is necessary to develop a firm grasp of, or reason for, harmonic movement, irrespective of the type of music being performed. This is a most important ingredient in a composer's conception of a composition and should be respected by performers (interpreters) of his/her work. It should be uppermost in the performer's mind when aiming to probe the intent of say, the harmonic structure of a late-Beethoven sonata in which the emotional implications through harmonic relationships is such a strong factor.

Notwithstanding the memory requirement of LMusA (one work from memory), a performance of all works from memory has the beneficial effect of inducing an extra



dimension to the performance. Usually, there is improved confidence and stronger overall presentation without the visual distraction of the part.

For singers, the examination space should be thought of as if in a theatre or concert hall and appropriate projection with suitable gesture employed. Often, there is some temerity to fully deliver the intent of works and other associated problems occur as a result—loss of pitch, poor diction and insufficient breath control. A wealth of opportunity exists in the repertoire for singers to run the full gamut styles and it would be most advantageous to exploit all facets of performance rather than “mark” in the examination situation.

The choice of works is of critical importance. There are so many factors to consider eg. the physiological nature of hands, voice type and tessitura, pyrotechnics and bravura aspects in virtuoso string and keyboard works, personal temperament, balance/contracts of works in programming. If these are well-considered, performances will benefit. Audiences (examiners) appreciate hearing performances revealing technical mastery, musical maturity, evidence of intelligent and detailed preparation, stylistic understanding, integrity to the score and individual artistic refinement.

2. Theory/Musicianship Diploma 2003

2.1 Essay-type answers

Candidates need to “read the question”. For example if the question is on Domenico Scarlatti, however brilliant the answer on Alessandro Scarlatti might have been it will be marked down.

Candidates need to “keep to the question”. In putting the answer to a question into context, balance is required. An introductory sentence may be useful (as also a sentence to round off the answer), but when half the answer is background material, it appears that the candidate is merely presenting a prepared response rather than answering the question as asked.

Candidates should take more notice of the marks allocated for a question, as a guide to the length of answer required. For instance, in Associate Theory III Q.1 (Set Works) the individual items were worth 11 marks apiece, while in Q. 2 the essays were worth 22 marks each. This suggests that in the latter case, the answers should be roughly twice the length of the former (in fact, many answers reversed the ratio), and accordingly be allocated twice the preparation time in the exam.

Musical examples given in support of an answer could be more apposite and, frequently, more accurate. This presupposes a better first-hand knowledge of the music itself, rather than a reliance on secondary literature.



2.2 Harmony/Counterpoint workings

Sound preparation for these questions includes not only a good understanding of harmonic and contrapuntal principles but also knowledge of the various genres represented in the papers. This necessitates looking at, playing, and analysing examples by the composers themselves. While one hopes that the candidates have analysed a number of Bach's chorale working (their own harmonisations rarely show such familiarity), far fewer seem acquainted with his chorale preludes. In particular, in all questions students need to pay attention to:

- Modulations, and particularly the cadences that define them
- Harmonic rate
- Using the chromatic chords or other requirements to be found in a question
- Appropriate, and typical, use of all types of unessential notes
- Correct use of the alto clef.

3. Teaching Diploma 2003

Please note: the following advice focuses on matters relating to ATMusA, in particular the written paper for this qualification.

3.1 Advice to candidates based on findings from 2003 responses.

- Time management skills are essential; it was clear that many candidates
- had not given due consideration to this important issue.
- Point form is acceptable
- Candidates should be aware of the mark allocation for each *part* of each question
- It may be helpful to underline key points on the question paper in relation to each question, in order to ensure that all important issues are addressed
- It would be helpful to work, under supervision, through copies of old exam papers

3.2 Question 1 (child development)

- Many candidates were ill-prepared for this question
- Some candidates had memorised information related to established research without using the material appropriately
- Candidates should clearly identify the division between 1(a)(i) and 1(a)(ii) and similarly, 1(b)(i) and 1(b)(ii).
- Candidates should be aware of the need to focus on the precise areas indicated for discussion; many candidates wrote generally about child development, rather than addressing the particular details of the question.
- Reading all parts of the question is vital.
- Lengthy anecdotal responses vaguely related to the question were no substitute for a genuine understanding of the topic.
- The mark allocation and distribution (5 + 10, 5 + 10) should be carefully considered



- 3.3 Question 2 (application of values; exams, group teaching etc.)
- This is where many candidates achieved high marks
 - Candidates should be aware that the question is worth 10 marks only (5 + 5); many wrote extensively and effectively, receiving high marks but leaving too little time for the remainder of the paper.
 - The personal view, often sought in Q. 2, was omitted by some candidates.
 - Common Eisteddfod practice was not always understood.
- 3.4 Question 3 (developmental programs)
- In part (a)–aural development–many candidates needed to think more creatively and imaginatively
 - Harmony was neglected by many candidates, who focussed almost exclusively on pitch and rhythm
 - At times responses were too general, failing to cover vital points in relation o the stages of development indicated for discussion.
- 3.5 Question 4 (instrument specific knowledge)
- Misuse of time was a problem for many candidates who left little time for an adequate response to Q. 4
 - Candidates need to know the repertoire of their instrument and be able to draw on examples from the AMEB syllabus.

4. Speech and Drama Written 2003

4.1 General Comments

Candidates handled very well the questions that could be answered with “learnt facts”. However the examples in many cases proved a lack of real understanding.

Candidates should address teaching methodology effectively. Choice of literature is essential. Many candidates, although choosing appropriate material, gave no reasons for their choice, or how they would go about teaching it. Successful candidates showed imagination and insight in their approach to question.

The task of the marker would be considerable shorter if candidate’s handwriting were legible. In many cases the handwriting was difficult to read. A lack of concise expression is evident in many answers, with relevant information being hidden underneath much irrelevant matter. Many answers appear to be unplanned.

Questions 3 and 4 as always pose the problem of candidates not being in a position to obtain practical teaching experience to any significant extent. If this is the case, it needs to be compensated by extensive reading and if possible, observation of qualified teachers



4.2 Associate Teacher

Question 1: On the whole, Phonetics were good, although vowel length, secondary stress and the use of the neutral vowel are still presenting problems for some candidates. There was some confusion regarding Assimilation and Elision.

Section (c) showed (in some cases) a certain amount of misunderstanding regarding General Australian.

Question 2: Many answers showed lack of planning, while others relied on the “tried and true” strategies, many of which were not always relevant to modern day children.

Question 3: The answers here indicated some very mixed abilities. Successful candidates showed imagination coupled with an understanding of the requirements of **teaching** either choral speaking or mime/improvisation. In some cases, experience outside the candidate’s sphere of perception was limited.

Question 4: Many answers included sentences beginning with the word “hopefully” demonstrated a lack of confidence. Repetition and lack of planning were evident here. Reasons were not always given for the choice of books.

2003 Federal Examiners	
Practical	Max Olding AM, Dr David Lockett Dr Ian Holtham Associate Professor Ronald Farren-Price AM
Written	Dr Barbara McRae Graham Bartle
Teaching	Elizabeth Mitchell, Joyce Skelton and Tess Hill
Speech and Drama	Victoria Clancy Joan Mooney David Waddell