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 Inquiry

Question and Answer Book

Practice examination 1 – 2027

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

Materials supplied

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

Instructions

- All of 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)

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

SAMPLE

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 (16 marks)

Work: 'So What'
Composer/Creator: Miles Davis
Performers: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Julian 'Cannonball' Adderley, Bill Evans, Paul Chambers, Jimmy Cobb
Album: *Kind of Blue* (Columbia, 1959)

This question features one excerpt from this work. The excerpt will be played four times. There will be silent working time after each playing.

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 and final playing (1′45″) – 3 minutes of silence

The following structure map is provided for reference.

Time code	Description
00:00 – 00:33	Introduction
00:33 – 01:01	Section A (heard twice)
01:01 – 01:15	Section B
01:15 – 01:30	Section A (return)
01:30 – 01:45	Section C (trumpet solo begins)

a. Identify **four** instruments / sound sources heard in the excerpt. 4 marks

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

SAMPLE

b. Describe the treatment of texture in the Introduction (00:00 – 00:33). 4 marks

c. Explain how transition is created as the music moves from the Introduction to Section A. In your response, you may refer to duration, texture and tone colour. 8 marks

SAMPLE

End of sample questions

Marking scheme for the sample questions

Question 1a. (4 marks)

*Identify **four** instruments / sound sources heard in the excerpt.*

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Identify four instruments / sound sources heard in the excerpt.

Responses naming electric bass, guitar or clarinet were not credited; naming the same instrument twice in different words earned one mark.

Audio the teacher must supply — Question 1

Recording: Miles Davis, 'So What', the opening track of *Kind of Blue* (Columbia, 1959): Miles Davis (trumpet), John Coltrane (tenor saxophone), Julian 'Cannonball' Adderley (alto saxophone), Bill Evans (piano), Paul Chambers (double bass), Jimmy Cobb (drums). Widely available on CD, vinyl reissues and every major streaming service; use the original studio take, not a live or alternate take.

Segment: 00:00 – 01:45 from the start of the album track, played four times (silences 15 s, 30 s, 1 minute, 3 minutes). Structure map: Introduction 00:00 – 00:33 (piano and double bass in free time); Section A 00:33 – 01:01 (the bass riff answered by the two-chord 'response', heard twice); Section B 01:01 – 01:15 (the same idea a semitone higher); Section A (return) 01:15 – 01:30; Section C 01:30 – 01:45 (the trumpet solo begins over a swing groove).

Listen for: 1a: the six instruments named above; the trumpet and saxophones are heard in the two-chord answers and the trumpet alone from 01:30. 1b: the Introduction's two interacting layers (piano chords and a slow double-bass line), no steady beat, wide spacing between the low bass and the piano. 1c: the move from free time to a steady swing pulse at 00:33; the bass riff becoming the foreground melody; the call and response with the horns/piano; the drum kit entering quietly to keep time.

Verify: Check every time code against your copy (remasters differ by a second or two) and move each boundary to the musical event named here; adjust the map on the paper to match. Confirm by ear whether the drums play at all in your copy's Introduction (if a light cymbal is heard, accept it in 1b). Fade the excerpt at 01:45. This recording is not one used in the 2023–2025 VCAA papers or the sample.

Mark allocation: 1 mark per correct instrument / sound source; only the first four responses were considered.

Responses could have included:

- trumpet
- tenor saxophone
- alto saxophone ('saxophone' credited once unless both saxophones are named)
- piano
- double bass (bass, acoustic bass, upright bass)
- drum kit (drums, ride cymbal, hi-hat, snare drum — credited once)

SAMPLE

Sample full-mark response

> 1. Double bass 2. Piano 3. Trumpet 4. Drum kit (ride cymbal)

Question 1b. (4 marks)

Describe the treatment of texture in the Introduction (00:00 – 00:33).

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

Describe the treatment of texture in the Introduction only: how the sounds are combined and how they interact.

Common errors included listing the instruments without saying how they combine, describing free time (duration) instead of texture, and describing Section A.

Mark allocation: 1 mark for each of four clear, accurate points about texture in the Introduction.

Responses could have included:

- a sparse, thin texture of two main layers — piano and double bass
- the two instruments alternate and answer each other, like a conversation (duet), rather than a fixed melody and accompaniment
- the piano plays soft, sustained chords and short fragments; the bass plays slow melodic phrases in a low register
- wide spacing between the low bass line and the piano chords gives an open, spacious sound
- no steady drum or rhythm-section layer, so the texture is light and floating
- mostly homophonic piano chords with the bass as a separate, independent line

Sample full-mark response

> Thin, sparse texture — only two main layers: piano and double bass. They take turns and answer each other (a duet) rather than one clear melody + accompaniment. Piano: soft, sustained chords; bass: slow melodic phrases low down → wide gap between the layers, open sound. No steady drum groove, so the texture stays light and spacious.

Question 1c. (8 marks)

Explain how transition is created as the music moves from the Introduction to Section A. In your response, you may refer to duration, texture and tone colour.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

SAMPLE

Explain how the shift from the Introduction to Section A is made, using specific evidence from the end of the Introduction and the start of Section A.

This question was marked on overall quality against the descriptors below.

Common errors included describing the Introduction and Section A separately without explaining the shift, and writing about the trumpet solo (Section C).

Mark allocation: Higher-scoring responses explained how the shift is made at and around 00:33 element by element (free time becoming a steady swing pulse, the entry of the bass riff and the two-chord response, the drum kit entering) and linked each change to the move from one musical idea to the next. **Middle-range responses** described features of the Introduction and of Section A accurately but explained the shift itself only generally. **Lower-scoring responses** described one section only, listed instruments, or wrote about Section B or the trumpet solo. Structure advice: state where the transition happens, then take each element in turn — what it is like at the end of the Introduction, what changes at Section A, and how that change moves the music from one idea to the next.

Responses could have included:

- duration: the flexible, free time of the Introduction gives way to a steady pulse at a moderate swing tempo; the bass riff sets the beat and the answering chords fall regularly at the end of each riff
- texture: two interacting layers become call and response — the bass riff in the foreground, the horns and/or piano answering with two short chords; the drum kit enters with a light time-keeping layer
- tone colour: the soft, sustained piano and the round plucked bass are joined by the blended, mellow sound of the horns and the crisp ride cymbal
- dynamics stay soft across the boundary, so the shift is smooth rather than abrupt
- harmony: the shifting chords of the Introduction settle onto one repeated harmonic centre for Section A

Sample full-mark response

> The transition happens at 00:33, where the free Introduction gives way to the main riff. Duration: the Introduction has no steady beat — piano and bass stretch their phrases. At 00:33 the bass sets a steady, moderate swing pulse with a repeated riff, so the music 'locks in' and moves forward. Texture: the two-layer duet becomes call and response — the bass riff is now the foreground melody and the horns/piano answer each phrase with two short chords; the drums enter quietly on the cymbal → a fuller, more organised texture that signals the start of the tune. Tone colour: the soft piano colour is joined by the mellow, blended horn chords and crisp cymbal. Dynamics stay soft, so the Introduction flows into Section A rather than being cut off.

SAMPLE