

## **NZMEB Chamber Music Examination Syllabus**

As New Zealand's only Music Examinations Board with NZQA Course recognition, NZMEB has been fostering musical talent and cultivating a love and appreciation of music since 2005. Conscious of the importance of developing a sense of music in everyone, the NZMEB is dedicated to inclusivity – music belongs to us all and should be nurtured at every age and every level. Through the Examination System, the NZMEB aims to offer a sense of structure to the graded exams, whereby all areas of technical development and musical awareness are carefully measured to ensure that progress can be attained at each level. An extensive range of repertoire is on offer for each instrument and at each grade in the hope that there is something to suit the taste of everyone! The purpose of the examination is to provide an opportunity for each entrant to be given a fair and balanced criteria based assessment of their progress, where positive elements of the performance will be rewarded, and weaker areas will be highlighted in a constructive manner. For those who do not wish to take exams, the syllabus can still be a useful tool to indicate milestones, and guide the teacher/ student towards the gradual development of both technical and musical skills. Whether exams are taken or not, there is no shortcut to success: regular practice is the only way to ensure steady progress, and will help to build confidence in everyone – young and old!

### **Aim of the Chamber Music Examination**

In the Chamber Music Examination Programme the emphasis lies strongly on group playing and performance.

Entrants are not assessed on Aural Tests, Sight-Reading, Theory or Scales. Consequently a higher standard is expected in the delivery of the chosen programme. This programme is open to all disciplines contained within the current syllabus, including duet, chamber music and ensemble groups.

The aim is to encourage entrants to understand the importance of:

- Ensemble awareness - communication and co-operation between members of the group
- Facial expression, especially for vocalists, is also an important aspect of the overall impression
- Presenting a written programme of their chosen pieces
- A sense of communication with the audience / listener
- Pacing the recital
- Overall delivery of a polished programme with sense of performance.

Entrants should aim to choose a programme that will display their imagination, technical strengths and musical preferences.

The entrants should enjoy performing the chosen pieces, so that this is communicated to the audience.

Entrants may perform one of their own compositions.

**Points to Remember**

Instrumentalists should tune their instrument prior to entering the room, but should check their tuning with the piano before starting to play. Wind/brass players, may blow a few notes to clear the instrument prior to tuning with the piano.

Entrants are required to present a performance list and copies must be provided for the examiner. Photocopies may only be used in the exam room when the original music is present.

Examinations may be presented either in examination room setting or in a performance venue setting.

All ensemble examinations will be videoed and may be used for training purposes.

**Categories**

The Chamber Music Examination can be taken at four levels. For each performance entrants will receive a result sheet as assessment of their performance, and a certificate will be awarded to successful entrants who will receive a criteria based mark of C, C+, B-, B, B+, A-, A, or A+

**Syllabus**

1. Performance of pieces as stated at each level .
2. Present a written programme with programme notes.
3. Answer Musicianship Questions:
  - Entrants will be expected to explain or answer simple questions on the mechanism of their instrument.
  - Entrants will be also be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the style of the pieces performed.
  - Entrants will be expected to discuss some of the technical demands presented in the chosen pieces, and their approach to overcoming these difficulties.

**Level 1****Criteria and Descriptors**

Processes are limited in range, repetitive and familiar, employing recall and a narrow range of knowledge and cognitive skills. These are applied in activities which are closely supervised by the teacher.

Examiners will use these criteria in assessing all level 1 entrants.

- Comfortable and appropriate instrumental position
- Appropriate hand and finger shape
- Beginning to acquire independent articulation of the fingers
- Performance of the work (s) at a suitable tempo
- Awareness of underlying pulse in the pieces
- Awareness of the dynamic range of the instrument
- Accurate and fluent performance of pieces
- Awareness and control of dynamics, tempo and touch

Entrants must present a programme which should equate to NZMEB Grade 2 - 3 standard and should last between 5 – 10 minutes including time between movements. At least two pieces (or movements of pieces) must be performed.

**Level 2****Criteria and Descriptors**

Processes are moderate in range, established and familiar, employing basic operational skills using readily available information. These are applied in directed activities which are supervised by the teacher. Learners have some responsibility for quantity and quality.

Examiners will use these criteria in assessing all level 2 entrants.

- Comfortable and appropriate instrumental position
- Appropriate hand and finger shape
- Technical facility, sufficient to allow:
  - Developing independent articulation of the fingers
  - Rhythmic stability
- Developing controlled co-ordination of the hands
- Controlled, clear, even legato touch and tone
- A developing sense of pulse to allow accurate performance of rhythmic figures
- Accurate and fluent performance of pieces through controlled touch and tone
- Awareness and control of dynamics, tempo and touch
- The ability to articulate legato and staccato textures as required
- Awareness of Phrasing

Entrants must present a programme which should equate to NZMEB Grade 4 - 5 standard and last between 8 – 15 minutes including time between movements. At least two or more pieces (or movements of pieces) must be performed.

**Level 3****Criteria and Descriptors**

Processes require a range of developing skills within a range of familiar contexts. These are applied using relevant theoretical knowledge, interpretative skills, discretion and judgment within a range of known responses to familiar problems. Although activities are directed by the teacher, learners have significant responsibility for the quantity and quality of output.

Examiners will use these criteria in assessing all level 3 entrants.

- Comfortable and well balanced instrumental position
- Appropriate hand and finger shape
- Technical facility, to allow:
  - Independent articulation of the fingers
  - Controlled co-ordination of the hands
- A well developed sense of pulse to allow accurate performance of rhythmic figures.
- Increased control of variations in tempo, tone and touch
- Increased control of variations in the tonal balance between the hands
- A developing sense of phrasing, style and ornamentation as appropriate to each musical period.

Entrants must present a programme which should equate to NZMEB Grade 6 standard and last between 12 – 15 minutes including time between movements. At least two or more pieces (or movements of pieces) must be performed.

**Level 4****Criteria and Descriptors**

Processes require a wide range of technical skills involving a considerable choice of procedures in a variety of familiar and un-familiar contexts.

The learning demands a broad knowledge base incorporating some theoretical concepts and analytical interpretation of information. The learning demand requires informed judgment within a range of innovative responses to concrete but often unfamiliar problems. Learners have complete responsibility for the quantity and quality of output under broad guidance and evaluation from their teacher.

Examiners will use these criteria in assessing all level 4 entrants.

In addition to those criteria at level 1, 2, & 3 the entrants will demonstrate:

- Accurate and fluent performance throughout
- Rhythmic stability and vitality
- A full exploration of the dynamic range of the instrument.
- A confident projection of the style and character of chosen works
- Sensitivity to subtleties of nuance, rubato and ornamentation

Entrants must present a programme which should equate Programme should equate to NZMEB Grade 7 – 8 or higher standard and should last between 15 – 25 minutes including time between movements. At least two or more pieces (or movements of pieces) must be performed.

**Marking Schedule**Technical Ability

Entrants will be assessed on their technical ability to play each piece. Examiners will be listening for good clarity and accuracy in the fingerwork. An ability to produce a good tone is also assessed here. For pianists, pedalling will be assessed except in Level One. Where appropriate, intonation will be expected to be secure. For vocalists, diction and pronunciation will be commented and marked on.

Interpretation

Entrants general musicality and ability to portray form and phrasing will be assessed in this section. Other aspects of this mark include dynamics, contrast in articulation and an ability to set the mood of each piece will be taken into consideration. Stylistically appropriate playing will be rewarded.

Group Skills & General Impression

The overall presentation (including the written programme) will be assessed here.

The ability to communicate and engage with the listener is assessed. Whether the performers showed off their best abilities, whether moods and styles were captured and if there was a sense of flair and originality. Communication between performers plays an important role and will be assessed. Facial expression, especially for vocalists, is an important aspect of the overall impression. The musicianship questions will be included in this section of the assessment.