

16+ PAST PAPER PACK

Rugby School 16+ Music

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Rugby School

Sixth Form Entrance Examination

SPECIMEN PAPER FOR MUSIC

This examination will take place in the Music Schools. Candidates must bring their instrument and music, including any accompaniment if applicable.

Time Allowed: 1 hour

INSTRUCTIONS:

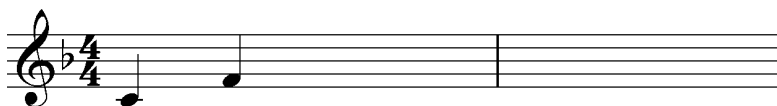
- Practical Performance:** You are required to perform on one instrument or voice. Piano accompaniment will be available. You will have time to warm up and run through with your accompanist. **30 marks [10 minutes]**
- Write your name and the date in the space at the bottom of this page.
- Short Answer / Listening:** All questions must be answered on this paper. Extracts will be played from a CD and repeated the number of times stated in each question. This part of the exam will consist of the following three sections:
 - Aural Skills** **10 marks**
 - Recorded Extract analysis** **10 marks [30 minutes]**
 - Application of Theory Music in Music** **10 marks**
- Written:** An extended essay on a choice of two questions. **20 marks [20 minutes]**

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section A – Melodic/Rhythmic Dictation and Cadence Recognition

1. Write down the melody (pitch and rhythm) played by the solo instrument in this extract. The time signature, key signature and first two notes have been given. Write down both the pitch and the rhythm. The extract will be played **four** times.



/ 6 marks

2. You will hear four cadences each played **twice**. Write down the name of each cadence in the spaces below.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

/ 4 marks

Section B – Recorded Extract

You are going to hear one extract of music from *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2*. The extract will be played **four** times, with a pause between each playing. Look at the skeleton score on the next page, and answer the questions.

You have **3 minutes** to look through the questions and at the score.

The trumpet is referred to as a **tromba** in the score.

Question numbers have been included in the score to help you locate the answers.

7 Tempo?

Flauto / Oboe / Violino

2a. Instrument?

3a. Key?

Tromba

'Cello

Flauto / Oboe / Violino

6. Describe

5. Key and cadence

Tromba

4. Notes?

end of extract

1. Give an alternative term for the upbeat at the start of the first movement.

/ 1 mark

2. (a) At bar 8, beat 4, which instrument enters with the theme?

/ 1 mark

(b) To which family of instruments does this belong?

/ 1 mark

3. (a) At bar 16, beat 4, the *Flauto dolce* plays the theme. In which key is the theme played?

/ 1 mark

(b) What is the relationship of this key to the tonic key of the movement?

/ 1 mark

(c) From listening to the sound of the instrument, tick the most suitable alternative term for describing the sound of the *Flauto dolce*.

Orchestral Flute

Treble Recorder

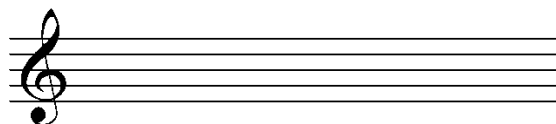
Chamber Organ

Panpipe

/ 1 mark

Questions on this extract continue over the page...

4. On the staff below, write out the missing trumpet melody ('tromba') from bar 33.



/ 2 marks

5. Which of the following terms describes the bass line bar 25? Tick the most appropriate.

Stepwise

Arpeggiated

Chromatic

Tonic pedal

/ 1 mark

6. Bach did not indicate a tempo at the start of this movement. Choose the Italian term you think is most appropriate:

Allegro

Andante

Moderato

Vivace

/ 1 mark

Section C – Theory of Music

7. Describe fully each of these melodic intervals (e.g. major 2nd)

The musical notation shows five intervals on a treble clef staff in 2/4 time. The intervals are: 1. G4 to A4, 2. A4 to C5, 3. C5 to B4, 4. B4 to A4, 5. A4 to G4.

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

/ 10 marks

Paper Notes: 16+ Music Specimen Paper (16+ Music Specimen Paper)

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you get the most from this paper.

Overview

This is a **specimen paper** for **Sixth Form entrance** at **Rugby School**, designed for candidates applying to enter Year 12. It assesses practical and theoretical musical ability across four components: a live instrumental or vocal performance, aural skills (melodic dictation and cadence recognition), analysis of a recorded extract from **Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2**, and an extended written essay on musical topics. The entire examination is completed in **one hour**, with separate time allocations for each section.

The paper is structured to test both performance fluency and academic understanding of music. Candidates will need to demonstrate technical control of their instrument, sight-reading or prepared repertoire, and the ability to articulate musical ideas in writing. The listening section requires score-following skills and knowledge of Baroque performance practice, while the theory component covers interval recognition. The essay options allow students to showcase either critical listening experience or detailed knowledge of their own instrument.

This specimen paper is ideal for students who have reached at least **Grade 6 or 7** on their primary instrument and have some experience of music theory at GCSE level or equivalent. It reflects the standard expected of serious music students seeking a place in a selective independent school's Sixth Form music programme.

How this paper is organised

The examination totals **70 marks** and is divided into four distinct sections. The **Practical Performance** (30 marks, 10 minutes) requires candidates to perform on one instrument or voice, with piano accompaniment available; students will have time to warm up and rehearse with the accompanist before the assessed performance. The **Short Answer / Listening** section (30 marks, 30 minutes) is further subdivided into three parts: Aural Skills (10 marks), Recorded Extract analysis (10 marks), and Application of Theory in Music (10 marks). Candidates answer directly on the question paper while listening to CD recordings played multiple times.

Section A focuses on melodic and rhythmic dictation (6 marks) and cadence recognition (4 marks). Section B centres on an extract from **Brandenburg Concerto No. 2**, with a skeleton score provided; candidates answer questions about instrumentation,

keys, intervals, and stylistic features. Section C tests interval identification, requiring candidates to name five melodic intervals precisely (e.g. "major 2nd").

The **Written Essay** (20 marks, 20 minutes) offers two options: a critical comparison of two pieces the candidate has heard or played, or an introduction to the candidate's own instrument covering its history, technical challenges, and famous repertoire. Students write their response in the lined space provided in the examination booklet.

Topics covered

- Live instrumental or vocal performance at an advanced level (approximately Grade 6–8 standard), demonstrating technical control, interpretation, and musicality
- Melodic dictation: transcribing pitch and rhythm from a solo instrument in a given key and time signature after four hearings
- Cadence recognition: identifying four different cadence types (e.g. perfect, imperfect, plagal, interrupted) by ear
- Baroque music analysis: detailed study of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2, including instrumentation (trumpet/tromba, recorder/flauto dolce, oboe, violin, cello), texture, and form
- Score-following: locating specific musical events (instrument entries, key changes, thematic statements) within a skeleton score while listening
- Key relationships and modulation: identifying keys in context and describing their relationship to the tonic (e.g. dominant, relative minor)
- Interval recognition: naming melodic intervals precisely (major, minor, augmented, diminished, perfect) from written notation
- Historical instrument identification: distinguishing period instruments (treble recorder, natural trumpet) from modern equivalents by timbre
- Tempo and tempo markings: selecting appropriate Italian terms (Allegro, Andante, Moderato, Vivace) for a given musical extract
- Extended essay writing: critical discussion of musical strengths and weaknesses, or expository writing about an instrument's history, repertoire, and technical demands

How to use this paper for revision

- Prepare at least two contrasting pieces for your performance, ensuring one demonstrates lyrical phrasing and one showcases technical facility. Practise with a pianist if possible.
- Revise all four standard cadence types until you can identify them instantly by ear. Sing or play cadence progressions at the keyboard daily in different keys.
- Listen to several recordings of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos, paying close attention to the different solo instruments and their interplay. Follow along with a full score if available.
- Practise interval recognition by singing or playing intervals from random starting notes. Use flashcards or an app to drill all interval types, including augmented and diminished.
- Work on melodic dictation by transcribing short phrases from recordings. Start with simple folk tunes, then progress to Baroque melodic lines with ornaments and leaps.
- Plan your essay before you start writing. Spend two or three minutes outlining your main points so your argument or description is clear and well-organised.
- Familiarise yourself with Italian tempo markings and what they imply about character and speed. Listen to pieces marked Allegro, Andante, etc., to internalise the differences.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Rushing through the melodic dictation without listening carefully to all four playings. Students often miss small rhythmic details or chromatic alterations by writing too quickly after the first hearing.
- Confusing imperfect and interrupted cadences. Remember that an imperfect cadence ends on chord V, while an interrupted cadence moves from V to vi (or another unexpected chord).
- Misidentifying the recorder (flauto dolce) as a modern orchestral flute. The sound is softer, more nasal, and less brilliant; listen for the characteristic breathy tone of a wooden instrument.
- Failing to describe intervals fully. Writing "2nd" instead of "major 2nd" or "minor 2nd" will lose marks. Always include the quality (major, minor, perfect, augmented, diminished) as well as the number.
- Writing an essay that is too general or vague. Avoid statements like "the piece is interesting" without explaining why. Use specific musical vocabulary and concrete examples from the score or your experience.
- Running out of time on the essay because of poor pacing in the listening section. Keep an eye on the clock and move on if you are stuck on a particular question.

Exam technique

Start with the **Practical Performance**, which is conducted separately before the written paper. Warm up thoroughly and run through your piece with the accompanist to establish tempo and coordinate any tricky moments. Play with confidence and musicality rather than attempting to be note-perfect; examiners value expressive interpretation as much as technical accuracy.

In the listening section, use the three-minute reading time to scan all the questions and identify what you are listening for (instrument names, keys, specific bar numbers). When the extract plays, jot down immediate observations in pencil beside each question, then refine your answers during subsequent hearings. Do not waste time rewriting answers neatly; focus on accuracy and completeness. For melodic dictation, mark the rhythm first (clapping along if necessary), then add the pitches once you have the rhythmic framework secure.

For the essay, allocate a firm **20 minutes** and stick to it. Spend the first two minutes planning: jot down three or four key points you want to make, then write steadily and clearly. If you choose the comparative essay, balance your discussion between the two pieces; if you choose the instrumental introduction, cover history, technique, and

repertoire in roughly equal measure. Aim for two or three substantial paragraphs rather than a single block of text. Leave a minute at the end to reread and correct any obvious errors.

What to revise alongside this paper

Students should revise **ABRSM or Trinity Grade 5 Music Theory** to consolidate their understanding of key signatures, time signatures, and interval construction. Practise writing out scales and arpeggios in all major and minor keys, and ensure you can identify all intervals up to an octave, both melodically and harmonically. If you have not yet studied cadences in detail, work through examples in a theory workbook or online resource, playing them at the keyboard and singing the bass line to internalise the sound of each type.

Broaden your listening by exploring other Baroque concertos, particularly those by **Vivaldi, Handel, and Telemann**. Pay attention to the roles of solo instruments and continuo, the use of ritornello form, and the contrast between solo and tutti sections. If you play a Baroque instrument or have access to period recordings, compare the sound of natural trumpets, wooden flutes, and gut-stringed violins with their modern equivalents.

For the essay component, read about the history and development of your own instrument. Investigate its repertoire from different periods (Baroque, Classical, Romantic, contemporary) and be ready to discuss specific pieces or composers. If you are preparing a critical essay, listen analytically to recordings of the pieces you intend to discuss, and practise articulating what makes them effective or flawed as compositions.

Key terms

Cadence, Perfect cadence, Imperfect cadence, Plagal cadence, Interrupted cadence, Melodic dictation, Interval, Major, minor, augmented, diminished, perfect, Tromba (natural trumpet), Flauto dolce (recorder), Brandenburg Concerto, Baroque, Score-following, Modulation, Tonic, dominant, relative key

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Rugby
School

Music

Sixth Form Examination

Mark Scheme

Performance

The performance, out of 30, will be marked against the following criteria:

26–30

Performances which are consistently excellent in musicianship and control of technique, communicating a very high level of musical understanding of the music (demanding the most highly developed skills expected at this level).

21–25

Performances which are very good in musicianship and control of technique, communicating a high level of musical understanding of the music demanding well-developed skills for a performance at this level (but lacking the consistent excellence to be placed in the highest category).

15–20

Performances which are fairly good in most respects, demonstrating a developing level of musicianship and technique, communicating a good general understanding of the style(s) represented (but less even in quality than the higher categories or with some limitations of technique or musicianship).

10–14

Performances which are good in some respects, though more limited in musicianship and/or technique, communicating a restricted understanding of the music in programmes which may not be altogether appropriate to the candidate (or which may be rather narrow in the range of musical or technical skills demonstrated).

5–9

Performances in which limitations of technique or musicianship are significant enough to impede the communication of musical understanding in some important respects in pieces which offer only limited opportunities to display technical and musical skills.

1-4

Performances which display significant weaknesses in musicianship or technique, and in which there may be relatively little evidence of musical understanding.

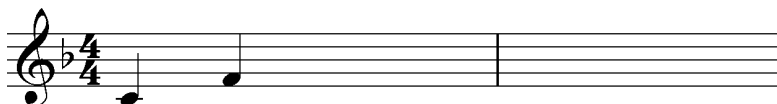
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No creditable qualities in the work presented, or no performance presented.

Listening

Section A – Melodic/Rhythmic Dictation and Cadence Recognition

1. Write down the melody (pitch and rhythm) played by the solo instrument in this extract. The time signature, key signature and first two notes have been given. Write down both the pitch and the rhythm. The extract will be played **four** times.



F G A G A C

/ 6 marks

1 mark per correct notehead (pitch and rhythm), 6 noteheads in total.

2. You will hear four cadences each played **twice**. Write down the name of each cadence in the spaces below.

- a. *perfect*
- b. *imperfect*
- c. *plagal*
- d. *interrupted*

/ 4 marks

Section B – Recorded Extract

You are going to hear one extract of music from *Brandenburg Concerto No. 2*. The extract will be played **four** times, with a pause between each playing. Look at the skeleton score on the next page, and answer the questions.

You have **3 minutes** to look through the questions and at the score.

The trumpet is referred to as a **tromba** in the score.

Question numbers have been included in the score to help you locate the answers.

The extract will be taken from the Western Classical Tradition. This extract is from Bach's 2nd Brandenburg Concerto, in F major.

1. Give an alternative term for the upbeat at the start of the first movement.

Anacrusis

/ 1 mark

2. (a) At bar 8, beat 4, which instrument enters with the theme?

Oboe

/ 1 mark

(b) To which family of instruments does this belong?

Woodwind

/ 1 mark

3. (a) At bar 16, beat 4, the *Flauto dolce* plays the theme. In which key is the theme played?

C (major)

/ 1 mark

(b) What is the relationship of this key to the tonic key of the movement?

Dominant

/ 1 mark

(c) From listening to the sound of the instrument, tick the most suitable alternative term for describing the sound of the *Flauto dolce*.

Orchestral Flute

Treble Recorder

Chamber Organ

Panpipe

/ 1 mark

Questions on this extract continue over the page...

4. On the staff below, write out the missing trumpet melody ('tromba') from bar 33.



F__F D G D

/ 2 marks

2 marks if all correct , 1 mark if 2 or more pitches correct

5. Which of the following terms describes the bass line bar 25? Tick the most appropriate.



Arpeggiated

/ 1 mark

6. Bach did not indicate a tempo at the start of this movement. Choose the Italian term you think is most appropriate:

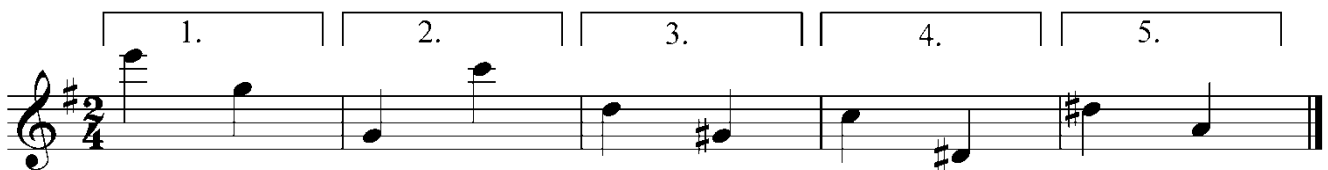


Allegro

/ 1 mark

Section C – Theory of Music

7. Describe fully each of these melodic intervals (e.g. major 2nd)



1. Major [1] 6th [1] 2. (compound) perfect [1] 4th [1]

3. diminished [1] 5th [1]

4. Diminished [1] 7th [1]

5. Augmented [1] 6th [1]

/ 10 marks

Essay

Either a) Choose two pieces that you have heard and/or played and discuss their strengths and weaknesses as musical compositions.

Or b) Introduce your instrument to someone who has never heard it before – you may wish to write about its technical challenges, famous repertoire and the instrument's history.

[20 marks]

16 – 20

- Detailed knowledge and understanding
- A full and clear response to the question with detailed references
- Convincing and well-structured arguments in a mature writing style with few, if any, errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation and a fluent use of appropriate specialist vocabulary

Answers in this band are very good or excellent. The candidate comments perceptively. The essay will answer the question fully and there will be good analytical detail.

11 – 15

- Sound knowledge and understanding
- An effective response to the question with references to scores / historical features
- A clear line of argument with some sense of style; few errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation and an appropriate use of specialist vocabulary.

Answers in this band will be strong on content and must contain evidence of aural awareness as well as a good range of facts and some analytical comment, showing that the candidate understands some of the technical aspects. The essay should answer the question, but answers may lack detail and/or some important aspects may have gone unnoticed.

6 – 10

- Some knowledge and understanding
- An attempt to respond to the question with references to the score, but these may be merely descriptive
- Some clarity in the line of argument but there may be errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation, and use of specialist vocabulary may be weak.

Answers in this band will have some content and relevance and there may be the beginnings of understanding. Typically candidates here give a catalogue of events rather than showing that they understand the technical aspects of the music. A description without explanation, however accurate, should not gain more than 10 marks.

0 – 5

- Limited knowledge and understanding
- The answer may not address the question and there may be few, if any, references to the score / history of the instrument / challenges; these may be merely descriptive or not relevant
- Limited vocabulary may hinder expression and there may be errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation, with no more than an attempt at specialist vocabulary.

Answers in this band are generally very weak. At the bottom of the band there may be as little as half a page of writing with a few 'remembered' facts which may or may not be relevant to the question. Three or four facts probably take the work over half-way but there will still be no evidence of understanding.

END OF EXAM

Answer-Key Notes: 16+ Music Mark Scheme (16+ Music Mark Scheme)

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you mark this paper and learn from each answer.

How to use this answer key

This mark scheme provides **three types of marking guidance**: a holistic rubric for performance (out of 30), model answers for listening and theory (30 marks), and a level-based essay rubric (20 marks). Use the performance descriptors to make a professional judgement of the candidate's overall musicianship, not simply to tick boxes; each band describes both technical control and musical understanding. For listening and theory, award marks only when the answer matches the mark scheme exactly, especially for interval names (both quality and number must be correct). The essay bands reward insight and structure, not recall alone, so read the whole response before deciding which descriptor fits best.

Distinguish between slips and gaps. A candidate who writes 'perfect 5th' for a diminished fifth may know intervals but worked carelessly under time pressure, whereas writing 'major 5th' suggests a fundamental misunderstanding. Similarly, missing one notehead in dictation is less serious than missing the rhythm entirely. When several errors cluster in one section, consult the worked examples below to understand the reasoning and identify where teaching should focus.

Score interpretation

A total score above 60/80 (75 per cent) indicates strong readiness for Sixth Form music study, combining secure aural skills, fluent theory application, and the ability to perform and write persuasively about music. Scores between 48 and 60 suggest good foundations but some gaps, perhaps in interval recognition or essay structure, that a summer of focused revision could address. Below 48 marks (60 per cent), significant gaps are likely in two or more components, and candidates should consider whether music at this level matches their strengths and interests.

The performance carries the greatest weight (30 marks) and reflects sustained work over months, so a strong performance score (21+) can compensate for nerves or inexperience in the written examination. Conversely, a candidate scoring full marks on listening and theory but only 12 on performance may lack the instrumental fluency expected for advanced study. The essay discriminates most effectively between bands: candidates in the 16–20 range write analytically and use technical vocabulary

accurately, while those scoring 6–10 offer description without insight. Review essay responses carefully to gauge depth of musical thinking beyond factual recall.

Worked examples

Melodic dictation and cadences, Q1–2

Dictation rewards **accurate pitch and rhythm notation**; examiners award one mark per notehead only when both are correct. Candidates often lose marks by guessing note values or forgetting accidentals implied by the key signature. Cadence recognition depends on hearing the bass movement and the harmonic function; naming a cadence requires both (for example, interrupted means V–VI, not simply 'it sounds surprising'). Common errors include confusing imperfect with interrupted, or plagal with perfect.

Q1 : F G A G A C (six crotchets in 4/4, key of B \flat major)

The melody begins on F (the dominant of B \flat major) and moves stepwise to G and A before returning to G and A, then leaping up to C. Each notehead must be rhythmically correct to earn its mark; writing six crotchets but placing A as a minim loses marks even if the pitches are right. **Listen for the contour and count beats carefully** rather than trying to transcribe everything on the first hearing.

Q2(d) : Interrupted

An interrupted cadence moves from V to VI instead of the expected V–I. In this example, the dominant chord resolves deceptively to the submediant, creating a sense of postponement. Candidates often confuse this with an imperfect cadence; remember that **imperfect cadences end on V**, whereas interrupted cadences end on VI. The bass line will drop by step (or rise by third) rather than moving by fourth or fifth as in a perfect cadence.

Recorded extract (Brandenburg Concerto No. 2), Q1–6

Baroque concerto questions test recognition of instrumental timbre, key relationships, and structural features such as anacrusis and imitation. Marks are lost when candidates name plausible instruments without listening carefully (for example, writing 'flute' instead of 'oboe' at bar 8 because both are woodwind). Key identification requires you to hear tonic chords and judge whether the passage sounds settled (tonic) or unstable (dominant or relative major). Always read the question carefully: 'describe the bass line' requires a technical term (stepwise, arpeggiated, pedal), not a general impression.

Q2(a) : Oboe

At bar 8, beat 4, the theme passes to a **double-reed instrument with a bright, slightly nasal timbre**. While both oboe and recorder are woodwind, the oboe has a more penetrating, reedy quality. Candidates who write 'flute' have confused the flauto dolce (which plays later) with this entry. Listen for the distinctive oboe tone in the fugal texture.

Q3(b) : Dominant

The flauto dolce at bar 16 plays the theme in C major. Because the movement is in F major, C major is the dominant key. **Dominant relationships are fundamental to Baroque form**; the ritornello theme typically appears first in the tonic, then in the dominant, then returns to the tonic. Simply naming the key (C major) does not answer the question; you must state the relationship.

Q4 : F F D G D (five pitches on the treble stave)

The trumpet (tromba) plays two repeated Fs, then D, then a leap to G and back to D. Award two marks if all five pitches are correct; one mark if two or more are correct. Many candidates lose marks by mishearing the G or by notating incorrect rhythms. **Focus on the trumpet's bright, fanfare-like timbre** to isolate this line from the accompanying texture.

Q6 : Allegro

The movement is lively and buoyant, with semiquaver passagework and a rhythmic drive characteristic of allegro tempo. Andante and moderato are both too slow for this music, and vivace, though plausible, overstates the speed. **Allegro is the standard tempo for the outer movements** of Brandenburg concertos. Judge tempo from the character of the music and the note values used, not solely from the metronome speed.

Intervals, Q7

Each interval requires **both its quality (major, minor, perfect, augmented, diminished) and its number (2nd, 3rd, etc.)** to earn both marks. Compound intervals (spanning more than an octave) must be named as 'compound' or counted accurately (e.g., 'compound perfect 4th' or 'perfect 11th'). Common errors: writing 'major 5th' (all 5ths are perfect, augmented, or diminished), forgetting to count both notes when determining the interval number, or ignoring accidentals. If unsure, build the interval from the lower note using the major scale or chromatic adjustments.

Q7(2) : Compound perfect 4th (or perfect 11th)

From the first E up to the second A spans an octave plus a perfect 4th. Counting letter names: E–F–G–A is four notes (a 4th), and the interval from E to A natural is perfect in the key of E major. Adding the octave makes this a compound interval. **Candidates must either state 'compound perfect 4th' or calculate the full interval as 'perfect 11th'** (4 + 7 = 11). Writing only 'perfect 4th' loses a mark.

Q7(3) : Diminished 5th

From E natural to B \flat is five letter names (E–F–G–A–B), making it a 5th. In the key of E major, the 5th above E is B natural, so lowering it by a semitone to B \flat makes it diminished. **A diminished 5th sounds the same as an augmented 4th but is spelled differently**; here, the notation shows a 5th (E to B) so 'diminished 5th' is correct. Writing 'augmented 4th' would be incorrect because the upper note is B, not A \sharp .

Q7(5) : Augmented 6th

From A natural to F $\sharp\sharp$ (F double-sharp) spans six letter names (A–B–C–D–E–F). The major 6th above A is F \sharp , so raising F \sharp by another semitone to F $\sharp\sharp$ makes it augmented. **Double sharps are rare but do occur**, and candidates must recognise that F $\sharp\sharp$ is enharmonically equivalent to G natural but spelled as F. Writing 'major 7th' would be wrong because the interval is counted A to F, not A to G.

Essay, Q8

The essay rubric rewards **perceptive comment, detailed references, and a clear line of argument**, not the quantity of facts. Answers in the 16–20 band cite specific bars, techniques, or historical context and explain their significance; those in the 6–10 band catalogue events without insight. Common weaknesses include failing to answer the question (discussing only strengths when both strengths and weaknesses are required), unclear structure, or using vague language ('nice melody', 'interesting harmony') instead of precise technical vocabulary. Plan before writing: two or three analytical points, each supported by evidence, will score more highly than a rambling survey.

Essay Q(a) : (Example of a 16–20 band response: focused comparison with technical detail)

A strong answer to question (a) **selects two contrasting pieces and analyses specific compositional choices**. For instance, a candidate might compare a Baroque fugue's contrapuntal rigour (a strength) with its lack of dynamic contrast (a potential weakness by Romantic standards), then contrast a minimalist work whose repetitive structure creates hypnotic momentum but may limit harmonic interest. Each paragraph should name bars, keys, or textures and explain their effect. Avoid mere description ('the piece begins quietly'); instead, evaluate ('the gradual crescendo over 40 bars builds tension effectively but risks losing less patient listeners').

Essay Q(b) : (Example of an 11–15 band response: sound content but less analytical depth)

An answer in this band might describe the instrument's range, famous repertoire (naming concertos or sonatas), and historical development, showing good factual knowledge. However, it may lack the evaluative edge of the top band: for example, stating 'the clarinet has a wide range' without explaining **how that range creates distinct timbral registers** (chalumeau, throat, clarion) or why composers exploit those colours. To reach 16–20, add specific examples (e.g., 'Mozart's Clarinet Concerto exploits the chalumeau register in bar 45 to create a mellow, introspective mood') and link technical challenges to musical outcomes.

Next steps

After marking, **group errors by type rather than by question number**. If interval mistakes cluster around augmented and diminished qualities, review how to build intervals chromatically and practise identifying them by ear. If cadence recognition was weak, play cadences at the piano (or use an app) until the sound of each is automatic. If the essay lacked structure, practice writing timed paragraph plans before drafting. Mistakes in dictation often improve rapidly with regular short practice (five minutes daily is more effective than one long session weekly).

Candidates scoring above 65 marks should explore advanced aural training (for example, transcribing jazz or pop recordings, or identifying modulations and chromaticism in real time) and read widely about music history and analysis to deepen the contextual knowledge that distinguishes top-band essays. Those scoring below 50 should prioritise aural skills and basic theory (scales, intervals, cadences) before attempting timed essays, and consider whether instrumental progress is keeping pace

with written work. Retake a similar paper in four to six weeks to measure progress, ensuring that practice is targeted at the weakest areas identified here.

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