Approaching the Examiner’s Chair: Chronicling the Experiences of Piano Examiner Apprentices for the Royal Conservatory of Music

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Faculty of Music
University of Toronto

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Abstract
Examinations administered by the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) play a major role in the musical education of many individuals across Canada. The evaluative process needs to be a constructive one in order to ensure its positive impact on students’ musical education. Examiners who are confident and comfortable in their roles as assessors are more likely to provide this ideal environment for the students. Individuals at the dawn of their examining careers are prone to lower confidence and comfort levels due to their inexperience. Yet all music students deserve an optimal examination situation, even from new examiners. Ensuring that an examiner receives proper training will help to increase their confidence and comfort levels while assessing students.

This study examined the elements of an examiner’s education, experience and preparation which contributed to higher confidence and comfort levels as they participated in the RCM evaluative process. Ten individuals participated in surveys and interviews. Seven were recent apprentices of the examiner training program and three were senior examiners. Their experiences and insights given in a narrative form shed light on which elements of their background and training benefited them as examiners. According to the participants, varied and extensive pedagogical training,
taking exams as students and intensive performance education gave them the most advantages during their early careers as examiners. Regarding the examiner apprenticeship program, participants felt that they would have benefited from more practical experience during the early classroom seminar, additional opportunities to observe students at varying performing levels and more time for discussion with their mentors.

These recommendations for background preparation and enhanced training are intended to give examiners greater confidence in their evaluative roles early in their careers, enabling them to provide constructive and effective assessments for students and their teachers.
For my Mom and Dad
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1 Introduction

As my fingers swept across the keys in the last flourish of Chopin’s “Black Key” Etude, I could sense an era was coming to a close. The date was Saturday, August 19, 2000, and the final G flat major gesture signaled the end of my last examination for the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM). I had completed my Associate Diploma in Piano Performance. It was the culmination of the past eleven years of working through the RCM’s curriculum and completing its exams. Every year the RCM examination served as a climax for my year of piano studies, and at the time I thought this was a satisfying conclusion to the long association I had with the RCM. Little did I know nine years later, I would enter that very same building for more RCM examinations, not as an examination candidate nervous about the impending challenge but as an anxious examiner apprentice wondering how I was going to evaluate that long list of candidates in a comprehensive and fair manner. My role required me to occupy the other side of the examiner’s table. The fact that my first examining experiences occurred in the very same room in which my ARCT exam was conducted acted as a symbolic bridge, signifying my transition from examination candidate to examiner. I was approaching the examiner’s chair.

Throughout Canada, private music study is often accompanied by examinations administered by the RCM. Providing standards for varying levels of practical and theoretical music study, this Toronto-based institution has become the most widely recognized music organization for students, parents and teachers across Canada. Many rely on the RCM as a way of tracking a student’s rate of progress in music study since the examinations serve as a form of external evaluation. Therefore, RCM examiners can play a crucial role in a student’s musical education.
Up to now, there is little independent research related to the examinations of the RCM in Canada. However, research involving the leading examination boards in the U.K. and Australia does exist. Several researchers have all presented studies related to these boards.\(^1\) They address issues regarding the role of examinations in music education, perspectives held by students, teachers and parents during exam preparation, as well as matters dealing with the examiners themselves. The RCM has been the leading institution in Canada for standardized music exams since 1924.\(^2\) Some materials of substantial nature relating to the RCM are available.\(^3\) These writings outline the history of the RCM, its organizational structure and the repertoire included in its examination syllabus. However, no study involving the RCM analyzes the organization’s

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\(^2\) E. Schabas, *There’s Music in These Walls*, (Toronto, 2005), 52

evaluation procedures, what affects these assessment practices, the examiners and how examinations themselves impact students.

All students deserve fair and accurate assessments. The exam experience needs to be a positive and encouraging event so that students are inspired to continue on with music study and exams. No matter what the level of piano playing is, it is the responsibility of the examiners to ensure that the evaluations are fair, accurate, encouraging and provide positive and enriching experiences for students.

A new examiner needs to be comfortable and confident in her role as assessor in order to make certain she is evaluating effectively and efficiently. For that reason, the purpose of this study is to present the personal experiences of examiner apprentices and senior examiners in narrative format and determine which elements of their preparation contributed to higher confidence and comfort levels as new examiners. The types of preparation will be divided into two categories: indirect preparation and direct preparation. Indirect preparation will refer to the education and experience of an examiner prior to entering the apprenticeship. Education includes academic degrees received and performance training. Experience includes teaching and evaluating expertise as well as taking exams as a student. Direct preparation will refer to elements of the training process.

Those who are in their early examining careers are less likely to have a high level of confidence because of their inexperience with this work. Yet, their evaluations must be just as thorough and effective as any other experienced examiner. This is absolutely essential given that every student deserves a fair assessment. If this degree of excellence is not demanded of examiners, a student
could be discouraged from taking exams or even continuing music studies at all. Parents and teachers may also lose faith in the system. Therefore, it is critical that new examiners possess the assurance they need in order to serve as effectively as they can.

Studies in many disciplines have addressed the correlation between an individual’s skill level and his confidence and comfort levels. Generally, if one has a higher confidence level in his ability to complete a certain skill, he is more likely to execute that skill successfully. In particular, musicians and athletes are trained specialists who are expected to perform successfully in certain situations. Don Greene has built a career around helping musicians and athletes to train themselves using an approach that gives them confidence, and in turn, improvement in their rate of success. The art of examining within the RCM examination system can be seen as a type of performance. Examiners are given a short window of time in which they must complete their evaluative duties for each examination candidate. They must ensure that they give each and every student a complete and thorough assessment, and there is very little room for error.

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In 2010, RCM Examinations served more than 100,000 candidates across Canada. It is by far, the most extensive music education organization in Canada, reaching out and influencing thousands of students and teachers across the country. Currently, RCM Examinations is aggressively expanding its activities in the U.S.A., affecting music study of even more students and teachers. With so many individuals involved, it is essential that those assessing the students are competent in their evaluating duties. Examiner apprentices and those who are at the beginning stages of their examining career are likely the ones needing the most guidance. A research project involving these individuals may help to shed light on the challenges and concerns of this specific population. Focusing on the training experiences of these apprentice examiners may further ensure that their first examining experiences are positive and that in the future, the students they evaluate are more likely to receive the comprehensive, fair and consistent assessments they deserve.

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6 RCM Examinations Website, (Accessed 1 February 2011), <www.rcmexaminations.org>

2 Development of the Royal Conservatory of Music

2.1 Expansion of Conservatories throughout the World

The earliest prototype of the conservatory dates back to the Middle Ages when church choir schools served as important breeding grounds for developing musical talent. Conservatories as we know them today started to spring up in the nineteenth century. Founded in 1795, the Paris Conservatoire served as the model for these schools. While Italian conservatories dominated the musical training scene in the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century saw the dominance of the schools in France and Germany. It was in the nineteenth century that the idea of pursuing music as a career began to gain respect in society. The development of the conservatory was a response to the rising professional status of music and musicians. In the twentieth century, similar musical institutions spread to other parts of the globe including Russia, Eastern Europe, Spain, Portugal, Asia, the United States and Britain and its overseas dominions.\(^8\)

The institutions in Britain fulfilled the need for instruction in piano and voice. Although competitors, two of the main music schools, the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music acted as partners in the testing and licensing of students and teachers. In 1889 they formed the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) to administer music examinations in Britain and the overseas colonies including Canada.\(^9\)


\(^9\) *ibid.*
2.2 The Royal Conservatory of Music

In Canada, the Royal Conservatory of Music enjoys a long-standing reputation as one of the chief institutions for music study. Founded in November 1886 by Edward Fischer and George Williams Allan, it assumed the name of the Toronto Conservatory of Music (TCM). In these late Victorian times, settlers from Britain wanted to ensure they had the same level of music education to which they were accustomed. The Conservatory acted as a sort of assurance against incompetent teachers and faulty methods. The grand opening occurred on September 15, 1887. Piano students served as the main source of income for the TCM. The piano curriculum included an extensive study of repertoire, technical studies, and a number of rigorous sight-reading and transposition classes. Students were also expected to function as proficient accompanists. Starting in 1898, the TCM established examination centres in various parts of the country. This arrangement provided students with more convenient options. Rather than traveling long distances to Toronto, the TCM made the journey to the students. During this early period, exams were rather informal and instruction by examiners at the examination was acceptable and often encouraged. The TCM was establishing itself as a leader amongst the many music education institutions in Canada. However, it was feeling the heat of competition, especially from outside foreign sources.

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10 E. Schabas, *There’s Music in These Walls: a History of the Royal Conservatory of Music*, (Toronto, 2005), 17-18

11 *ibid.*, 21

12 *ibid.*, 22-23

13 *ibid.*, 25
In 1899, one year after the ABRSM initiated examinations in Canada, Canadian musicians united and created the document, “An Account of the Canadian Protest Against the Introduction into Canada of Musical Examinations by Outside Musical Examining Bodies.” This was a result of a direct attack on the ABRSM of the U.K. It was an interesting scenario since the very same Canadian individuals who extended an invitation to the ABRSM to come to Canada, ended up being the same people who led the cause against the ABRSM.\textsuperscript{14} Thus ensued what Gaynor Jones calls the “Exam Wars”. Occurring just at the turn of the twentieth century, these arguments caused much friction between the Canadian and British examination systems.\textsuperscript{15}

For the first quarter of the twentieth-century, the Toronto Conservatory of Music found itself in the company of many other conservatories operating in the province of Ontario. Several did not survive in business for long but a few institutions did serve as healthy competition for the TCM. Their chief rival was the Canadian Academy of Music. To help distinguish itself amongst the pack, the TCM fell under the umbrella of the University of Toronto in 1921. All administrative duties were passed on to the university. As a result, the TCM joined forces with the Faculty of Music at the university. In 1924, the TCM purchased the Canadian Academy, established their stature as Canada’s leading music school and thus monopolized standardized examinations across the country.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} ibid., 30-31

\textsuperscript{15} G. Jones, “Exam Wars” in Canadian University Review 11 (1991), 55

\textsuperscript{16} Schabas, op. cit., 52
The depression caused a decrease in student enrollment, but after World War II the Conservatory enjoyed unprecedented prosperity.\(^{17}\) In 1947, the Conservatory received the Royal Charter and was renamed The Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM). During this period, there was also a new structure put into place because of the overlapping activities of the university’s Faculty of Music and the Conservatory. Under the institution’s new name, Royal Conservatory of Music, there were to be two divisions: the Faculty of Music and the School of Music. The Examination department that impacted so many students across the country, would be part of the School of Music but would issue certificates in the name of the RCM and the university; a rather complex arrangement. The intention was to make the best use of the Faculty’s and Conservatory’s resources.\(^ {18}\)

The RCM continued to develop as a music educational institution. It also relocated to a different location within the city of Toronto, closer to the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Music. However, with the onset of the 1980s, reorganization was once again imminent. By 1986, it was deemed necessary that the RCM should once again become an independent institution, free from the administration of the university. This vision was brought to fruition in 1991 and the RCM was once again, “free at last.”\(^ {19}\)

\(^{17}\) ibid., 66 and 90

\(^{18}\) ibid., 124

\(^{19}\) ibid., 211
2.3 Organizational Structure of the Royal Conservatory of Music

The RCM is Canada’s largest music and arts education institution.\textsuperscript{20} Its impact and influence is far-reaching, affecting music educators and students throughout the nation. There are several branches located within the organizational structure of the conservatory. The RCM Community School offers private lessons and group classes to interested members of the public. The Community School’s goal is to “inspire a love of the arts; to motivate the discovery and the joy of creativity and expression; and to create a growing community of dedicated supporters of the arts and education for all Canadians.”\textsuperscript{21} The Young Artists Performing Academy (YAPA) aims to offer a well-rounded music education for talented youngsters between the ages of nine and eighteen. As it fosters the musical development of children who have the potential of continuing their studies to the professional level, admission is by audition. The Glenn Gould School offers programs at the post-secondary level. Its instructional focus is based on performance and offers students the chance to study with world-class musicians. The Frederick Harris Music Co., Limited, an organization associated with the RCM, is the oldest and largest music publishing company in Canada. It is the exclusive publisher of RCM materials. There is also the ‘Learning through the Arts’ program assisting teachers across the country. This initiative provides educators with arts-related tools to help their students engage in other subjects including, math, science, social studies and language arts.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Royal Conservatory of Music Website, (Accessed 6 January 2009), www.rcmusic.ca
\item loc.cit.
\item loc.cit.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The sixth sector that makes a lasting impression on many Canadians is the examination division, formally known as RCM Examinations (RCME). They administer exams for many practical and theoretical subjects based on a curriculum they outline. With more than 100,000 music students participating, the structure and administration of the examinations do play a significant role in how music education is conducted in Canada.\textsuperscript{23}

### 2.4 RCM Examinations

Currently, RCM Examinations issues a piano syllabus approximately every seven years, outlining its curriculum at all grade levels. An examination may be taken for each level. Upon successful completion of an exam, students are awarded a certificate. This program of study spans eleven grade levels from introductory study to certification as an Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Music (ARCT). It is not necessary for students to take every exam; the only exception is students must successfully pass the grade ten exam before proceeding to the ARCT diploma. However, following the RCM curriculum helps to create a gradual and well-planned progression of study. Also, from grade six, students must fulfill theoretical requirements in order to receive their certificates. All the information in this section can be found in the RCM Syllabus.\textsuperscript{24}

Since its inception in 1886, the instruction and examination of piano students has remained the RCM’s priority. Examinations from the preparatory levels all the way through to the A.R.C.T.

\textsuperscript{23}RCM Examinations Website, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{24}Royal Conservatory of Music Piano Syllabus, 2008 edition
diploma are marked with a percentage. The following is the classification of marks used for all levels:

90 and above  First-Class Honours with Distinction
80 to 89       First-Class Honours
70 to 79       Honours
60 to 69       Pass (Grades 1 to 10)
70             Pass (ARCT in Piano Performance)
70 in each section Pass (ARCT in Piano Pedagogy)

Divided into four sections, performance of repertoire, technical requirements, ear tests and sight reading, the examination aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of each candidate. A summary of the requirements for each grade can be found in appendix A.
3 Literature Review

To date, there has been no publication dealing solely with the RCM Examinations and the way students are assessed. There’s Music in These Walls by Ezra Schabas addresses the historical development and the changes within the organizational structure that took place. A Masters thesis by Ann Babin surveys the music conservatories that have existed within Canada and compares the evolution of their syllabi and content of their curricula. Also available is a doctoral dissertation by Jason Kong-Chiang Tye outlining the way piano teachers in Penang, Malaysia prepare their students for examinations of the ABRSM. The author also discusses the way in which social and political implications weigh heavily on piano instruction in that region.

There are several studies dealing with musical assessment in various situations. A variety of angles are approached in these research papers.

3.1 Opinions about Examinations and other Evaluative Events

The effectiveness of evaluative exercises and events is often the subject of disagreement amongst educators in many disciplines. Examinations, festivals and contests all provide some sort of assessment for music students. Since the assessment of music performance can be very subjective, the usefulness of evaluations is debated. In particular, the authors of two articles, both written in 1994 take opposing sides. G.W. Forbes argues that music festivals and contests affect not only the students but also the teachers and parents. He states that the level of success that students experience at these festivals, help senior officials to evaluate a music teacher’s performance in the classroom. Parents also use these results to determine if their children are learning in the classroom. Forbes believes that no matter what, some type of evaluative
consideration is needed since so many rely on this information. To make evaluations even more effective, he offers a few recommendations: ensure only the performance is being evaluated; improve judge reliability; and improve interjudge reliability.\textsuperscript{25} On the other side, W. Salaman focuses on ABRSM examinations and identifies some negative effects resulting from the perceived benefits of taking exams. Salaman acknowledges that exams can be seen as benchmarks, an extra challenge or hurdle one can strive to overcome. However, Salaman questions whether this extra motivation is connected to music making or exam taking. Responding to the argument that the successful completion of an exam provides a tangible sense of accomplishment, Salaman cites the certification process as a student’s need for approval from outside authority. Also, some individuals see examinations as a structure for learning. However, Salaman does not believe that the exam system supports the learning style needed for music study and points out several other consequences of examinations that are not conducive to successful music study. He asserts that instructors are limited to only a certain number of teaching methods when preparing students for an exam. He also maintains that exam preparation does not encourage the acquisition of a wide range of repertoire. Finally, he states that music making must be intrinsically motivated and exams do not provide this for all individuals.\textsuperscript{26} These two articles represent the contradicting opinions about examinations and shed light on some of the arguments made in favour of and against these types of assessments.

\textsuperscript{25} G.W. Forbes, “Update: Applications of Research in Music Education”, 12 (1994), 16-20

\textsuperscript{26} W. Salaman, “The Role of Grade Examinations in Music” in British Journal of Music Education, 11 (1994), 210-215
3.2 Creation of Assessment Criteria

In evaluations, assessment criteria are often used to help evaluators make effective and accurate judgments. Ideally, evaluators will provide assessments that are more objective if they have assessment criteria on hand since it is a form of standardization. In the context of evaluating musical performances, the actuality of this benefit is up for discussion. Peter Johnson acknowledges the three-fold purpose of assessment criteria as an aid to the examiner: to help the examiner go beyond the minimum standards required of the students; to assist the examiner in identifying innovative and idiosyncratic work amongst all the performances; and to distinguish between technical and artistic achievements. However, Johnson still argues that objectivity cannot be guaranteed with the use of assessment criteria during evaluations of musical performances.²⁷ Yet on the other side of this argument, the National Association for Music Education stresses that assessments should be standardized and should reflect the skills and knowledge that are most important for students to learn. The association advocates that, as is necessary with any kind of examination, musical assessments need to be reliable, valid and authentic.²⁸

3.3 Analyzing the Evaluation Process

In order to determine the effectiveness of an evaluation process, it is necessary to assess the method of evaluation used. Janet Mills, an assessor herself, offers her opinion in this matter. She


states that holistic and segmented assessments will feel differently to various assessors. Through her own experience as a holistic assessor, she feels as though she is considering the performance on her own terms, in a ‘musical’ way. As a segmented assessor, she finds herself less articulate.\textsuperscript{29} When dealing with an assessment through the segmented process, the examiner must assign marks for individual skills and various aspects of interpretation. This may lead to the undesired equation of skills plus interpretation equals performance. A holistic assessment looks at the entire performance and assigns an overall mark.\textsuperscript{30} Mills feels that it is more natural to move from assessing a performance as a whole to looking at individual components. She also states that there is a tradition of linking formative and summative assessments in graded music performance examinations such as those offered by the ABRSM. It turns out that the report accompanying the summative mark is formative rather than justification for the mark awarded.\textsuperscript{31} Mills believes that holistic assessment is more musically credible, a better representation of what musical performance is in the real world.\textsuperscript{32}

In their study, the findings of Michael Stanley, Ron Booker and Ross Gilbert echo the sentiments held by Janet Mills. They found that examiners first arrive at a global assessment – this can be considered a first impression or gut reaction. The second step is justification of this gut reaction.

\textsuperscript{29} J. Mills, “Assessing Musical Performance Musically” in Educational Studies 17 (1991), 173

\textsuperscript{30} ibid., 174

\textsuperscript{31} ibid., 175

\textsuperscript{32} ibid., 179
The examiners explained that they identified certain performance characteristics that supported their gut reaction. Finally, in the third step, the examiners considered specific criteria to determine whether or not they were listening to all aspects of the performance. They described a concern to make sure they were not being influenced by just an initial impression.33

In this study, most examiners admitted that the criteria did help them to concentrate on relevant aspects of the performances they were assessing. They found the criteria particularly useful when evaluating cases that were unconvincing. The criteria helped the examiners to provide productive feedback to students.34 The examiners also acknowledged that the use of the assessment criteria could be tedious and they expressed a concern that a pre-determined list may not sufficiently cover all aspects of a performance. Different people look for a wide variety of elements in a performance and it would be impossible for this or any list to include everyone’s personal criteria assessment. The examiners also found it difficult to use when a performance was inconsistent.35 In the end the authors offer two recommendations. They suggest that examiners need to be trained in order to develop their skills for both holistic and criteria-based assessment. They also recommend that assistance should be provided to examiners using criteria when the standard of a student’s performance varies greatly during a recital.36


34 ibid, 51,52

35 ibid., 52-53

36 ibid., 53
Another particularly interesting article looks at the examination process during the preparation period, the execution of the exam and the aftermath of the assessment. Researchers Jane Davidson and Sarah Scutt include the opinions of students, teachers and parents during this process. They observed how the three groups of participants thought and worked over the time period of six months and examined their attitudes towards learning, strategies for motivating practice and sustaining interest.37

Upon completion of the study, Davidson and Scutt found that the group of teachers they interviewed used examinations as target goals within a larger learning process. They had intrinsic motivational goals for their students. The researchers found that the teachers’ opinions were highly influential and informed the views of the students and parents. Both parents and students relied on the teachers for structuring the learning experience, although the teachers themselves may not have realized how influential they had become. The study also highlighted the role of the examination, identifying it as an initiator and sustainer of motivation. The researchers found that the exam could also be a source of self-confidence for the student. All participants deemed the six-month journey of preparing and participating in the exam as a worthwhile experience. Most families acknowledged that exams would likely be part of their future musical plans. Clearly, all groups wanted the examination to be a constructive, learning experience.38

37 J. Davidson and S. Scutt, “Instrumental learning with exams in mind” in British Journal of Music Education 16 (1999), 82

38 ibid, 93-95
3.4 Factors Affecting Evaluators’ Judgments

Many factors can influence an evaluator’s judgments during the assessment process. Some of these factors may relate to the evaluator’s background and training while other factors may be associated with aspects of the examination itself.

One common perception is that those who are deemed to give reliable judgments are also accomplished performers. Studies by Harold E. Fiske and Michael P. Hewitt/Bret P. Smith refute this view. Using high school trumpet evaluations as the basis for his study, Fiske concludes that there is no connection between performing ability (as indicated by their applied music grades) and the reliability of a judge’s evaluation.39 The participants of Hewitt’s and Smith’s study came from a diverse background of instrument specialties. Most of them reported their primary performance areas as brass and woodwind instruments but there were many who played stringed instruments and several were percussionists, vocalists or pianists. The participants were assigned to evaluate trumpet performances. Hewitt and Smith discovered that neither performance experience nor the level of teaching experience had any effect or influence on how the evaluators assessed the performances.40 In a similar study, Neil Winter found that training had more of an effect than expertise on examiners using criteria-based assessment. Examiners who have less evaluative experience are not at a great disadvantage when making their evaluative judgments. Since Winter found that training is more important than experience, he advises that training


courses should verify assessment criteria. Yet, a more recent study by D. W. Kinney supports the notion that greater musical experience does contribute to evaluator consistency in a positive way. This researcher argues that it is a salient influence on the consistency of performance evaluation. However, he clarifies that familiarity of a piece does not play a huge role when one is evaluating musical expression. The author suggests that this type of evaluation is governed by stylistic awareness and personal taste. In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that evaluators with greater experience are more capable of assessing accuracy and expression separately. Those with less experience tend to provide more generalized assessments. Therefore, the expert examiners are able to judge more discrete elements of a music performance.

There are also several factors within the examination itself that can influence an evaluator’s judgment. M.J. Bergee and M. Platt study four potential influences on high school adjudicator ratings: time of day, performing medium, solo or ensemble and school size. This summary will address the only variable that could have an influence on RCM piano examinations, namely, time of day. The results show that for the high school festivals involved in this study, there was a trend that ratings increased as the day progressed. The physical characteristics of the performers being evaluated could also bear some influence on the evaluators. Researchers C. Ryan and E. Costa-Giomi conducted a study to determine whether attractiveness has an impact


43 M. J. Bergee and M. Platt, “Influence of Selected Variables on Solo and Small-Ensemble Festival Ratings” in Journal of Research in Music Education 51 (2003), 342-353
when evaluators rate young pianists. Their results support the presence of an attractiveness bias when evaluating young children. This bias seems to only affect children who actually play well. If a student's performance is poor, her physical features will not make that much of a difference for the evaluation. The researchers also discovered that attractive female pianists receive higher ratings than their less attractive colleagues, yet for males, the effect is the reverse. In a later study, the presence of an attractiveness bias was found to be non-existent when evaluating high-level performers. One other element that could affect an assessor’s judgments is the presence of a musical score during the performance. In one study, researchers found that the use of a musical score does not improve an evaluator’s consistency. In fact, when evaluators used a score and completed rating scales, the consistency of their judgments dropped. The results also suggest that the nature of the music being evaluated affects assessment consistency. In this study, evaluators listening to slow excerpts are less consistent than those evaluating fast excerpts. Surprising to the authors was the fact that piano performance experience did not affect consistency. This finding is in congruence with the studies by Fiske and Hewitt/Smith which were mentioned earlier.

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3.5 Comfort and Confidence Levels as Related to the Execution of Skills in Various Fields

The level of assurance in one’s own skills and the amount of comfort one has with the task at hand can have an impact on whether or not an individual successfully completes his/her assigned duties. O. Compte and A. Postlewaite assert this commonly held notion that confidence can increase one’s performance in a certain skill. Individuals often experience anxiety related to performance. While both positive and negative responses can result from this anxiety, the authors of this paper focus on the negative responses that reduce performance. They create a model that turns these liabilities into factors that improve the individual’s welfare.47 This concept of confidence and level of performance has been addressed in various fields.

In the area of sports performance, several theoretical approaches have been established to outline the affiliation between self-confidence and sports performance. Deborah Feltz outlines these models in her article.48 The connection between these two factors has also been addressed in the field of medicine. Researchers from a study published in 1990 asked participants to attend a resuscitation program, providing them with instruction on this medical procedure. They concluded that experience alone raises confidence but not competence, suggesting that training coupled with experience and immediate feedback may help to maintain a healthy amount of

confidence which will increase performance competence levels. Another medical study engaged participants in a simple surgical task. S.S. Leopold and his colleagues tested four hypotheses related to the surgical procedure of a simulated knee joint injection. They wanted to determine whether or not there was a relationship between an individual’s confidence and his ability to perform a task competently. The researchers also wanted to see if more hands-on training would improve the level of competence amongst the participants. The study concluded that even small amounts of instruction improved the confidence and competence levels of the participants. However, certain participants (in particular, men and physicians) tended to overrate their skills before and after training – as their confidence level increased, their skill level decreased.

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4 The Role of the Examiner

RCME holds examinations at four different times throughout the year – January, April, June and August. Each of these examining periods is called an examination session. Exams are held in different locations across the country. They are called examination centres. Depending on the need, examiners are called upon to evaluate for each of these sessions. Several weeks before a session, examiners receive a package from the RCME office. It contains their examination schedule, travel information if they are not commuting from home as well as the books from which they will administer the ear and sight reading tests. The contents of these books are only to be seen by the examiners – no one else. Any distribution to the public is forbidden because it will damage the integrity of the RCM’s exams.

When an examiner arrives at an examination centre, she is expected to contact the centre representative. This individual is someone from the area, designated by the RCME as the main contact person during examination sessions who will ensure that the examiner is comfortable and has access to the examining building. All candidates taking exams register with this representative once they arrive at the examining building. Candidates are asked to bring scores for the examiner to refer to during the assessment. The centre’s representative instructs the candidates to organize their books so they can be ready for the examiner. Often the students use books published by Frederick Harris Music (associated with the RCM family). There are two books available for every grade – one book includes a selection of repertoire pieces from the RCM syllabus and the other book includes studies (or études) from which the candidate chooses to perform. Most candidates use these books when learning their pieces. Examiners are asked to
bring their set of repertoire and study books to the exam in case students forget to bring their copies or choose to use the music while performing.

Figure 1: Typical set-up of an examination room (based on the plan from the RCM Examiner Manual)
Examiners are expected to warmly greet each candidate at the door and to help them feel comfortable. Depending on the candidate’s preference, the exam begins with either the prepared repertoire or technical elements. If the candidate wishes to start with the technical elements, the examiner calls out various scales, chords and arpeggios according to the keys and requirements prescribed for the specific grade level. Following this portion, the examiner asks the student to play each of his studies or etudes. Next, the candidate plays each repertoire selection he has prepared for the exam. The final portion of the exam includes the ear and sight reading tests. The examiner conducts these from the piano, asking the candidate to look away from the keyboard. Depending on the grade level, the candidate will be asked to clap back the rhythm of the melody played by the examiner. The candidate may also be asked to name intervals, chords and/or intervals. The ear test concludes with the candidate playing back a melody that was played twice by the examiner. The final portion of the exam has the candidate playing through a short passage at sight and clapping a short rhythm at sight. During this time, the examiner completes her paper work and gets ready to escort the candidate out the door and greet the next candidate.

During the examination, the examiner must be writing comments in a legible and comprehensive manner. She should also determine (or at least give some indication for herself) the mark that will be assigned for each element of the examination. Examiners are instructed not to immediately record their marks on the form for the official examination report. They are asked to first record the mark for each exam portion in a logbook. This way, they have the option to make changes to the marks if necessary. For example, examiners may award marks that end with 0.5 (6.5, 7.5) for individual elements. However, the final mark for the entire exam must be a whole number. Recording marks in the logbook first, allows the examiner to slightly alter the marks in order to make certain the final total is a whole number. Also if the examiner feels the total mark
does not match the overall performance of the candidate, she has the opportunity to adjust the marks for each separate portion in the logbook before transferring them to the official examination report form. Another mark needs to be taken into consideration by the examiner. If each repertoire piece is memorized, two memory marks are awarded to the candidate. However, if the candidate’s piece is not memorized, he is not awarded a memory mark unless the performance of the piece is at a high enough standard. If the examiner feels that the candidate’s performance of the piece is worth 70 to 79%, a memory mark of 0.5 is awarded to the candidate. If the performance is awarded at least an 80%, the candidate receives a memory mark of 1. Therefore, at first, the term “memory mark” appears to be a misnomer. However, the examiner needs to make sure she takes this policy into account when evaluating all candidates.

If one acquires the impression that the examiner has a lot to do with the examining period, it is true! Only a short amount of time is scheduled for each examination. The amount of time scheduled for each exam is as follows. For the purposes of this thesis, only the grades from the preparatory to grade 9 levels will be referred to since examiners must be examining for at least five years before they can examine students at the grade 10 and Diploma levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparatory Levels – 11 minutes</th>
<th>Grade 1 – 11 minutes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2 – 14 minutes</td>
<td>Grade 3 – 14 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 4 – 14 minute</td>
<td>Grade 5 – 16 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 6 – 16 minutes</td>
<td>Grade 7 – 16 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8 – 22 minutes</td>
<td>Grade 9 – 25 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examiner needs to be very organized in order to complete all her tasks during the exam. One might feel tempted to cut off candidates who have longer pieces; however, the RCME strongly advises against stopping students during their performances unless it is absolutely necessary.
Candidates often put in a great deal of preparation for these examinations and they should be allowed to play through everything they have prepared. The examiner also needs to make sure that all her desk materials such as repertoire books and the all important ear and sight reading test books are always readily at hand. It is necessary to ensure students never leave with the ear and sight test books or any other material from the examiner’s desk. Likewise, the examiner needs to make sure she does not forget to give the candidate back his materials. In all the commotion, it can be easy to lose materials. Most examiners take time at the end of the day to review their reports, make small grammatical corrections, check their math and transfer their marks from the logbook to the official report forms.

**The RCM Examiner Apprenticeship Training Program**

After reviewing all applications and interviewing the examiner candidates, the RCME invites a select group of individuals to their apprenticeship training program. Those who successfully complete this program will be admitted to the College of Examiners and serve as evaluators for the RCM examining board.

The first part of the apprenticeship is one-half day of observation. Apprentices are required to attend an examination session as scheduled by the RCME administration. The apprentice is asked to silently observe the manner in which the examiner administers the exam, interacts with the candidates and handles any unexpected circumstances that diverge from the typical examining routine. This half day of observation is intended to give the apprentice an overall idea of what goes on in an examining session.
Following this half day of observation, apprentices undergo a four-day training seminar a few weeks later. This is where all the specific details are presented. Apprentices work with the Chief Examiner for Training and Development. Other senior examiners are brought in as guest speakers to provide more variety for the seminar as well as offer other perspectives on examining. Topics such as writing examiner reports, assigning marks, expectations for the classification of marks, interacting with candidates, setting up the examiner’s desk, and setting up the examination room are all discussed during this training session. Apprentices are expected to read the syllabus beforehand; however, examining policies are reviewed during this session. Apprentices are given general guidelines regarding the way they are to carry out examining duties. It is emphasized however during the training session that there is some element of personal preference. For example, one examiner might want to organize his materials in a way that is different from another examiner. It is also acknowledged that evaluators may offer different opinions about the same performance. Apprentices are encouraged to justify their marks through their comments. For example, commentary that includes more remarks that praise a candidate’s performance should receive a higher mark than commentary that includes more ways to improve the performance. Also, the level of the degree of criticism must be taken into account when assigning marks. Apprentices are asked to ensure that there is a good “linkage\textsuperscript{50}” between their comments and the marks they assign. They are also expected to write their commentary in an encouraging and positive light – no matter how severe the criticism must be.

During this training session, apprentices also have some opportunity to put the information they have learned to practical use. At first, apprentices practise giving exams to each other.

\textsuperscript{50} This term is used during the RCM four-day seminar and among RCM examiners to identify the task of making sure the marks reflect the written critique.
Participants in the training seminar take turns being the student and being the examiner. The RCME also brings in real students, individuals who are preparing for or who have just completed examinations. Apprentices take turns conducting these mock examinations. They practise greeting the candidates at the door, asking for their repertoire and technical requirements, as well as administering the ear and sight reading tests. During these mock examinations, all apprentices write comments and decide what marks to give for each segment of the examinations. They later discuss their marks and comments as a class.

Following the training session, apprentices complete six days of examining while being mentored by an experienced examiner. Normally, an apprentice completes two mentoring days in one session. Therefore, most apprentices complete the six mentoring days over the course of three examining sessions, thereby making the apprenticeship training program one full calendar year. On some occasions, some apprentices may effortlessly acquire the examining skills quickly and the Chief Examiner may admit those individuals to the College of Examiners earlier than anticipated. Once accepted, the RCME requires examiners to attend a workshop once a year in order to update them regarding examining policies and help refresh their evaluative skills.
Figure 2: Typical set-up of an examination room during a mentoring session
Each apprentice is matched with an examiner who has at least several years of experience under her belt. At the beginning of the first day, the apprentice may simply observe how the mentor conducts exams. However, as time goes by, she is expected to assume more examining duties. Apprentices are allowed to work at their own pace but usually by the third or fourth day (if not earlier), the apprentice is administering full examinations, writing comments and assigning marks to the examination candidates. The mentor is always present to answer questions and help the apprentice if things go out of key. She also writes full reports for the candidates since it is still the mentors’ comments and marks which are official. Therefore, the apprentice fulfills all duties that an examiner needs to accomplish, but her reports will not be seen by the candidates. They will, however, be reviewed by the Chief Examiner of Development and Training. It is also expected that the apprentice and mentor compare at least some reports to make sure the apprentice’s standards match those of the RCME’s.

After each mentoring session, the Chief Examiner sends a report to the apprentice. This encompasses his opinion of the apprentice’s progress as well as any feedback he received from the mentor during that session. If the apprentice is deemed to be ready at the end of six mentoring days (or earlier), the Chief Examiner invites the apprentice to the College of Examiners as a full member.
5 Methodology

Pilot Study

In October 2007, I conducted a pilot study with the intention of gaining an approximate representation of how an RCM examiner evaluates and what factors affect his evaluating decisions. A survey was sent to thirty individuals who were full members of the College of Examiners. Although only five responses were returned, their input provided a general view of how examiners function in the examination setting and how their training and experience may affect their decisions when evaluating. I also interviewed two examiners, asking them the same questions as the survey. However, since I spoke with them face to face, I was able to gather more detailed responses providing me with a clearer picture of the merits of the examination process. Finally, I audited the RCM’s four-day Examiner Apprentice training seminar where I learned about the intricacies of conducting examinations. I also participated in giving and evaluating mock examinations to students of varying levels. These experiences allowed me, in a sense, to put on the examiner’s hat for myself. The following general tendencies evolved as I analyzed the survey responses, interviews and my own experiences:

Training and Experience

RCM Examinations does not teach examiners the “good and bad” of piano playing. Through the interview process of choosing examiner apprentices, Chief Examiners are able to select the people that they feel exhibit the necessary qualifications to evaluate students. All piano examiners should understand the essence of fine piano playing. The training that the organization offers provides the framework within which they want their examiners to work. Equipped with
their knowledge and experience, examiners evaluate within this framework so that RCM Examinations can provide assessments that are consistent.

Most of the examiners I surveyed and interviewed found that they were prepared for the different situations that arose at examinations. Individuals with other adjudicating experience found that they issued lower marks for RCM examinations (as opposed to their other adjudicating responsibilities) since there were more elements of the student’s musical training being evaluated in exams. There were no visible trends that related years of experience to any of the factors listed above.

_The Human Factor_

Some examiners did state that they form their impressions of candidates quickly, sometimes within the first few scales or first piece of repertoire. Others noted that they refresh after each element and create a new impression for each component of the exam. It tended to be that those with more years of experience as an RCM examiner created overall impressions of candidates, forming an opinion at the beginning of the exam that carried through the rest of the evaluation. Those with less experience created a new impression for each element of the examination.

_Assessment Criteria, Rubrics, and Standards_

Examiners are not required to follow a specific assessment criteria or rubric scale. Therefore, they generally use a holistic approach – identifying the classification of a performance and then defending their opinion with a more detailed critique. RCM Examinations trust each examiner to use his own good judgment regarding the important elements of piano playing. Examiners award grades within the marking format the RCM outlines. However, examiners still feel that they have
a certain amount of freedom. They do feel that their own musical and pedagogical concerns are for the most part aligned with those of RCM Examinations.

Through this study, it appears that RCM Examinations and their examiners are concerned with providing careful and fair evaluations for candidates who choose to enroll for an examination. The organization does allow for a margin of variance since different people will hold varying opinions. However, they do monitor the results in order to ensure the marks remain within a national average. RCM Examinations acknowledges their role as a third party evaluator, and does provide external assessments for students and their teachers.

As I audited the RCM’s four-day apprentice training seminar, I began to observe how certain individuals carried out the examining tasks with confidence and speed, while others struggled with the varying responsibilities. Some apprentices seemed more comfortable with the examining duties while others looked and felt out of place. I know that as a newcomer to anything, I will likely be a little nervous, hesitant and less than self-assured about my skills needed for the task at hand. So, what happens to new examiners, individuals who are examining for the first time on their own? Do they feel comfortable and confident with their examining skills? One would hope so, since the way they conduct and evaluate their examinations has an impact on the candidates being assessed. New examiners are more likely to be comfortable and confident if they felt this way during their apprenticeship. Therefore, I decided to focus my major study on investigating which factors in their preparation contribute to the overall confidence of examiner apprentices, so that they will feel comfortable in their evaluative roles.
Current Study

A qualitative research method employing elements of the narrative inquiry approach was selected to gain a comprehensive understanding of the examiner apprentice’s point of view. I chose to follow the method outlined in D. J. Clandinin and F. M. Connelly’s book *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. The role of a music examiner is a unique position. Examiners need to be thinking on a number of different levels simultaneously. Examiner apprentices or examiners in training are likely to have a wide range of feelings as they undergo the training process. These thoughts that go through an examiner’s mind cannot be rationalized in a quantitative manner. I feel that it would be more useful to study the experiences that examiner apprentices face and the accompanying sentiments. Additionally, all apprentices have a background of education and experience which undoubtedly influences their abilities as examiners. Each apprentice has a unique story behind his experience. In a quantitative study, the individuality of each participant’s story would be lost in the statistical analysis. Also, very few individuals undergo the RCM examiner apprenticeship program every year. There are not enough potential participants to make a quantitative study valid. Since the narrative inquiry method examines the stories of a small number of individuals, this approach is suitable for my pool of participants. Each person is given the freedom to tell his/her story in this study. The initiators of this research method maintain that “Education and educational studies are a form of experience.”\(^\text{51}\) For narrative inquirers, experience is what they study. A narrative approach is a

\(^{51}\) D. J. Clandinin and F. M. Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, (San Francisco, 2000), 18
significant way of writing and thinking about experience.\textsuperscript{52} As Clandinin and Connelly state, “it is a way of understanding experience.”\textsuperscript{53}

Ten individuals were recruited to participate in this study. I, along with five other people, entered the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship program in 2009. Out of my five colleagues, four agreed to participate in my project. These individuals will be referred to as the 2009 Examiner Apprentices. As part of my pilot project, I also audited the 2008 examiner training course but did not partake in the observation or mentoring days for that year. I contacted the nine apprentices from this training course and three individuals agreed to participate. They will be referred to as the 2008 Examiner Apprentices. Finally, I recruited three senior examiners, individuals deemed by RCM Examinations to be highly successful in their role as examiners. Through their narratives, these participants provided me with a comparative angle and perspective for this study. They will be referred to as the Senior Examiners.

Three written surveys were sent to each of the 2009 Examiner Apprentices. They completed surveys after the examiner training course in June 2009, the first set of mentoring days in August 2009, and the second set of mentoring days in January 2010. Likert scales were used to track the participants’ self-assessments of confidence and comfort levels during the examination process. Two of these apprentices finished their mentoring days in January 2010 and I conducted live interviews with them shortly thereafter. One interview was done face to face and the other

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{ibid.}, 18

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{ibid.}, 20
through video conferencing. The remaining two apprentices completed their mentoring days in June 2010 and they were interviewed in person shortly after this examining session.

The 2008 Examiner Apprentices were interviewed in February 2010. Two interviews were conducted in person and one over the telephone. No written surveys were distributed since they had already completed the apprenticeship and were full members of the College of Examiners. The interviews included the same material that was asked of the 2009 Examiner Apprentices in their written surveys. I am aware that the 2008 participants had to recall information from a year ago or earlier. All Senior Examiners were interviewed in person in April 2010. While some questions were similar to those asked of 2008 and 2009 Examiner Apprentices, the Senior Examiners’ interviews focused on reflecting on their background and experience, and assessing how these factors had helped them to succeed at examining. I chose to include Senior Examiners in my study in order to ensure a greater sample population and a wider range of perspectives. There are not that many individuals who go through the apprenticeship program each year and so it was necessary for me to recruit people from two different apprenticeship classes plus the College of Examiners.

One final survey was sent to all of the participants towards the end of my study in December 2010. This time, everyone was asked to reflect upon and answer the same questions. Since the 2009 Examiner Apprentices had completed the program at least six months prior to this final survey, they would also have to recall their experiences, just like the other participants. This final questionnaire also gave the participants a chance to focus on their confidence and comfort levels at the varying stages of their training. Many of the apprentices-now-turned-examiners would
have also gained experience examining on their own, experience which they could draw on while answering the final survey.

As much as possible, the identity of each participant has been concealed. Names have been changed and sometimes, genders have also been altered. Educational institutions that individuals attended have also been left unnamed in order to maintain as much anonymity as possible. As the researcher, I chose not to record the interviews, preferring instead to listen acutely and make copious notes. Since this material is associated with their roles or potential roles within RCM Examinations, I felt that they would not be as forthcoming with their information if they knew they were being recorded. As professional musicians, examining does not constitute the whole of their careers. They have other activities such as teaching, adjudicating and performing. However, since the music world is very small and interconnected, positive and negative impact from one activity can easily affect another. I also submitted an ethics protocol application to the University of Toronto Ethics Board (reference #23617; approved January 28, 2009) where I indicated that I would do everything in my capacity as researcher to protect the anonymity of my study’s participants. Indeed, even experts on the narrative inquiry method feel that recording devices can be overused when researchers feel that their field notes will not adequately capture the experiences involved. Clandinin and Connelly state that field notes are “constructed representations of experience” and can serve as sufficient research material. 54

54 ibid., 106
After I completed the narratives for each participant, I sent each completed document to its “rightful owner” for review. I wanted to make sure that each participant was comfortable with the material I would be including about him in my thesis. Each participant responded and made changes or clarifications as he wished. I integrated all changes into the narratives. This collaborative approach is in keeping with the narrative inquiry method.\(^{55}\)

Throughout the course of this study, I also took part in the training for examiner apprentices. I attended the four-day training seminar and completed four mentoring days over the course of two examining sessions. In February 2010, I was accepted into the College of Examiners. My perspective as an apprentice will also play a role in this study. I will be able to speak directly from an apprentice’s point of view. When interviewing the participants, I took special care to ensure that their responses were in no way influenced by my own opinions as an apprentice.

After receiving the approval for each narrative from each participant, I re-read each story and identified common themes that were prevalent throughout the stories. I determined that both “indirect” and “direct” types of preparation play important roles in the training of each examiner. First, an examiner’s educational background along with pedagogical, performance and evaluative experience combine to form her “indirect preparation”. These are experiences that occurred before the official RCM examiner apprenticeship. While this background may not necessarily have been directly related to RCM examining, it certainly informs each examiner’s decisions when she is evaluating. Second, an examiner’s training during the apprenticeship program forms her “direct preparation.” This includes the four-day training seminar as well as the mentoring

\(^{55}\) *ibid.*, 20
days and any other preparation she may do on her own that is specifically geared to evaluating for the RCM. Once I identified the factors within each type of preparation, I looked at which type of preparation each participant experienced and correlated it to the levels of comfort and confidence the participant reported. There are aspects related to personality and other personal concerns that would affect the relationship between preparation and confidence/comfort levels. I chose to allow each participant to tell his/her story so that the effect of these preparation factors could be seen in the larger, more global context of the participants’ experiences.
6 Approaching the Examiner’s Chair-Issues Facing Examiner Apprentices

After surveying and interviewing all the participants, I compiled the information and wrote a narrative for each participant’s experience. As stated in the methodology, each participant had the opportunity to read and make changes to their narrative. I wanted to make sure that the true story of each participant was made clear. Through the structure of these narratives, the personality of each participant is evident and their experiences are recounted in detail. A summary of the details that specifically affect the comfort and confidence levels of the participants can be found in chart format in appendix B.

6.1 Apprentices from the 2008 and 2009 Training Sessions

Katherine – Examiner Apprentice

Katherine is a new RCM Examiner who completed the apprenticeship program. She has a strong background in performance and pedagogical training, receiving a BMus degree in Music Education coupled with a performance diploma. She also holds two MMus degrees, one strictly in Performance and the other in Performance and Pedagogy. Prior to her post-secondary education she took nearly fifteen years of private lessons. As a senior student of her piano instructor, she also participated in master classes and attended a prestigious summer music academy. She was also active in musical activities at her high school such as playing flute in her school band and keyboards for the jazz ensemble. She grew up taking RCM Examinations throughout her formative years and this culminated in her Performer’s A.R.C.T.
Her teaching experience and training is quite extensive. She has been teaching for seventeen years. She started out with group lessons and eventually switched to teaching private lessons. She has also been instructing at the university level for seven years. Throughout her university years, she received pedagogical training at all levels. During her Masters degree in Performance and Pedagogy, she took two full years of methodology and diagnostic courses and completed an internship where she taught a senior level student. She continues to update herself by attending pedagogical workshops and conferences. Her previous evaluating experience consists of adjudicating at a few festivals and sitting on university level juries.

Upon completing the four-day classroom style training session for apprentices, Katherine felt somewhat confident about the prospect of examining RCM candidates. She generally knew what she had to do but stated that she “was unsure of the nitty-gritty details.” Since she had participated in the system as a student, she felt that her experience as the one being examined would benefit her when she became an examiner. She also had extensive teaching at all levels of the RCM system and as a result was very familiar with the syllabus including all the policies and repertoire selections. She was concerned about the aspect of staying on time, and knew that she had to work on the skill of multi-tasking and on being concise but complete with her comments of the candidates’ playing. She felt that everything that needed to be explained was covered in the training course. In retrospect, she learned a lot by just doing the work hands-on with her mentors later on during the mentoring sessions.

In preparation for the mentoring sessions, she paired up with another colleague to practise administering examinations to one another. She also gave mock exams to her own students. The process of running through the motions of an examination helped her to feel prepared for her
initial examinations sessions as an apprentice. Katherine read through sample examination reports given to her at the training session as well as the reports from her students’ exams, and her own exams when she was younger. In between mentoring sessions, she would go through the motions of the examination again so that the process would remain fresh in her mind. After four days of mentoring over two exam sessions, RCM Examinations deemed her to be ready and welcomed her to the College of Examiners.

Prior to enrolling in the apprenticeship training program, she viewed the role of an examiner as “a knowledgeable source of a second opinion.” After the initial classroom training session, her opinion did slightly change…in a negative way. During the training session, she was “surprised by what some people valued in a musical performance.” She went on to say that she “noticed more how someone with less musical background [could alter the evaluations].” This has caused her to have some concerns with the consistency of the examination results.

As Katherine progressed through the mentoring days, she gained confidence with her examining skills and felt more comfortable in her role as an examiner. With each passing day, she assumed more and more responsibility with conducting the examinations. On the first day, she chose a few exams to observe and then a few exams when she would write evaluation reports. She conducted only a few exams on this day. The second day was less structured and she was more involved with administering the exams. By the third and fourth days, she was running the exams and writing the reports simultaneously. Based on what she was told at the training session, this is exactly how she expected the mentoring days to unfold.
She felt relatively confident with her developing skills as an examiner. She was capable of helping the candidates to feel at ease and efficiently administered ear tests and the sight reading portion accurately. Katherine also stated:

I felt mostly confident about the marks I assigned and I felt that I could write comments that validated my decisions. However, I was less sure about the effectiveness and number of details that would ensure complete understanding from the student's perspective, especially in terms of vocabulary that would be sensitive for their age and/or level of playing.

She also struggled a bit with staying on time. In particular, she found it hard to remain within the time allotted for grades seven and nine examinations. It was especially difficult when the candidates arrived unprepared and stumbled through playing their various pieces. There were some items that her mentors suggested she sequence differently (ear tests and sight reading), contrary to what she was taught at the training seminar. However, she ended up following the way she was originally instructed at the seminar. The mentors also had differing opinions regarding when to cut off elements such as longer pieces or sight reading in order to keep the flow going. She had to take all this advice into consideration and decide for herself.

Many areas of her background and training contributed to helping her feel confident and comfortable during her first RCM examining experiences. She felt that her university experience, teaching experience and pedagogical training were all beneficial in her role as examiner. The adjudicating she did at festivals did prove to be useful experience; however, it was not crucial. She explained that there is more time to write reports while adjudicating in festivals. Also, while
her comments as an adjudicator should match the marks she assigns, “the comments-to-marks proportion is less specific and broken down” than what is required for exams. Evaluating juries at the university level proved to be better preparation for RCM examinations because the duration of the assessment is similar. However, she found that juries provided a much more generalized evaluation. She was very familiar with the RCM repertoire; however, this provided her only some measure of comfort when she was examining. She found that her own experience taking exams as a younger student more effectively put her at ease.

Katherine worked with four different mentors. Most allowed her “to do her own thing,” taking the hands-off approach but still giving occasional suggestions which she found very helpful. The one other mentor took an alternative method, interrupting her all the time. Since she did not know what to expect, she was open for any approach during these mentoring sessions. She was however surprised by the more hands-off approach. Among the suggestions that she received from her mentors, some of the most valuable were: how to organize the log book, how to effectively give verbal instructions for the ear tests, how to improve the flow of the exam by organizing the sequence of the exam elements and how to effectively organize the examiner’s table so that students do not walk off with important and confidential materials. She does wish that she could have read what the mentors wrote for their reports about the candidates’ performances. Unfortunately, there was not enough time for this. She was however able to compare each element’s mark (including part marks) with the mentors. One mentor looked at what Katherine wrote down in her reports. When she received her feedback reports from RCM Examinations, Katherine agreed with their evaluations regarding how she functioned as an examiner. Their suggestions were helpful and she was able to incorporate these in her examiner routine. She found that most mentors were well matched to her except for one.
Katherine has now been a member of the College of Examiners for more than one year. She feels very confident and comfortable in her examining role. In order to feel comfortable, she suggests that new apprentices practise the sequence of events that occur in examinations. She says, “Give A LOT of mock examinations outside the training process.” This can be easily accomplished with one’s own students. She also recommends that new examiners practise their writing skills and keep a handy list of adjectives readily available so that the comment reports are always interesting to read and useful for the candidate’s musical learning experience.

**Liam – Examiner Apprentice**

Liam is a Doctor of Musical Arts performance graduate who was recently accepted to the College of Examiners. Prior to completing his Bachelor and Master degrees in performance, he took piano lessons from the age of seven. He also participated in musical activities at his high school, accompanying choirs as well as instrumentalists. RCM exams were a part of Liam’s early piano studies. He completed the practical portion of the A.R.C.T. diploma but not the theoretical components.

As a teacher in a variety of settings, Liam has a wealth of experiences under his belt. He has taught privately for nine years. He also taught a class in the preparatory department of a music school for one year and at the university level in group and private settings for three and two years respectively. During his university career, he received intensive pedagogical training. Courses offered during his undergraduate and doctoral degrees involved in-class and practicum work, providing him with a well-balanced pedagogical foundation. Since graduating from his final degree, he has attended international conferences and workshops to keep him up to date with the current trends in piano pedagogy. He also has experience evaluating in a formal setting.
He adjudicated a two-day community school competition and has assessed students in a preparatory department. For three years, he was a jury member at the post-secondary level and also determined if students entering their undergraduate programs needed to take class piano or not.

After finishing the in-class training course for examiner apprentices, he felt confident evaluating RCM exam candidates. He expected that he would easily be able to make the students feel comfortable and have constructive things to say, but he anticipated that running the exams in a seamless manner (transitioning from one segment to another) would be a weakness he would need to work on. He was also worried that his unfamiliarity with the RCM repertoire would be a drawback for him. These predictions were based on the knowledge and experience he gained while taking exams during his younger years. As a child, he was very familiar with the RCM repertoire. Being away from the system for more than a decade caused him to feel out of touch – he would have to update himself quickly with the most recent syllabus. Liam thought the four-day training course was helpful, but immediately after its completion, he said:

I would have liked to see more of the actual completed Exam reports from previous candidates, in order to get a sense of the layout of the comments, grades, etc. I would also have liked to be able to view some of the confirmation slips that the candidates have to bring to their exam. I would have liked to have more time with the ear training/sight reading materials. I know these are confidential, but given that we’ll never see them until the session, I would have liked to have the opportunity to study the layout, etc. [beforehand].
However, he still felt well prepared. The practice exams that were a main part of the training course gave him a boost of confidence and the session explaining how to organize oneself at the examiner’s desk provided him with extremely useful pointers. To prepare for the first set of mentoring days, he already knew what he would focus on:

- I will review my vocabulary list, prepare menus to administer technical requirements, practice sitting at a table with all of my ‘props’ just to make sure I know where everything is, and familiarizing myself with the repertoire because I’m not familiar with it (I haven’t taught at all from the RCM books).

Prior to the training course, his impression of an examiner was “somebody who pretty much knew every single technical requirement, study and repertoire piece by memory because he/she had done so many years of teaching the curriculum.” However, after the course, his perception of an examiner’s role had changed.

- My impression now is different, because I realize that more important than having memorized all the requirements/rep, is the ability of the examiner to listen and employ the highest quality of standards in musicianship so that the candidate gains valuable feedback from the experience. I see myself as being better equipped than I initially thought, for despite not having taught from the RCM materials, I feel that my advanced studies will serve me very well. I also had no idea how much goes on “behind the scenes” so to speak (i.e. time management, organization, decorum, etc.). I also didn’t think that examiners had as many guidelines to
follow. On the flip side, I always thought that an examiner would call things out off the top of his head. I had no idea that they had done their homework to prepare ‘menus’, log books, etc. As a child taking the RCM exams, the examiner was always to me, an EXTREMELY professional and gentle person who wanted to enjoy my performance as much as I did. This much I realize is still true!!

After completing his first two days of mentoring, Liam was already feeling very comfortable.

I was struck by the immediacy of the impact felt by each examiner. That is, in an instant, I could tell that my first examiner was a real efficient, detailed and highly organized individual…The [individual]…. on the second day however – while still organized and efficient – seemed to have prepared the materials the night before. What amazed me was the fact that two examiners with completely different methods of administering exams could both be operating at the same high level and with great attention to the students.

Both days went very smoothly with Liam observing the first few exams and then slowly proctoring more sections of the exam. During the training session, he had felt overwhelmed with all the things that he would have to keep track of while examining. To compensate, he reviewed the exam policies very thoroughly, prepared his log book and other examining aids meticulously and even rehearsed certain things. For example, he planned the layout of his desk on the kitchen
table and determined the strategic placement of the items he would need such as pencils, pens, calculator, percentage charts, syllabus, technique menus, etc. He practised “managing the table” while proctoring imaginary exams. Since time management is one of the biggest concerns with examining, he wanted to make sure he would work as efficiently as possible. He also practised calling out the technical requirements.

As mentioned earlier, he wished that the training course could have covered a few more elements related to examining such as providing more examples of completed reports. However, upon completion of his first two days as an examiner apprentice, his opinion changed:

I think the apprentice program was great! It completely prepared me and in fact, my expectations were exceeded. That is, I think the program prepared me more than I realized. I suppose I was also drawing from my own experiences as a candidate in years past as well as my training throughout the conservatory system, but in terms of knowing how to proctor the actual exam and how to create a nurturing environment for the student and ‘looking’ the part, my experiences with the mentors were exactly how the apprentice program said they would be.

He went on to say, “What we did was definitely sufficient for my preparation. I cannot think of anything that the apprentice program could have done to make me feel more comfortable. Feeling comfortable during the mentoring days was as much about my own preparation as it was about the training session.” As a result, he was able to successfully carry out all the duties required of an examiner: helping the candidates feel comfortable, assigning marks with
confidence, writing comprehensive reports, ensuring the marks reflected the reports, and administering the entire exam efficiently including the ear tests and sight reading portions. He was not always able to stay on time but the delays were not so severe that it would have caused serious concern.

Liam believes that his university education and teaching experience proved to be beneficial for his RCM examining experience. Other factors such as his pedagogical training and familiarity with evaluating other types of assessments were also helpful, but he rated them slightly lower than the previous two elements. During his university education, most of his teaching experience occurred at post-secondary institutions where the RCM syllabus was not used. His teaching duties were graduate assistantships, which required him to follow the syllabi of the governing professors. Although he was well aware of the standard pedagogical repertoire, he was not familiar with what was labeled as RCM repertoire. Prior to the mentoring days, he thought this would affect his examining capabilities in a negative way. However, he found that his knowledge of the repertoire was not essential for his comfort/confidence level and he felt that he was still able to examine successfully. He did acknowledge that his experience taking exams as a student was essential in helping him feel comfortable, as the overall flow of the exam and the image of the RCM examiner had changed very little. In a sense, the knowledge he gained as a child offered him an understanding of the exam structure. He gained the musical and diagnostic skills needed to carry out the evaluations during his university education and teaching experience. All the preparation he completed prior to the mentoring days was either somewhat necessary or very essential. Rehearsing the exam routine at a table, reviewing notes from the training session, purchasing the needed supplies and preparing his colour-coded charts were most important for his examining success.
Although his first two mentors had contrasting approaches to conducting the exams, they both made Liam feel at home and allowed him to work at his own pace. He said, “They couldn’t have been more nurturing or supportive of my own efforts to learn the ropes.” He was impressed with their professionalism and certainly learned a lot. This is what he expected and hoped for. The only thing out of the ordinary was the fact that the second mentor greeted all the candidates rather than letting Liam take on the welcoming role as the first mentor had. He suspected that the second mentor wanted to stay on schedule and perhaps this helped him catch up with the time.

He received many suggestions from the first mentor who was not afraid to step up and say something if Liam was headed down the wrong path. The mentor suggested reducing the amount of “stuff” on the desk so as to avoid a candidate accidentally running off with one of the ear training books. Liam adjusted accordingly and noticed a big difference. This mentor also advised him to play the ear tests a bit more slowly and provided some recommendations for writing cohesive and comprehensive reports. In preparation for the second set of mentoring days, he planned on preparing in the similar way he did for the first session. He would seek to familiarize himself more with the repertoire and aim to provide comments that reflected the stylistic period in which each piece was written.

Following the second set of mentoring days, he felt very comfortable and confident examining RCM candidates, an increase in self-assurance from the last session. He felt that he was very successful handling all elements of the examining process although he sometimes still ran behind schedule. During this second session, he placed greater priority on his comments rather than marks. This modification was based on the helpful feedback he received from RCM Examinations. He took the time to write more detailed and extensive reports knowing that he
likely would not have time to write in a mark for each component before the exam finished. He said, “My mentors from this past session reassured me that this was an acceptable practice, because one should be able to determine a mark based on the comment (i.e. linkage\textsuperscript{56}). As a result, he felt that his reports were more diagnostic (although he could have included more praise) and he felt quite comfortable determining marks based on his comments. He was pleased with the improvement and he strongly believed that he was able to incorporate the suggestions from RCM Examinations as much as he could. In this session, both of his mentors were willing to allow him to conduct the majority of the exams. He expected this to be the mentor’s role at this stage in the training, although he goes on to say,

I don’t think that this batch of mentors behaved any differently than the previous batch, nor did they have a ‘strategy’ of how to help apprentices based on the level they’re at. They simply proctored less as apprentices evolved, and in that regard, the role of the mentor is largely ‘built-in’ to the whole apprentice program. I think apprentices change in each stage more than the mentors do. I think the mentors take their cues largely from the apprentice’s level of skill more than anything else, assessing and mentoring accordingly, answering questions and correcting things as needed.

The two most significant suggestions Liam received from these mentors were to write detailed reports before assigning marks and to play the ear tests quite loudly. He had been playing the ear

\textsuperscript{56} This is the term RCM Examinations uses to describe the skill of ensuring that the written critique reflects the mark assigned.
tests “musically” – the mentor said it is best to avoid that in favour of a very strong/loud performance so that the candidate doesn’t call in to complain after the exam.

He found himself comparing marks with all mentors, both from the first and second sessions. He compared about one-third to one-half of his reports. The comparisons usually happened at the end of the day. Most of the mentors took charge to ask what his marks were.

After this second set of mentoring days, he was admitted to the College of Examiners. Looking forward, he planned on aiming for a better balance between diagnosing and praising in his written reports. He also stated that he would not play the ear tests in a “musical” way to ensure that all candidates could hear the notes clearly.

Upon completing the Apprenticeship program and being admitted to the College of Examiners, he concluded that his previous evaluating experiences were not that similar to conducting RCM exams. The marking schemes for these other assessments were much more vague. Class piano assessments were the most similar in terms of logistics and time management. Competitions were similar in the sense that adjudicators need to provide positive feedback and constructive reports. However, no marks are given in these cases. He does not feel the time allotted for the various grades of exams is enough to complete his job as an examiner. Nonetheless, he feels that once he has more experience, he’ll acquire a better rhythm with administering the exams.

Although there were some questionable moments during his mentoring days, he was satisfied with the mentors that were matched with him. The arrangements between mentors and apprentice
fit well. He feels that examiners come from a similar lot – they all have similar demeanours and backgrounds.

Overall, Liam agrees with how the RCM evaluates its candidates. He does however have some concerns. He does not like how the exams themselves have become an institution. As a result, he feels at times that “marks rather than comments tend to steer the ship.” He feels this competitive nature can affect how the student performs in the exam. On the other hand, he liked the flexibility of giving the early level students lots of positive comments and then gradually offering more criticism as they progress through the grades. He is somewhat apprehensive, however, about “the degree to which comments must link up to marks, as it can potentially become hazardous to the overall goal of assessing the candidate’s ability to give a communicative and expressive performance that reaches the heart of listeners.” He aims to develop his ability to write articulate and meaningful reports that will leave a lasting impact on the candidates, parents and teachers. Nevertheless, he is impressed by the uniformity of professionalism that he has seen from all examiners he has encountered so far. He feels that considering the amount of work they need to accomplish, they are doing a fine job. This consistency comes from the training and directives issued by RCM Examinations.

**Joshua – Examiner Apprentice**

As an experienced pedagogue for twenty-five years, Joshua brings a well informed perspective to the role of examining. Prior to attending university, he studied music with a private teacher and also received instruction at the high school level. He completed an undergraduate degree focusing on music education and a Masters degree with a piano pedagogy emphasis. He did not undergo exams by any examining board. In addition to teaching privately, he has also taught
group piano lessons for ten years and university level classes for one year. His formal pedagogical training began at the undergraduate level and continued through to his graduate work where he enrolled in courses and internships associated with various pedagogical topics. He has also attended seminars and received certification for group piano teaching. A life-long learner, he continues to attend conferences and workshops related to the music teaching field. In addition, he is a seasoned evaluator judging at local, regional and provincial/state competitions for twenty years. He has also participated in workshops for evaluators that were offered by his local teachers’ association.

Upon completing the four-day RCM training course for examiners, Joshua felt very insecure examining RCM candidates. Although he believed he was well prepared, he was feeling quite a bit overwhelmed because he was not as familiar with the repertoire and technical requirements as those who either grew up taking exams or preparing students for exams for many, many years. Joshua believed that his experience teaching all levels of students and entering them in local adjudicated festivals would be an asset to him as an examiner apprentice. He expected that his strengths would be his ability to settle on a concise evaluation, and his facility with writing quickly and legibly in a short amount of time. He was anxious when considering that he would have to juggle number, administer AND evaluate the ear tests while maintaining a positive outlook and writing style. During the training session, he would have liked to see a more in depth review of the syllabus as well as mock examinations demonstrating playing that the RCM would consider as “barely passing” (60%). Realizing what he needed to work on, he planned on preparing for the first set of mentoring days in a variety of ways. He intended to play through as much of the repertoire as he could, to listen carefully to the repertoire, and to conduct some mock examinations with his students, re-reading the sample written reports distributed at the
training session, and reviewing the technical requirements for every level. Prior to the training course, his impression of an examiner’s role was “just a basic adjudication experience with writing a few comments, hearing repertoire, ear and sight tests.” However, after completing the seminar, his point of view changed drastically:

A great deal is expected of the examiners in a very short time. I have never walked a student in and out of the room, nor checked their repertoire, nor try to listen, write comments, AND score. Checking the chart to see what points should be allotted is most confusing and time consuming. I’m not sure I will enjoy the push, nor the constant need to employ the “power of positive thinking” and writing. It makes me very nervous to know that I will either be accepted or rejected into the college by the type of comments I write, whether all my math is correct and all this work while staying within a prescribed and strictly watched time frame.

After finishing his first set of mentoring days, he still felt uncomfortable and insecure examining RCM candidates. He began the first day by observing how the mentor conducted the exam and made his own notes. Then, as the day passed, he would administer more of the examination. By the second day, he proctored a few examinations in their entirety. Joshua expected that the days would be conducted at a more relaxed pace. At the time, he explained:

The first mentor that I had made me feel very pushed and rushed. He would say that he was going to take over as we were running late. We ran late every session, but my second mentor was not nearly so frantic if and when we did get late. We all agreed that
more time is necessary if one is mentoring. To have a full normal day does two things: 1) Makes one always feel harried and never comfortable and 2) That there is no way one will ever be able to accomplish all that needs to be done in these pushed sessions by oneself, make coherent, reflective, constructive comments AND stay on time. There wasn’t time to share comments and the first mentor shared that he was told not to worry about comments that RCM would deal with those and they just needed to share and go over the marking system. I was thrown lots and lots of little things that kept adding up to quite a bit of discouragement on my part. I’m afraid I’ll never be able to remember all of this and I’ll never be able to do this on my own.

He also noted that the temperature in the room was sweltering, making it feel “more like a punishment rather than an accomplishment.” This was not what Joshua had envisioned based on the training course. According to his description of the experience, it was certainly not an ideal situation. He said:

I was extremely stressed at the end of day one and didn’t even feel comfortable taking my papers back to my room to go over—my mentor at first wanted them at the end of the day and since we were in the same hotel I convinced him that I would need to take them with me to go through in the evening. I found myself staying up till midnight reconciling marks and justifying comments (which I don’t really think I did). I truly wasn’t sure I wanted to go back
for the second day. I felt totally and completely inadequate, inept and always in the back of my mind was—RCM is going to read these comments and now I’ll get their judgement thrown in as well. I was expecting time to breathe at lunch or break and maybe go over comments, but the conditions at the center were such that we couldn’t stay there in non-air-conditioned quarters. I expected to only observe and ask repertoire the first morning and maybe some technique in the afternoon. I did more each day than I thought I might, and that has plusses and minuses attached to it.

He desperately wanted more time during these mentoring days. The following quote reveals his frustrations:

Time to talk after each student. Time-time-time!!! Some exams were good, some were not. I had lots of questions but felt a constant push to go faster and yet was being bombarded with dos and don’ts. I couldn’t even write all of them down there were so many—speak louder, play slower, say this, say that, don’t take the paper with you, take the paper with you, you have too much stuff out/around, try to keep Grade 2’s in the 70’s, a 60 is a really bad score for Grade 8, pronounce “root” differently—How the heck does one remember all of this. Add in .5 or take away 1.5, check this list and that chart—ACK!!!

Other suggestions included:
Speak more clearly, remind them of the octave requirement in asking for technique, no need to tell them how many octaves—they are supposed to know, keep it professional, be more friendly, keep the younger grades in the 80’s, keep ear training in the middle of the piano—don’t switch up the octaves, don’t give them something to complain about (huh?)...

There were several examiner responsibilities that he felt he was not successful carrying out. He did not feel that there was any linkage between the marks he assigned and the reports he wrote. He was even skeptical as to whether or not his reports were helpful. He said, “In the back of my mind I kept hearing, ‘You have to justify your marks with your comments’ and ‘Stay away from ‘you’’ and ‘Don’t be cute or draw pictures.’ I must say I don’t think I wrote the way I normally do when I adjudicate because I am used to making suggestions that I cannot do with the RCM.” Although he felt like he was being welcoming to the candidates, he assumed that he was not because he was told to smile more and use a different tone of voice. He certainly was not able to stay on schedule and if he did, it was because there were cancellations or the mentor examiner took over the reins. Joshua did feel confident about assigning marks but he was not able to effectively do this and make comments for every piece. Administering the ear tests and sight reading portions went a little bit better but he was not able to conduct them efficiently.

Throughout these first two mentoring days, Joshua did struggle as he tried to adjust to the instructions of the mentors.

I never felt like I “did my own thing” and if I did it was mostly wrong from the tone of my voice, how I pronounced words, how I
played the ear/sight, how I asked for technique. The greatest frustration was being told two different things on successive days with two different examiners. One mentor was really good to pass me little notes that I then stuck on my book as reminders.

When asked if this was what he expected to be the mentor’s role, he said:

For the most part, sure. I think personalities play into this somewhat. Type A’s aren’t necessarily best paired with type B’s. I have no doubt that my one mentor was so completely distressed by me and I’m sure distraught over what I was doing especially in the resulting lateness. Nothing else much mattered except that we kept on time so that limited any discussion.

He had so many questions that he wanted to ask. Unfortunately, there was not enough time:

I wish, I wish, I wish, there could be time to get together in the evening and go through the day’s activities. Either that or time cushions throughout the day to immediately discuss what happened, like a candidate crying and falling apart, or a challenge of the technical studies asked for or an exam that failed. Those are things that need addressing at the time. Then after some time and space we could get together and talk about marks and comments and allow time for questions—“what do you say/do about....”

After these first grueling days as an examiner apprentice, Joshua did not feel it could get any worse. He said, “I figure I have been through the fire and had the worst thrown at me.” When
looking ahead to his next set of mentoring days, he was looking up, looking to improve. He stated, “I will make some changes in how I lay out my items and I think I will do some practicing with my own students in my studio and then we’ll see. Hopefully, I will come up with some stress reducing strategies that will prove effective with my next mentoring session.”

Joshua obviously did – his comfort level significantly increased after completing the second set of mentoring days. Although his level of confidence also increased, it was still at a relatively low level. He was able to successfully carry out all his examiner duties. Staying on time was still an issue, but he did improve in this area. He developed a better flow pattern from desk to piano to administer the ear tests and created a helpful ear test/sight reading marking form. He said, “I still had comments about my inefficiencies, but took them in stride as differing methods and feeling like whatever is preferred by oneself is always best.” He strongly agreed with the reports he received from RCM Examinations and found them to be very helpful:

I redid my percentage charts to make it easier to find what I wanted and pasted the suggestions I received from the evaluations of my comments on it. This proved so helpful as I searched where to place each candidate’s marks. I was able to think more in terms of whether or not the performance was honours, first class, distinction, etc. and also where to cap points.

Based on his description, Joshua’s mentoring experience this time was generally more fruitful. He describes it in great detail:

The first mentor worked with me in a real collaborative experience, letting me do the exams in a manner I was comfortable with and helping out when a question arose such as a scale that
was not prepared. We shared marks and chatted at lunch and I didn’t feel entirely pushed. I was also able to take the comment sheets back with me to the hotel to go over and print off.

The second mentor had a routine and her own way of doing things which included a music stand on which to place the ear and sight books and even told me that my flow was inefficient then changed the placement of the stand and told me where to go and how to proceed. I was pushed the whole day and never felt comfortable in much of anything. I was told how to say things, when to say them and even how I should address a candidate. She seemed to act as more of an overseer/instructor than a mentor. She also told me when she would be taking over and what she would be doing and what I would be doing. Some of what she told me was in direct contradiction to what we were told in our training and also what I had been able to do and told the day before.

The third mentor was a wonderful way to end my three days. This was a true collaboration with a back and forth conducting of exams all day whenever one of us needed a break or a little more time. There was so much respect for each that we both thanked the other at the end of the day. That was the first time I was thanked by a mentor! I can learn so much with every observation and wanted to do so which this mentor allowed. The back and forth allowed me
Joshua rated his pedagogical training and judging experience as the most beneficial elements for his work with examining. He did not find his pedagogical knowledge to be as beneficial because he said “We can’t teach in our comments.” The RCM exams were also different from other assessments that he has conducted. He said “I’ve never had to assign points before and try to stay within a national percentage system.” He found his university education to be the least beneficial. Since he was only somewhat familiar with the RCM repertoire, he did review the pieces by listening to the CDs and completed all the other preparatory activities he mentioned before the mentoring session. However, in the end, he did not feel that listening to the recordings of the repertoire actually made him feel more comfortable. All other types of preparation did prove to be of assistance while examining.

He thinks it would be interesting to find out just what RCM Examinations tell the mentors as each treated him so differently. As in the last set of mentoring days, he received all sorts of suggestions such as “Put your books here, move this way to the piano, make your marks as you go along, use these intervals.” He found that the second mentor was particularly a micromanager:

Allowing me time and space was like a luxury and I am so appreciative of the last mentor who told me if I needed time just to let her know. I wish the second mentor had not dictated every
move that I made and word that I spoke. She also made a point to let me know that her marks came from her years of experience which might be why they are more accurate to the playing. Perhaps this is true but to tell me that only eroded any confidence I had built up from the day before. I may have been all over the place with my marks with the third mentor because we never shared any marks or comments, but ignorance and I finished the day much happier and feeling better about myself. She said that she would leave the evaluating of comments and marks to the chief examiners and I truly appreciated that.

In comparison to his previous evaluating roles, Joshua found RCM exams to be similar in terms of writing the comments, but the “point” system differed greatly from other approaches he has used. Also, knowing that his comments would be viewed and evaluated by RCM Examinations affected his experience while examining. He believes that taking exams as a student would have been advantageous for his role as an examiner. He explains that this background would give a certain amount of flow to administering the examination.

Regarding the time management issue, he is uncertain about what to do. Sometimes, examiners might need to stop candidates while they are playing in order to move on to the next segment. This may be due to longer repertoire or a candidate who is not quite prepared and therefore stumbles over his/her piece. He notes that in the training seminar, apprentices are told not to cut off students while they are playing their repertoire. However, one of his mentors told him to cut off candidates whenever he wanted to! This same mentor warned every candidate that they might
have to be cut off. In fact, each of his five mentors had his/her own opinion of what to do under these circumstances. He certainly did not find any consistency on this issue between RCM Examinations and his examiner mentors.

Joshua rarely compared reports with his mentors. Very randomly did they compare marks and nobody shared the written comments with him. One mentor did not even share anything. Sometimes, he would converse with the mentor, especially if there was a bad exam that was played. He definitely does not feel that the RCM matched mentors that were specifically suited to him in terms of personality, experience and education. He found that there were some people he got along with and others that he found harder to work with. But he noted that he did learn from everyone.

After his mentoring days were completed, he clarified his position regarding knowledge of the repertoire. He said that he was familiar with the repertoire but he was not familiar with the requirements for each examination level. He has been teaching with RCM materials for many years; however, he was unsure about the “nuts and bolts” associated with each level (ie. number of pieces, number of studies, which intervals, etc.). During the first set of mentoring days he discovered that he did not carefully read which intervals were required for each grade and as a result, made some costly timing mistakes when administering the ear tests.

As noted earlier, his level of comfort significantly increased during the second set of mentoring days. He attributes this to a number of elements. After the experience of the first few mentoring days, he was able to realign himself and focus his preparation on the aspects that needed work.
For example, he refined his percentage reference chart so that it worked more efficiently for him. He also learned a lot from all his mentors, even the ones that apparently did not like him.

Joshua agrees with the format of the RCM’s evaluations. He says that though there is still some subjectivity, examiners are given parameters. He finds the “points” system to be helpful, providing some objectivity to the evaluation. He also appreciates the evaluative approach that is suggested by RCM Examinations: the average student will perform at the Honours level (70-79). With this guide, he believes it is easier for examiners to determine where each candidate stands in terms of this standard. Joshua’s story is certainly one that has had several ups and downs; however, his acceptance to the College of Examiners has proven that he is more self-assured in his role as an examiner.

**Mariel – Examiner Apprentice**

A pianist with a broad spectrum of experience in performing, teaching, and evaluating, Mariel has recently added “RCM Examiner” to her career portfolio. After studying piano for nine years, she went on to receive extensive academic credentials including Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral degrees in Piano Performance. During her formative years, she did not take examinations through the RCM or any examining board.

She has a wide variety of teaching experiences. She has been teaching university level pianists for ten years and has also taught university group piano classes for four years. Additionally, she has maintained a private studio for fifteen years. She had a full year of pedagogical training during her undergraduate degree, each semester taught by a different instructor. Both courses involved hands-on teaching experiences and observation of a variety of teaching methods
(private, Kindermusic, Orff, Suzuki, etc.). She remains in touch with the pedagogical world by attending workshops and conferences regularly. The bulk of her evaluating experience comes from her work at the university level. As a studio instructor for ten years, she has also assessed juries at the university level for the same period of time. In addition, she has judged at local and regional festivals and competitions for three years. She has not received any formal training in evaluating other than the RCM’s examiner training course.

After completing the apprenticeship training course, she felt confident evaluating RCM candidates. As a highly accomplished pianist, she expected that her knowledge of style and interpretation of the repertoire would be one of her greatest strengths when examining. She was confident in her writing ability, but she was anticipating that the organizational challenges would prove to be one of her weaknesses. The constant need to go back and forth between forms, books and grade levels did seem a bit daunting to her. In preparation for her first set of mentoring days, she conducted mock exams with some of her students and even some of her colleagues so that she could “go through the motions” of running an exam. However, she did feel that since she was getting ready for “the first hands-on experience, it was hard to do much preparation.” She did more of this type of “examining practice” in between her examining sessions since she knew what she needed to work on. Prior to attending the training course, she “believed the role of the examiner was primarily to provide a high quality evaluation while maintaining a sensitive and encouraging atmosphere.” She also viewed examining as a “fairly intense activity.” Looking back, she thinks that her impression was accurate. She goes on to say however, “keeping track of all the specific requirements, percentages, point systems, etc., while simultaneously addressing the student, was more difficult than I anticipated.” The course also gave her a good sense of what to expect during the mentoring days.
Upon completing the first set of mentoring days, her confidence level dropped slightly as she sensed that she needed to administer the exams more efficiently. After the second set of mentoring days however, her comfort and confidence levels improved and she was feeling very confident by the end of the session. The organizational and logistical aspects of running the exam became much easier for her to handle. She found that she was able to help the candidates feel at ease. She was confident with the marks she assigned and wrote clear and concise reports that accurately reflected those scores. The ear tests and sight reading portions were administered efficiently and accurately. At first she had trouble staying on time, but gradually, she was able to improve this aspect of her examining skill. She admits that she still gets delayed; however, her tardiness is not nearly as significant as it was when she was starting out.

Mariel feels that her university education and teaching experience serve her to great benefit in her examining role. Her pedagogical training provided some comfort but she feels that her evaluating experience was more advantageous as she trained to be an RCM examiner. She believes that adjudicating festivals is slightly more akin to RCM examinations since both evaluations involve preparing a written evaluation for the student. For the university juries she was involved with however, no written evaluation was prepared for the student. When she began the examiner apprenticeship, she was somewhat familiar with the RCM repertoire. She feels that her knowledge of the repertoire was somewhat useful in helping her feel comfortable examining. Mariel points out that she was not necessarily familiar with every specific piece included in the RCM syllabus; however, she was well acquainted with the various styles and eras that the pieces represented.
Mariel was mentored by three different individuals. Overall, her marks were similar with the first mentor on both days they worked together; however, her marks did not match with the second mentor during their first day together. As the second day went on, the marks that she assigned did become consistent with the second mentor. They were also well aligned with the third mentor. It was this last individual that initiated a lot of discussion and comparison of marks and reports. He/she was very interested to see what Mariel had to say. They would talk about candidates in between exams with the mentor considering her opinions. The results of almost every exam were compared in detail, looking at marks for each segment and even part marks. By the end of each day, the comparisons became more of an overall review. Mariel also found this final mentor to have more of a “laissez-faire” approach while the second mentor was at the other end of the spectrum and insisted on staying on time (there were external, personal circumstances). The second mentor was so “amazingly fast” that he/she turned out to be a role model for Mariel. The initial mentor was an amalgamation of the two others – in the middle of the spectrum. Mariel expected that all the mentors would have their own examining style and was not fazed by their varying approaches. They provided her with suggestions such as “Keep smiling,” and “Faster!!” She found this mentoring experience to be so complete that she could not think of anything she wished they would have done differently. Regarding the feedback from RCM Examinations, Mariel agreed with the comments and found the remarks to be very helpful. The main suggestion was to work faster and that she did. She thought that their personalities were quite different from her own. They also did not have as much education as she had acquired. As a result, she does not think the RCM matches mentors according to personality, experience or education.
As a member of the College of Examiners for one full year now, Mariel feels very comfortable and confident in her examining role. She recommends that examiner apprentices practise administering exams with their students and colleagues. Working through the choreography of running an examination can alleviate a lot of stress. She also states it is important that examiners maintain the qualities of a good assessor: staying positive and professional.

Although she is now very comfortable in her examining role, Mariel does feel it would be a good idea to have more time allotted for the various grades of examinations. The short durations “can lead to feeling rushed which would impede evaluations and the student’s performance.” She does agree with how the RCM evaluates students. She says that the examinations “maintain a standard. They aren’t too hard or too easy.”

**Natasha – Examiner Apprentice**

Natasha is a well-known teacher in her community and has been providing piano instruction for over twenty years. Prior to attending university for a Bachelor of Music in Education, she studied piano with a private teacher and also took music classes during her elementary and secondary school years. After her undergraduate degree, she received a Master of Music in Performance and Pedagogy. She took RCM examinations during her formative years and received Associate diplomas from two different examining boards, one of which was the RCM. She received extensive training in pedagogy at the Masters level and also frequently attends workshops run by her local music teachers’ association as well as conferences. Prior to enrolling in the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship program, she had not been involved with any type of evaluating experience.
After completing the four-day training seminar at the RCM, she felt fairly confident with the prospect of evaluating RCM examination candidates. She expected that her extensive knowledge of the repertoire and substantial teaching experience would serve her well as she began her examiner training. She was concerned however about the time management issues and wondered how she would administer the exams efficiently. She was satisfied with the content of the training seminar: still, she wished there could have been “more opportunity to take up exam reports, more opportunities to witness and administer exams, and many more examples of various levels of playing.” At the time, she felt “pretty ready” but she anticipated that she would feel better after studying and preparing on her own time. Natasha planned on listening to the repertoire from the various grades on the recordings, studying the scores, as well as organizing and studying the notes she received from the training seminar. Prior to entering the apprenticeship training course, her impression of an RCM examiner was that of an evaluator of exams. She viewed the examiner as a representative of the RCM and an individual who would have some sort of personal impact on each examination candidate. This impression was not altered by the seminar.

Upon completion of her first set of mentoring days, she felt comfortable evaluating RCM examination candidates. She said,

Day 1 was more stressful and fast-paced. I decided to dive in and try to conduct entire exams. My mentor was very sweet and we worked as a tag team. I found it harder to mark the less successful exams. I tended to mark them too high. Eventually I got that figured out. It didn’t take me too long to start to pick up the
routine but it was much harder to write assessments when I was conducting exams as well.

By the second day, Natasha was feeling much more confident. She felt that this mentor’s laid back approach was similar to her own. She had less space to work with but somehow stayed more organized. There were a number of unprepared grade eight candidates and listening to their exams was “torture!” She and her mentor ended up going well overtime and had to skip scheduled breaks. Reflecting on the two days in this mentoring session, Natasha commented:

In some ways things went better than I expected. The mentors encouraged me and supported me and I caught on quickly. On the other hand, there wasn’t enough time to discuss and learn. This isn’t fair to the mentors because they aren’t paid for overtime and it is stressful for them when things get behind. If this is to be an optimum “training” session, there needs to be time allotted for comparing marks and coaching.

She felt that the training seminar successfully influenced her expectations of these two mentoring days. Both of her mentors were extremely helpful, offering her many insider tips. She added that “debriefing periods” are an absolute necessity since “feedback on the spot is invaluable.” Natasha was able to effectively carry out many of the examiner’s duties. She was able to help the candidates feel at ease, administer the ear tests and sight reading portions accurately and efficiently produce well-written, helpful reports. She felt relatively confident regarding the marks she assigned to each candidate but had more difficulty staying on schedule. She commented that all her university education, teaching experience and pedagogical training were highly beneficial for her first examining experience. Her experience taking RCM exams as a student, her
knowledge of the repertoire as well as the preparation she did prior to the mentoring days were also factors essential to making her feel comfortable. Although they took their role seriously, both of her mentors were flexible enough to allow her to do her own thing within their guidelines. They also let her conduct a number of exams in their entirety. She was certainly hoping that this would be the mentor’s role and she was pleasantly satisfied. She felt that they both did their best with the time they had but wished they could do more.

Natasha continued to feel even more comfortable in her examining role after the second set of mentoring days. She also experienced greater confidence in her decisions. She was more uniform in her ability to execute the various tasks of her role as examiner, although she still had some trouble staying on schedule. In an attempt to better multi-task and save time, she tried to do a few things differently: she had her technique menus ready and in order according to the sequence of grades for each exam day; she brought her log sheet up to the piano to record marks for the ear tests and sight reading portions; she tried to usher each candidate out while bringing the next one in; and she left the job of tallying up all the marks until the very end. With these small changes, she was more successful in her attempt to save time. She did start “getting into a groove” but felt that she still needed to continue to work on ways to work more efficiently.

Receiving the feedback from RCM Examinations’ administration, Natasha agreed with the reports and found them to be helpful. In order to incorporate their suggestions, she attended some advanced festivals to gain more familiarity with the higher grades and she tried to write more neatly. Unfortunately, her experience with the mentors during the second session was not as positive. Both left her to do her own thing for the most part. She said, “one was very helpful, the other seemed to want to invest the minimum amount of time.” The helpful mentor certainly met
her expectations, yet the other disappointed Natasha with her lack of effort. Suggestions she received included playing ear tests more slowly, greeting candidates at the door and ushering them out. She wished that the mentors could have shared the contents of their reports with her. She also said, “The one mentor concerned me in that she wouldn’t alter her mark when I pointed out an oversight she had made. I appreciate when mentors are willing to admit they are human.”

Unfortunately, her last mentoring session was not the greatest experience either. Although her fifth mentor (first mentor in the third session) was helpful and gave her confidence, the sixth and final mentor had no clue what to do with Natasha. She left Natasha with a bad impression. At the end of this session, she continued to feel the same amount of confidence examining RCM candidates. However, there are still a number of issues she does not feel comfortable nor confident addressing. She is still unsure about the standards regarding the higher grades. She did not hear enough examples to confidently decide who would pass exams at these levels and who would fail. In her experience working with the mentors, she found there was much discrepancy amongst examiners regarding this evaluation issue. She feels that there are vague terms in the RCM standards. She would love to watch many more exams at different success levels and then see what marks each candidate would receive from the RCM. In fact, she suggests that the organization should prepare videos for examiner apprentices to watch so that everyone is on the same page regarding standards. Although her marks were still within a reasonable range of RCM’s expectations, she would like much more exposure to different standards within each level. Actually, she could not compare all her marks with all her mentors. Sometimes, she did not even know how she fared in marking over the course of a day. Natasha herself was victim of this strain and made one error while administering the sight reading portion. On one occasion, she accidentally gave a cello sight reading example to a pianist! She says that the examiners cannot
be entirely blamed for all these oversights and errors. She feels that “the RCM is squeezing the orange”…and to her, it appears that the orange is running out of juice.

If they were lucky and there was time, Natasha and her mentors were able to compare some marks. One mentor generously took one and a half hours of her own time to compare marks and comments after the examining day! Another mentor did not compare anything at all. She also sensed that some mentors were almost protective about their exam reports and marks. This made her feel a little hesitant to ask them if they would compare reports.

When asked if she feels that enough time is provided to examine each candidate effectively, her response was, “No!!!! Hell, no!!” She said, “For the majority of people, it’s not humanly possible!” She goes on to explain that one unprepared student can wreak total havoc on the schedule. Then she finds that everyone is on edge because of their tardiness – the examiner, the candidates, the parents, and the centre representative all feel the push to stay on time. She believes that in this environment human error is high and examiners make mistakes. She finds this to be discouraging for the students and embarrassing for the good hearted examiners. There was one occasion when, at the beginning of the day, Natasha noticed that the piano was not what she expected. The instrument’s height was so low that people with long legs would not be able to fit their knees underneath it and the pedals were not working properly! She brought this to the attention of the mentor. She suggested that at the very least, they could look for another bench or chair so that taller candidates could feel more comfortable at the piano. However, the response she received was essentially, don’t fuss about that, we don’t have time. Again, the mentor, was stressed by the fact that they had to stay on time and so was blinded by the fact that each candidate would not be given a fair chance at completing his/her exam. Natasha feels that each
student should be given an adequate opportunity and be offered a proper instrument to play on. She explains that the stress imposed on examiners because of the time limits spills over to the students.

Natasha feels that the RCM does not match mentors that are specifically suited to her in terms of personality, experience and education. Actually, she is sure that she has more teaching experience and education than some of her mentors. She also felt that she knew the repertoire better than one of the mentors. She did not receive the impression that the mentors are trained to train the apprentices. In fact, with one mentor, Natasha had to take over and lead the mentor, explaining what usually happens in a mentoring session. After the day’s first exam, this same mentor turned to her and asked, “So do we compare reports now?” Natasha replied that there was no time. This mentor was so slow she was actually the cause for putting them behind schedule. Natasha lamented that it would be her who would be reported as running late. She also observed several instances of unprofessionalism on the part of a number of her mentors. On one occasion, one mentor was eating while examining a student. She does not necessarily blame the mentor for this because he/she simply had no time for lunch because the examining schedule was too tight. Another mentor exclaimed, “I can’t take this anymore!!!” right in front of a candidate! Natasha also noticed that mentors would regularly deviate from rules that were strongly emphasized at the seminar training session. She found mentors eliminating technical elements and cutting pieces at the grade four level to save time. She also noted that one of her mentors admitted he/she made the mistake of not verifying whether a certain candidate used the music while performing a piece. Natasha corrected the mentor, stating that she had noted it on her report. However, the mentor claimed he/she could not change the mark because he/she already entered it. Natasha could not understand what this meant because the mentor was completing the reports
by hand. On more than one occasion, she did not feel proper standards were being upheld. She felt that many of the infractions were made in an effort to save time. For her, it was disheartening and discouraging. One mentor was like a drill sergeant and did not waste any time. Unfortunately, any human compassion was all but gone; all that mattered was that each exam was to be finished as soon as possible and on time.

Out of her six mentors, Natasha felt that four of them did an excellent job. Some of the mishaps that occurred throughout the days were created by the stress that the mentors had to endure because of the time limits and the added responsibilities of guiding the apprentice, Natasha. One of her mentors clearly LOVED examining. The kind demeanour to the candidates and the positive outlook this mentor maintained proved to be an excellent example for Natasha. This individual explained to her that the students always remember the examiner, and therefore it is crucial that all examiners be sensitive to how they present themselves to the candidates. Natasha also stated that other mentors did not possess people skills and emphasizes that “it takes people skills to be a mentor!” She believes that the RCM should screen mentors and take care in choosing which individuals are assigned to guide the apprentices. She also strongly feels that there should be some significant reward for the mentors, whether it be monetary or otherwise, since they take on a lot of responsibility helping to train apprentices.

Natasha generally concurs with the way the RCM evaluates students. She is impressed with how the marking scheme is laid out. For her, the numbers she assigns for each exam always add up to the overall mark that the candidate deserves. She found that she could predict what mark each candidate would receive at the beginning of the exam.
As one who now feels confident with her examining skills, she now realizes even more how subjective in nature the exams end up being – she realizes that her opinion will always come through. She is looking forward to examining on her own and will tailor the experience to her personality so that she feels comfortable. But, she still has conflicting feelings. Although she is eagerly anticipating examining alone, she feels so isolated and wishes that more support could be available. She almost feels like the mentoring days were simply a chance for her to “show up and take up everyone’s time.” She suggests that new examiners should be matched up with experienced examiners – not in person during the examining sessions but as someone they can contact if they have any questions or concerns – sort of a mentor on the road. She strongly believes that all mentors should be compensated generously since their duties go above and beyond their regular examining duties. She senses that some of the mentors are feeling that they are being used. Natasha did learn a lot throughout her training but did so with much unnecessary stress.

Roy- Examiner Apprentice

Roy is a recent examiner apprentice who has just started conducting examinations on his own. He brings a myriad of teaching and evaluative experiences to his role as an examiner. His educational credentials are extensive: he has successfully completed Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees in piano performance. Prior to attending university, his intensive piano training consisted of private and group lessons. He also attended a preparatory department run by a major post-secondary music school. RCM Examinations were not a part of his early training; however, he did undergo other types of evaluations.
Prior to entering the apprenticeship program, he had approximately fifteen years of teaching experience. He has taught privately using traditional and Suzuki methods and has instructed group lessons in a multiple keyboard lab. University level teaching has also played a role in his career. In this capacity, he has taught private lessons as well as theory and music appreciation classes. He received pedagogical training during his university studies, taking a year long course in each of his Bachelor and Master degrees. He also attends conferences and workshops.

As an evaluator, he has experience at the local, regional and international levels. He has judged local festivals and competitions for ten years and regional events for five years. He was also involved with the preliminary round of decisions of an international competition, writing evaluations comments. Other than the RCM Apprenticeship and some experience in pedagogy class, he has not received any other formal training regarding evaluations.

Prior to enrolling in the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship program, Roy described his impression of an examiner’s role:

> Before I went, I was more confident. I thought that I [would] always have something to say about each performance. Commenting will be a piece of cake. I have judged in events where a lot of time was given for each student and I always stayed on time. I felt that I would be very good at this. During the observation days, I saw the examiner being highly organized and I was amazed with her conducting skills.

However, after taking the training course, he said, “I realized that it was harder than I expected. I expected that the “time management” was going to be an important part but it was a bigger deal
than I expected. It is very busy!” He went on to say, “I thought that providing a good evaluation was important but I realized that the examiners were more focused on making the students feel welcomed, comfortable, and cared for. The examiners want to motivate this test system to be a positive experience.”

After completing the in-class seminar, he felt somewhat comfortable and confident with examining RCM candidates. Since he holds a Doctoral of Musical Arts degree, he expected that his greatest strength would be his ability to evaluate all levels of examinations. He anticipated that time management and organization would be the areas of examining he would need to work on the most. The more exams he conducted however, the better he was able to stay on schedule. As it turned out, writing the reports was his weakest skill. Since he thought organization was the most important aspect he needed to work on, he said, “I prepared my syllabus, tables and examining tools.” But, he still felt pressed for time and he found it difficult to keep himself on track. He observed that the mentors had memorized the percentage values for the various exam segments – this saved them a considerable amount of time. In between mentoring sessions, he consulted with colleagues to talk about the examining process, continued to study the syllabus, listened to recordings of the repertoire and even practised writing reports by watching random video clips of children’s performances on YouTube. As he gained more experience, he found more efficient ways to write comments for the technical requirement segment. His scoring also edged closer to his mentors’. He observed that students in his home country tend to be marked rigorously and so he had to alter his standards.

As Roy progressed through his mentoring days, he felt somewhat comfortable. His confidence/comfort level did increase as he advanced but he noted that it also depended on the
mentor assigned to him. Most of them were supportive and encouraging and he found that lunchtime was an especially good opportunity for him to hear their opinions, suggestions and criticisms. The apprentice training course provided him with an accurate portrayal of how the mentoring days would go and he liked the fact that they were spread over the course of a year. He was able to execute the various examining tasks with consistent success. He helped the candidates feel at ease, administered the ear and sight reading tests easily, assigned marks confidently, and produced written reports that would be helpful for the candidates. Yet he was constantly worried about staying on schedule and as a result he did manage to work very efficiently. Roy did feel less confident about how well his reports reflected the marks he assigned. Throughout the mentoring sessions he worked to improve the way he called out technical elements, added a positive spin to his comments and was more welcoming to each candidate. Eventually, he found that his marks concurred exactly with his mentors.

He determined that his experience judging at competitions proved to have the most direct benefit for his RCM examining experience. Of course all his musical training and teaching experience influenced his maturation as a musician; however, each factor had a different level of direct influence while training to become an RCM examiner. His teaching experience and pedagogical training taught him to listen and evaluate critically as well as provide positive and tactful comments. His university education offered less direct influence; however, that is how he gained his musical knowledge which inevitably allows him to evaluate effectively. He did have a number of written aids that were immensely helpful to him. For example, he preserved and used a glossary he received from a conference seminar. He also had a reference sheet of evaluative comments and phrases that he received at a local festival where he adjudicated. These tools helped him when writing reports and were definitely a time saver. When he began his work as
an examiner apprentice, he was only somewhat familiar with the RCM repertoire, especially since the new editions of the repertoire and study books had just been published. He does recognize that knowledge of the repertoire is essential for successful examining.

The mentors that were assigned to Roy all offered that he take on as much exam responsibilities as he wished. He expected that this approach would be the format of the mentoring days. They also provided him with suggestions such as “welcome the candidates more cheerfully” and “talk as you walk to the piano for the ear tests.” Some recommended that he calculate all the scoring within the exam period. Others said he should determine some marks in the exam but go back later to ensure that the marks and comments do concur. Most of the time, they would just compare the marks they assigned for each student but when the time allowed, they would also compare comments. Roy received a very helpful report from RCM Examinations. He also agreed with how they felt about his performance as an apprentice examiner. The report encouraged him to write more neatly, start commentary for each element with a positive remark and improve on his writing style.

Having completed the apprenticeship course, he is still somewhat comfortable/confident examining RCM candidates and has been a full member of the College for more than a year now. He feels that the time allotted for the earlier grades is not enough and states that the grade one exam “goes way too fast!” He goes on to explain that from grade six and up, there is more time allotted but with the extensive technical requirements in grade eight as well as the length and difficulty of the sight-reading examples, an examiner can easily find himself running out of time.
He does not believe that the RCM matches apprentices and mentors according to personality. He also had the following comments regarding his experiences as an apprentice:

I think that for the mentors, having an apprentice around provides them a refreshing opportunity to review their examining skills. It motivates them to conduct the exams well and helps to ensure that they are grading well. It is a win/win situation for both parties. When apprentices ask questions, it could serve as a review of the examining material for the mentors. It could also be the first time the mentor hear[s] about this information. The mentor could use this opportunity to check this information later on and update their own knowledge.

I also noticed that the training session told us to carry all the books (both repertoire and studies) but many mentors only carried one kind or none – if the mentors brought books, they usually brought the publications for studies since many of the candidates don't have these pieces memorized because it is not mandatory.

Having an apprentice sit-in with the experienced examiners can often cause delays with the examining process. One time I thanked the mentor for being patient with me - especially since there was a big risk of us getting behind in our schedule. The mentor responded "not at all. It also helped me since you brought all the books and I can use yours."
On another occasion, it also helped when the mentor accidentally brought a calculator that made noise and she was able to borrow mine.

I liked how the mentors coached me to re-word my instructions when conducting the technique portion and the ear tests. They taught me how to give instructions that were quick and precise. I am also happy that we have our current technology of sending email messages. After the mentoring sessions, I can still be in touch with my mentors.

Roy liked the fact that the RCM paired him with several different mentors, providing him with a variety of opinions and viewpoints. Since he had not undergone RCM examinations as a student he wonders if the RCM administration could have matched him with someone who also did not “grow up” in the system – someone who would understand his situation. It could give him yet another helpful perspective.

Overall, he agrees with how the RCM evaluates music students. He deems the standards to be appropriate and realistic. He recommends that those interested in becoming examiners familiarize themselves with the repertoire and take every evaluating/judging experience seriously in order to prepare themselves sufficiently before applying to the apprenticeship program.
Stephanie – Examiner Apprentice

A veteran piano teacher for twenty years, Stephanie brings a wealth of experience to her new role as RCM examiner apprentice. During her formative years, she regularly took private lessons to prepare herself for her undergraduate program, but was not involved with the RCM curriculum. She received a Bachelor of Music in Performance with an emphasis in Pedagogy but also took courses in a variety of other music fields including music therapy. She then continued her studies, receiving a Master of Music in Music Education, and has obtained certifications from several music teachers’ associations. Her pedagogical training is extensive, ranging from courses taken during her undergraduate and graduate degrees to several seminar-based workshops which resulted in certificates. She continues to update her knowledge base by attending pedagogical workshops and conferences. In addition to teaching privately for twenty years, she has also taught community-based piano classes held at a university. She has judged at local festivals and competitions for twenty years and conducted assessments at the elementary and high-school levels. She received evaluation training in university piano pedagogy classes.

After completing the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship training course, she felt a little insecure regarding the prospect of evaluating RCM examination candidates. She felt confident with diagnosing a candidate’s strengths and weaknesses and giving them a critique. This was due to her experience judging at festivals. This same experience however did not require her to assign “points” for a student’s performance. For festivals, she had to assign only the student’s performance to a certain level (eg. poor, good, very good, etc.). Therefore, she was expecting that she would have a difficult time marking students in the manner required by the RCM. Although she did not take RCM exams as a student, Stephanie had been preparing her own students for exams for five years. She has also been using the RCM repertoire and study books in
her teaching for twenty-three years. Prior to the in-class apprentice training course, she expected the examiner’s role to be that of a mentor for the examination candidate. This impression did not change after the training session. In preparation for her first mentoring session, she planned on reading all the handouts she received and study the forms she would need to use as well as the “points” requirements for the exams.

After completing her first set of mentoring days, Stephanie felt somewhat comfortable/confident with assessing RCM exam candidates. During this first session, she observed carefully, took many notes and administered certain segments of the exams but never an entire exam. Based on the in-class training session, this was what she expected would happen during the initial mentoring days. She stayed on schedule and was able to help candidates feel at ease. However, she did not feel as comfortable administering the ear tests and sight reading portions. She also felt less confident with the way she presented her reports. She was even more uncertain about the marks she assigned to students’ performances. She did not feel that her reports reflected the marks that she gave. In addition to reviewing the materials from the training session, she also listened to the CDs that accompany the RCM’s Perspectives Repertoire books to help prepare her for this first session. Although she did not feel confident in all areas of examining, these elements of her preparation certainly made her feel more comfortable than if she had not reviewed the materials and repertoire. She found the mentors to be quite helpful. As she hoped, they gave her the freedom to do her own thing and allowed her to assume responsibility for administering the exams at her own pace. With the schedule so tight however, she did wish there could have been more time to review her forms. The key suggestions she received from her mentors were to mark lower and stay on time. Due to her previous evaluating experience, she found that she had to adjust her marking standards so that she could be more in line with RCM
Examinations’ expectations. She made this change a priority for her second set of mentoring days. She also resolved to review the examining routine evaluating with a “practice student.” In a side note, she did mention that it was very hot at the examining venue. While this was not directly related to her examining procedures, it did affect her environment which would contribute to her comfort level.

After completion of her second set of mentoring days, Stephanie felt somewhat comfortable/confident with examining RCM candidates. Although this was the same response she gave after the first session, when comparing the two sessions, she still felt more confident with the decisions she made in the later session. She also achieved a greater level of comfort with the whole process of examining. During this second set of mentoring days, Stephanie took on a more active role when administering exams. She handled more portions of the exams and even took one afternoon to administer all segments of all the exams. Her mentor told her to “Go for it!” and she did! While it was an excellent experience, it did cause them to have a severe delay in their schedule. She did gain confidence writing her reports and felt that the marks she assigned did a better job of reflecting the reports. She also felt more self-assured with the marks that she allotted to the various segments of the exams. She did not feel she did as good of a job helping to make the candidates feel comfortable. Also, administering the ear tests and sight reading portions still provided some uncertainty. She found the mentors to be very helpful.

This time, they took both “hands-on” and “hands-off” approaches. She expected this difference in mentoring since every person has a slightly different way of carrying out his/her tasks. They suggested that she “be more confident about giving lower marks” and to “be more specific when giving instructions to students.” They felt it was important for her to think about how she would
phrase instructions to the candidates. She found that there was very little time for discussion about exams and comparison of reports. In fact, on one day, there was no opportunity for her and the mentor to exchange thoughts at all. She also found the reports from RCM Examinations’ administration to be very helpful and agreed with how they rated her performance as an apprentice examiner. When asked to look ahead to her third mentoring session, she wanted to do a better job of coordinating her written reports and marks so that they reflected each other more accurately. She also wanted to make a point of improving and speeding up the way she administered the ear tests and sight reading portions of the exams. RCME administration guided her to resources that could help acquaint her with these types of tests and this helped her immensely. Looking back, she wishes that RCME could have presented these sight reading and ear tests materials at the in-class training session. This would have saved her much grief over the first two mentoring sessions. She also hoped that she could spend a whole day administering entire exams with the mentor to “bail me out!” as she said if needed.

After finishing her third set of mentoring days, she was much more comfortable and confident examining RCM candidates. She attributed this to the mentors who were incredibly helpful as well as to the feedback from the RCM Examinations’ administration. Looking back, she strongly feels that much of her background provides great support to her role as an examiner.

The final set of mentoring days were “really good” although the scheduling was a real “bear.” There was “dead time” and “scrunch time,” so one had to be very flexible. She realized that her anxiety with administering the ear tests and sight reading portions of the exam was due to her unfamiliarity with the format of the tests and the format of the books given to the examiners. She found herself “looking for levels” in the sight reading and ear tests books. She says, “These exam
books are only given to the mentor examiner prior to the exams for security reasons. It would be beneficial for the apprentice to review the books before the exams to coordinate the levels to be evaluated.”

Stephanie has found that the evaluating standards for RCM exams are higher than for the other evaluative tasks she has experienced. Since the standards are higher, she has found that she needed to increase her expectations and lower her marks. In her previous experience as an assessor, she simply had to assign each performance a level – poor, good, very good, excellent, etc. As an RCM Examiner Apprentice, she found that she had to assign a mark for each exam segment and hoped the total would fit in to one of the levels (honours, first class honours, etc.) that suited the entire performance of the exam. She had difficulty understanding the “point” system adopted by the RCM until a mentor at her second session sat down and explained it to her in detail. Stephanie said it wasn’t until that time that she was “finally able to make sense of the point system.” As one who did not grow up taking RCM exams, she definitely feels that the experience as an examination candidate would have certainly helped her as an examiner. The evaluative events she encountered as a young student placed emphasis on performance and memory with no stress on aural or sight reading skills.

After experiencing three sessions of examinations, she feels that there is “just barely” enough time to complete one’s job as an examiner. She said “you can’t really do everything in that amount of time. Then you find yourself pushing the student to do the sight reading and ear tests.” She firmly believes that exams at the grade six level and higher need a bit more time for the sake of both the candidate and examiner. This lack of time also affected the amount of discussion and comparison of reports that could be done between her and each mentor. During her first session,
hardly any comparison of reports and marks was accomplished. In her second session, she was fortunate to be comparing many of her reports with her second mentor. Finally, in the last session, she and her mentors would do spot-comparisons. She found all her mentors to be very professional. Some were a bit better at giving her pointers throughout the day and she feels that mentors and apprentices were not matched based on personality. However, she felt all mentors were matched to her based on their high level of expertise. One mentor was so detail-oriented that Stephanie wondered how she would be able to do it all. However, after looking back and after working with other individuals, she realized that this overly meticulous approach was not always necessary in order to successfully carry out exams. One mentor knew exactly what Stephanie needed to work on as an examiner apprentice. In fact this mentor told her she received this information from the RCM Examinations office. There were some logistical aspects related to the mentoring process that she wished could have been organized better. For example, some mentors set up their room with the apprentice in mind while others did not. Sometimes she found that she and the mentor were literally too far apart from each other in the room – so much so that they could not share the repertoire sheet that was handed to them by the student. With the limited amount of time that she already had, Stephanie found herself having to include yet another task – jotting down all the pieces and then walking over and handing the list to the mentor examiner. Her immediate reaction was, “This wastes time!” Other mentors arranged the room so that they would be near her for easy consultation. At the end of the apprenticeship program, Stephanie was unfortunately not admitted to the College of Examiners.

Several weeks after she received this news she said, “My thoughts upon completing the apprenticeship program are both disappointment and relief. I was disappointed that after spending a great deal of time and effort that I was not admitted to the College of Examiners. I
feel that I have certainly expanded my evaluation knowledge and look forward to passing the information gained to my colleagues and students. I was relieved that the apprenticeship training was completed and that the stress of being evaluated was over. My final observation is that the role of an examiner is more than I had anticipated.”

Overall, she agrees with the way RCM Examinations evaluates its candidates. She feels that the organization sets a high standard, one that is needed in a world that is increasingly permissive of mediocre results. “A reality check is always needed,” she says.

**Figure 3: Graph Representing the Confidence/Comfort Levels of the Examiner Apprentices**

The following graph illustrates the increase and decrease of confidence levels as a group among the examiner apprentices throughout the course of the training process. At the end of my research study, I asked the participants to complete one last survey (please see appendix J). The averages of these results are summarized in this figure. The x-axis indicates the progression of time during the apprenticeship program:

- A = Prior to the in-class training course
- B = After the in-class training course
- C = After the first mentoring session
- D = After the second mentoring session
- E = At the end of the examiner apprenticeship, after all the mentoring sessions were completed

The y-axis indicates the rate of confidence level, one being the lowest confidence level and six being the highest confidence level.
Graphs illustrating the increase and decrease of confidence levels for each individual can be found in appendix C.

As represented in this graph, the general trend for each examining skill is an increase in confidence. A larger increase is seen for some skills like administering ear and sight reading tests and ensuring comments reflected marks. The skill of assigning marks for each exam segment also has a relatively large change in confidence. The overall difference in the confidence level for producing succinct, helpful reports is smaller than those skills listed earlier. However, it experienced a considerable dip in confidence after the first mentoring session. The confidence levels for helping candidates feel at ease and staying on schedule remained relatively stable throughout the apprenticeship although participants were considerably more comfortable helping candidates feel at ease than staying on time.
6.2 An Internal Viewpoint: Self Reflections of the Researcher as Examiner Apprentice

As the author of this thesis, I have also undergone the examiner apprentice program with my colleagues. This is my story.

Prior to attending university, I was enrolled in private piano lessons for much of my formative years. I also received training in voice, violin and cello. As part of a Suzuki string program, I attended group lessons on a regular basis. In high school, I participated in various ensembles and took one senior-level music course. Throughout these early years, I completed many RCM exams, culminating with my Performer’s A.R.C.T. diploma. I went on to receive an undergraduate degree in piano performance and voice as well as a Masters degree in piano performance. Currently, I am completing my Doctorate of Musical Arts in piano performance. I have also undertaken considerable coursework and research in the pedagogical field. Prior to entering the examiner apprenticeship in June 2009, I had seven years of teaching experience under my belt. I have also had the opportunity to teach a group piano facility class at the university level for one semester. During my undergraduate degree, I took the required pedagogy course and also enrolled in a short, non-credit seminar during my Masters degree. My pedagogical training at the doctorate level has been much more extensive ranging from teaching young beginners to advanced students at the post-secondary level. I have attended several workshops and conferences over the years, but not on a regular basis. I plan to increase my activity in this area as my obligations as a student decrease. Upon entering the apprenticeship, I had minimal official evaluating experience. As instructor of the university level group piano
facility class, I was required to make quick evaluations of incoming students to determine if they would need to take the remedial piano course. I also conducted the students’ mid-term and final examinations. This comprises the extent of my relatively formal evaluating experience.

As part of the pilot project for this study, I had audited the examiner training course in January 2008. Although my role was that of observer, I was allowed to fully participate in the activities and mock examinations. As a result, I was able to take part in the four-day seminar twice, reviewing the material and practicing the exam routine. This undoubtedly helped me to feel comfortable with the examining routine, giving me an extra advantage that the other apprentices did not have. As a researcher however, it provided me with the unique chance of comparing the two training sessions and seeing the similarities and differences between the two classes.

After officially completing the apprenticeship training course, I felt somewhat comfortable with the prospect of evaluating RCM candidates. I knew that my solid musical training and ample teaching experience would serve me well in my new role as examiner apprentice and that I would be able to provide constructive feedback to the students and their teachers. It was also the second time I had sat through the course. But, I still had several insecurities. I was concerned that the marks I assigned would not line up with the marks designated by my mentors. Our musical priorities might be different. Although I was confident that I would appear friendly and act in an amicable way, I was anxious about making all the students’ exam experiences positive events. I did not want their exams to be negatively impacted because I was a trainee, learning on the job. I was most worried about staying on time – I was not sure if I would be able to successfully keep to the schedule and write reports that were coherent and organized in a logical fashion. I did wish that the in-class training course incorporated many more simulated exams that occurred in
successive order. Perhaps, mock exams could have been scheduled back to back for one and one-half hours or so. That way, we would have been able to have at least a hint regarding what would be coming up during the mentoring sessions. This would have given us, the apprentices, more of a chance to feel how busily and how efficiently we would need to work. This training was more prevalent in the seminar course I audited in 2008, and I feel it was lacking in the course offered in 2009. The seminar certainly provided a lot of resources. In addition to the instructor, guest speakers provided us with many lists, varying log book formats, sample critiques and a wide range of tips to help make our first examining experiences more comfortable and successful. The seminar also helped me to know what I would need to review in the syllabus. I became more aware of the information I knew well and aspects of examining that I was not familiar with. As part of my preparation for the first mentoring session, I played through much of the repertoire from the introductory level to grade nine. I prepared my logbook, organized my supplies and reviewed my notes from the training session as well as the content in the syllabus. Prior to attending the training session, my impression of an examiner was that of a professional who evaluates student examinations. After completing the seminar, I realized the examiner is also an administrator. There is so much to do in a very short period of time. Being an examiner is certainly a much more stressful job than I had imagined.

The first set of mentoring days provided a significant but necessary learning curve for me. I feel that I handled myself well and my mentors seemed to agree. My level of comfort and confidence however remained the same even after this first session. Both examiners were very flexible with their mentoring approaches, allowing me to conduct as much or as little of the examinations as I wanted. I was expecting that the days would be more structured as stated in the apprenticeship guidelines I received in the mail. Yet, I was still satisfied with the approach both of my mentors
took. Although we were warned of the time shortages we would face during examining, the very tight schedule still took me by surprise since I really did not know what to expect. I knew that I would feel rushed but I did not realize how taxing the agenda would be.

During these first days of examining with a mentor, I found it very difficult to stay on time. On the plus side, I did feel comfortable with several of my examining duties. I felt that I was quite successful maintaining a friendly demeanour, helping the candidates to feel at ease. I also felt confident administering the ear and sight reading tests and deemed that my written reports reflected the marks I assigned. My written comments were satisfactory; however, I still felt that I had room for improvement in this area. On the first day, I found that I was repeating certain phrases and adjectives and using similar sentence structures throughout the reports. At times, I also experienced writer’s block but by the second day, this seemed to disappear. My writing came much more easily and I was able to compose my reports with more variety and creativity. I also experienced some hesitancy when assigning marks for each segment. All my experiences leading up to examining, including my university education, teaching stints and pedagogical training were immensely helpful in my role as an examiner. The preparation I assumed prior to these first mentoring days was essential in helping me acquire a greater sense of confidence. Taking into account the salient features of each musical genre proved to be a huge timesaver when I was writing reports. Not only was I able to zone in on specific elements of a candidate’s playing; my immediate awareness of these important stylistic aspects helped me to organize my reports and provided me with a starting point for my critiques. My experience taking exams as a student and my familiarity with the repertoire served as a great benefit to me sitting in the examiner’s chair. It is hard for me to fathom how I would be able to get through this initial examining experience without the familiarity from the other side of the desk as the student. Both
mentors were very encouraging and assured me that I was doing a fine job so far. My second mentor offered more suggestions throughout the day. She suggested I make small changes such as: “Don’t ask the candidate for ‘your other study’ – call it by name”; “Gesture the candidate in the direction you want them to leave the room”; “Leave any of the candidate’s extra books/items at the door or outside”. These tips proved to be timesavers and helped me to run the examinations more smoothly. There were more cancellations the second day. As a result, I felt less harried and we had a little more breathing room in the schedule, although we still ran late. My mentor noted that a candidate who is not prepared and stumbles through their examination elements is the greatest cause for putting an examiner behind schedule. In preparation for my second set of mentoring days, I planned on doing things that would help to save me even more time – such as writing down the student information in my log book in advance; creating a hard copy of important characteristics related to different stylistic features; and creating an adjective book. These last two plans would also help me to overcome writer’s block if it occurred again.

After my second set of mentoring days, I definitely gained greater comfort in the examiner’s chair and confidence with my examining skills. Administering the various elements of the examination came more easily. On occasion, I did get behind schedule – at one point by twenty minutes. My mentor however assured me that this was normal, considering the circumstances at the time (i.e. students stumbling through their exams). There were two small things I did that saved me so much time and alleviated a lot of stress. Prior to these mentoring days, I wrote all the students’ information in my log book. If there was a cancellation, I would simply strike out that person’s section, making it easy for me to indicate absences. Not having to worry about whether I was entering the correct information during the examination was a huge relief. On my desk, I also stored my RCM repertoire and study books upright in a magazine file folder rather
than stacking them on top of each other on the table. This minor change surprisingly saved me more time than I would ever imagine. If I needed to look for music, I was able to find each book immediately by colour, and returning it to its original spot was just as easy. By the second of these mentoring days, I was examining nearly the whole day. Only the last three or four grade eight exams were conducted by my mentor because he said he was “tired of just sitting around.” I suppose this was a good thing because he felt that he did not have to do much when I was administering the exams.

I had one mentor over the course of these two mentoring days who took a low-key approach, treating me as a colleague rather than a trainee. At first, I was worried that he would feel out of place to give me suggestions and not provide me with feedback at all. I soon learned however that his method of mentoring was very effective. It was exactly what I needed at that stage in my training. He basically stayed out of the way and made only subtle and discreet suggestions when needed. This helped to boost my confidence while still improving my examining skills. Most of the suggestions he made were regarding the marks I had assigned. At one point several unprepared grade one candidates arrived. My mentor thought I had marked them too high. I was trying to heed the instruction I received at the training seminar, “You want them to come back for another exam.” In other words, do not discourage the candidates, especially the young students. Don’t keep your expectations so high that your marks end up being so low. I was attempting to mark the students higher in order to encourage them. My mentor however advised me not to. He said, “Don’t be afraid to mark them in the 60s.” After reviewing my comments, I realized that my marks did not match and that my reports warranted marks in the 60 range. I suppose this instance is an example of where the mentor helps to put the instructions given at the training session into perspective. The mentor helps to apply the rules to the real world. I also
received useful feedback from RCM Examinations. I generally agreed with the apprentice report I received and was able to incorporate their suggestions by improving my written reports and conducting the ear and sight reading tests more efficiently.

Shortly after I completed this second set of mentoring days, I was admitted to the College of Examiners. RCM Examinations felt confident that I was well prepared and could handle the task of examining on my own. I also felt assured that I had the confidence and experience to move forward. The last set of mentoring days certainly went very smoothly. My mentor also assured me that I will feel even better examining on my own since no one will be looking over my shoulder.

All three of my mentors were kind, supportive and helpful. I got along well with each of them and I feel that the RCM assigned me to these individuals based on my level of expertise and where I was in my training. The more laid-back mentor was assigned during my last set of mentoring days because perhaps they knew I would need even less hands-on help.

During these days as an apprentice, I would sporadically compare overall marks with my mentors. This would usually happen if there was time or there was an examination performance that confused me. If overall marks varied widely, we would look at the marks for each element and sometimes compare comments in the written reports. I would have liked to compare reports even more but there was really no other opportunity.

I do not believe there is enough time scheduled to administer and effectively evaluate all candidates. Even if I am “the perfect examiner” (which I’m not), circumstances beyond my
control will put me behind schedule. I could conduct each exam and assess each student in the most efficient way, yet if a few unprepared students came my way, I would inevitably get behind schedule. I do agree with the way RCM examines piano students. As a teacher (and student), I know first-hand that these assessments provide an important goal for students to work towards. The inclusion of technique, sight reading and ear tests also helps to make this assessment much more comprehensive than other evaluations. Although it is a form of external motivation, sometimes this type of incentive will help students to move from being externally driven to being spurred on by their own enthusiasm.

**Graph Representing my Confidence/Comfort Levels**

Like the seven examiner apprentice participants, a graph illustrating my confidence and comfort levels throughout the training process can be found in appendix C.
7 View from the Examiner’s Chair – Senior Examiners

I also interviewed three individuals identified by the RCME as senior examiners. Their status is a result of the high level of expertise they acquired with regards to examining. Within the context of its examining format, the RCME considers their evaluating skills to be excellent. Analyzing their experiences provides a comparison point that can be used in conjunction with the examiner apprentices. Once again, summaries of these participants’ stories can be found in the chart located in appendix B.

Jose – Senior Examiner 1

Now a retired but still highly-respected evaluator, Jose is a twenty-year veteran of the RCM’s College of Examiners. His musical studies started in an early childhood music program. He then went on to study piano privately with some RCM instructors, following the RCM curriculum and resulting in his A.R.C.T. Performers diploma. He was also sent to boarding school where he had private piano instruction and was enrolled in music classes. He did not complete a post-secondary degree in music but instead received his Licentiate diploma through the pedagogy stream at a university. This was an intensive three-year program which focused on both performance and teaching skills.

He started to teach at a rather young age. He was involved with several practica as part of his Licentiate diploma program. Later he also taught groups of young children using the Orff and Kodály methods at public schools. His pedagogical training at the university did not consist of formal classes. Instead, he observed his pedagogy teacher instruct other students. This gave him the opportunity to gain perspective on how to teach students of various levels. He was able to see
his teacher work with many junior level and senior level students. However, he was not able to observe that many intermediate students. To update his skills later on in life, he took summer courses at a university pedagogy faculty. He also continued to be involved with pedagogical workshops and conferences – attending them and making presentations himself. He has had some evaluating experience outside RCM examinations. He has adjudicated several local festivals as well as national competitions. He found that adjudicating at festivals was more tiring than examining and so he was very selective with the festivals he adjudicated.

There was no formal training program for RCM Examiners when Jose first joined the College. Instead, he had “on-the-job-training” over three days where he was mentored by three different senior examiners. On his first day of examining with a mentor, he recalled being completely overwhelmed. He wondered how he would do it all: the writing, assigning marks, running the exam, and maintaining a pleasant demeanour. At first, it all seemed too much. After the initial shock of this first day, he got his feet wet and learned very quickly. The actual logistics of running the examination was what made him most nervous. He was also anxious regarding working within narrow time constraints and the eloquent writing he would need to do at a rapid pace. During the first mentoring day he felt rather uncomfortable with the whole process but by the end of the third mentoring day he felt better. Looking back, he does wish that there had been more time to talk with the individual mentors about every aspect of examining. This would have helped him to acclimatize himself to the job more easily. Once he was on his own, his preparation would involve looking over the syllabus to review requirements as well as the repertoire, especially between grades four and eight. As mentioned earlier, his pedagogical training involved many junior and senior students but lacked intermediate students. As a result, he was unfamiliar with the repertoire at this transitional level of piano playing.
Once he was on his own and was able to run his own examinations, he enjoyed examining right away. He found that there were a number of skills that he was able to carry out easily. A natural “people person”, he was able to put candidates at ease right from the time they entered the room. His primary concern was the candidate and that affected all his actions while examining. He said, “You have to be honest to be a thoughtful examiner.” As an organized person, he found it easy to coordinate his desk in a manner that would enhance his examining experience and he usually managed to stay on time. He was able to conduct the ear tests and sight reading portion with efficiency and ease and his critique writing improved with practice. He found that his diagnostic skills were well developed from his teaching experience. However, when an element of the candidate’s playing needed constructive criticism, he found it hard to express his thoughts and opinion in words. He said he would go over and over in his mind what exactly was wrong with the sound. He did have difficulty assigning marks for each segment of the examination, spending much time deliberating the score for each element. He believes that examiners should take time when deciding on the individual scores. He also questions the type of situation where an examiner settles on a mark very quickly and without much thought. He states that the mark for every element of the exam should be considered carefully.

Jose studied music at a time when it was not a program frequently found in universities. Therefore, he does not feel that he has a “university education.” He received a licentiate diploma which provided him with a solid musical foundation; however, based on our conversation, I can certainly state that he has accumulated the experience and wisdom that matches or even supersedes a university degree. He feels that a university education (since music programs are so readily available these days), teaching experience, pedagogical training and performance experience are absolutely crucial for an examiner’s background. These elements provide the
solid foundation – “you have to start out with something” and he goes on to say, “BUT, you have
to do more, more, more.” In terms of teaching, one has to be right at the top of his/her game,
teaching at least ten students. Jose believes that examiners should also be performing because
they must be able to inspire their students. He also adds that life experience is an absolute
necessity for being effective as an examiner.

Regarding experience with adjudicating festivals and competitions, he states that this is “ok” and
“good to have.” He goes on to say however that doing too much adjudicating can take away from
one’s “real teaching;” experience which would be more beneficial for examining. Adjudicating
is more about comparing students whereas comparisons between students when examining are
usually not made. The skill of making sound comparisons may come up when trying to decide
which classification of mark a student should receive (eg. Honours or First Class Honours).
However, this is the only instance when this type of judgment may be made. He feels that
examining involves more detailed work than adjudicating and therefore it is better to have
experience with the detailed work first.

Jose feels that it is extremely important for examiners to become familiar with the repertoire.
This knowledge helped him immensely when examining. He did not feel however that his
experience taking exams as a student influenced the way he examined as a professional. This
factor was not essential at all in helping him feel comfortable as an examiner.

As a senior examiner, he was very confident and comfortable in his role. In addition to his
extensive musical education, pedagogical training, teaching and performing experience, the
upper administration of RCM Examinations treated him very well and all these factors
contributed to his high level of assurance. To prepare for examination sessions, he would review his “thesaurus” - a collection of phrases to describe different types of playing. This aid has proved to be invaluable especially with the time constraints of an exam. He did not need to look over scores or review the syllabus because he was heavily involved with the creation of the repertoire lists and examination policies. Jose skillfully managed the time factor – he had it down to a science. Pure intuition! However, he did admit that the time management factor became more difficult to cope with as he got older. In order to make sure that his marks reflected his comments, he always reviewed his reports. Since he could not finalize them with the candidate in the room, he always spent time at the end of the examination day to review his reports.

As a mentor of examiner apprentices, he received very little instruction from RCM Exams for these duties. However, he is a very good with people and was able to effectively judge how he needed to work with each apprentice. When he was working both as an examiner and mentor, he did wish that personal time could be set aside during a mentoring day. This would ensure that the mentor could speak with the apprentice so that specific concerns could be addressed. He suggests that apprentices and those wishing to become examiners become involved as much as possible in the music performing and teaching worlds. He says, “The more you teach, the better!” He encourages all examiners and teachers to take an interest in every student they encounter in order to find the student’s connection with the music.
Logan—Senior Examiner 2

Logan is a senior examiner who has been a full member of the College for twenty-five years. From a young age, he was surrounded by music at home with his mother and aunt playing the piano. He started piano lessons at the relatively late age of nine years but progressed rapidly. He started to perform professionally from a young age and debuted with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra at the age of sixteen.

RCM Examinations were not a regular part of his formative music education. However, he did complete the requirements for the grade ten and A.R.C.T. (Performer) levels. He did not receive an undergraduate degree in music but rather a Bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts. Later on in his adult life, he also received a licentiate diploma in Piano Performance from another examining board.

When he first started to work as an RCM examiner, he had over fifteen years of teaching experience. He also had one year of teaching first-year piano majors at the university level. During his teenage and young adult years, he received pedagogical training from his private piano teacher. Although he did not complete the A.R.C.T (Teacher’s) diploma, the pedagogical training he received from his teacher was rigorous. He continues to update his teaching skills by not only attending various pedagogical workshops and conferences but also presenting at these types of events. As a result, he is very much up to date with the current trends and challenges in teaching.

Around the same time that he joined the College of Examiners, he also started adjudicating at local festivals and competitions. Since then he has served as adjudicator at many competitions
from local to provincial levels. During the one year he taught at the university level, he also served on piano juries to assess undergraduate students.

When he was accepted to the College of Examiners, there was no formal training program. He was assigned to two different expert examiners so that he could train under their watchful eyes – these were his mentoring days. His first day in training consisted of observing some exams, writing some comments, comparing some marks with the expert examiner and administering some ear tests and the sight-reading portion of the exam. His mentor examiner suggested that he write the comments during the exam and then leave the marks for after hours. On the second day, Logan found himself being mentored by a different individual. The morning of this second day turned out to be very similar to the first day – observing, administering certain portions of the exam, writing comments, etc. As it happened, that afternoon, the examiner informed Logan that he had to go off to a dentist’s appointment. Logan was on his own. He was the examiner! He was thrown into the deep end quite quickly. During this and his other subsequent early examining experiences, he felt somewhat comfortable evaluating the examination candidates. The actual act of assessing the candidates was not that bad. He had a solid musical foundation and was able to identify the positive and weaker attributes of each student’s performance. Coping with the lack of time however was overwhelming and brought down his comfort and confidence levels.

As a new examiner, Logan quickly learned what his strengths and weaknesses were with this type of assessing. He knew that he was very good with people and had no trouble putting them at ease. He was also very comfortable with assessing and assigning marks for the individual elements of the examination. But he needed to work on his writing skills and since finding the right words did not come easily to him, he made it a point to improve this skill. His hard work
paid off and he eventually felt comfortable with writing reports that not only reflected the marks he assigned but were succinct and helpful for both students and teachers. He also discovered very quickly that he needed to find some way to stay on time. This latter skill is something that he struggles with to this day and is always looking for ways to improve this aspect of his examining routine. When preparing for these examination sessions early on in his career, he would check over any irregularities in the schedule and read over policies put in place by RCM Examinations so that he would be prepared for any situation. He explains:

A candidate with physical disabilities that might impact their playing would prompt me to perhaps employ a different standard for marking. For example, if there is an anomaly with their vision or hearing, I, as the examiner would have to adjust my speaking voice and/or perhaps proceed with different ear and sight tests.

He did not need to review repertoire since he was quite familiar with it through his teaching and performing experiences.

Logan found that his university education, teaching experience, pedagogical training and extensive performing experience were very beneficial to his early examining experiences. He believes that a university education, whether it is in music or another discipline, is crucial for writing and critical thinking skills. For those who study music at the post-secondary level, their knowledge of the repertoire is also broadened during this time. He feels that extensive teaching experience helps an examiner to appreciate the efforts of the examination candidates. Therefore, this experience is necessary, right from the beginning of an examiner’s career. Pedagogical training is crucial so that one can assess and properly diagnose aspects of a student’s playing that
can be improved. Finally, maintaining a performance profile is absolutely vital. In order to identify excellent musicianship, one must be a musician himself.

Performing also improves one’s knowledge of repertoire, an element that is crucial when one needs to make assessment decisions quickly. He emphasizes that keeping up one’s practice/playing is necessary as one continues to examine. He found that adjudicating competitions/festivals and assessing as part of post-secondary juries did not make a huge difference for his early RCM examining experiences, although it did provide him with a familiarity with listening, writing and assessing all at the same time. He did not find much of a useful connection between these other experiences and examining. The experience of taking RCM exams in the past was somewhat essential in helping him feel comfortable as an examiner. It helped him in the sense that he could relate to how the student prepared. He understood the student’s situation.

As might be expected, he now feels very comfortable and confident assessing RCM examination candidates. He feels that this can be attributed to his experience of actually doing it. The years of experience have paid off. In preparation for examination sessions, he continues to look over the package he receives from RCM Exams to see if there are any irregularities with the schedule or candidates with special needs. He continues to update his teaching and examining skills through his association with teacher organizations. He still struggles with staying on time but has acquired some techniques that he uses, if he finds that he is lagging behind schedule. For example, he might deviate from the technique menus, asking for elements in easier keys if he finds that the candidate is not well prepared. He has also learned to write more precisely but maintain the content in the comments he provides. He finds it most difficult to write about
playing that is poor. A student who is not prepared will certainly put him behind schedule. To ensure the marks reflect his comments, he always reviews what he has written, spending time after-hours if necessary.

As an expert examiner himself, Logan has mentored many apprentices. Prior to meeting an apprentice, RCM Examinations provides him with some background about the individual. He always encourages apprentices to be positive. He tells examiners-in-training to listen for the big picture. Many of the students being examined will not go on to be professional musicians; however, their efforts to demonstrate some musical artistry should be rewarded, even if it is at the expense of some pitch or slight articulation inaccuracies. He makes an effort to help the apprentices be realistic when they are assessing. He tries to instill in examiner apprentices that they should always have an appreciation for what the candidate being examined has accomplished. He does wish that more time be allotted for the mentor to speak with the apprentice. He suggests that it would be helpful if examination days with apprentices could end earlier so that the mentor and apprentice could discuss the issues of the day. He advises apprentices to see the candidates as their own students in order to approach the examination session from a more empathetic perspective. For those individuals interested in becoming examiners he recommends that they should have quite a bit of teaching experience under their belts. Finally, he urges new examiners to really train their ears to listen and hear. Genuine listening will ensure that their assessments are reliable and accurate.
Isabella – Senior Examiner 3

As a teaching veteran of forty-five years, Isabella has acquired a wide ranging set of skills and a portfolio of experiences that has contributed to her success as an RCM examiner. Prior to entering university as a student, she had received only two years of formal private piano lessons; however, she had grown up in a household filled with music. Examinations, with the exception of the A.R.C.T., played a role in her music studies. She then completed a Bachelor of Music in Performance and then went on to take various masters level courses in performance, theory and history although she did not complete a graduate degree. To further her practical studies, she attended a European conservatory and completed a performance diploma.

In addition to the forty-five years of private teaching that Isabella has done, she has also taught group lessons for twelve years. In high school classrooms, she has served as a substitute teacher and has worked for ten years teaching at the university level either as a teaching assistant or sessional instructor. At the post-secondary level, she has taught private lessons, accompanying and musical skills classes. Having completed two full years of pedagogy courses during her undergraduate degree, her pedagogical training is substantial. During this time, she had the opportunity to learn from four different professors. Course work included sitting in on the lessons of senior teachers as well as bringing in her own “guinea pig” students to teach in front of the pedagogy class. To keep up to date with the current pedagogical trends, Isabella attends workshops and conferences about once or twice a year.

She has been working as an RCM Examiner for eighteen years. Prior to this role, she also worked as an examiner for three other examining boards in Canada. She has a wealth of other
evaluating experiences including adjudicating at local and regional festivals for twenty years. She has also evaluated post-secondary level juries.

When she began her work with RCM Examinations, there was no training program as there is today. The extent of her formal preparation from the RCM was one morning of “assisted mentoring.” But, she did not need much guidance. After just this one session, she felt very comfortable and confident evaluating RCM exam candidates. This was likely due to her extensive experience examining for other boards.

In her early days as an RCM Examiner, she already discovered that she could easily relate to the students. Her personable style helped to put them at ease, but she did find that the limited time constraints proved to be a challenge. She said that she learned how to operate “two brains” in order to respond “in the moment.” Her attention to the time factor ensured that she did stay on schedule. Personal preparation for exam sessions involved reviewing the requirements for the ear tests, sight reading and technique portions, allowing her to feel confident when administering these segments of the exam. She was a little less assured when assigning marks for each exam element and composing her written reports. However, she did feel that her reports successfully reflected the marks she assigned while managing to stay right on schedule.

Her university education, teaching experience and pedagogical training proved to be of greatest benefit to her RCM examining experience. Her previous experiences with evaluating were also advantageous; however, not to the extent of the three factors just mentioned. She felt that juries were more akin to exams since they were conducted privately as opposed to festivals that are carried out in public. Her experience taking exams in the past had some positive effect in helping
her feel comfortable as an examiner, yet it was her knowledge of repertoire that played a larger role in her preparedness.

As can be expected with a senior examiner, her preparation regime for upcoming examining sessions is more streamlined than less experienced examiners. Prior to exam sessions, she reviews any changes that have been made with regards to the exam requirements, process or policies. However, since she is one of the individuals who run the clinics, informing teachers of these changes, she is already very well versed with these alterations. She states that all her education and background experience can be attributed to her high comfort level as an RCM Examiner. She feels that “the combination of the kinds of teachers” she was instructed by proved to be instrumental for her success as a musician. It is this solid musical training that informs all her decisions as an examiner. Ample “hard-core training based in performance” is what gives her the confidence to be assured in her evaluations of performances. Not surprisingly, Isabella is still able to stay on time (give or take five to ten minutes) when examining. She manages this because she does not dwell on marks during the examination. She always enters a mark for each segment in her logbook; however, she leaves an indication to remind herself later if the mark can be adjusted up or down. She reviews her reports and mark tallies either at the end of the exam or later on in the evening. This also helps her to ensure that the marks clearly reflect the comments she has written.

Having achieved expert status as an RCM examiner, she now shares her knowledge and wisdom as a mentor to new examiner apprentices. Even though RCM Examinations does provide her with guidelines for her role, she has a booklet that she can refer to if needed. Prior to mentoring a new apprentice, RCM Examinations informs her of the apprentice’s background and where
he/she is in the training process. She feels that one of her most important jobs as a mentor is to help the apprentice examiner feel at ease in the examination room. She does feel that the mentoring program fulfills its purpose in the overall training process. She feels that it is flexible enough to allow for individual differences. The apprentices that she deals with are well prepared and ready for the mentoring phase of their examiner training. She feels that RCM Examinations does choose mentors carefully; however, she does not believe that personality plays a significant role when they match mentors with apprentices.

Isabella advises apprentices to keep their sense of humour. It is important to maintain one’s “own balance and equilibrium.” She feels that examiners must always focus on the exam candidate, the “most important person in the room.” She believes it is always necessary to remind oneself that the examining experience is always “all about the music.” Regarding preparation for becoming an examiner, she suggests that individuals listen to as many recordings as possible, particularly if one has not performed that much. Knowing the intricacies of the syllabus, various policies and options for candidates, will certainly help to make examining a rewarding and satisfying experience.
Graphs Representing the Confidence/Comfort Levels of the Participants

These graphs represent the confidence/comfort levels of the senior examiners during their apprenticeships. They answered the same survey as the examiner apprentice participants (see appendix J). It is acknowledged that the senior examiners had to recall farther back in their memories and therefore their responses are affected by the longer lapse of time. Their training also differed from the apprentices, and so, a direct comparison cannot be made. Hence, I did not include them in the aggregate graph seen in the last chapter.

Figure 4: Jose

A = Prior to the in-class training course
B = After the in-class training course
C = After the first mentoring session
D = After the second mentoring session
E = At the end of the examiner apprenticeship, after all the mentoring sessions were completed
Figure 5: Logan

A = Prior to the in-class training course

B = After the first mentoring session

C = At the end of the examiner apprenticeship

Figure 6: Isabella

A = Prior to the in-class training course

B = After the only mentoring session; the end of her apprenticeship
8 Reassessing the Training of New Examiners

Upon analysis of these stories, I identified trends or factors that affected the examiner apprentices’ comfort levels in different ways and in varying degrees. These five main trends can be classified under two larger headings:

1) Indirect preparation and training for the role of examining; ie. the apprentice’s musical background (this includes his/her education history as well as work and performing experience)

2) Direct preparation and training that was assumed for the task of examining for the RCM

8.1 Indirect Preparation and Training

1) Educational path

All apprentices completed advanced studies at the graduate level. Master’s degrees were in hand well before anyone entered the apprenticeship program and some of the participants had doctoral degrees under their belt. The senior examiners did not possess graduate degrees when they became examiners; however, they all had some form of post-secondary education along with extensive experience as teachers and evaluators.

One aspect of the apprentices’ educational path did seem to have an effect on the comfort level of each apprentice. Overall, apprentices with intensive performance training had higher and more stable confidence levels throughout the apprenticeship process. Inevitably, performance experience is tied in with performance training but the former is not the aspect that is being focused on here. Performance training refers to private lessons, weekly performance master classes as well as regular coaching in collaborative work for chamber, vocal and instrumental music. Classes to develop aural skills and sight reading are also part of performance training.
The types of evaluation that students face in this type of training are juries and recitals. When rating the various types of indirect preparation, those with rigorous performance training rated their education much higher in terms of positively increasing their confidence levels than those who did not have this intensive type of training.

Additionally, all senior examiners, Jose, Isabella and Logan, specifically mentioned that extensive performance training is a crucial factor in providing examiners a solid foundation for diagnostic skills that will be developed in teaching. As Isabella stated, ample “hard-core training based in performance” is what gives her the confidence in her evaluations of performances. Logan emphasized that a performance profile must be maintained. One must be a musician in order to identify quality musicianship. He also said that the actual act of assessing the candidates was not that difficult since he had already established a solid musical foundation. Logan’s undergraduate degree was in Fine Arts but later on he received a licentiate diploma in performance.

Liam, Mariel, Roy, Katherine, Natasha and I all have graduate degrees in performance. Joshua and Stephanie’s graduate degrees were not in performance and they did express some difficulty with the examining process, as well as experienced slightly lower comfort levels during the apprenticeship. They also rated their education as having less of a positive effect on their confidence levels. In fact, Stephanie suggested that her education decreased her confidence level. Certainly, Joshua’s Master’s degree in piano pedagogy and Stephanie’s Master’s degree in Music Education have helped them to be effective educators. However, their intensive performance training was not as extensive as the other participants, and perhaps this may have had some effect on their confidence level. It can be inferred that those with intensive
performance training have greater performance ability and have extensive performing experience. The correlation between performing ability and effective evaluators has been addressed in several studies. Research by Fiske, Wapnick et. al., and Kinney highlighted contradicting findings dealing with this issue. However, this current study clearly highlights a positive correlation between intensive performance training and the confidence/comfort levels for RCM Examiner Apprentices. Although the pool of participants was small, intensive performance training was undoubtedly an asset for the evaluators.

2) Teaching Experience

In this study, all examiner apprentices and senior examiners entered the examiner training program with extensive experience in teaching. They all regarded their teaching experience as an element that increased their confidence levels. One of the requirements for examiner applicants listed on the RCME website is “five years of professional teaching experience after completion of undergraduate degree.” A wide variety of teaching experiences at different levels were identified by the participants: private teaching, group lessons, classroom teaching and teaching at the university level. Teaching done in a private setting (whether in a private or university studio) elicits the types of experience most relevant to examining skills. Clearly, the diagnostic skills that are required for being an effective examiner are first and foremost developed as a teacher. Senior examiner Logan also noted an added benefit gained from extensive teaching experience:


empathy for the examination candidates. An examiner will be able to better appreciate the efforts of the exam candidates.

3) Previous Evaluating Experience

Prior to becoming apprentices, most participants had experience with other evaluative forms such as adjudicating at festivals, judging competitions and serving on post-secondary juries. Mariel and Roy both felt that their previous evaluating experience were among the factors that had the most direct benefit on their role as an RCM examiner apprentice. Joshua and Stephanie also believed that their judging experiences were among the most beneficial elements for their work with examining. However, they did acknowledge that RCM exams were quite different from the other assessments they conducted. Liam and Katherine noted that their previous evaluating experience was helpful but they did not cite this element as the most beneficial to their RCM examining experiences.

Of all the participants in this study, Natasha and I had the least amount of evaluating experience prior to examining for the RCME. We both acknowledged that there is always a certain amount of evaluating that goes on in teaching – it helps to steer the direction of how we run a lesson, but neither of us had familiarity with conducting formal assessments.

Senior examiners affirmed that while prior evaluating experience was useful and good to have, it did not play a crucial role in helping them feel more comfortable examining RCM candidates. Jose even goes as far as to say that too much adjudicating can take away from one’s “real teaching” experience which would be more beneficial for examining.
A few inconsistencies were found when comparing the responses from the last survey to previous surveys and interviews. On the final survey, Mariel rated her previous evaluating experiences as having less effect on her RCM experience while Jose and Isabella rated their previous evaluating experiences higher. Perhaps this could be due to a slight change of heart.

Given the fact that Joshua and Stephanie had been involved with other assessments for the longest period of time but yet seemed to report the most difficulty adjusting to the examination process, prior evaluating experience does not appear to actually give a huge boost to confidence levels of apprentices. While Joshua and Stephanie may have been even less confident had they not had the previous experience with assessments, it clearly did not have a huge impact on their confidence levels. Also, several of the other participants did not list their previous evaluating experience as a top reason for higher confidence levels. Therefore, while the knowledge from previous evaluative experience can be helpful to some during the apprenticeship process, it is not a crucial factor with regards to increasing confidence levels.

As stated in Mills’ article, holistic and segmented assessments will feel different. Through the segmented process, assessors must assign marks for individual skills while a holistic approach takes a look at the entire performance.\footnote{J. Mills, “Assessing Musical Performance Musically” in \textit{Educational Studies} 17 (1991), 174} RCM examiners must evaluate on several levels. First, they assess the individual components of the exam: repertoire, technique, sight reading and ear tests. Generally, examiners look at each component both from segmented and holistic viewpoints. Finally, they must look at the entire exam from a holistic viewpoint, making sure the marks add up to the appropriate level for the whole performance (Honours, First Class Honours,
etc.). Although some of the participants may have had other assessment experiences, the RCM experience offered a very different setting for them.

Of course, every individual is different and certain people may find that other evaluating experiences will help them feel comfortable in the examiner’s chair. It is clear however that it is not necessary for everyone, and can even have almost no effect on an individual’s comfort level.

4) Taking RCM Exams as a Student

A number of the participants had the experience of taking RCM examinations as students in their younger years. Katherine, Liam, Natasha and I all went through the examination program as youngsters. We all found that this experience from many years ago helped to put us at ease with our work as examiner apprentices. Perhaps it was because we were familiar with the set-up and progression of the examinations. Liam noted that the overall flow and image of the RCM examiner had changed very little from the time when he took exams. This experience as a child gave him an understanding of the exam structure. Having this level of familiarity in place allowed for the more detailed knowledge of exams to settle more readily. Stephanie and Joshua did not possess the experience of taking exams as students, but both indicated that this experience would have been advantageous for them with regards to their role as examiner apprentices. Although all participants had their moments of disorder, the testimonials of Stephanie and Joshua report more feelings of confusion and uncertainty regarding many aspects of the examination. After reviewing their comments, it is clear that they were not accustomed to the flow and format of the exams. For example, Stephanie noted that she had trouble administering the sight and ear tests. She realized that her anxiety was due to her unfamiliarity with the format of the tests. Prior to the examining day, the books for the sight and ear tests can
only be in the possession of the examiner but not the apprentice. RCME sends these books out to the examiners a couple of weeks before the examining session, and this practice is for confidential reasons to ensure the integrity of the exams. However, if one is not familiar with the format of these tests and the format of the books, it is difficult to administer these tests in an efficient and effective manner. Mariel is an exception to this trend. She had no prior experience taking exams as a child but still reported relatively high comfort levels as an examiner. Also, all senior examiners took at least a few exams as students, but none of these three examiners felt that the experience they gained with exams in their youth aided them in the process as examiners. Since they are senior examiners, perhaps their experience as students taking exams was too far back in their minds, and they did not realize how much of an influence this factor did have on their comfort levels as examiner apprentices. Nevertheless, the evidence still points to the fact that experience taking exams as a student does increase the comfort levels at this initial stage of examining.

5) Teaching with the RCM Curriculum

With the exception of Liam, all participants had experience working with the RCM curriculum as teachers. Some felt that their knowledge of the repertoire was essential for effective examining while others saw this factor as beneficial but not critical. Katherine stated that it only provided her with some measure of comfort but she rated it quite high in the final survey. Mariel pointed out that it is more important to know about the styles and eras that the repertoire represents. Natasha, Roy, Stephanie and I as well as all the senior examiners determined that our knowledge of the repertoire was a significant contributor to our confidence levels. However, the measurable effect of this factor on our comfort levels is questionable. For example, Liam had no previous experience using the RCM curriculum as a teacher, and yet he exhibited relatively high
levels of confidence. On the contrary, Joshua had been teaching with RCM materials for many years but was unsure about the “nuts and bolts” associated with each level. Stephanie had also been preparing her students for exams for five years and yet both she and Joshua reported struggles during the mentorship.

### 8.2 Direct Preparation and Training

1) Four-Day Training Seminar

All apprentices are required to attend and participate in the four-day training course that RCME offers. The seminar is held annually at the RCM building on Bloor Street in Toronto and it usually occurs at the end of June. Examiner apprentices for all disciplines meet on the first day. Following this initial orientation session, piano examiner apprentices meet an additional three days.

In this study, all of the apprentices found the seminar to be very helpful and a necessary part of their training to become examiners. While some may have felt overwhelmed by all the information they received in a short period of time, they appreciated the fact that it was all laid out for them. All participants took copious notes and zeroed in on the aspects that would need their individualized attention prior to the mentoring sessions.

While most apprentices seemed to be satisfied with the information about examining that was provided, some individuals wished there could have been more opportunities to put this information into practical use. Natasha wanted “more opportunity to take up exam reports, more opportunities to witness and administer exams, and many more examples of various levels of playing.” She did not feel that she witnessed enough examples of students’ playing at the various
levels (ie. first class honours with distinction, first class honours, honours, pass, fail). She felt that there was vagueness in terms of the RCM standards. Since she was not sure what the RCM’s standards were at the various levels, she was less comfortable when assessing the students during the mentoring sessions. Joshua also echoed similar sentiments. He wanted to see more mock exams demonstrating playing that the RCM would consider as “barely passing” (60%). This is certainly a crucial borderline mark since it determines which candidates pass and which do not. Examiners and examiner apprentices should be certain as to what the RCM expects of them in this area. During the seminar, it was always emphasized that various individuals have differing opinions. Marks may vary between examiners but they must always be supported by the written comments. Since examiners and apprentices come from so many different types of musical backgrounds, it can be difficult to determine what standards the RCM holds. Most exam candidates are not intending to be professional musicians. The RCM exams are intended for those who are studying music for avocational reasons (eg. for pleasure and further enrichment). An examiner who comes from a background of highly skilled music making might have extremely high expectations and mark students too low. At the same time, another individual might come from an area where the level of student playing is not as sophisticated and may mark students too high. At the training session, guidelines for the characteristics associated with playing at the various levels were distributed. However, live examples of the types of playing at these various levels could help to further establish and strengthen these standards. I attended two training seminars, the first in January 2008 as an auditor and the second in June 2009 as an apprentice. I noticed that in 2008 there were a greater number of mock exams that apprentices were offered to observe than in 2009. In fact, I was looking forward to the experience of the mock exams in 2009, but was surprised and slightly disappointed when I learned there were not
going to be as many as in the past. It is certainly one of the most important segments of the training session.

There were a couple of elements that two apprentices would have liked to review in more depth. Joshua would have liked a more detailed overview of the syllabus and Stephanie had difficulty understanding the marking scheme. Both of these individuals did not take exams as students and so perhaps their unfamiliarity with the system extended to these areas of examining.

This four-day seminar is certainly a crucial element of the training process for examiner apprentices. It sets the tone for the rest of their experience. As was stated in the medical study by Leopold et al., even small amounts of instruction can increase comfort and competence level. Winter’s study also discovered that training influenced examiners’ responses more than expertise. The training session also serves as an ideal time to warn examiners of external factors that could affect their judgment such as time of day, race, gender, attractiveness, etc. A complete and thorough overview of the examining process by RCM administrators certainly offers apprentices a strong foundation for their examining careers.


2) Apprentice Homework - preparation that participants assumed on their own

Every examiner apprentice in this study followed up the training seminar with work and preparation they did on their own. Various types of preparation were employed. They all reviewed their notes from the seminar and studied the various policies and marking schemes set out by the RCM. They organized their examining materials and reference sheets as suggested in the seminar. Several of the individuals reviewed the pieces in the repertoire and study books so that they would know this music better. All these preparation strategies certainly provide benefit to any examiner apprentice; however, some methods are more effective than others.

Several of the apprentices surveyed cited the use of mock exams as part of their preparation. They found this work to be very helpful and those who did mock exams or some type of re-enactment of the examination process cited higher comfort levels. When asked what advice she would give to future apprentices, Katherine stated that new examiners should practise the sequence of events that occur in examinations. She said, “Give A LOT of mock examinations outside the training process.” This can be done by using one’s students as mock examination candidates. Mariel also stated that working through the choreography of running an examination relieved a lot of her stress. When she did not have any of her own students to do mock exams with, she employed her colleagues to act as candidates. Liam did not use students to conduct mock exams but did practise “managing the table” while proctoring imaginary exams. He felt that this exercise helped him with time management. He planned the layout of his desk and determined the optimal place for his examining tools. He also practiced calling out the technical requirements. These three apprentices maintained a high degree of confidence early on in the mentoring process.
Another important aspect of preparation is honing the skill of critical writing. Examinations are often the highlight and climax of many a student’s musical year. They are read eagerly by students, parents and teachers. Since reports need to be written quickly and effectively, an examiner’s critical writing skills must be finely tuned. Near the beginning of their careers, senior examiners, Jose and Logan, found it difficult to express their thoughts and opinion in words. They worked hard to improve their ability in this area but eventually their persistence paid off. Roy also made a point to improve this aspect of examining. He even practiced writing reports by watching random video clips of children’s performances on YouTube.

Knowledge of repertoire also played a role in the comfort level of the apprentices. Natasha felt that her expertise in this area helped her to feel more confident in her examining abilities. Senior examiner Isabella also felt that her knowledge of repertoire played the largest role in her preparedness. She had a high comfort level right from the outset of her RCM examining career. However, Katherine, Mariel and Liam all felt that knowledge of the repertoire did not play as large a role in their comfort level when examining. Katherine was familiar with the RCM repertoire but she felt that it provided only some measure of comfort while examining. Mariel was not familiar with every specific piece in the syllabus; however, she was very well acquainted with the various styles and eras that the pieces represented. This broader type of repertoire knowledge served her very well. Liam was unfamiliar with the RCM’s syllabus of repertoire; however, he still maintained a high comfort level while examining. In-depth knowledge of the individual pieces listed in the syllabus can certainly save an examiner time when writing reports, simply because he/she will not need to refer to the score as much. However, a solid understanding of good musicality will certainly go a lot further, allowing the examiner to feel comfortable no matter which piece is performed. This finding corresponds to what Kinney
discovered through his research: familiarity of a piece does not play a huge role when one is evaluating musical expression. He suggests that this type of evaluation is governed by stylistic awareness and personal taste.\\(^{63}\)

3) Mentoring Days

According to the bar graphs, the general overall trend was an increase in confidence levels as the apprentice participants progressed through the apprenticeship. A few individuals (Joshua, Natasha and Stephanie) experienced a decrease in confidence levels after the first mentoring session. By and large, the other participants’ confidence levels remained the same at this period in time and they did not increase.

All apprentices found the mentoring days to be the most critical part of the apprenticeship process. This was the chance when they were able to put all their preparation into practice and apply their skills to the RCM examining format. This on-the-job training was most beneficial to all the participants. Still, there are certain elements of this training process that could be enhanced so that it facilitates an even better experience for the apprentices.

**Available time**

The most common complaint from apprentices in this study was the fact that there was so little time available during the mentoring sessions. While many felt that more time should be allotted for each student’s examination, they were well aware that examining is a job that needs to be completed under time pressure. However, many of the apprentices were hoping that there would

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be time for them to discuss the day’s occurrences with their mentor and ask questions, especially
at the early stage in their mentoring sessions. For some apprentices, their questions and
confusions compounded so heavily that it became overwhelming. Inquiries could not be aired on
the table simply because there was no time. Katherine would have liked to read what her mentors
wrote for their reports regarding candidates’ performances. Natasha stated that “debriefing
periods” were absolutely necessary since “feedback on the spot is invaluable.” Also, since the
lack of time is so prevalent, she feels that everyone is on edge – the examiner, the candidates, the
parents, the centre representative – they all feel the push to stay on schedule. As a result,
everyone suffers, but most importantly it hampers the experience of the candidates. Joshua said
that both he and his mentors agreed that more time was needed for successful mentoring.
Stephanie found that on one day, there was absolutely no opportunity for her and the mentor to
exchange their thoughts about the exams they observed. I was fortunate that there were several
cancellations in my examination schedule, which allowed me time to speak with my mentors and
to ask questions. On two occasions, I had lunch with my mentors and this provided the necessary
opportunity for general discussions regarding examining. As it stands, mentors and apprentices
are required to go about their duties with a regular examining schedule. No extra free time is
available in the schedule. Joshua pointed out however that having a full normal day does two
things: makes one feel rushed, never comfortable, and does not allow the mentor and apprentice
to accomplish what they are set out to do. Even senior examiners commented on the lack of time
involved with mentoring sessions. Jose noted that looking back to his own mentoring session, he
wished that he had more time to talk with the individual mentors about all the aspects of
examining. It would have helped him to feel much more comfortable and acclimatize to the job.
Even as he worked as a mentor himself, he still felt that extra time would certainly be of great
benefit. When Logan went through his training process, he felt that the lack of time was
overwhelming and this brought down his comfort and confidence levels. Like Jose, he also feels that extra time should be included in the schedule for a mentoring period. Ending earlier would allow the mentor and apprentice to discuss the issues of the day. Roy found lunchtime to be a particularly excellent opportunity to speak with the mentors about their opinions, suggestions and criticisms. Some apprentices went for lunch with their mentors. Those who did not mentioned that the mentor never offered.

Advice that conflicts with the training seminar

Some of the apprentices also found that the mentors offered conflicting advice. At times, the suggestions even differed from what was instructed in the training seminar. Naturally, individuals will have varying opinions. As mentioned earlier, the RCME also encourages examiners to find their own comfortable way of examining as long as they abide by the board’s examining policies, but sometimes the conflicting views could create unnecessary confusion for new examiner apprentices. It also impedes consistency within the College of Examiners. For example, in the training seminar, apprentices were instructed to avoid cutting off a candidate’s performance unless the candidate was painfully slow and the examiner was in desperate need of time. Katherine found however that some of her mentors had differing opinions regarding this issue. They also suggested for her to conduct the sight and ear tests in an order contrary to what she was originally instructed at the seminar. She ended up following what she was originally told. Joshua found that each of his mentors had a different opinion on the “cutting off” problem. One of his mentors told him to cut off candidates whenever he wanted to. Joshua found no consistency on this issue between the RCME and his mentors. Natasha found that there were discrepancies amongst her mentors regarding the borderline issue of when a candidate passes an exam or fails. She felt this discrepancy was due to the vagueness of the RCM standards. During
the training seminar, apprentices were strongly encouraged to complete as much as possible within the examination and to finish all their work before leaving the examination centre in order to ensure their evenings are free for relaxation. Clearly, this is not often possible due to the restrictions of time. Senior examiner Logan always reviews his examining reports at the end of the day, spending hours if necessary. Jose, another senior examiner, also believes that examiners should take time when deciding on the individual scores. Most of the apprentices in this study found themselves reviewing reports well into the evening. For apprentices, this scenario could possibly imply that evenings free of reviewing exam reports (as the RCME encourages) is unrealistic – a frustrating thought. Roy also noticed that not all mentors brought their RCM repertoire and study books to the examination session. This was contrary to what was emphasized in the seminar – all examiners should bring their repertoire and study books to examination session for reference. While it is important to be exposed to varying points of view it can cause significant frustration, especially in the heat of the moment of examining. At one point during the mentoring process Joshua said, “The greatest frustration was being told two different things on successive days by two different examiners.”

**Personality clashes**

There were also some personality clashes and uninspiring experiences between the apprentices and their mentors in this study. No one believed that the RCME matched apprentices and mentors according to personality. While all apprentices found that most of their mentors were quite helpful, there were still several instances where the relationship between apprentice and mentor was quite strained. Katherine found that all her mentors were well matched except for one. She wondered how anyone could get along with that individual. Joshua found that there were some people he got along with and others that he found harder to work with. One mentor
even criticized the way he pronounced “root”! He had some interesting anecdotes to describe his experiences. Viewing this in a positive light however, he said that he still learned from all of them. Natasha noted that some of her mentors did not have people skills, traits imperative to being a mentor. Several of her mentors were superb while others were lackluster. Her last mentor had no clue of what to do with Natasha, leaving Natasha with a bad impression. She also wished that some of the mentors could have shared their reports with her. She was hesitant to ask since some seemed almost protective of their reports and marks. Natasha realized that some of her mentors had less education and experience than she did. She also felt that she knew the repertoire better than some of them did. Her experience left her feeling that the mentors are not trained well enough to train apprentices. Further, due to the lack of time, Natasha feels that mentors are not given the chance to offer an optimal training session. When there was not enough time to discuss and learn and when things got behind, it was stressful for the mentors. Although her experiences with the mentors were not as positive during her second session as they were in the first session, her confidence while examining still increased. This was likely due to her intense educational and teaching background. Although Roy did not have any personality clashes with his mentors, he wondered if the RCME could have matched him with someone who also did not “grow up” in the system – someone who would understand his situation, thus giving him another helpful perspective. Mariel was fortunate to have excellent experiences with all her mentors. She noted that mentors can really make or break the apprenticing experience. She was fortunate to have mentors that were very supportive and encouraging. Her experience is similar to the one I had with mine. All the individuals I worked with were extremely warm, welcoming and encouraging.
Logistical issues

Stephanie noted that there were some logistical issues that she wishes could have been organized better before her mentoring sessions started. Some mentors set up their room with the apprentice in mind while others did not. Sometimes she was so far apart from the mentor that they could not share the repertoire sheet listing the pieces that each student would play. In this situation, Stephanie found herself having to complete yet another task – copying the repertoire list for each student and then walking over and handing to the mentor. This bothersome task certainly took up precious time.

Climate control

Finally, Joshua noted one aspect of his mentoring days that inhibited his experience. During one of his mentoring sessions, the temperature in the room was swelteringly high, making the session feel “more like a punishment rather than an accomplishment.” Stephanie also noted that it was very hot in one of her examining venues. While this is completely unrelated to the examining process itself, it is important that apprentices, examiners and candidates alike feel comfortable in the examining centres. Extreme heat or cold can affect both a candidate’s and examiner’s performance. If an examiner has been suffering in extreme temperature for the whole day, chances are he/she will not be examining effectively and the examination candidates in turn, will also be negatively affected.

The mentoring process coupled with the four-day seminar certainly has a large impact on the examiner apprentice’s comfort and confidence levels. This is supported by the research of Winger. He stated that training influenced the examiners’ responses more than expertise. He advises that examiner training courses should verify assessment criteria and identify the essential
ideas behind the approaches used in assessments. These approaches include reporting methods, rating scales, descriptive statements and judgment methods. Much of this is included in the RCM’s training course; however, more can be done with regards to clarifying the standards between the pass, honours, and first-class honours levels.

Figure 7: Graph Representing the Effects of Various Types of Preparation on Confidence/Comfort Levels

The following graph illustrates the effect that each type of preparation had on the participants’ confidence levels. All participants agreed that the mentoring sessions were the most critical parts of the apprenticeship process. Their confidence levels for various examining skills during the mentoring process were tracked in the line graphs. Therefore, in an effort to minimize redundancy, I chose to not include this in the final survey (please appendix J). The average of these of results is summarized in this figure.

Participants were asked to rate seven areas of their background and training according to the following scale:

1 – Decreased my confidence level
2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
4 – Increased my confidence level
5 – Significantly increased my confidence level

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The blue bars refer to indirect types of preparation while the red bars refer to direct types of preparation.
9 Conclusions

9.1 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Through the analysis of the data, trends regarding which factors benefit the confidence and comfort levels of examiner apprentices have emerged. Based on the experiences of the participants in this study, the following are recommendations for preparation of an apprentice examiner.

Indirect Preparation

Prior to entering the training program, it is advisable that apprentices obtain certain experiences and training. On average, the participants in this study found all types of indirect preparation to be helpful. However, certain elements clearly had a greater positive effect than others.

1) Education

All participants possessed graduate degrees prior to entering the apprenticeship program and most agreed that this element played a role in increasing their confidence level. However, those with performance-based (performance degrees or diplomas) training experienced higher confidence levels when rating their examining skills throughout the apprenticeship. It would be advisable that individuals considering a career in examining ensure that they have the necessary intensive training in performance to help them acclimatize more quickly to the high pressure situations of the RCM evaluative environment.
2) Varied and Extensive Teaching Experience

All participants concurred that a strong background in piano instruction is essential for individuals to develop diagnostic skills, the ability to listen critically and empathy for students. Pedagogical expertise also helps to expand one’s general knowledge of repertoire, stylistic awareness as well as musical and technical considerations.

3) Previous Evaluating Experience

While experience in this area may bring some sense of familiarity, most other types of assessments are quite different from the RCM examination. Surprisingly, previous evaluative experience is not a necessity to make apprentices comfortable in the examiner’s chair. In fact, sometimes, those with other evaluative experience might have some confusion realigning their standards to the RCM. Joshua and Stephanie had decades of evaluating experience and they felt that it increased their confidence levels. However, in reality, their confidence levels were lower and less stable than the other participants.

4) Participation in RCM exams as a student

This factor turned out to be more of a confidence builder than expected. On average, the participants ranked it as the factor that increased their confidence levels the most. Those who did not have the experience acknowledged that they would have likely found it beneficial in their role as examiner. On the other hand, the senior examiners claimed that their experience taking exams as students was not a factor in their increased confidence levels. Perhaps time had clouded their memory and they did not realize how much of a positive effect this factor had when they were starting out as examiners.
Familiarity with the exams from a student’s point of view provides a framework which will help apprentices understand the flow, structure and philosophy of the examination process. If an individual has not taken exams prior to becoming an examiner, it would be advisable for that apprentice to acquire the experience of taking exams at a few grade levels. This would provide him with an excellent overview of what an exam entails. This experience will also help apprentices to develop a healthy dose of empathy for the candidates.

5) Prior Teaching Experience with the RCM Curriculum

It would be natural for one to infer that familiarity with the repertoire in the RCM syllabus from a teaching standpoint would significantly increase an apprentice’s confidence level. However, it is actually not necessary for examiner trainees to have specifically taught using the RCM curriculum. In fact, the RCM curriculum is based on standard pedagogical repertoire and so teachers inevitably come into contact with much of the repertoire in the syllabus. Of course, knowing the pieces does save time for an examiner so that she does not have to refer to the score so much. However, accurate and stylistic knowledge regarding the various eras that the pieces come from will serve an examiner much better. Among the participants in this study, those who had more experience teaching with the curriculum did not always have the higher confidence levels. Also when comparing it to the other factors on the aggregate graph, it was not ranked as high as the other factors listed.
Direct Preparation

Based on the information gathered from participants of this study, the following are recommendations for improving the training seminar and mentorship sessions.

1) RCM Four-Day Training Seminar

The training seminar was an essential component of the apprenticeship program and served as the backbone for an examiner’s career. In some cases, it might have been helpful for individuals to experience the training session twice. In my own experience, participating in the training seminar on two occasions provided an extra boost to my confidence. Already, a large amount of material was covered during the seminar’s four days. By and large, apprentices appreciated everything that was presented to them and ranked the training seminar as a confidence builder. However, Natasha noted that it only slightly increased her confidence level and Joshua indicated that it actually decreased his confidence level. In light of the responses, the following recommendations for additions to the program have been identified.

A higher volume of mock examinations at varying grade levels is needed to successfully simulate the “real-life” situation of an examiner. These exams need to be scheduled back-to-back for a full morning session, (approximately 10 exams in a row with a 20-minute break) similar to an actual examining scenario. It would also be very useful for apprentices to observe examinations of students at varying degrees of performance proficiency. This would help the trainees to better understand the distinction between the standards of classification (ie. Pass, Honours, First-class honours, etc. Please see page 12). To supplement the mock examinations presented in the training seminar, the RCME could provide apprentices with videos of students playing at these various levels so that the RCM standards are clearly defined.
2) *Homework in Between Mentoring Sessions*

Apprentices should continue to do more mock examinations with their students or with their colleagues. Practising the motions of administering the exam is essential to ensure examinations can be run in an efficient manner. Participants who cited this type of preparation had the most stable levels of confidence. For those who did not teach with the RCM curriculum in the past, it would be advisable to review the repertoire and study the syllabus in order to gain some familiarity. Knowledge of the marking schemes and policies will save time in the examination room. However, as stated earlier, it is not necessary for apprentices to have taught extensively with the curriculum.

3) *Mentoring Sessions*

This element of the apprenticeship program was also essential to the training of examiners. As previous research has found, a thorough training program including mentor intervention impacts an evaluator’s decisions as well as confidence and comfort levels.\(^{65}\) Participants of this study have indicated that the mentoring sessions could have been more efficient and effective in some cases. The following recommendations in regards to mentoring sessions have been proposed.

Overall, more opportunities for discussion between apprentice and mentor are needed. Longer mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks along with the lunch period will give both parties the chance to address certain issues regarding the examination procedure. Perhaps officials at RCM Examinations could evaluate each of the apprentices (based on their indirect preparation) as well

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as observe how they progress through the training seminar and then schedule mentoring days accordingly. It would be advisable that those apprentices who will have more questions and need more time be offered the luxury of having longer breaks scheduled into their days. As they progress through the mentoring days, less time for discussion can be scheduled since their comfort levels will have increased. Making it standard for mentors to take the apprentices for lunch will provide an excellent opportunity for additional discussion. It is also critical that mentors are chosen carefully for their ability to remain calm, composed, amicable, organized and encouraging throughout the day of examining. Mentors need to accommodate apprentices in every way possible just as long as the examination candidates do not suffer. For example, if a slightly different room setup is required because an apprentice is present, alterations should be made. They also need to be equipped with the most updated examining information from the RCME office.

The RCME also needs to ensure that examination rooms are maintained at a comfortable temperature. Additionally, the availability of all necessary amenities must be confirmed. Finally, it would be advisable to provide the opportunity for newly-accepted examiners to be in contact with senior examiners throughout their first year of examining for continued mentorship.

9.2 Limitations and Possibilities for Future Research

It is difficult to recruit a large number of participants for this type of study because the RCM only trains a very small number of apprentices every year. Since the RCM apprenticeship program occurs over the course of one year and the amount of time allotted for my study has been a relatively short period, I was able to track the experiences of only one class of apprentices
as they progressed through the program (2009 Examiner Apprentices). Four out of the five 2009 apprentices participated and I did not feel that it would be sufficient for me to include only four participants in my study. I would have difficulty protecting their identity. Therefore, I recruited participants from the 2008 Examiner Apprenticeship program to increase my pool of possible contributors. Three out of the nine apprentices agreed to participate in my study. I realize that the 2008 apprentices viewed their experiences from a slightly different angle than the 2009 apprentices. While the 2009 apprentices reflected on elements of the apprenticeship experience as they occurred, the 2008 apprentices were six to twelve months removed from their experiences. Indeed, the lapse of time likely caused them to view their apprenticeship in a somewhat fading light. However, the information offered a broader perspective, allowing me to see the overall outcome of their apprenticeship experiences over at least six months. To provide greater depth to my study, I also invited the input of three senior examiners. These individuals are even further removed from their training process than the 2008 apprentices. Their insight and knowledge as experienced examiners and mentors however provided me with an added dimension of extended time and experience in the examination process.

In the future, I would conduct a similar study with slightly different parameters. Over the course of several years, I would track the experiences of participants from three or more apprenticeship sessions. Since an entire apprenticeship runs the course of one year, I would be surveying and interviewing a different set of apprentices each year as they progress through the program. Upon completion of each cycle, I would continue to survey the participants as they become full members of the College of Examiners. Tracking them during this period would offer me insight regarding how they manage their examiner responsibilities on their own along with how they view their mentored training in hindsight. Conducting a study in this manner would provide me
with the opportunity to survey participants at the same stages in their training and early examining careers.

The RCM Examination system is embedded in our Canadian cultural quilt. In a world where citizens are receiving dwindling amounts of education and exposure to music and the arts, the RCM exam system provides one option for filling those gaps. For certain individuals, it does serve as a source of motivation and act as a marker of achievement in their musical studies. For that reason, it is important that examiners fulfill their own roles as assessors in the most complete and effective way possible. These recommendations, along with further research, may help examiner apprentices feel more confident and comfortable in their evaluative roles earlier in their careers. This study could also let other individuals evaluate their own suitability for the role of examiner, allowing accepted apprentices to flourish as effective examiners who would provide positive and encouraging experiences for students and teachers.
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## Appendix A

**Summary of the RCM Examination Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Repertoire</th>
<th>Technical Requirements</th>
<th>Ear Tests</th>
<th>Sight Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All pieces must be played for memory. Repertoire has been carefully selected by the Conservatory in order to ensure that the standard of difficulty is maintained.</td>
<td>Studies/Études: May be performed with music. Each work focuses on a specific technical element that is particularly complicated for that level. Technical Tests: Include Scales, Triads, Arpeggios, Dominant and Diminished Sevenths</td>
<td>Rhythm clap back and Melody playback</td>
<td>Play a passage at sight Clap a rhythm at sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>Two pieces from repertoire list and one piece chosen by the teacher</td>
<td>No study/etude Technical Tests: Scales, Triads</td>
<td>Rhythm clap back and Melody playback</td>
<td>Play a passage at sight Clap a rhythm at sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>List A</strong> – Baroque/Classical&lt;br&gt;<strong>List B</strong> – Romantic/20th and 21st Century&lt;br&gt;<strong>List C</strong> - Inventions</td>
<td>One study/etude Technical Tests: Scales, Triads</td>
<td>Rhythm clap back and Melody playback</td>
<td>Play a passage at sight Clap a rhythm at sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>List A</strong> – Baroque/Classical&lt;br&gt;<strong>List B</strong> – Romantic/20th and 21st Century&lt;br&gt;<strong>List C</strong> - Inventions</td>
<td>One study/etude Technical Tests: Scales, Triads</td>
<td>Rhythm clap back and melody playback, identifying intervals</td>
<td>Play a passage at sight Clap a rhythm at sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>List A</strong> – Baroque&lt;br&gt;<strong>List B</strong> – Classical&lt;br&gt;<strong>List C</strong> – Romantic/20th and 21st Century</td>
<td>Two studies/etudes Technical Tests: Scales, Triads</td>
<td>Rhythm clap back, melody playback, identifying intervals</td>
<td>Play a passage at sight Clap a rhythm at sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>List A</strong> – Baroque&lt;br&gt;<strong>List B</strong> – Classical&lt;br&gt;<strong>List C</strong> – Romantic/20th and 21st Century</td>
<td>Two studies/etudes Technical Tests: Scales, Triads, Arpeggios</td>
<td>Rhythm clap back, melody playback, identifying intervals</td>
<td>Play a passage at sight Clap a rhythm at sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>List A</strong> – Baroque&lt;br&gt;<strong>List B</strong> – Classical&lt;br&gt;<strong>List C</strong> – Romantic/20th and 21st Century</td>
<td>Two studies/etudes Technical Tests: Scales, Triads, Arpeggios, Dominant and Diminished Sevenths</td>
<td>Rhythm clap back, melody playback, identifying intervals</td>
<td>Play a passage at sight Clap a rhythm at sight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6 | **List A** – Baroque  
**List B** – Classical  
**List C** – Romantic/20th and 21st Century | Two studies/etudes  
Technical Tests: Scales, Triads, 4 note chords, Arpeggios, Dominant and Diminished Sevenths | Rhythm clap back, melody playback, identifying intervals, identifying chord types | Play a passage at sight  
Clap a rhythm at sight |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | **List A** – Baroque  
**List B** – Classical  
**List C** – Romantic/20th and 21st Century | Two studies/etudes  
Technical Tests: Scales, 4 note chords, Arpeggios, Dominant and Diminished Sevenths | Rhythm clap back, melody playback, identifying intervals, identifying chord types | Play a passage at sight  
Clap a rhythm at sight |
| 8 | **List A** – Baroque  
**List B** – Classical  
**List C** – Romantic  
**List D** – Post-Romantic/20th and 21st Century | Two studies/etudes  
Two studies/etudes  
Technical Tests: Scales, 4 note chords, Arpeggios, Dominant and Diminished Sevenths | Identifying cadences, melody playback, identifying intervals, identifying chord types | Play a passage at sight  
Clap a rhythm at sight |
| 9 | **List A** – Baroque  
**List B** – Classical  
**List C** – Romantic  
**List D** – Post-Romantic/20th and 21st Century | Two studies/etudes  
Two studies/etudes  
Technical Tests: Scales, 4 note chords, Arpeggios, Dominant and Diminished Sevenths | Identifying cadences, melody playback, identifying intervals, identifying chord types | Play a passage at sight  
Clap a rhythm at sight |
| 10 | **List A** – Baroque  
**List B** – Classical  
**List C** – Romantic  
**List D** – Post-Romantic/Early 20th Century  
**List E** – 20th and 21st Century | Two studies/etudes  
Two studies/etudes  
Technical Tests: Scales, 4 note chords, Arpeggios, Dominant and Diminished Sevenths | Identifying cadences, melody playback, identifying intervals, identifying chord types | Play a passage at sight  
Clap a rhythm at sight |
| ARCT | **List A** – Baroque  
**List B** – Classical  
**List C** – Romantic  
**List D** – Post-Romantic/Early 20th Century  
**List E** – 20th and 21st Century | One concert etude (memorized) | No requirements | No requirements |
Appendix B

The following charts summarize the details from the narratives which have an effect on the changing confidence levels of the apprentices.

**Katherine**

| **Education**          | • B.Mus. (Music Education),  
|                       | • M.Mus. (Performance),  
|                       | • M.Mus. (Performance and Pedagogy) |
| **Teaching Experience** | • 17 years of teaching experience  
|                       | • 7 years teaching at the university level  
|                       | • has experience teaching private and group lessons  
|                       | • received pedagogical training throughout university studies |
| **Previous Evaluating Experience** | • adjudicated at a few festivals  
|                       | • served on university level juries |
| **Taking RCM Exams as a student** | • took exams throughout her formative years and received the Performer’s A.R.C.T. diploma |
| **Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum** | • extensive experience teaching with the RCM curriculum and preparing students for exams |
| **Training Seminar** | • Four-day classroom style session |
| **Mentoring Sessions** | • worked with four mentors  
|                       | • most mentors gave her the freedom “to do her own thing”  
|                       | • some of the mentors’ advice conflicted with what was taught in the training seminar  
|                       | • had the opportunity to compare marks with the mentor but no time to compare comments |
| **Homework in between Mentoring Sessions** | • conducted mock exams with colleagues and her own students  
|                       | • read through sample exam reports  
<p>|                       | • reviewed motions of the exam in her mind |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Liam</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Education** | • B.Mus.(Performance),  
• M.Mus.(Performance),  
• D.M.A. (Performance) |
| **Teaching Experience** | • 9 years of private teaching experience  
• 1 year teaching a preparatory department class  
• enrolled in pedagogy classes in his undergraduate and doctoral degrees |
| **Previous Evaluating Experience** | • adjudicated a two-day festival  
• assessed students in a preparatory department  
• jury member at the post-secondary level for 3 years  
• decided if students entering their undergraduate programs needed to take class piano or not |
| **Taking RCM Exams as a student** | • completed exams throughout his early years  
• completed the practical portion of the A.R.C.T. diploma but not the theoretical components |
| **Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum** | • unfamiliar with the more recent RCM repertoire |
| **Training Seminar** | • Four-day classroom style session |
| **Mentoring Sessions** | • worked with four mentors  
• mentors had differing approaches but they made him feel “at home”  
• compared marks with all his mentors  
• compared about one-third to one-half of his written reports |
| **Homework in between Mentoring Sessions** | • prepared technique menus, vocabulary list  
• planned the layout of his desk  
• practised “managing the table” while proctoring imaginary exams  
• reviewed exam policies very thoroughly |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Joshua</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• B.Mus. (Music Education),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• M.Mus. (Piano Pedagogy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Experience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 25 years of teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• taught group lessons for 10 years and university level classes for 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• formal pedagogy training occurred throughout both of his university degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous Evaluating Experience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 20 years of experience judging local, regional and provincial/state competitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taking RCM Exams as a student</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exams were not a part of his training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• familiar with the RCM repertoire but not the requirements of each exam level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training Seminar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Four-day classroom style session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring Sessions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• worked with five mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• advice from mentors frequently conflicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• some mentors were harder to work with than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• needed a lot more time to compare reports and for discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1st session: room temperature was sweltering making the experience feel “more like a punishment”; never felt like he could “do his own thing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2nd session: working with the 1st and 3rd mentors was more of a collaborative experience; he felt pushed working with the 2nd mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework in between Mentoring Sessions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• played through and listened to as much of the repertoire as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• conducted mock exams with his students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• re-read sample written reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reviewed technical requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Mariel

| **Education** | • B.Mus. (Performance),  
|              | • M.Mus. (Performance),  
|              | • D.M.A. (Performance) |
| **Teaching Experience** | • has maintained a private studio for 15 years  
| | • 10 years teaching university level pianists  
| | • 4 years teaching university group piano classes  
| | • received 1 year of pedagogical training during her undergraduate degree |
| **Previous Evaluating Experience** | • 10 years assessing juries at the university level  
| | • judged local and regional festivals and competitions for 3 years |
| **Taking RCM Exams as a student** | • did not take RCM exams during her formative years |
| **Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum** | • has taught with the curriculum  
| | • somewhat familiar with the repertoire |
| **Training Seminar** | • Four-day classroom style session |
| **Mentoring Sessions** | • worked with three mentors  
| | • compared marks with all mentors  
| | • as she progressed, her marks became more consistent with the mentors’  
| | • the last mentor initiated a lot of discussion regarding the marks and reports  
| | • found the mentoring process to be very complete |
| **Homework in between Mentoring Sessions** | • conducted mock exams with some her students and colleagues to “go through the motions” of running an exam |
### Natasha

| Education                          | • B.Mus. (Music Education),  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>• M.Mus. (Performance and Pedagogy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience</td>
<td>• 20 years of experience with private teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Evaluating Experience</td>
<td>• no evaluating experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking RCM Exams as a student</td>
<td>• took RCM exams during her formative years culminating with an ARCT diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum</td>
<td>• has taught extensively with the curriculum and has prepared many students for exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Seminar</td>
<td>• Four-day classroom style session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mentoring Sessions                | • worked with six mentors  
|                                  | • would have appreciated more time to discuss examining issues with the mentors although one mentor generously took 1 ½ hours to compare marks and reports at the end of the day  
|                                  | • discovered discrepancy amongst mentors regarding certain examining issues  
|                                  | • 1st session: mentors were very supportive and helpful  
|                                  | • 2nd session: one mentor was helpful, the other “seemed to want to invest the minimum amount of time”  
|                                  | • 3rd session: first mentor was helpful but the last mentor had no clue what to do with Natasha |
| Homework in between Mentoring Sessions | • listened to the repertoire, studied the scores  
|                                  | • organized and studied the notes from the training seminar |
Roy

| Education                        | • B.Mus. (Performance),  
|                                 | • M.Mus. (Performance),  
|                                 | • D.M.A. (Performance)    |
| Teaching Experience             | • 15 years of teaching experience  
|                                 | • taught privately using traditional and Suzuki methods  
|                                 | • taught group lessons  
|                                 | • also has experience teaching at the university level  
|                                 | • received pedagogical training during his B.Mus. and M.Mus.    |
| Previous Evaluating Experience  | • has evaluated at the local, regional and international levels  
|                                 | • judged local festivals for 10 years and regional events for 5 years  
|                                 | • involved with the preliminary round of decisions of an international competition    |
| Taking RCM Exams as a student   | • RCM exams were not a part of his formative years but he did undergo other types of evaluations  
| Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum | • somewhat familiar with the RCM curriculum and repertoire                    |
| Training Seminar                | • Four-day classroom style session  
| Mentoring Sessions              | • worked with six mentors  
|                                 | • as he progressed through the mentoring days, his marks concurred more closely with his mentors  
|                                 | • they gave him the freedom to take on as much exam responsibilities as he wished  
|                                 | • usually, time would allow for them to compare marks and if they had the chance they would compare written reports    |
| Homework in between Mentoring Sessions | • studied his syllabus and prepared his syllabus and examining tools  
|                                 | • consulted with colleagues; listened to recordings of the repertoire  
|                                 | • practised writing reports by watching random video clips of children’s performances on YouTube           |
**Stephanie**

| Education                      | • B.Mus. (Performance with emphasis on pedagogy; also took courses in Music Therapy),  
|                               | • M.Mus. (Music Education)  
| Teaching Experience           | • 20 years private teaching  
|                               | • also taught community-based piano classes at a university  
|                               | • took pedagogy courses throughout all her university training  
| Previous Evaluating Experience| • judged at local festivals and competitions for 20 years  
|                               | • conducted assessments at the elementary and high-school levels  
| Taking RCM Exams as a student | • did not take RCM exams as a student  
| Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum | • has been preparing her own students for RCM exams for 5 years  
| Training Seminar              | • Four-day classroom style session  
| Mentoring Sessions            | • worked with six mentors  
|                               | • needed much more time to effectively examine and discuss examining issues with mentors  
|                               | • found that some mentors did not set up the room with the apprentice in mind  
|                               | • uncomfortable administering the ear and sight reading tests  
|                               | • found that she had to adjust her marks as the standards are higher than for other evaluative tasks she experienced  
| Homework in between Mentoring Sessions | • read all the handouts from the seminar  
|                               | • studied the forms she would need to use as well as the marking system  

## Diana

| Education                                                                 | • B.Mus. (Performance),  
| • M.Mus. (Performance),  
| • D.M.A. candidate (Performance) |
| Teaching Experience                                                      | • 7 years private teaching  
| • taught a piano facility class (group class) at a university  
| • received pedagogical training at the undergraduate and doctoral levels |
| Previous Evaluating Experience                                            | • previous evaluation experience very minimal: required to make quick evaluations of incoming students to determine if they needed to take the remedial piano course; evaluated their mid-term and final exams |
| Taking RCM Exams as a student                                            | • took exams as a student culminating with an A.R.C.T. diploma |
| Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum                            | • used the RCM curriculum through all years of teaching  
| • prepared several students for examinations |
| Training Seminar                                                         | • Four-day classroom style session  
| • took the class twice, first as an auditor, then as an apprentice |
| Mentoring Sessions                                                       | • worked with three mentors who were all very flexible and allowed me the freedom to take on more examining responsibilities as I saw fit  
| • when there was time, marks were compared  
| • able to discuss examining issues with two of the mentors over lunch |
| Homework in between Mentoring Sessions                                   | • played through much of the repertoire  
| • prepared logbook, organized supplies  
| • reviewed the syllabus and notes from the training session |
**Jose, Senior Examiner**

| Education | • Licentiate diploma through the pedagogy stream |
| Teaching Experience | • many, many years of teaching experience  
| | • taught children’s group classes  
| | • pedagogical training consisted not of formal classes but instead observing his pedagogy teacher instruct other students |
| Previous Evaluating Experience | • adjudicated several local festivals  
| | • since examining, he has also judged national competitions |
| Taking RCM Exams as a student | • took exams as a student resulting in his A.R.C.T. |
| Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum | • had experience using the RCM curriculum |
| Training Seminar | • no training seminar at the time, only on-the-job training over 3 days |
| Mentoring Sessions | • worked with three mentors  
| | • would have liked more time to discuss issues with the mentors |
| Homework in between Mentoring Sessions | • looked over the syllabus to review requirements as well as the repertoire, especially between grades 4 and 8 |
### Logan, Senior Examiner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Education</strong></th>
<th>• B.F.A., Licentiate in Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Teaching Experience** | • prior to being an examiner, he had 15 years of teaching experience  
• taught undergraduate 1st year piano majors for 1 year  
• received pedagogical training from his teacher |
| **Previous Evaluating Experience** | • started adjudicating festivals and competitions around the same time he joined the College of Examiners |
| **Taking RCM Exams as a student** | • not a regular part of his formative training but he did complete the grade 10 and A.R.C.T. exams |
| **Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum** | • had experience using the RCM curriculum |
| **Training Seminar** | • no training seminar at the time, only two days training under a senior examiner |
| **Mentoring Sessions** | • worked with two different mentors  
• by the afternoon of the second day, he was the examiner as his mentor left |
| **Homework in between Mentoring Sessions** | • worked on his writing skills  
• checked over any irregularities in the examining schedule |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Isabella, Senior Examiner</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• B.Mus. (Performance) took Masters level courses in music but did not complete the degree, Performance Diploma from a European conservatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Experience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 45 years of private teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 12 years of group class teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• worked for 10 years at the university level either as a teaching assistant or sessional instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• completed 2 full years of pedagogical training at the undergraduate level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous Evaluating Experience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• worked as an examiner for 3 other boards in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluated post-secondary level juries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taking RCM Exams as a student</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exams played a role in her early music studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior Teaching Experience with RCM Curriculum</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• had experience using the RCM curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training Seminar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• no training seminar at the time, only one morning of “assisted mentoring”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring Sessions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• worked with one mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• one morning of “assisted mentoring”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework in between Mentoring Sessions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reviewed requirements for ear tests, sight reading and technical tests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Graph Representing the Confidence/Comfort Levels of the Participants

The x-axis indicates the progression of time during the apprenticeship program:

A = Prior to the in-class training course
B = After the in-class training course
C = After the first mentoring session
D = After the second mentoring session
E = At the end of the examiner apprenticeship, after all the mentoring sessions were completed

The y-axis indicates the rate of confidence level, one being the lowest confidence level and six being the highest confidence level.

Figure 1: Katherine
Figure 2: Liam

Figure 3: Joshua
Figure 4: Mariel

Figure 5: Natasha
Figure 6: Roy

Figure 7: Stephanie
Figure 8: Diana
Appendix D

Graphs Representing the Effects of Various Types of Preparation on Confidence/Comfort Levels

Participants were asked to rate seven areas of their background and training according to the following scale:

1 – Decreased my confidence level
2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
4 – Increased my confidence level
5 – Significantly increased my confidence level

These graphs represent the responses for each participant. The blue bars refer to indirect types of preparation while the red bars refer to direct types of preparation. If no bar is shown, this indicates that that particular area of background/training is not applicable to the participant.

Figure 1: Katherine
Figure 2: Liam

Figure 3: Joshua
Figure 4: Mariel

Figure 5: Natasha
Figure 6: Roy

Figure 7: Stephanie
Figure 8: Diana

Figure 9: Jose
Figure 10: Logan

Figure 11: Isabella
Appendix E

Survey 1 for Apprentices from the 2009 Training Session

SURVEY OF ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC (RCM) EXAMINER
APPRENTICES – June 2009

Dear Colleague,
Thank you for taking the time to complete the following survey and for your participation in this year-long project. Your input is of the greatest importance for the completion of my dissertation research.
I am truly grateful for your willingness and generosity of time to respond to the following questions. Any other comments relating to the questions asked are more than welcome. Please include these comments underneath each question it applies to. If you have questions or concerns about this survey, feel free to e-mail me at any time. I would appreciate it if you could please complete and e-mail the survey to me by Thursday July 23, 2009. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Diana Dumlavalla
ddumlavalla@gmail.com

1. Background Information: Education

a. What types of formative music education did you receive prior to post-secondary school? Please type an X beside all that apply.

- Private lessons
- Group Lessons
- Preparatory Programs (eg. YAPA at the RCM, Junior Departments run by universities and conservatories)
- Instruction provided in elementary or high school
- Other – please indicate

b. What formal music education did you receive at the post-secondary level? If you started, but did not finish the program requirements for a specific degree please indicate this below. Mark with an X all that apply.

- Bachelor of Music
- Performance
- Education
- Theory
- Composition
- History
2. Teaching Experience

a. Indicate the types of teaching experiences you have by writing the number of years you have been involved with each activity listed below.

Private lessons
Group lessons
Elementary school classroom teaching
High school classroom teaching
University level teaching

b. Describe all formal piano pedagogy training you have received. Please be as specific as possible by writing a short explanation about the training.

Pedagogy class(es) taken at the undergraduate level

c. Did you take examinations by the RCM or another board as a student? Yes/No

If yes, did you receive your A.R.C.T.? Please specify whether you completed the requirements for Performer’s or Teacher’s requirements. If you completed the requirements for the associateship of another board, please specify.
Pedagogy class(es) taken at the graduate level
Seminar(s) that resulted in certificate(s)
Other – please specify

c. Do you attend any of the following activities on a regular basis (once or twice a year)? Mark with an X all that apply.

Workshops provided by teachers’ associations, the RCM
Pedagogy conferences

3. Evaluating Experience

a. Indicate the types of evaluating/assessing experiences you have by writing the number of years you have been involved with each activity listed below.

Judging at:
Local Festivals/Competitions
Regional Festivals/Competitions
Provincial/State Competitions
National Competitions
International Competitions

Music assessments:
Elementary School level
High school level
Post-secondary level (juries)
Examinations for another examining board

Other – please indicate

b. Describe any formal training in evaluating other than the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship Training Program. Please be as specific as possible.

4. Approaching the Examiner’s Chair: How do you feel?

a. Now that you have completed the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship Training course, how confident do you feel evaluating RCM examination candidates? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 indicating that you feel most confident.

b. What do you expect will be your greatest strength(s) when examining?

c. What do you expect will be your weakness(es) when examining?
d. Was there anything else you wish could have been covered in the training course?

e. How well prepared do you think you are for the first set of mentoring days? Please describe.

f. What sort of preparation will you be doing between now and your first two mentoring days in August?

g. What was your impression of an examiner’s role before you underwent the examiner training course and observation day(s) this month?

Did that impression change after you went through the initial stages of training? If so, in what way was your initial impression altered?
Appendix F
Survey 2 for Apprentices from the 2009 Training Session

SURVEY OF THE RCM EXAMINATIONS EXAMINER APPRENTICES – August 2009

Dear Colleague,

I hope you are having a wonderful summer! Thank you for taking the time to complete the following survey and thank you for your continued participation in this year-long project. Your input is of the greatest importance for the completion of my dissertation research.

I am truly grateful for your willingness and generosity of time to respond to the following questions. Any other comments relating to the questions asked are more than welcome. Please include these comments underneath each question it applies to. If you have questions or concerns about this survey, feel free to e-mail me at any time. I would appreciate it if you could please complete and e-mail the survey to me by Friday September 4, 2009. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Diana Dumlavwalla
ddumlavwalla@gmail.com

1. The Initial Examining Experience

   a. Having completed the first two days of examining with a mentor present, how confident/comfortable do you feel assessing RCM examination candidates? Please rate according to the following scale and mark with an X:
      1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
      2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
      3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat Insecure
      4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
      5 – Comfortable/Confident
      6 – Very comfortable/Very Confident

   b. Please describe how each day of examinations progressed. Was this what you expected? If not, what would you have liked done differently?

   c. Did you feel that the Examiner Apprenticeship Program successfully influenced your expectations for these first two mentor days? If not, please describe what you were expecting based on the sessions in the apprenticeship program.
d. Is there anything you wish could have been included in the apprenticeship program to help make you feel more comfortable in your role as an examiner apprentice?

e. For each skill/task listed, please rate each statement according to the following scale. Indicate the rating number (1 through 6) beside each statement. If any skill improved as the days progressed, please describe.
1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Somewhat Disagree
4 – Somewhat Agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly Agree

i. I was able to help the candidates feel at (relative) ease.
ii. I administered the ear tests and sight reading portions efficiently and accurately.
iii. I was able to assign marks easily for each segment of the examination and felt confident about my decisions.
iv. I produced written reports that were succinct and provided helpful comments for the candidates and their teachers.
v. Written reports for each segment clearly reflected the marks I assigned.
vi. I stayed on schedule with only perhaps an occasional five-minute delay.

2. Background, Training and Preparation

a. How did the areas of your background/training help you with your first RCM examining experience? Please rate each factor according to the following scale and mark your rating number (1 through 4) beside each statement. Ensure that your ratings relate specifically to the RCM’s assessment experience. Also, please indicate if a certain background/training element is not applicable to you.

1 – Not beneficial for my RCM examining experience
2 – Somewhat beneficial for my RCM examining experience
3 – Beneficial for my RCM examining experience
4 – Very Beneficial for my RCM examining experience

i. University Education
ii. Teaching experience
iii. Pedagogical training
iv. Judging at competitions (please specify at which level: local, regional or provincial/state)
v. Experience with other assessments (please specify level: elementary, high school, post-secondary, examining for other boards)
vi. Any other formal training with assessment (please specify)
b. Please describe the type(s) of preparation that you actually accomplished prior to the mentoring days.

c. How well did you know the RCM repertoire? Mark with an X the statement that applies to you.

1  – Very unfamiliar
2  – Not familiar
3  – Somewhat familiar
4  – Familiar
5  – Very Familiar

d. Please rate how essential each of the following areas were in helping you feel comfortable as an examiner. In addition to the factors listed below, please rate each type of preparation you listed in question 2b. You can list these items below. Mark your rating number (1 through 3) beside each item.

1  – Not essential in helping me feel comfortable
2  – Somewhat essential in helping me feel comfortable
3  – Very essential in helping me feel comfortable

i. Experience taking RCM exams in the past (if applicable)
ii. Knowledge of the repertoire

3. Your Mentors

a. How did he/she conduct the day of exams with you present? Did he/she let you “do your own thing” or did he/she take on a more hands-on approach?
b. Was this what you expected to be the mentor’s role?
c. What types of suggestions (if any) did your mentors recommend?
d. Please describe anything you wish the mentor would have done differently.

4. Looking Ahead

a. Please describe what you will carry forward and do the same for the next session of mentoring days.
b. What will you do differently?
Appendix G

Survey 3 for Apprentices from the 2009 Training Session

SURVEY OF THE RCM EXAMINATIONS EXAMINER APPRENTICES – January 2010

Dear Colleague,

I hope you are having a wonderful new year! Thank you for taking the time to complete the following survey and thank you for your continued participation in this year-long project. Your input is of the greatest importance for the completion of my dissertation research.

I am truly grateful for your willingness and generosity of time to respond to the following questions. Any other comments relating to the questions asked are more than welcome. Please include these comments underneath each question it applies to. If you have questions or concerns about this survey, feel free to e-mail me at any time. I would appreciate it if you could please complete and e-mail the survey to me by Friday February 12, 2009. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Diana Dumlavwalla
dumlavwalla@gmail.com

1. The Second Examining Experience

   a. Having completed the second session examining with a mentor present, how confident/comfortable do you feel assessing RCM examination candidates? Please rate according to the following scale and mark with an X:
      1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
      2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
      3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat Insecure
      4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
      5 – Comfortable/Confident
      6 – Very comfortable/Very Confident

   b. Overall, how was your experience in comparison to the session last August? Please mark with an X one option from each set of choices.
      1 - Less comfortable
      2 – Same level of comfort
      3 – More comfortable
      1 – Less confident in my decisions
      2 – Same level of confidence in my decisions
      3 – Greater level of confidence in my decisions
c. For each skill/task listed, please rate each statement according to the following scale. Indicate the rating number (1 through 6) beside each statement. If any skill improved as the days progressed, please describe.

1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Somewhat Disagree
4 – Somewhat Agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly Agree

i. I was able to help the candidates feel at (relative) ease.
ii. I administered the ear tests and sight reading portions efficiently and accurately.
iii. I was able to assign marks easily for each segment of the examination and I felt confident about my decisions.
iv. I produced written reports that were succinct and provided helpful comments for the candidates and their teachers.
v. Written reports for each segment clearly reflected the marks I assigned.
vi. I stayed on schedule with only perhaps an occasional five-minute delay.

d. Were there any procedural or evaluative tasks that you tackled in a manner differently from last August’s examination session? If so, please specify these changes and describe how they positively or negatively impacted your most recent examining experience.

2. Feedback from RCM Examinations

a. Please rate the following statement according to the scale below.

The apprentice report concurred with how I felt about my performance as an apprentice examiner.

1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Somewhat Disagree
4 – Somewhat Agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly Agree

b. Did you find the report’s comments/suggestions helpful?

1 – Not helpful
2 – Somewhat helpful
3 – Helpful
4 – Very helpful

c. Were you able to incorporate these suggestions in your development as an examiner? Please describe.

3. Your Mentors

e. How did he/she conduct the day of exams with you present? Did he/she let you “do your own thing” or did he/she take on a more hands-on approach?

f. Was this what you expected to be the mentor’s role at this stage in your training?

g. What types of suggestions (if any) did your mentors recommend?

h. Please describe anything you wish the mentor could have done differently.

4. Looking Ahead

c. Please describe what you will carry forward and do the same for the next session of mentoring days.

d. What will you do differently?
Appendix H
Interview Questionnaire for Apprentices from the 2008 Training Seminar

1. Background Information: Education

   a. What types of formative music education did you receive prior to post-secondary school? Please type an X beside all that apply.

      Private lessons
      Group Lessons
      Preparatory Programs (e.g. YAPA at the RCM, Junior Departments run by universities and conservatories)
      Instruction provided in elementary or high school
      Other – please indicate

   b. What formal music education did you receive at the post-secondary level? If you started, but did not finish the program requirements for a specific degree please indicate this below. Mark with an X all that apply.

      Bachelor of Music
         Performance
         Education
         Theory
         Composition
         History
         Pedagogy
         Music Therapy
         Other – please indicate

      Master of Music
         Performance
         Education
         Theory
         Composition
         History
         Pedagogy
         Music Therapy
         Other – please indicate

      Doctor of Music Arts
         Performance
         Composition
         Pedagogy
PhD

Education
Theory
History

Diploma – please specify

c. Did you take examinations by the RCM or another board as a student? Yes/No

If yes, did you receive your A.R.C.T.? Please specify whether you completed the requirements for Performer’s or Teacher’s requirements. If you completed the requirements for the associateship of another board, please specify.

2. Teaching Experience

a. Indicate the types of teaching experiences you have by writing the number of years you have been involved with each activity listed below.

Private lessons
Group lessons
Elementary school classroom teaching
High school classroom teaching
University level teaching

b. Describe all formal piano pedagogy training you have received. Please be as specific as possible by writing a short explanation about the training.

Pedagogy class(es) taken at the undergraduate level
Pedagogy class(es) taken at the graduate level
Seminar(s) that resulted in certificate(s)
Other – please specify

c. Do you attend any of the following activities on a regular basis (once or twice a year)? Mark with an X all that apply.

Workshops provided by teachers’ associations, the RCM
Pedagogy conferences

3. Evaluating Experience

a. Indicate the types of evaluating/assessing experiences you have by writing the number of years you have been involved with each activity listed below.

Judging at:
Local Festivals/Competitions
Regional Festivals/Competitions  
Provincial/State Competitions  
National Competitions  
International Competitions  

Music assessments:  
Elementary School level  
High school level  
Post-secondary level (juries)  
Examinations for another examining board  

Other – please indicate  

b. Describe any formal training in evaluating other than the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship Training Program. Please be as specific as possible.  

4. Approaching the Examiner’s Chair: How did you feel?  

a. After completing the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship Training course, how confident did you feel evaluating RCM examination candidates?  
1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure  
2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure  
3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat Insecure  
4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident  
5 – Comfortable/Confident  
6 – Very comfortable/Very Confident  

b. What did you expect would be your greatest strength(s) when examining?  

c. What did you expect would be your weakness(es) when examining?  

d. Was there anything else you wish could have been covered in the training course?  

e. How well prepared did you think you were for the first set of mentoring days? Please describe.  

f. What sort of preparation did you do between the training seminar and your first two mentoring days? Did you do any preparation in between each set of mentoring days?  

g. What was your impression of an examiner’s role before you underwent the examiner training course and observation day(s)?  

Did that impression change after you went through the initial stages of training? If so, in what way was your initial impression altered?
5. The Mentoring Days

a. After completing each set of mentoring days, how confident/comfortable did you feel assessing RCM examination candidates? Please rate according to the following scale and mark with an X. **Indicate how he/she felt after EACH set of days:** (this is reminder for me)
   1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
   2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
   3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat Insecure
   4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
   5 – Comfortable/Confident
   6 – Very comfortable/Very Confident

b. Did you gain comfort/confidence with your examining skills and decisions as your mentoring days progressed?

c. Please describe how each day of examinations progressed. Was this what you expected? If not, what would you have liked done differently?

d. Did you feel that the Examiner Apprenticeship Program successfully influenced your expectations for these mentoring days? If not, please describe what you were expecting based on the sessions in the apprenticeship program.

e. For each skill/task listed, please rate each statement according to the following scale. Indicate the rating number (1 through 6) beside each statement. If any skill improved as the days progressed, please describe.
   1 – Strongly Disagree
   2 – Disagree
   3 – Somewhat Disagree
   4 – Somewhat Agree
   5 – Agree
   6 – Strongly Agree

   i. I was able to help the candidates feel at (relative) ease.
   ii. I administered the ear tests and sight reading portions efficiently and accurately.
   iii. I was able to assign marks easily for each segment of the examination and felt confident about my decisions.
   iv. I produced written reports that were succinct and provided helpful comments for the candidates and their teachers.
   v. Written reports for each segment clearly reflected the marks I assigned.
   vi. I stayed on schedule with only perhaps an occasional five-minute delay.

f. Were there any procedural or evaluative tasks that you tackled differently from between the examination sessions? If so, please specify these changes and describe how they positively or negatively impacted your most recent examining experience.
6. Background, Training and Preparation

a. How did the areas of your background/training help you with your first RCM examining experience? Please rate each factor according to the following scale and mark your rating number (1 through 4) beside each statement. Ensure that your ratings relate specifically to the RCM’s assessment experience. Also, please indicate if a certain background/training element is not applicable to you.

1 – Not beneficial for my RCM examining experience
2 – Somewhat beneficial for my RCM examining experience
3 – Beneficial for my RCM examining experience
4 – Very Beneficial for my RCM examining experience

i. University Education
ii. Teaching experience
iii. Pedagogical training
iv. Judging at competitions (please specify at which level: local, regional or provincial/state)
v. Experience with other assessments (please specify level: elementary, high school, post-secondary, examining for other boards)
vi. Any other formal training with assessment (please specify)

Which earlier evaluating experience (eg. festivals/juries, etc.) prepared you the most for the RCM examining experience? How similar or different are the experiences? Please explain.

b. How well did you know the RCM repertoire? Mark with an X the statement that applies to you.

1 – Very unfamiliar
2 – Not familiar
3 – Somewhat familiar
4 – Familiar
5 – Very Familiar

c. Please rate how essential each of the following areas were in helping you feel comfortable as an examiner. In addition to the factors listed below, please rate each type of preparation you listed in question 2b. You can list these items below. Mark your rating number (1 through 3) beside each item.

1 – Not essential in helping me feel comfortable
2 – Somewhat essential in helping me feel comfortable
3 – Very essential in helping me feel comfortable

i. Experience taking RCM exams in the past (if applicable)
ii. Knowledge of the repertoire
7. Your Mentors

a. How did they conduct the days of exams with you present? Did they let you “do your own thing” or did they take on a more hands-on approach?

b. Was this what you expected to be the mentor’s role?

c. What types of suggestions (if any) did your mentors recommend? Did these suggestions concur with the information provided at the training seminar?

d. Please describe anything you wish the mentors would have done differently.

8. Feedback from RCM Examinations

a. Please rate the following statement according to the scale below.

The apprentice reports concurred with how I felt about my performances as an apprentice examiner.

1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Somewhat Disagree
4 – Somewhat Agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly Agree

b. Did you find the report’s comments/suggestions helpful?

1 – Not helpful
2 – Somewhat helpful
3 – Helpful
4 – Very helpful

c. Were you able to incorporate these suggestions in your development as an examiner? Please describe.

9. In the Examiner’s Chair

a. How confident/comfortable do you now feel assessing RCM examination candidates? Please rate according to the following scale and mark with an X.

1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat Insecure
4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
5 – Comfortable/Confident
6 – Very comfortable/Very Confident

b. How long have you been working as full member of the College of Examiners?

c. What advice would you give to examiner apprentices and other individuals interested in becoming examiners?

Misc. Questions

Do you feel the time allotted for the various grades of examinations is enough to complete your job as an examiner or not enough?

In how much detail would you compare comments and marks with the mentors?

Did you feel that the RCM matched mentors that were specifically suitable to you? (you: based on your personality, experience, education)

Do you agree with how RCM evaluates students?
Appendix I

Interview Questionnaire for Senior Examiners

1. Background Information: Education

   a. What types of formative music education did you receive prior to post-secondary school? Please type an X beside all that apply.

      Private lessons
      Group Lessons
      Preparatory Programs (eg. YAPA at the RCM, Junior Departments run by universities and conservatories)
      Instruction provided in elementary or high school
      Other – please indicate

   b. What formal music education did you receive at the post-secondary level? If you started, but did not finish the program requirements for a specific degree please indicate this below. Mark with an X all that apply.

      Bachelor of Music
      Performance
      Education
      Theory
      Composition
      History
      Pedagogy
      Music Therapy
      Other – please indicate

      Master of Music
      Performance
      Education
      Theory
      Composition
      History
      Pedagogy
      Music Therapy
      Other – please indicate

      Doctor of Musical Arts
      Performance
      Composition
      Pedagogy

      PhD
      Education
Theory
History

Diploma – please specify

c. As a student, did you take examinations by the RCM or another board? Yes/No

If yes, did you receive your A.R.C.T.? Please specify whether you completed the requirements for Performer’s or Teacher’s requirements. If you completed the requirements for the associateship of another board, please specify.

2. Teaching Experience

a. Indicate the types of teaching experiences you have by writing the number of years you have been involved with each activity listed below.

Private lessons
Group lessons
Elementary school classroom teaching
High school classroom teaching
University level teaching

b. Describe all formal piano pedagogy training you have received. Please be as specific as possible by writing a short explanation about the training.

Pedagogy class/classes taken at the undergraduate level
Pedagogy class/classes taken at the graduate level
Seminar(s) that resulted in certificate(s)
Other – please specify

c. Do you attend any of the following activities on a regular basis (once or twice a year)? Mark with an X all that apply

Workshops provided by teachers’ associations, the RCM
Pedagogy conferences

3. Evaluating Experience

a. Indicate the types of evaluating/assessing experiences you have by writing the number of years you have been involved with each activity listed below.

Judging at:
Local Festivals/Competitions
Regional Festivals/Competitions
Provincial/State Competitions
National Competitions
International Competitions

Music assessments:
Elementary School level
High school level
Post-secondary level (juries)
Examinations for another examining board

Other – please indicate

b. Describe any formal training in evaluating other than the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship Training Program. Please be as specific as possible.

4. RCM Examiner Apprenticeship Training Program

a. What were the components of your in-class training seminars? What topics were covered?

b. What were the mentoring days like? How many days did you complete? What kind of advice did your mentors provide you?

c. Looking back, after completing the RCM Examiner Apprenticeship Training program, how confident did you feel evaluating RCM examination candidates?
1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat Insecure
4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
5 – Comfortable/Confident
6 – Very comfortable/Very Confident

d. Was there anything else you wish could have been covered in the training course?

5. Approaching the Examiner’s Chair: Early Examining Experiences

a. As you progressed through the training program, what were your strengths and weaknesses? What skills came easily to you and what did you need to work on?

b. What type of preparation would you do for the mentoring days?

c. Think back to the first 2 or 3 sessions of examining. Could you reflect on your level of confidence and expertise during those first sessions? How would you rate yourself for each element as an examiner? For each skill/task listed, please rate each statement according to the following scale. Indicate the rating number (1 through 6) beside each statement.

1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
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3 – Somewhat Disagree
4 – Somewhat Agree
5 – Agree
6 – Strongly Agree

i. I was able to help the candidates feel at (relative) ease.

ii. I administered the ear tests and sight reading portions efficiently and accurately.

iii. I was able to assign marks easily for each segment of the examination and felt confident about my decisions.

iv. I produced written reports that were succinct and provided helpful comments for the candidates and their teachers.

v. Written reports for each segment clearly reflected the marks I assigned.

vi. I stayed on schedule with only perhaps an occasional five-minute delay.

6. Influence of Background and Training on Early Examining Experiences

a. How did the areas of your background/training help you with your first RCM examining experience? Please rate each factor according to the following scale and mark your rating number (1 through 4) beside each statement. Ensure that your ratings relate specifically to the RCM’s assessment experience. Also, please indicate if a certain background/training element is not applicable to you.

1 – Not beneficial for my RCM examining experience
2 – Somewhat beneficial for my RCM examining experience
3 – Beneficial for my RCM examining experience
4 – Very Beneficial for my RCM examining experience

i. University Education

ii. Teaching experience

iii. Pedagogical training

iv. Judging at competitions (please specify at which level: local, regional or provincial/state)

v. Experience with other assessments (please specify level: elementary, high school, post-secondary, examining for other boards)

vi. Any other formal training with assessment (please specify)

Which earlier evaluating experience (e.g., festivals/juries, etc.) prepared you the most for the RCM examining experience? How similar or different are the experiences? Please explain.

b. Please rate how essential each of the following areas were in helping you feel comfortable as an examiner. In addition to the factors listed below, please rate each type of preparation you listed in question 2b. You can list these items below. Mark your rating number (1 through 3) beside each item.
1 – Not essential in helping me feel comfortable
2 – Somewhat essential in helping me feel comfortable
3 – Very essential in helping me feel comfortable

i. Experience taking RCM exams in the past (if applicable)
ii. Knowledge of the repertoire

7. In the Senior Examiner’s Chair

a. How confident/comfortable do you now feel assessing RCM examination candidates? Please rate according to the following scale and mark with an X.

1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat Insecure
4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
5 – Comfortable/Confident
6 – Very comfortable/Very Confident

b. How long have you been working as a full member of the College of Examiners?

c. How do you prepare for upcoming examining sessions? Do you review materials, repertoire?

d. What do you think has contributed to your comfort/confidence? Eg. Experience, training, background, preparation, RCM training and enrichment workshops?

e. How do you deal with the time factor? Are you able to stay on time?

f. What do you do to ensure that the marks reflect the comments?

8. Passing the Baton: Mentoring examiner apprentices

a. As a well-respected examiner, you have probably mentored examiner apprentices yourself. What sort of instruction do you receive from the RCM for this duty?

b. Is there anything that can be done to enhance the mentoring program?

c. What advice would you give to examiner apprentices and other individuals interested in becoming examiners? What can they do to best prepare themselves for the examining experience.
Appendix J

Questionnaire for all Examiners/Examiner Apprentices

Dear Colleagues,

This is the final survey I am sending you for my thesis project. Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this. As always, I am very grateful for your willingness and generosity of time to respond to the questionnaires.

There are no long answers in this questionnaire. You simply have to click on the box which corresponds to your confidence/comfort level as related to each element listed. I am aware that not all of you had to undergo three mentoring sessions or a four-day in-class training course during your apprenticeship. If a certain question does not apply to you, please indicate as necessary. Any other comments or clarifications relating to the questions asked are more than welcome. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, feel free to e-mail me at any time. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Diana Dumlavwalla
ddumlavwalla@gmail.com

1. Please recall how comfortable/confident you felt prior to the in-class training course or four-day seminar or equivalent. For each skill/task listed, rate each statement according to the scale indicated. Please mark the one box that reflected your confidence/comfort level with the prospect of accomplishing each examining task or skill.

a. Helping candidates feel at relative ease

1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
5 – Comfortable/Confident
6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

b. Administering ear and sight reading tests efficiently and accurately

1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
5 – Comfortable/Confident
6 – Very comfortable/Very confident
c. Assigning marks easily for each segment of the exam and feeling confident about the decisions made

- 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

d. Producing succinct reports that provide helpful comments for candidates and their teachers

- 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

e. Writing reports for each segment that clearly reflect the marks assigned – in RCM term, this would be the “linkage” between the marks and comments

- 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

f. Staying on schedule with only perhaps a five minute delay

- 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident
2. Please recall how comfortable/confident you felt after the in-class training course or four-day seminar or equivalent. For each skill/task listed, rate each statement according to the scale indicated. Please mark the one box that reflected your confidence/comfort level with the prospect of accomplishing each examining task or skill.

a. Helping candidates feel at relative ease
   - 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
   - 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
   - 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
   - 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
   - 5 – Comfortable/Confident
   - 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

b. Administering ear and sight reading tests efficiently and accurately
   - 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
   - 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
   - 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
   - 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
   - 5 – Comfortable/Confident
   - 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

c. Assigning marks easily for each segment of the exam and feeling confident about the decisions made
   - 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
   - 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
   - 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
   - 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
   - 5 – Comfortable/Confident
   - 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

d. Producing succinct reports that provide helpful comments for candidates and their teachers
   - 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
   - 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
   - 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
   - 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
   - 5 – Comfortable/Confident
   - 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

e. Writing reports for each segment that clearly reflect the marks assigned – in RCM term, this would be the “linkage” between the marks and comments
   - 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
   - 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
   - 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
   - 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
f. Staying on schedule with only perhaps a five minute delay
   1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
   2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
   3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
   4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
   5 – Comfortable/Confident
   6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

3. Please recall how comfortable/confident you felt after the first mentoring session. For each skill/task listed, rate each statement according to the scale indicated. Please mark the one box that reflected your confidence/comfort level with your ability to accomplish each examining task or skill.

   a. Helping candidates feel at relative ease
      1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
      2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
      3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
      4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
      5 – Comfortable/Confident
      6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

   b. Administering ear and sight reading tests efficiently and accurately
      1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
      2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
      3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
      4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
      5 – Comfortable/Confident
      6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

   c. Assigning marks easily for each segment of the exam and feeling confident about the decisions made
      1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
      2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
      3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
      4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
      5 – Comfortable/Confident
      6 – Very comfortable/Very confident
d. Producing succinct reports that provide helpful comments for candidates and their teachers

- 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

e. Writing reports for each segment that clearly reflect the marks assigned – in RCM term, this would be the “linkage” between the marks and comments

- 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

f. Staying on schedule with only perhaps a five minute delay

- 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

4. Please recall how comfortable/confident you felt after the second mentoring session. For each skill/task listed, rate each statement according to the scale indicated. Please mark the one box that reflected your confidence/comfort level with your ability to accomplish each examining task or skill.

a. Helping candidates feel at relative ease

- 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident
b. Administering ear and sight reading tests efficiently and accurately

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c. Assigning marks easily for each segment of the exam and feeling confident about the decisions made

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d. Producing succinct reports that provide helpful comments for candidates and their teachers

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e. Writing reports for each segment that clearly reflect the marks assigned – in RCM term, this would be the “linkage” between the marks and comments

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f. Staying on schedule with only perhaps a five minute delay

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5. Please recall how comfortable/confident you felt at the end of the examiner apprenticeship – after all the mentoring sessions were complete. For each skill/task listed, rate each statement according to the scale indicated. Please mark the one box that reflected your confidence/comfort level with your ability to accomplish each examining task or skill.

a. Helping candidates feel at relative ease

- [ ] 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- [ ] 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- [ ] 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- [ ] 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- [ ] 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- [ ] 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

b. Administering ear and sight reading tests efficiently and accurately

- [ ] 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- [ ] 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- [ ] 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- [ ] 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- [ ] 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- [ ] 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

c. Assigning marks easily for each segment of the exam and feeling confident about the decisions made

- [ ] 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- [ ] 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- [ ] 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- [ ] 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- [ ] 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- [ ] 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

d. Producing succinct reports that provide helpful comments for candidates and their teachers

- [ ] 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- [ ] 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- [ ] 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
- [ ] 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
- [ ] 5 – Comfortable/Confident
- [ ] 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

e. Writing reports for each segment that clearly reflect the marks assigned – in RCM term, this would be the “linkage” between the marks and comments

- [ ] 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
- [ ] 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
- [ ] 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
f. Staying on schedule with only perhaps a five minute delay
   ☐ 1 – Very uncomfortable/Very insecure
   ☐ 2 – Uncomfortable/Insecure
   ☐ 3 – Somewhat uncomfortable/Somewhat insecure
   ☐ 4 – Somewhat Comfortable/Somewhat Confident
   ☐ 5 – Comfortable/Confident
   ☐ 6 – Very comfortable/Very confident

6. How did the following areas of your background/training affect your confidence/comfort levels with examining? Please rate each factor according to the scale indicated.

   a. Education
      ☐ 1 – Decreased my confidence level
      ☐ 2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
      ☐ 3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
      ☐ 4 – Increased my confidence level
      ☐ 5 – Significantly increased my confidence level

   b. Teaching Experience
      ☐ 1 – Decreased my confidence level
      ☐ 2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
      ☐ 3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
      ☐ 4 – Increased my confidence level
      ☐ 5 – Significantly increased my confidence level

   c. Previous Evaluating Experience (If you had no experience, please indicate)
      ☐ 1 – Decreased my confidence level
      ☐ 2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
      ☐ 3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
      ☐ 4 – Increased my confidence level
      ☐ 5 – Significantly increased my confidence level

   d. Taking RCM exams as a student (If this was not part of your experience, please indicate)
      ☐ 1 – Decreased my confidence level
      ☐ 2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
      ☐ 3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
      ☐ 4 – Increased my confidence level
      ☐ 5 – Significantly increased my confidence level
e. Prior teaching experience with the RCM curriculum (If this was not part of your experience, please indicate)

1 – Decreased my confidence level
2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
4 – Increased my confidence level
5 – Significantly increased my confidence level

f. Four Day Training Seminar (or equivalent)

1 – Decreased my confidence level
2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
4 – Increased my confidence level
5 – Significantly increased my confidence level

g. The homework you did on your own before and between mentoring sessions. (eg. mock exams, colour-coded charts, listening to recordings of repertoire, playing through repertoire, etc.)

1 – Decreased my confidence level
2 – Had no effect on my confidence level
3 – Slightly increased my confidence level
4 – Increased my confidence level
5 – Significantly increased my confidence level