

Examiners Report 2014

2014 has not been as busy a year as some for our examiners but it has marked the introduction of significantly revised syllabi. This has thrown up one or two points worth making and we hope these brief notes will provide some helpful insights for those who are preparing candidates.

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Awards Secretary
November 2014*

A couple of points worth re-iterating from the last Examiners Report:

There is a significant step up in standard between the Dean's and Bishop's awards and candidates (or those preparing them) don't always seem to appreciate this.

Candidates (and those preparing them for the awards) need to remember that although the awards are geared to church choristers the basics of singing technique: posture, controlled breathing, an expressive face, clear diction are still very important – and sometimes found wanting.

Entry forms:

There are now two versions of the entry form a pdf version and Word .doc version, please where ever possible use the Word version, complete it on your computer and email it back. Electronic payments also make the Awards Secretary's life easier! The pdf version is really for printing out, completing and posting back.

Hymn:

This is the first item the candidates sing so watch out for the requirements for verse length in the different awards.

Psalm:

The examiners are very aware that with Anglican chant every choir has it's own 'house style' and they are sympathetic to that, do please make sure that your 'house style' supports the flow and meaning of the words.

Pieces:

The repertoire lists are now mandatory! It gives the Awards Secretary much extra work to sort it out when the pieces on the entry form aren't on the list.

In general the pieces are well prepared but be careful when choosing pieces that rely heavily on the other parts in the choir to give a lead in as the absence of them can cause problems.

Repertoire:

Generally this section is reasonably well prepared but there are still some candidates whose basic knowledge of the music they have just sung is lacking.

Further questions:

Generally this section is reasonably well prepared.

Aural Tests:

This was a rather more variable, all the tests require thorough preparation, the changes in the Bishop's Award tests seemed to cause some confusion.

Sight Reading:

Once again, as the examiners have come to fear, this is the Achilles heel of most candidates, the standard achieved this year has been, in many cases, far below the target.

Choir in Context:

This section carries a significant number of marks and deserves an appropriate preparation, some candidates were very well prepared other candidates seemed to have made a much more modest attempt at preparation. There are now definitive notes about how material should be prepared and presented.

We would encourage choir directors to get the clergy to take an active role in training choristers for this section of the awards.

A final thought:

Are the hymns and pieces the candidates are preparing their favourites or the ones that demonstrate their abilities to the full? If you are lucky they are both, but if not, beware favourite pieces that show up issues with intonation or breathing and phrasing.

Always make sure they are singing pieces they enjoy singing – it shows!