

PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT



BOTSWANA
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL

BGCSE MUSIC

2025

PAPER 1: WRITTEN PAPER

General Comments

The paper requires candidates to listen to musical excerpts and respond to different stimuli. Most candidates attempted questions that focused on recall and identification of musical concepts. This was evident in their responses to questions that required identification, stating or naming certain concepts. However, many candidates were unable to access most items, as they failed to provide precise answers to specific items. Questions 6,23,24,25 and 29 posed challenges, as candidates were unable to describe the order of vocal or instrumental entries in the music. Generally, candidates demonstrated difficulties in applying their aural skills during the examination. Although some candidates possessed relevant musical vocabulary, they lacked the ability to apply this knowledge effectively to the audio examination.

Candidates should be equipped with relevant and appropriate vocabulary for specific musical concepts such as musical styles, texture, structure and elements. Candidates should be guided on appropriate approaches to melodic notation and aural setting/work. Centres are advised to teach candidates a distinction between the characteristics of music and the purpose of music. Candidates should be guided towards understanding of elements of music, to ensure their appropriate application in their responses. Candidates need to demonstrate understanding of Musical styles and their characteristics.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A

Music A1

1. The item required candidates to describe the melodic shape and rhythm of the first phrase. Most Candidates performed poorly in this question, with majority getting 1 out of 3 marks. Some candidates correctly described one melodic shape of the first phrase as being ascending in pitch and in stepwise movement. Instead of describing the rhythm as being repetitive and use combination of crotchets and quavers, most candidates' provided terms such as rhythmic and syncopation.
2. Candidates were to identify the form of the music, and most candidates did very well in this item, they were able to identify AB/ ternary form.
3. Candidates were expected to identify the first chord of the music The question was well attempted. Most candidates correctly identified the first chord. Those who did not access it gave chord IV or V as their responses.
4. The question required the candidates to state a musical element that makes the music dancelike, the item was well done as candidates were able to state elements such as tempo, mood and rhythm as their responses.
5. Candidates were given a rhythm and expected to place the notes appropriately in a provided treble clef staff. Most candidates performed poorly in this item as they were unable to reproduce correct pitches, and some even failed to reproduce the correct rhythm that was already provided for them.



Music A2

6. The question was poorly done. Instead of describing the arrangement of voices and instruments after the instrumental introduction as starting with the lead voice then four-part harmony/SATB with instrumental accompaniment, most candidates listed different voices and instruments without arranging them.
7. Candidates were expected to describe the structures of the music in the instrumental section as starting with the trumpet, followed by instruments and lastly trumpet with chordal accompaniment, and after the instrumental section as starting with the voice, then choir and instrumental accompaniment. Most candidates performed poorly in this item with majority describing musical textures such as homophonic and polyphonic textures. Some candidates left the item unanswered.
8. The question was fairly done. Candidates were able to identify 4 and 6 time signatures.
9. The candidates were to identify the melodic instrument, and most candidates correctly identified the trumpet heard in the music.
10. The item was well attempted. Candidates were expected to state the instrument that maintains the beat. Most candidates were able to correctly identify the cymbals/drum.

Music B1

11. (a) Most candidates did very well in this question, they were able to state the purpose of the music as being recreational.
(b) The item required candidates to state two reasons of the music heard. Most candidates correctly stated the use of whistle and dancelike rhythm as their responses.
12. Candidates were expected to describe the ensemble heard as being vocal, multipart/mixed female and male voices, has phala sound. Most candidates performed poorly in this item with the majority listing different voices.
13. (a) Most candidates correctly identified phala heard in the music.
(b) The item was well answered, most candidates, successfully described blowing as the playing technique of the instrument heard.
(c) Almost all candidates correctly classified the aerophone heard in the music.
14. (a) The majority of the candidates were able to correctly identify dikhwaere as the style of music heard.
(b) The item required candidates to state a melodic feature of the style as heard in the music such as pairing of male and female leads, short, repeated motives/phrases. Most candidates provided general characteristics of dikhwaere instead of focusing on the melody.



Music B2

15. (a) The question was easily accessible to candidates as most of them were able to identify katara used in the extract.
- (b) The item was well attempted, most candidates managed to state picking or stumming as the playing techniques heard in the music.
16. (a) Candidates were expected to state the function of the voice in the music and most candidates gave the correct response that it plays the melody.
- (b) The item was well done, most of the candidates were able to state the function of the instrument as being able to accompany or support the main melody.
17. The question required candidates to state events such as wedding celebrations, parties, national arts festivals or competitions where the music is commonly heard. Most candidates provided days or places such as Independence Day, or kgotla as their responses.
18. (a) The item was well done as candidates were able to identify the male voice heard.
- (b) The item was well attempted, with a reasonable number of candidates stating the correct chord progression, I, IV and V.
- (c) The question was well done. Most candidates were able to state ostinato as heard on the bassline of the instrument playing.
19. The item was well done as most candidates stated melody and accompaniment as the texture of the music.

Music C1

20. The item required candidates to describe the instrumental entry at the beginning. Most candidates performed poorly in this question, with majority getting 0 out of 2 marks. Instead of describing the instrumental entry as being guitar dominated, starts with the bass guitar, followed by other guitars with the percussions, most of the candidates listed the instruments heard in the music.
21. (a) The item was well done as most candidates were able to identify kwasa kwasa or local rhumba as the style of music heard.
- (b) Most candidates accessed at least one characteristic of the style as heard in the music. Instead of stating characteristics of kwasa kwasa such as guitar domination, percussive, dancelike, polyrhythms, upbeat/fast tempo, some candidates gave musical devices such as repetition and ostinato as their responses.
22. (a) The item was poorly done. Rather than identifying, dipina tsa dikatara as Botswana indigenous style that inspired the music, candidates provided unrelated styles of Botswana indigenous music such as tsutsube, dikhwaere as their responses.



- (b) The item was not well attempted; candidates were expected to state soukous/Congolese rumba as the international style which influenced the music but instead gave kwasa kwasa as their response.

23. Candidates were expected to describe the vocal arrangement heard, the lead singer introduces followed by two-part harmony, male voices only or higher and lower male voices. Most candidates accessed at least one description of the vocal arrangement heard in the music. However, some candidates stated a musical device such as call and response as their response.

Music C2

24. The item required candidates to describe the arrangement of the music at the beginning, that it begins with the guitar then keyboard with drum kit and then voices follow. Most candidates performed poorly in this question, with majority getting 1 out of 3 marks. Most candidates listed the instruments heard in the music.
25. The item was poorly done. Candidates were expected to name the voices according to the arrangement of entry at the beginning of the music that it starts with alto, followed by tenor and then choir or all voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass). Most candidates did not focus on the arrangement instead listed the voices heard in the music.
26. (a) The question was generally well attempted, with most of the candidates correctly identifying Contemporary choral music/ choral music as the genre of the music.
- (b) The item was well attempted with candidates stating choral choir with instrumental accompaniment to support their answer.
27. Candidates were expected to describe the texture of the music. Most candidates could not access all the two marks as they correctly listed homophonic and polyphonic textures without describing them.



PAPER 2: PRACTICAL TEST

General Comments

This is a paper that assesses candidates' practical skills, where each candidate performs two (2) pieces of music, alone (solo) and with others (ensemble). The marking is conducted in teams which visit centres, and assessment is live.

The purpose of this report is to provide information on what transpired during the marking exercise of music component 1258/02 across different Centres. In this report, an account of the positives and negatives will be provided. This report will also provide some recommendations to help close gaps or to avoid repetition of the challenges experienced.

Centres should ensure clarity of roles in ensembles. This will enhance the quality of ensembles. Candidates are advised to use backing tracks or instrumental accompaniment in order to help or improve to maintain tempo while performing

Candidates' Performances

BSSE Music examinations is mainly performance where candidates are expected to perform in an Ensemble and as an individual (solo). Most Centres were able to prepare for these two expected performances. The performances were generally good, showing a significant improvement from 2024, with candidates accessing most of the criteria.

Ensembles

Most Centres have improved live band performances, as compared to the previous year, using instruments from different instrument families and using different (varied) songs. Only one (1) Centre used Marimba and not more than two (2) pieces performed, for almost all the candidates. The same Centre also did not meet the requirements for an Ensemble for most candidates, because they used a backtrack on an Ensemble performance, instead of live performance, as per assessment requirements.

Ensemble Performances

The following were noted concerning the criteria:

(a) Accuracy of notes or quality of improvisation

For this criterion, most of the ensembles were performed very well and displayed high quality of improvisation.

(b) Ensemble Coordination

Most of the candidates ranged from very good to excellent, displaying high quality coordination. There was a marked improvement in most of the ensembles as compared to the 2024 cohort. Few candidates performed below average.

(c) Sensitivity to phrasing and expression

Most of the candidates were average on completing phrases and applying implicit expressions. Only few candidates managed to apply dynamics and round off phrases effectively.

(d) Technical control of the instruments / voice

Most candidates showed very good technical skills. Regarding Voice, candidates did well in placement, production and intonation. Candidates also demonstrated good to excellent control, in other instruments.

(e) Range of musical skills displayed

Candidates demonstrated good to very good musical skills and musicianship, displaying a high range of technical skills.

Solo

Centres varied both instrumental and vocal solo performances by selecting different songs for either instrumental solo or vocal solo. In almost all Centres, a majority of solo performances were accompanied by a backing track and very few by a Keyboard or a mini live band. For candidates who performed solos without accompaniment, had challenges in keeping a steady tempo.

Solo performances

The following were observed following the criteria:

(a) Accuracy of notes and rhythm or quality of improvisation

In this criterion, most of the candidates performed averagely. Some struggled to sing in pitch, throughout the performance.

(b) Choice and control of tempo

Most of the candidates did very well and few candidates had tempo fluctuations. Tempo challenges were mostly affecting candidates who performed without accompaniment.

(c) Sensitivity to phrasing and expression

Most candidates showed very good expressions & good phrasing when performing. They were able to demonstrate implicit dynamics and applied performance directions.

(d) Technical control of the instrument or voice

Most of the candidates had good technical control of the instrument even though others failed to project their voices and maintain intonation throughout their performances.

(e) Range of technical and musical skills demonstrated

Some of the candidates had high range of songs with good musical skills except one centre which failed to meet the requirements by using short and elementary songs.



PAPER 3: PROVIDER BASED ASSESSMENT

General Comments

BSSE Music paper III (1258/03) is mainly music creation, and all candidates were expected to either arrange a Botswana indigenous song or compose a song and as well do a song writing project with music and text. This BSSE Music component being mainly music creation, composition and demonstration of song writing skills, it was expected that candidates will, through their products, demonstrate these creation skills. They were further, to demonstrate their song writing skills and craft text to music. Moreover, candidates were, as a requirement, also expected to produce write-ups (portfolios), audios, as well as texts which were to be crafted to their respective music.

Centres must practice more in exploring musical devices and their effective use in compositions. Centres must encourage candidates to present their main idea clearly before they proceed with the composition. They should also provide guidance on idea developmental stages to avoid compositions with no form/structure. Centres must provide correct stimuli to the candidates for proper guidance on arrangements. Centres must practice more on recording stages/processes and make sure all candidates go through all stages till the mastering stage. Recordings and sound waves from raw recording to the final stage must be submitted together with the folio. AI should be used by Centres appropriately and still not lose focus concerning manipulation of sound and going through recording processes to the final song product.

Candidates' Performance

In general, candidates did not do well, particularly on the arrangement task. Song writing was, however, a new assessment area which was only brought in with the new BSSE syllabus. Despite being a new assessment area, most candidates performed it relatively well.

Compositions

- Most Centres chose to do composition over arrangement, and they performed well in this component.
- Candidates were challenged in the use and application of music devices but instead they delved more into trying more variations and explorations.
- Most candidates failed to present their main idea and its developmental stages, clearly.

Arrangements

- Generally, few Centres and candidates chose to do arrangements. It was the most challenging component in all the three assessment areas. For those that did arrangements, most of them diverted completely from the indigenous feel of their original stimuli to something that sounded like a new composition. An arrangement is guided by the stimulus; hence, the expectation is to hear the relationship between the stimulus and the arrangement.
- Other Centres provided the wrong stimulus to the candidates, hence, misguiding them right from the beginning.

Song Writing

The song writing assessment area was a new addition to this component 3. It was the first time that it was being assessed.

- Most Centres did very well in this assessment area, except for a few where most critical stages were skipped.
- Most candidates who did not do well in this assessment area, had a challenge with the technical part where they were expected to manipulate sound to come up with a better and own independent creatively thought-out sound.
- Candidates were also challenged on the part concerning lyrical content and musical creativity. They were not able to demonstrate understanding of crafting text to music and applying creative skills.
- Only one centre seemed to have used AI inappropriately and seemed to have overlooked that candidates are expected to manipulate sound.

Assessment areas for Song writing

(a) Lyrics

While most candidates were able to submit texts for their songs, as a requirement, it is the quality of these texts that posed challenges to some candidates. There is need to avoid lengthy songs, but rather craft text that adheres to general characteristics and traits of good songs, such as the Intro, chorus, hook and outro.

(b) Music Content

Some candidates were challenged with the structure of their songs, instrumentation and the quality of the overall song, including melody and harmony. These have to be well-thought out and technically presented.

(c) Use of Music Technology

Most candidates were able to use technology appropriately; however, candidates and centres are advised that candidates have to demonstrate skills of recording and editing sound products.