Course Companion

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Music · HL

Every topic handout in one volume

exercises.lol

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Exploring music in context

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Music · HL

IB Diploma Programme Music HL (first assessment 2022; 2020 guide). This topic equips EXPLORING MUSIC IN CONTEXT, the externally assessed exploration portfolio (30% SL, 20% HL): written work demonstrating engagement with, and understanding of, diverse musical material, plus practical exercises in creating and performing. The exploration is focused through the four AREAS OF INQUIRY and experienced across three contexts in the roles of researcher, creator and performer. This handout teaches the inquiry kit, the matrix of encounters and the portfolio. All worked examples are original.

Must-know for exploring music in context:

Family	Content
inquiries	four areas of inquiry, each a lens, not a genre list
contexts	personal, local and global: where the encounter sits
roles	researcher, creator, performer: every encounter, all three
elements	rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, timbre: the analysis kit
portfolio	written work plus practical exercises in creating and performing

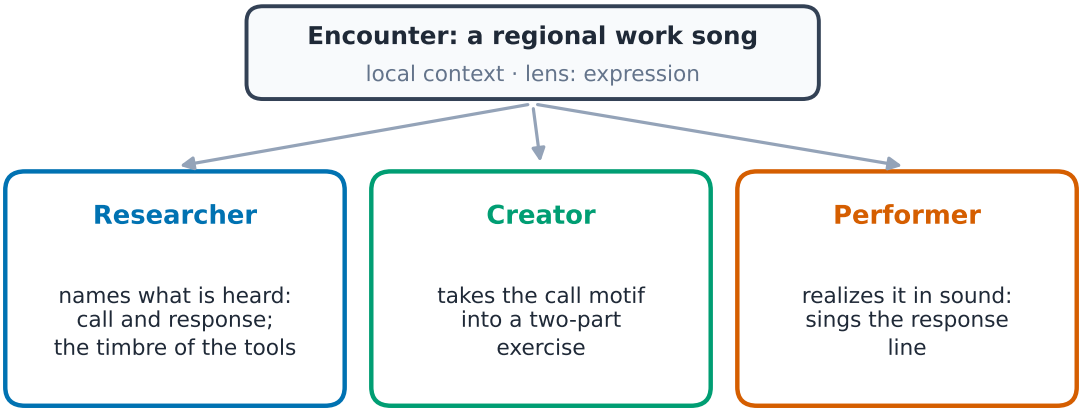
The four areas of inquiry

The **areas of inquiry** are lenses onto any musical material, not a syllabus of set works: music for sociocultural and political expression (protest songs, work songs, anthems); music for listening and performance (the concert and its repertoires); music for dramatic impact, movement and entertainment (film scores, game soundtracks, dance); and music technology in the electronic and digital age (production, sampling, the DAW). One piece can sit under more than one lens, and the strongest explorations say WHY the lens fits.

> **Worked example.** A student plots three encounters: a regional work song under expression, a film cue under dramatic impact, and a phone-DAW remix under technology. For the work song the lens fits because the music organizes collective labour; for the film cue because the harmony steers tension the picture cannot show.

The three contexts

Every encounter sits in a context: PERSONAL (the student's own musical world), LOCAL (the culture and community around them) and GLOBAL (previously unfamiliar music). The course asks students to move beyond the personal: breadth is shown by reaching local and global material. The three roles run through every encounter: the researcher analyses elements and context, the creator takes something into an exercise, the performer realizes it in sound.



One encounter, three roles: researcher, creator, performer

> **Worked example, continued.** The work song is a local-context encounter (collected from a regional archive): researched (its call-and-response **texture** and the **timbre** of voices against tools), created (its motif taken into a two-part exercise), performed (the response line sung).

The exploration portfolio

The **exploration portfolio** is the course's first submission: written work demonstrating engagement with, and understanding of, diverse musical material, plus practical exercises in creating and performing. The discipline: every claim about a piece is made through the elements (an audible or notated event named before any context or effect is claimed); diversity and breadth are shown across the inquiries and the contexts, not asserted; and the practical exercises grow out of the same encounters the written work analyses.

> **Worked example, concluded.** The written entry for the work song names two audible events (the leader-group call and response in texture; the dry timbre of the tools marking time) and reads them as sociocultural expression: the music organizes the labour. The linked exercise sets the call motif for two instruments and performs the response.

Checklist

- The four inquiries as lenses, each fit argued (inquiries).
- The three contexts: personal left behind for local and global (contexts).
- Every encounter worked through all three roles (roles).
- Element claims: event named before effect (elements).

- Written and practical work from the same encounters (portfolio). Boundary notes: the examiner must see the music happening: engagement shown in the elements, the processes evidenced, the work finished. All worked examples are original.

Experimenting with music

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Music · HL

IB Diploma Programme Music HL (first assessment 2022; 2020 guide). This topic equips EXPERIMENTING WITH MUSIC, the internally assessed experimentation report (30% SL, 20% HL): a written report (a rationale and a commentary for each process) supporting practical musical evidence of experimentation in creating and performing, in two areas of inquiry in a local and/or global context. This handout teaches the experimental loop, the evidence discipline and the report. All worked examples are original.

Must-know for experimenting with music:

Family	Content
loop	question, trial, evidence, verdict: one variable changed at a time
areas	two areas of inquiry, local and/or global context: not the personal only
roles	experiments in creating AND performing
report	rationale (why) and commentary (what the evidence shows)
evidence	recordings, sketches, versions: the trial preserved, not summarised

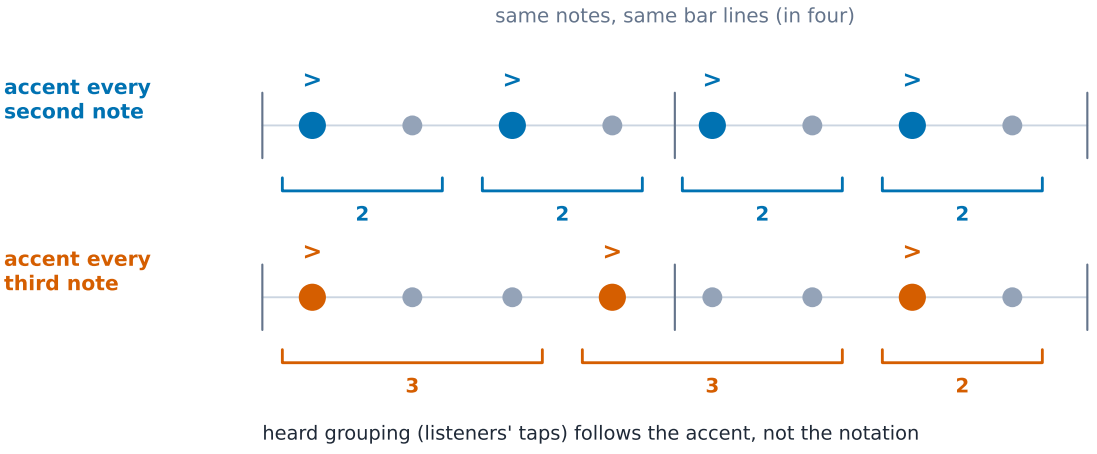
The experimental loop

An experiment is not practice. Practice repeats; an experiment asks a question (what happens if one thing changes?), runs the trial, keeps the evidence (a recording, a sketch, two versions side by side) and reaches a verdict. The discipline: change ONE variable at a time, so the evidence can be attributed; keep the failed trials, because a verdict on what did not work is still a finding; and write while the experiment is live, not from memory.

> **Worked example.** The **experimentation** begins from a fixed four-note melody (four equal notes C4 D4 E4 G4). The question: what does a sustained C3 below change? The trial is recorded twice (without, then with the added part); the melody and rhythm stay fixed while the texture moves from monophonic to two-part and the harmonic context shifts; the verdict names what moved and what stayed, with the balance dependent on timbre.

Accent and metre: a second experiment

A second worked experiment tests **accent** : the same eight notes played twice, once with the accent on every second beat, once displaced onto every third. The question: does the metre the listener hears follow the notation or the accent? The evidence (two recordings, listeners' taps) shows the perceived grouping following the accent: the verdict feeds the creator's next piece, where a notated four is heard as three until the accent returns.



Same notes, same bar lines: the grouping listeners tap follows the accent.

Both experiments sit in the area of inquiry of listening and performance in a local context.

> **Worked example, the second inquiry.** A global-context technology experiment: a work song from the unfamiliar repertoire is loaded into a DAW and its tempo halved. The question: does halving the tempo change the work the song does, or only its surface? Evidence: the original and the half-speed render side by side, plus one listener's description of each. Verdict: the call-and-response survives (the grouping is intact) but the functional rhythm loses its lift, so the context that made the music is part of the music: a finding the commentary can carry, and the second area of inquiry the report requires.

The report: rationale and commentary

The report supports each process with a **rationale** (why this experiment: the question and what motivated it) and a **commentary** (what the evidence shows, element by element). The discipline: the rationale precedes the trial's outcome (a rationale written after the fact reads as hindsight), the commentary quotes the evidence rather than summarising it, and the verdict is honest about failure.

> **Worked example, concluded.** The texture experiment's rationale: a fixed melody isolates one variable (the added part) so the change can be heard alone. The commentary: take one, monophonic and exposed; take two, the same melody now sitting on a sustained tone, two-part, the E4 reinterpreted as part of a new harmony. Verdict: texture and harmony can move while melody stands still.

Checklist

- Question, trial, evidence, verdict: the loop closed on every experiment (loop).
- Two areas of inquiry, local and/or global: the personal not the only context (areas).
- Creating and performing both evidenced (roles).
- Rationale before outcome, commentary on the evidence, failure kept (report).
- The worked texture and accent experiments understood (worked). Boundary notes: the examiner must see the music happening: engagement shown in the elements, the processes evidenced, the work finished. All worked examples are original.

Presenting music

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Music · HL

IB Diploma Programme Music HL (first assessment 2022; 2020 guide). This topic equips PRESENTING MUSIC, the externally assessed collection of finished works (40% SL, 30% HL): programme notes, presenting as a creator (composition and/or improvisation) and presenting as a performer (solo and/or ensemble), demonstrating engagement with diverse material from the four areas of inquiry. This handout teaches the finished work, the two presenting strands and the programme notes. All worked examples are original.

Must-know for presenting music:

Family	Content
creator	composition and/or improvisation: the maker's work finished
performer	solo and/or ensemble: the player's work finished
notes	programme notes written for the listener, not the examiner
diversity	the works engage material from all four areas of inquiry
identity	finished works expanding musical identity and musicianship

Presenting as a creator

The creator's strand submits finished **composition** and/or **improvisation** : a piece brought to a state the student would sign. The discipline: the material's sources are diverse (drawn from the four inquiries), the choices are audible (a listener can hear the decision without being told), and an improvisation is presented as a rehearsed practice with its limits named, not as a lucky take.

> **Worked example.** "Signal", a ninety-second piano piece: a call motif borrowed from the analysed work song (the inquiry of expression), answered in the same part; the texture thins to one voice at the close, reversing the song's build; one improvised answer phrase in the final return, marked, rehearsed and freely timed.

Presenting as a performer

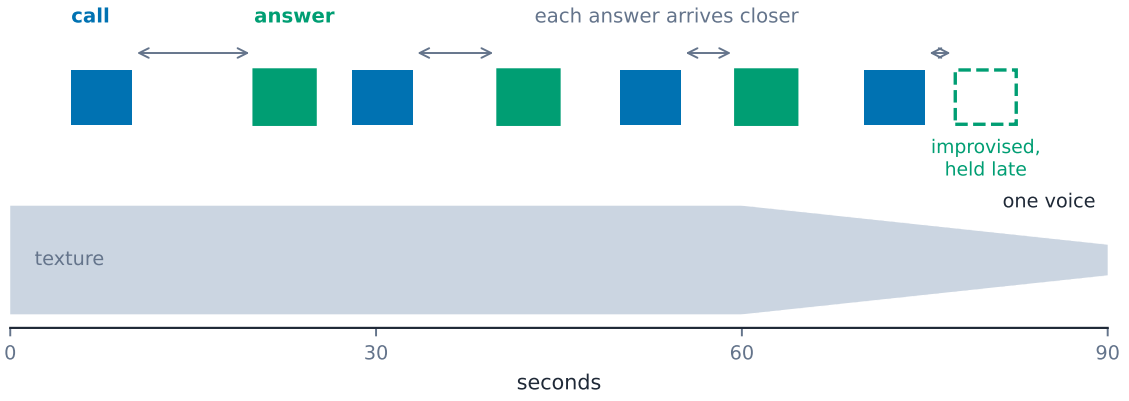
The performer's strand submits finished **solo** and/or **ensemble** performing: the choice serves the music (a close that needs one player's control of time argues solo; a piece built on dialogue argues ensemble), the interpretation is a decision (tempo, voicing, where the accent falls) evidenced against the score or source recording, and the standard is the student's best finished work, not the hardest attempt.

> **Worked example, continued.** "Signal" is presented solo: the single-voice close needs one player's time, and the call-and-response is handled inside one part; the interpretation holds the response line slightly late, reading the call as insistent.

Programme notes

The **programme notes** serve the audience's listening: what to hear (the texture thinning to one voice at the close), where the material came from (the work-song motif, named as source and study), and what the performer chose (the response held late). The failure modes: the biography essay (about the composer, not this listening) and the analysis dump (technical inventory with no guidance for the ear).

> **Worked example, concluded.** The notes open inside the sound ("the piece begins with a call you will hear four times, each answer closer"), name the source in one sentence, and close with the listening instruction ("let the last answer arrive alone").



A listening map of the worked piece: what the programme notes tell the ear to follow.

Checklist

- Creator: composition and/or improvisation finished and signable (creator).
- Performer: solo and/or ensemble, the choice serving the music (performer).
- Notes for the listener: what to hear, the source, the choice (notes).
- The works engaging all four inquiries' material (diversity).
- The worked "Signal" presentation understood (worked). Boundary notes: the examiner must see the music happening: engagement shown in the elements, the processes evidenced, the work finished. All worked examples are original.

HL: The contemporary music maker

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IB Diploma Programme Music HL (first assessment 2022; 2020 guide). This topic equips the HL-only CONTEMPORARY MUSIC MAKER project (30% HL): plan and collaboratively create a project drawing on the competencies, skills and processes of ALL the course's musical roles, inspired by real-life practices of music-making, and submit ONE CONTINUOUS multimedia presentation evidencing the project proposal, the process and evaluation, and the realized project or curated selections of it. This handout teaches the real-life project, the documentation and the curation. All worked examples are original.

Must-know for hl: the contemporary music maker:

Family	Content
project	real-life: a real deliverable for a real audience beyond the classroom
roles	researcher, creator and performer: every role in the team
document	one continuous multimedia presentation: proposal, process and evaluation, realized project
curation	curated selections must still evidence all three parts
collaboration	the team's shared plan and each member's visible contribution

The real-life project

The project is **musical collaboration** on a real brief: a deliverable that exists beyond the classroom (released episodes, a staged event, a published resource), inspired by how music is actually made in the industry. The team writes a **project proposal** naming the aim, the roles (researcher, creator, performer split across the members), the deliverable and the constraints (time, equipment, permissions).

> **Worked example.** Four students propose "Corridor Sessions": record and release three live sessions by local artists in the school corridor, as a podcast with artwork. Roles: one researcher selects and briefs the artists; two creators arrange the intro music and the session order; all four perform the interval set; the proposal fixes the release date as the deadline that disciplines every choice.

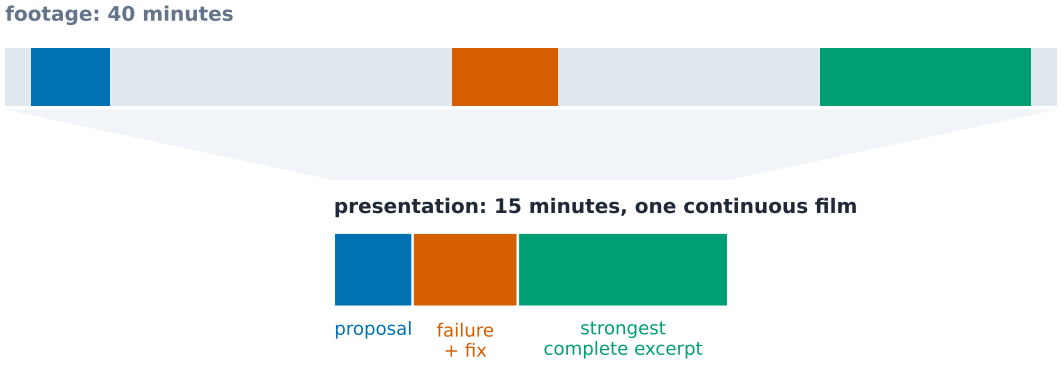
Process and evaluation

The **evaluation** is earned from evidence, not asserted: audience data, the takes that failed, the schedule that slipped. The discipline: record the process while it runs (the log, the drafts, the meeting notes), evaluate against the proposal's own aim (did the sessions reach an audience, did each role contribute), and keep the failures in the account because they evidence the collaboration.

> **Worked example, continued.** Episode two loses its audience inside a ninety-second news-style intro: the data shows listeners leaving before the first song. The verdict: the intro buries the session's best moment; episode three opens inside the music, the artist introduced over the fade. The failure stays in the evaluation.

The continuous presentation and curation

The submission is ONE continuous multimedia presentation (not a portfolio of separate files) with three evidences: the proposal, the process with its **curation** documented, and the realized project or curated selections of it. The curation rule: forty minutes of footage does not mean forty minutes of presentation; the selection must still evidence all three parts, so the proposal moment, one process failure with its fix, and the strongest complete excerpt must survive the cut.



Cut hard, but keep evidence of all three parts in the final film.

> **Worked example, concluded.** The presentation runs fifteen minutes: the proposal read over rehearsal footage, the failed intro with the data and the fix, and the strongest complete performance closing the film.

Checklist

- Real brief, real deliverable, real audience (project).
- Every course role visible in the team; the proposal written first (roles).
- One continuous presentation with the three evidences (document).
- Curation that keeps proposal, one failure with its fix, and the strongest excerpt (curation).
- The worked "Corridor Sessions" project understood (worked). Boundary notes: the examiner must see the music happening: engagement shown in the elements, the processes evidenced, the work finished. All worked examples are original.