

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS – Explanatory notes from 2027

Questions at Gold level will include knowledge of the terms, signs, keys etc. from Bronze and Silver Level. Information from these levels is **not** repeated here, and candidates are advised to revisit and revise the study notes from those levels.

In the exam, candidates will be asked 9 questions, with the examples drawn from the sight-reading test. There will be a question on each of the following:

1. An Italian term
2. Musical textures
3. Identifying and naming of degrees of the scale (tonic, supertonic etc)
4. Identifying a chord position (root position/first inversion/second inversion)
5. Identifying the key of the music at a point in the music, including where it might have modulated away from the one indicated by the key signature
6. Identifying a cadence
7. Describing a rhythmic feature, or explaining time signature
8. Precisely identifying a melodic interval
9. Identifying one musical feature which is typical of the music of the period in which the piece was composed. Candidates will be told the period and will **not** be expected to identify it for themselves.

Questions 4 to 8 will usually also be played at the piano, where appropriate. Questions will not necessarily follow this exact order, but the final question will be always be on musical style, and the first always an Italian term. Other questions will follow a logical progression.

Clefs

Candidates will need to be able to identify/read notes in both treble and bass clef, regardless of their own normal voice part.

Keys.

Candidates will need to know all major and minor keys up to 6 sharps or flats, and be able to identify keys both from modulations within the score using accidentals which may be present, as well as from key signatures.

Time Signatures and rhythms

Candidates will need to know time signatures with crotchet, dotted crotchet, minim and quaver beat types – i.e. simple and compound time signatures with 2, 3 and 4 beats per bar.

In addition to the patterns of rhythm from Bronze and Silver levels they should be able to identify and describe:

Syncopation – where a note sounds ‘across’ the beat. Sometimes, erroneously, called ‘off beat’. Syncopated notes will begin on a weak beat of the bar, often a half beat, and will have a duration that sees them continue sounding across the next strong beat.

Hemiola – A rhythmic device in triple time where the beats across two bars are grouped into pairs. The musical effect is that two bars of, for example, 3/4 sound like three bars of 2/4, with the metrical emphasis every two beats, rather than every three. It is commonly used at cadence points in Renaissance and Baroque music.

Intervals

Candidates will be expected to know and identify all intervals within an octave, including their type (Augmented, Major, Minor, Perfect, Diminished). They will be able to see the notes on the score, and the interval will also be played to them. The interval will be melodic, i.e., from two adjacent notes in the same voice part. It might be in either treble or bass clef.

Italian Terms

In addition to the terms required for Silver and Bronze, candidates should also learn these:

maestoso	Majestically/grandly
presto	Very fast
piu mosso	More movement
con moto	With movement
dolce	Sweetly
semplice	Simply
sempre	Always
subito	Suddenly

Degrees of the scale

Candidates will be asked to identify and name the degree of a scale of a note in the sight-reading using the correct word, as in this table. The note may be in either treble or bass clef.

Degree of scale	Name
1 st	Tonic
2 nd	Supertonic
3 rd	Mediant
4 th	Subdominant
5 th	Dominant
6 th	Submediant
7 th	Leading note

Triads and their inversions

Candidates will be asked to identify whether a diatonic triad is in root position, first inversion or second inversion. The example will be within the accompaniment/piano reduction, and the chord will also be played to them. Note that the triad will not be in a 'closed position', but will be in an open position, potentially with doubling of one note in a four-voice texture, for example:



Cadences

Candidates will be asked to identify a cadence in the music. They will both see the score and hear the cadence played to them. They should know the four 'standard' cadences (Perfect, Plagal, Interrupted and Imperfect). The cadence might be chosen from a point in the music which has modulated, in which case, the preceding question is likely to have asked them the key of the music at that point.

Musical Textures

Candidates will need to be able to recognise the following textures in the score

Homophonic/Chordal	The voice parts move together. A hymn's texture is a good example of this.
Contrapuntal	The voice parts have independent melodic lines, but which are sung together. This term tends to be associated with music from the Baroque period or later
Polyphonic	The voice parts have independent melodic lines, but which are sung together. This term tends to be associated with music from the Renaissance period, or music influenced by that style.
Unison	The voices sing the same notes/tune at exactly the same pitch. In choral music this term is often used synonymously with 'octaves', where the Tenors and Basses sing the same tune as the Sopranos and altos, but an octave lower. Correctly, beyond choral music, unison requires the music to be all at the same octave.
Imitative	A subset of Polyphonic/Contrapuntal music, where a second voice sings more or less the same music as another, but a few beats later. Importantly, in imitation, the voices must overlap (the first voice must still be singing when the second one enters), not one after the other.
Canon	A subset of imitation where the melody is imitated exactly by the 2 nd voice, without any change.
Octaves	The voices sing the same notes/tune, an octave apart
A capella	Unaccompanied
Thirds	Where two voice parts sing the same melody, but a third apart harmonically
Sixths	Where two voice parts sing the same melody, but a sixth apart harmonically

Features of Musical Style

The examiner will tell the candidate the period of the sight-reading, and ask them to identify one musical feature which is typical of that period.

Candidates must **not** duplicate answers from the previous questions (for example, whilst a Polyphonic texture is a good indicator of the Renaissance period, if it has been an answer to a previous question, it cannot be recycled here).

Examiners will credit any correctly identified musical feature that is at least slightly plausible as pointing to the period. Features which do not plausibly point at the period will not be credited. Here are two examples, one of a plausible feature, and one which is not.

Describing a piece of music from the Baroque period...

Plausible answer: 'The music was largely stepwise, with few larger leaps'

Implausible answer: 'The music was fast'

Note: examiner use, or not, of the sustain pedal on the piano should **not** be taken as an indication of the period. Examiners may, for example, use the pedal in Renaissance or Baroque music to facilitate their playing of the music.