Captivate
EDUCATION

SAMPLE QUESTIONS
One question from each section of this exam, with its marking scheme, so teachers can see what the full paper is like. Full exam and solutions: captivateeducation.com.au/trial-exams

Music Composition

Question and Answer Book

Practice examination 1 – 2027

- Reading time is 15 minutes
- Writing time is 1 hour

Materials supplied

- Question and Answer Book
- An audio recording of musical excerpts (supplied by your teacher)

Instructions

- All your work, including rough work, will be considered for assessment.
- You may write at any time during the playing of the audio recording.

Students are not permitted to bring mobile phones and/or any unauthorised electronic devices into the examination room.

Contents

4 questions (75 marks)

SAMPLE

Practice material in the layout of the 2025 VCAA paper – generated 2027. Not a VCAA examination.

Instructions

- Answer **all** questions in the spaces provided.
- Write your responses in English.
- An audio recording will play continuously for the duration of writing time.

Sample – Question 1 of the 4 questions in this section; Question 1 is shown to part c of its 4 parts.

Question 1 (10 marks)

Work: 'Bohemian Rhapsody'
Composer/Creator: Freddie Mercury
Performers: Queen
Album: *A Night at the Opera* (EMI, 1975)

First playing (1′45″) – 15 seconds of silence
Second playing (1′45″) – 30 seconds of silence
Third playing (1′45″) – 1 minute of silence
Fourth playing (1′45″) – 1 minute of silence
Fifth and final playing (1′45″) – 2 minutes 30 seconds of silence

The structure of this excerpt could be described as follows.

Time code	Section	Description
0:00	1	verse: voice with accompaniment
0:42	2	featured instrument 1
1:03	3	transition
1:08	4	new section: piano and voices

a. Identify **two** instruments/sound sources, other than the voice, heard in Section 1. 2 marks

Instrument/Sound source 1

Instrument/Sound source 2

SAMPLE

b. Describe the tone colour of featured instrument 1 in Section 2. 4 marks

c. Describe the texture in Section 4. 4 marks

SAMPLE

End of sample questions

Marking scheme for the sample questions

Question 1a. (2 marks)

*Identify **two** instruments/sound sources, other than the voice, heard in Section 1.*

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Identify two instruments/sound sources, other than the voice, heard in Section 1 (the verse).

Lower-scoring responses named instruments that are heard only in Section 4 (for example the multitracked choir of voices), or named the voice.

Recording for this question (teacher to supply): Work: ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ (Freddie Mercury), Queen, *A Night at the Opera* (EMI, 1975), album version. Excerpt: about 1:55–3:40 of the track (1′45″). Section map (excerpt time): 0:00 second ballad verse (“Too late, my time has come”) — voice with piano, bass guitar and drum kit, guitar fills near the end; 0:42 (track ≈2:37) guitar solo; 1:03 (≈2:58) transition — descending band figure, the groove stops; 1:08 (≈3:03) operatic section — staccato piano chords, solo voice, then the multitracked choir in call and response. What each part needs the student to hear: 1a the accompanying instruments of the verse; 1b the overdriven, sustained, vibrato-rich guitar tone; 1c the solo-versus-choir texture and the punctuating piano chords; 1d the halting of the groove, the descending line and the sudden new key and tempo. Teacher check: confirm these features and timings against your recording before use; adjust the structure table and answers if your recording differs.

Mark allocation: 1 mark for each instrument/sound source correctly identified (2 marks).

Responses could have included:

- piano
- bass guitar (electric bass)
- drum kit (drums, cymbals)
- electric guitar (fills towards the end of the verse)
- “Keyboard” was accepted for piano and “bass” for bass guitar.

Sample full-mark response

> Instrument/Sound source 1: piano. Instrument/Sound source 2: bass guitar.

Question 1b. (4 marks)

Describe the tone colour of featured instrument 1 in Section 2.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Describe the tone colour of featured instrument 1 (electric guitar) in Section 2.

SAMPLE

Lower-scoring responses described what the guitar played (a melody, a solo) rather than how it sounded, or gave only one adjective (“loud”, “rocky”). Loudness is dynamics, not tone colour.

Mark allocation: 1 mark for each accurate, relevant characteristic of tone colour, to 4 marks.

Responses could have included:

- an electric guitar with an overdriven (distorted) but smooth, warm tone rather than a harsh or fuzzy one
- long sustained notes that ‘sing’ like a voice; the sound does not die away quickly
- expressive vibrato and string bends shape the sound of held notes
- the tone becomes brighter and more piercing as the melody climbs into a higher register
- the guitar is placed prominently in the mix above the piano, bass and drums

Sample full-mark response

> Featured instrument 1 is an electric guitar with a warm, overdriven tone that is smooth rather than harsh. Its notes sustain for a long time, so the solo ‘sings’ like a voice, and held notes are coloured by wide vibrato and string bends. As the solo climbs higher the tone becomes brighter and more piercing, cutting through the piano, bass and drums.

Question 1c. (4 marks)

Describe the texture in Section 4.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Describe the texture in Section 4 (the start of the operatic section).

Lower-scoring responses described the voices as “operatic” or “high” (tone colour and pitch) without saying how many layers there were, what each layer did or how they interacted.

Mark allocation: 1 mark for each accurate, located characteristic of texture, to 4 marks.

Responses could have included:

- a thin texture at the start: repeated detached piano chords accompany a solo voice
- a multitracked group of voices enters, singing in block chords (homophonic)
- call and response between the solo voice and the group, and between high and low groups of voices
- layers enter and drop out suddenly, so the texture changes from phrase to phrase
- bass and drums play short punctuating hits rather than a continuous groove
- the piano’s role is harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment; the voices carry the melody

Sample full-mark response

SAMPLE

Section 4 begins thinly, with a solo voice over repeated, detached piano chords. A multitracked group of voices then answers in block chords, creating a homophonic call-and-response texture; later, high and low groups of voices answer each other. Layers drop in and out suddenly, and the bass and drums only add short hits instead of a steady groove, so the texture keeps changing from phrase to phrase.

SAMPLE