Questions matter

Command words

Command words are the words and phrases used in exams and other assessment tasks that tell students how they should answer the question.

The following command words are taken from Ofqual's official list. Their meanings are relevant to this subject. We've added our own command words and their meanings to complement Ofqual's list.

Listening/Written Paper (Component 1)

Describe

Provide a description of the features and/or characteristics of a piece of music. If required, give as much information as you can to describe exactly what something is.
For example: Describe one feature of...

Explain

To make something clear or easy to understand, by describing or giving information about it.
For example: Explain how Beethoven has used...

Give

To recall or state a specific piece of information, such as a fact or definition.
For example: Give the Italian term which best describes the...

Identify

To give the name(s) or characteristic(s) of something.
For example: Identity two instruments heard in the following extract.

Name

To identify a specific feature or features found in a piece of music.
For example: Name the vocal technique.

What

To ask for specific information found in a piece of music.
For example: What is the time signature?

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Which

To select and/or identify information found in a piece of music.
For example: Which of the following rhythms...

NEA Performance and Composition (Components 2/3)

Compose

To create a piece of music.
For example: Compose a piece of music to be performed at a dance festival.

Develop

To take forward, change, improve or build on a musical idea as a starting point.
For example: Develop your ideas into longer compositions by focussing on the different elements of music.

Perform

To play or sing a piece of music.
For example: You must perform two pieces lasting a combined minimum time of four minutes.

Present

To give written evidence or a response to a musical idea that shows a personal fulfilment of intentions.
For example: Present evidence in the Candidate record form (CRF) to prove all the ideas were your own.

Record

To document ideas through writing, composing, performing, and/or the capturing of sound.
For example: Give details of the hardware and software used to record your music.

Respond

To produce a piece of work generated by a subject, theme or starting point.
For example: In your composition, respond by using the stimulus in the given key.

Show

To explain, present and display your own thoughts and findings to a piece of music.
For example: Use an annotated screenshot to show the overall structure of your piece.

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Study

To examine and investigate an understanding of what you have found or experienced.
For example: You may study a wide range of musical genres…

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