VIVA VOCE EXAMINATION

THE PURPOSE OF THE VIVA VOCE

The viva voce provides an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, approach and understandings of the music played.

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDANCE ON THE VIVA VOCE

The viva voce should be conducted right after the performance. Candidates must be examined singly. Only one teacher may conduct the test. No other person should normally be present during the assessment.

Other recommendations for teachers:
• do not walk about or distract the candidate in any way, for example by doodling or fiddling with papers
• never show undue surprise, impatience or mockery
• never correct a candidate.

During the examination, it is necessary that both the candidate and the teacher face the microphone and speak clearly. The HKEAA examiner needs to hear both sides of the conversation, both the teacher’s questions and the candidate answers.

CONDUCTING THE VIVA VOCE

The viva voce should be conducted in a relaxed manner to minimize the candidate’s nervousness which might affect his/her response to the teacher during the examination. The opening questions are informal, progressing to topics on which candidates are likely to be knowledgeable, then move on to more challenging questions. The teacher should ask unambiguous questions. All questions should be clearly expressed and phrased so that the candidate would be able to provide answer readily. Some questions will be open-ended, others will be more direct.

THE ASSESSMENT FOR VIVA VOCE

The viva voce section lasts for 3 to 5 minutes. There are 15 raw marks available for viva voce, with a weighting of 3%. The assessment criteria for the viva voce consist of two
categories, namely the understanding of music and context and the candidate’s response during the examination. (See the criteria descriptors issued by HKEAA.)

The viva voce examination includes three areas:

(1) The background of music pieces,

(2) Stylistic characteristics,

(3) Ways of interpretation.

Questions asked should cover all the above three areas.

To find out how well a candidate understands the music he/she performed, questions for delineating the candidate’s order of thinking ranging from remembering and understanding to applying, analysing or beyond should be progressively asked. Usually a direct question pointing to simple facts should be followed by further questions requiring an explanation or discussion of the reasons/phenomena that lie underneath the facts.

Important note:

It is intended that the viva voce section will be lively and spontaneous. Teachers should warn their candidates not to produce chunks of pre-learned material since HKEAA examiners are advised to penalise candidates who do so. Equally, teachers who may also be conducting the final examination should guard against over-rehearsing the assessments in advance. Any suspicion of collusion in the conduct of assessments (e.g. pre-prepared questions, candidates or teachers using pre-determined scripts) will be dealt with in accordance with HKEAA’s malpractice procedures.

RECORDING OF CANDIDATES

Schools should ensure, well in advance of the test, that a suitably quiet room is available and that the recording equipment is in good order. Rooms which are too close to a playground, recreation room or noisy classroom should be avoided; unnecessary background noise must be excluded.

The school is responsible for supplying CDs for the recording of its assessments. Teachers must ensure that all recording CDs are clearly audible and visional. When submitting recordings, each candidate’s file must be saved individually and saved...
as .mp4, .avi or .wmv so that it can be accessed for the purposes of external assessment.

Care should be taken to ensure that recording quality is good. The recording equipment must be tested in advance, and new, unrecorded CDs used. The recording level should be tested before the start of the assessments. Where possible, the recording equipment should have external microphones so that separate microphones can be used for the candidate and the examiner. If only one microphone is being used, it should be placed facing the candidate. If the candidate is softly-spoken, the microphone should be placed nearer to the candidate before the start of the test.

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

The following are sample questions but they are not exhaustive. Questions that are relevant to the candidate’s performance and choice of programme can be asked, as long as these questions fall within the three areas.

1. **The background of music pieces**
   - How would you decide what pieces to play in your programme?
   - What criteria did you consider when you set your programme?
   - When was the music composed?
   - To what period of music history does this piece belong?
   - Who was/were the composer(s) of the piece?
   - Was there any special reason/circumstance under which the composer composed the music?
   - Is the piece an original work or transcription, or arrangement?
   - To what instruments was this piece written for? What roles did each instrument play? What is/are the characteristic(s) of the part that you played?
   - (Ask follow up questions about the musical stylistic/ instrumental/ technical features of the piece.)
   - To what instrument was this piece originally written for? How is it different from the instrument that you are playing?
 Did the composer write any other similar pieces?
 Did any other musician(s) of that period write similar pieces?
 Can you name any other pieces that belong to the same genre?

2. **Stylistic characteristics:**

- To what period does the music belong?
- What kind of music is this composition? What is/are its characteristic feature(s)?
- What is the genre of this piece? What is so special about this genre?
- What is the musical form of this piece?
- How is the music organised?
- Comment on the characteristics/stylistic features of the music in terms of melodic structure; (ii) rhythmic interest; (iii) instrumental setting, timbre/colour etc.
- Compare the stylistic features (such as melody, rhythm, instrumentation/timbre etc.) of the two/three pieces that you play

3. **Ways of interpretation**

- How do you decide the tempo when you play this piece?
- What is the meaning of this marking in on the score? How the dynamic/expressive markings would be interpreted?
- What is the mood(s) of this piece? How did you convey it/them to the audience?
- Describe your ways of interpretation for this piece of music.
- Is this piece difficult or easy? Why? Please provide evidence to support your answer.
- What kind of instrumental technique(s) did you use in playing the music? How did you show them in your playing?
- Where in the music did you find challenging? Why, please discuss?