GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

MUSIC
GCSE

SUMMER 2018

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https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?l=en

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Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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COMPONENT 1 PERFORMING

This report is based on feedback received from members of the moderating team for GCSE Music.
I should like to thank teachers for all the hard work they have undertaken during this academic year preparing candidates for the Component1: Performing. On evidence, the process for the majority of centres has run smoothly with few glitches and teachers are hopefully finding that the new system of uploading pupil work presents few problems.

Centre administration:

There were many very organised and efficient uploads where correct files were labelled in a uniform manner with candidate name or number and solo/ensemble clearly visible; mark sheets on the whole were filled in correctly and marks adjusted for difficulty level. Unfortunately, some moderators encountered several issues – missing student and teacher declarations, missing timings of individual pieces, miscalculations of marks and non-adjustment of marks for under-time performances and difficulty levels. Several centres had to be contacted for the correct work to be uploaded and I thank them for their swift responses.
Some teachers gave useful comments in the teacher comment box which were helpful in giving an insight into certain individuals' work. Some used this space to explain the content of ensemble performances, others noting the absence of work. This was particularly useful and avoided unnecessary messages to centres regarding missing work.
Please also note that 'Piece 1' refers to the ensemble on the mark sheet; several centres placed details of the solo performance in this space.

Timings:

This was sadly an issue for several centres when the submissions did not reach the minimum time requirement of four minutes. Some teachers had adjusted marks appropriately but several had awarded a mark for the performance of one piece. The specification states clearly: "a minimum of **two** pieces must be performed". There were several recordings where the teacher's spoken announcement of the piece was included in the timings noted as were long musical introductions; it is vital that teachers time from the candidate's entry. When this occurs it may have implications for the overall mark awarded and may incur an under-time penalty if it means the candidate falls short of the minimum requirements, as set out in the specification.

There is no need for an announcement prior to each recorded performance.

Recordings:

It is a pleasure to note that the majority of MP3 recordings submitted were of a high quality with the role of the candidate clear to the moderators. There were a few recordings which cut out after a few seconds. It would be really helpful for all moderators if centres will please check recordings in future before uploading; it delays the moderation process if centres have to be contacted regarding missing or short recordings.

Several schools had added reverb to their recordings to enhance the sound; this is not in line with the specification which states that the attempt should be 'unedited'.

In some ensemble recordings, where possible, parts need to be more carefully balanced; at times either the candidate or their supporting performers were especially prominent and it became difficult to distinguish the other parts and to judge the candidate's ability to maintain a balance.

Scores/Lead sheets

Although most centres had provided clearly annotated scores or lead sheets with the role of candidate highlighted, too frequently, scores and lead sheets were found to be lacking, either in their presentation (e.g. poor quality photocopies which obscured some notation), or in their failure to indicate significant deviation from what had been written (e.g. additional repeating sections, melodic/rhythmic variation). This was particularly evident in popular and musical theatre songs. Some teachers just wrote blanket statements across the top of the score e.g. 'performed freely' or 'with stylistic changes'. In order to moderate marks for accuracy, specific bars on the score must be either changed or bracketed with the words "melodic embellishment at this point".

There were examples too of solo copies submitted for ensemble with unacceptable comments such as "candidate adds improvised harmony parts"!

Lyrics with chords written above are not appropriate as lead sheets for vocal or guitar performances. It is essential for the moderation process that lead sheets contain detail as outlined in the specification with an outline of the melody and strumming pattern clearly indicated. Drum scores must show an indication of rhythmic patterns and structure.

Please note that the submission of YouTube links or recordings in lieu of scores/lead sheets is not admissible.

In cases where there is insufficient detail in the score provided, the highest marks cannot be awarded for accuracy as there is not sufficient evidence to support this.

Very often, the role of the candidate in an ensemble performance was totally unclear on the score. The clearest scores were those with the candidate's role highlighted.

Again, I urge centres to check the orientation of score pages and that all pages are uploaded.

Difficulty Level

On the whole, difficulty levels had been correctly awarded, although vocal music in particular was often quoted at a higher level when some of the songs offered were limited in their vocal range and rhythmically simple e.g. the song "Hallelujah". Please contact the WJEC/Eduqas Subject Officer if in doubt of difficulty level and consider carefully the pages in the specification which give a clear indication of requirements for each level. It is important to note also that pieces of Grade 4 standard which are simplified for the candidate cannot be stated as 'More Difficult' on the mark sheet.

There were a number of centres giving pupils Grade 3/4 pieces to attract marks for difficulty, but several lost more marks for accuracy and technical control which negated the extra marks. Centres choosing simple, more repetitive pieces for their weakest candidates fared much better.

Solo Repertoire:

Most candidates had chosen totally appropriate pieces for their solo performances commensurate with their ability and reflecting their individual musical interests which is to be commended. It was a joy to hear so many performances which were full of expression and musicality.

Across the centres, there was an impressive and exciting range of genres featured from classical solos to vocal rap performances, from bagpipe solos to outstanding djembe performances.
Again Rockschool and Trinity Rock and Pop proved to be popular with guitarists, drummers and vocalists with some impressive improvisations also offered.
Please note that for the purposes of an examination, explicit or otherwise inappropriate lyrics must be avoided.

Ensemble Repertoire:

It was pleasing to hear so many excellent ensemble choices, ranging from instrumental groups, piano duets, close harmony vocal groups to rap duets and some outstanding steel pan ensembles where the melody line was passed from one performer to the other, fulfilling the specification criteria admirably.
Some of the best performances were from pieces that had been arranged by teachers for their candidates. Scores had been carefully notated to include the role of the candidate which facilitated the moderation process.
Piano duets where the candidate performs the primo part, taking the melody throughout, do not meet the requirements for ensemble as per the specification. An alternative for piano players, which several centres offered this year, was the accompanying of other performer(s). This was a good choice for both advanced pianists and the less able, as accompaniments are readily available at a range of standards.
Musical theatre numbers are still popular but some ensemble choices in this genre were unwise e.g. "For Good", which contains far too much solo material and not enough opportunity for interaction; the same with "Panis Angelicus" where Part 1 takes the melody throughout. One centre swapped parts very successfully and annotated the score accordingly.
Centres should also take some caution when adapting solo repertoire for ensemble performance to ensure that it still meets the requirements of the specification; candidates must be able to demonstrate ensemble skills. This was evident in some Rock School guitar performances which were really solo performances again with accompaniment provided by a bass player and drummer. Similarly, vocal lines which take the melody throughout are considered to be solo performances.
Again, I urge centres to submit scores to the WJEC/Eduqas Subject Officer to confirm the suitability of certain ensemble pieces.
A significant number of centres used the same ensemble pieces for all of their candidates. I understand how this helps teachers to prepare pupils, but I do wonder if this practice offers candidates the best opportunity to gain high marks.

Teacher Assessment:

Overall, marking was deemed fair and objective and moderators reported that they were in agreement with many centres regarding the assessment of candidates' work. The quality of the work went from some truly magnificent, high standard performances to the very basic.
The grids were used well on the whole; however, there were instances when candidates received a "double penalty" for intonation issues, scoring low marks for 'Accuracy' as well as 'Technical Control'.
Regrettably, some (very able) candidates were awarded zero for this component as the timings of their submitted performances failed to meet the requirements of the specification, as directed by Ofqual. Frustratingly, if some of these performers had been instructed to follow the written repeat markings, they would not have fallen short of this vital requirement!

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COMPONENT 2 COMPOSING

This report is a general overview based on feedback received from the members of the moderating team. I trust that teachers, and all those responsible for the guidance of future GCSE candidates in Music, will find the content of valuable use.

Administration

All centres uploaded their sample coursework this year in line with WJEC requirements. For most this was a completely successful process, and moderators commented on the excellent practice adopted in many centres. For others, the process was a little more problematic and some moderators faced a number of clerical errors: there were the usual problems of missing authentication signatures and errors in calculations, but of more concern this year were the occasional missing and /or incomplete files, tracks and documentation (including the necessary marksheets). Partial uploads were noted by almost all of the moderating team, with some work having been submitted after the deadline. Most centres were swift to respond to requests for the missing work but unfortunately this was not always the case, and on a few occasions the Composing work was uploaded under the Performing Unit (and vice-versa). Some work had been 'scanned', at times appearing very faint, occasionally loaded upside down and at times mislabelled. Some teachers added comments to support their marks, and while these are not compulsory, some moderators found them helpful.
Best practice has been recognised by all the team as well-organised, clearly labelled, and uploaded on time! It was also felt that the timings of pieces and penalties correctly included on the marksheets were very helpful.
In an attempt to clarify, please note the following requirements which may assist teachers next year.

- **Labelling work**

  The file names must be clearly identifiable, and not too long. Some centres had begun each file (whether pdf or mp3) with the title Comp.2: this was a little confusing, as the files looked as if they were all for composition 2, but in actual fact it meant Component 2!
  In all, there must be 6 items to upload – can I therefore suggest the following labelling system:
  1. (Candidate number) Log
  2. (Candidate number) Marksheet
  3. (Candidate number) Set brief - score
  4. (Candidate number) Set brief - mp3
  5. (Candidate number) Free brief - score
  6. (Candidate number) Free brief - mp3

This is just a suggestion – but such uploads were the easiest to navigate. Some centres presented zip files, others presented all the written material as one (very long) document. I am happy to leave it to the centre, but please check carefully that all the required information and coursework has been uploaded correctly, to avoid accidental omission.

- **Titles**

A number of candidates omitted to include titles for their work. Most were labelled appropriately and often imaginatively – other titles were felt to be totally unrelated to the music.

- **Putting marks on IAMIS**

There were some errors and miscalculations noted by moderators which affected the rank order in some centres.

Candidate Logs

The log is the opportunity for candidates to highlight their composing skills and display their understanding of the composing process to the moderator. Most took the opportunity to present the processes and decisions they had undertaken to produce their final composition, with some presenting a very detailed explanation**.** The best cases gave excellent insight into the candidate's thought processes and musical influences – the more informative were concise, contained excellent reasoning for all choices and outlined details of musical devices and processes. This is highly valued and praised by all moderators as the **information supports the musical outcome**; and an accurate account of the process helps to contextualise the compositions, allowing the moderator to appreciate a clear rationale for choices made in their compositional journey.

It was acknowledged that the quality of the logs were extremely varied, and unfortunately there were many occasions when the procedures were still not clear; this usually related to instances when the recording was performed by someone other than the composer, or when the recording was different to the score. Some candidates omitted to state the brief, others did not surrender the required (or indeed sufficient) details of live performances, and disappointingly rather too many were vague, lacking in detail and sufficient explanation. Some information was presented in the wrong order, and occasionally did not seem to match with the work (e.g. one candidate described an atonal piece but the score and recording was in B major). Moderators noted logs that were left incomplete, or presented illogical information not showing understanding, or seemed to have been completed at the very last minute, (even retrospectively). In some cases the logs from the cohort had not been not attempted or included; another centre submitted only the first pages, with the candidate declarations. Please remind all candidates that completion of the log is a firm requirement of the specification.

Best practice/guidance for the candidate
- Type up the information and submit as a word document, with digital signatures
- Always state the selected brief in the space provided on the log, remembering to mention details of audience/occasion – it is not up to the moderator to seek out such details. There were a number of confused instances where one brief was stated on the front sheet, but another described in the log; **as the musical response to the brief is assessed this is an important consideration**.
- Leadsheets must include details of the overall structure, harmonies, descriptions of the melodic and rhythmic content, and lyrics when a song is submitted.
- Explain the different choices made, the steps taken, the techniques employed and targets set in agreement with the teacher at each stage. Include the guidance given by the teacher, and explain why certain musical features and decisions have been made (using factual musical terminology).
- When the comment is made that ideas were developed, explain **how** they were developed.

- When no score is available, and in the case of a live performance, there must be a clear explanation on how parts have been taught to performers. This almost always lacks clarity: please remind candidates that credit cannot be given to any work that is not their own. If candidates are able to play or sing each part, then they should multi-track the work themselves – this should not be a problem if they have taught others what to do. One centre had encouraged students to record the melodic line of their song on keyboard, then someone sang it above on a separate track, alongside the guide track; this was considered to be good practice.
  Please remember: the assessor must only credit what the composer has produced. When 'others' perform what they have been 'shown', the question arises as to why the candidate did not record their own ideas.
- Explain exactly how backing tracks have been created and identify any pre-existing patterns which have been used; with automated settings, candidates have not shown skills in the creation or development of the sounds/ ideas. When a candidate has created their own material, then credit is justly deserved.

Avoid
- The practice and explanation in the log of 'I told them what to play and they played it for me'; this is not appropriate for examination work. Rather too many candidates did not attempt to explain how their ideas had been communicated to the performers (particularly apparent when the student did not perform in their own recording)
- Relying on other people's practical skills to improve the content of the piece with embellishments, added decoration or improved content
- Including explanation in the log which really doesn't make sense in relation to the music (e.g. 'I checked to make sure everything blended together'...if the piece is full of dissonance)
- Submitting work where the input of the candidate is unclear e.g. a song where apparently all the candidate has done is written the words
- Embellishing the work of the candidate e.g. when a candidate has supplied chord symbols/triads for an accompaniment and the content is 'reinterpreted' for the recording by someone other than the candidate. When this occurs, ownership is lost.
- Using 'sample' sounds without explanation of the source and use. Try not to use automated settings for musical ideas.

Some moderators felt that a number of compositions had been signed off very early (as according to the logs). Such pieces did not often reach the highest standards in their view and would have benefitted from further refinement and development that additional time may have allowed.

Scores/Leadsheets

Most candidates presented scores or leadsheets with their compositions. Please note: it is also useful when candidates add the titles and their names / candidate numbers to the score or leadsheet.

Most notated scores were very well presented (usually Sibelius or Musescore), though moderators suggested that on occasion adding dynamics and performance marks would have been beneficial to show control of some elements. Scores from GarageBand were less detailed/informative, but still useful for the moderator. There were issues with some of the scores produced in Logic where the notation did not correctly represent the audio (e.g. if a candidate had used an arpeggiator and this was notated as a chord in semibreves – a difference not always clarified in the log); in addition, some scores in Logic were not always in the correct stave so there were at times a lot of unnecessary leger lines. Some centres had candidates who produced lots of notated parts rather than the full score; generally, moderators felt these were difficult to follow – a well explained, annotated lead sheet would probably have been more useful.

Some centres had clearly supported candidates in the preparation of leadsheets which were excellent - informative, well detailed and including snippets of notation and analyses within the overall structural outline which detailed harmonies and compositional devices. At times, individual parts were shown as either a piano roll, or had been portrayed using the 'score' function; this made it much easier to identify pitch, rhythmic and harmonic developments. Unfortunately, moderators still reported folios which only presented screenshots (of little use in themselves) or songs without the lyrics and harmonies.

Please note: when a score is not available, the inclusion of explanatory accompanying information is a firm requirement of this specification. It is encouraging to note that candidates are now also providing thoughts on dynamics and tempo /general performance markings, which demonstrates control over the musical elements. This year, there seemed to be more handwritten scores than previously; of course, this is perfectly acceptable if it suits the candidate!

Recordings

Recordings extracted from music software were mostly well balanced and of excellent quality, mostly in mp3 format, but also some AIFF files (Sibelius export function). Live recordings of songs were often far more successful than the use of a vocal sound(s), as hearing the word–setting was so much better! Others were less thoughtfully produced, with little regard for balance - some had tracks muted, with no explanation, and a tiny minority were simply far too quiet. A number of moderators reported of tracks which had been clipped or cut out before the end of the composition. There seemed to be a growing number of centres submitting live performances of the work; while this is certainly commendable and a practice to be encouraged (where possible), it does throw up some issues. Some of these have been mentioned already – but other issues include background noise, incorrect positioning of the microphone (giving unbalanced outcomes), and performances which did not accurately represent the score or included errors in performances. That said - many live performances were extremely impressive and most enjoyable.

Timings/Penalties

Most centres submitted folios that satisfied the minimum time requirement of 3 minutes, with many pieces lasting between 2 – 3 minutes. Some compositions were far too long, and most of these rather lost focus in terms of the structure. Please note: announcements are not necessary, and do not count towards the total time. Unfortunately, some folios did incur penalties, and these were imposed according to the guidelines in the GCSE specification – and in many cases correctly given by the centres themselves.
My advice here is that candidates must attempt to present two compositions of equal length and musical substance; in many folios it was noted that one composition was significantly better and more substantial than the other. This affected the marks.

Appropriate tasks

Most tasks were considered to be appropriate, though drum solos persist. At their best, these can include exciting rhythmic and timbral content, but they inhibit the candidate from showing control over such elements as melody and harmony. Some free compositions were presented as the result of class projects, with the whole class performing together to produce very similar and rather basic outcomes. This is not in the nature of the specification as we encourage individual working and a naturally differentiated outcome. It was felt that a few centres perhaps limited their candidates by taking a kind of 'composing by numbers' approach, again producing similar results which lacked creativity, sophistication and development. Another centre offered the same accompaniment for every candidate in one

task. A few candidates had used pre-existing themes which could not be credited. Several candidates linked their pieces to influences such as Pachelbel's canon and Yiruma, which resulted in little contribution melodically and harmonically. Where candidates had used pre-existing lyrics for their songs they were often influenced by the original music.

It was pleasing to see that most centres encouraged candidates to work to their strengths.

Use of ICT

Centres are using a wide range of technology to encourage candidates to explore a range of musical elements and sounds, with some candidates describing their use of iPads and even phones. Sadly, a few lament the lack of appropriate equipment in the department. Popular programs were Sibelius, GarageBand, Logic – also freeware such as Musescore and Noteflight. This list is certainly not exhaustive!

Thankfully, most (but unfortunately not all) candidates were clear in their application of ICT, clarifying when and how samples and loops had been used - if at all. Some exceptional examples of the use of ICT were noted as candidates explained the processes of sequencing and balancing final mixes. Other work was drowned out by drum loops and swamped by reverb; panning was a problem on a number of tracks. All moderators advise the careful checking of the final audio mix-down, and respectfully remind candidates of the priority of working on the musical content and not getting too carried away with sound effects! Finally, moderators advised of the care needed to refine and quantize, as some outcomes were very basic – conversely, others were overly complex and unmusical.

Compositions

- **General content**

It was felt that the emphasis given to the briefs has been a positive move, with compositions being generally focussed. There was a huge variety of work across the spectrum, ranging from outstanding and very professional, to weak. Many candidates submitted compositions of a similar genre, but this was perfectly acceptable and it was felt that this allowed them to work to their strengths (e.g. two piano pieces, 2 pop songs, 2 woodwind pieces, 2 film scores etc). One candidate wrote two pieces which used the same melodic motif in both, both in the same film-music style, and both for the same orchestration; this was not felt to be in the spirit of this Component, even if there is no requirement for the pieces to be contrasting – we still expect two different compositions! In most cases, compositions from within a centre drew upon a wide range of genres and musical combinations with pleasing success, with good use made to create interesting textures, and achieve variety and contrast in the use of the musical elements. To reiterate - it is commendable when centres allow candidates to explore their own interests and develop their own strengths.

Compositions recognised as being in the **top assessment band** were focussed, had structural clarity, thoughtful melodic substance and rhythmic ideas of interest; candidates made use of varied/extended chordal patterns and demonstrated flair, and stylistic invention – interplay between parts was natural, textural ideas were varied and the interweaving of ideas was effortless and creative.

Compositions that fell in **band 3** showed a satisfactory to good degree of musical style as candidates drew upon a fairly wide range of ideas and techniques to create interest – further work to improve phrasing, increase melodic clarity and refine and develop ideas was advised by moderators here.

Compositions in the **lower assessment bands** were brief and lacked sufficient harmonic and melodic understanding, often overly reliant on repetition to extend the material.

Relating to all the work, it was noted by all moderators that in terms of the **harmony**, set triads/ 4-chord tricks were a common starting point for many pieces. Once established, the better candidates then went on to explore other progressions and used more interesting chords – but many pieces copied the patterns relentlessly. It almost appeared to be the default setting from some centres where all candidates had approached their compositions in the same way (again seen in the information provided by candidates in their logs). The best candidates had invested time in harmonic exploration of chromatic and diminished chords and modulation to keys other than the obvious dominant, relative major or minor and this was impressive. Unfortunately (perhaps in line with many examples in the pop music industry) reliance on repetition and the use of a limited chord progression seems to be a growing trend, whereby the **melody** lines were also often triadic and seemed to be of secondary importance. Much melodic work was awkwardly placed, lacking direction, structure, focus and character. The use of **texture** was a strength in many pieces – imitation was the most prominent device, though also noted was pleasing use of layering, and antiphonal dialogue. In terms of **rhythm** and **metre**, some work did not venture beyond crotchets and minims with the occasional sets of quavers –but there were many occasions when candidates tried to use as many different rhythms and time signatures as possible, giving a muddled outcome which lacked clarity. There were some excellent examples of drum writing with sophisticated use of fills and changes of beat for the appropriate style, and candidates deserve credit for this – at other times it would have been better if the drum part had been left out as it did not contribute positively to the composition. Candidates are best advised to refine all initial ideas carefully, then work on ways to develop their initial material in a musical and focussed way. Those candidates who included **dynamic markings, articulations and performance directions** were in a good position to gain further credit in their 'control' of the musical elements. In terms of writing for **instruments**, the best results were clearly when candidates understood about the instruments they were composing for – most moderators' commented on the poor writing for piano at times.

N.B. the use of repeat marks: there is no benefit in including repeat marks solely for the purpose of extending the piece. Some were included for no obvious structural reason, and contributed nothing extra. Even when they have been included - as expected - in a certain structure (such as Binary Form), the repeat is not counted within the total time allocation.

Response to the set brief/Areas of Study

Brief 1: Musical Forms and Devices
(Compose a piece of music in binary form intended for performance by Year 11 instrumentalists in the school Awards Ceremony)
There were examples of well-structured pieces with a sense of melodic shape, a pleasing understanding of key relationships, and an excellent balance between Section A and B to develop ideas; many candidates executed the structure convincingly. Some responses were less convincing – e.g. where the B section was completed unrelated, where there was a lack of variety or development or where the form had been misinterpreted; a number of binary form pieces were either in ternary or some kind of rondo where different motifs kept occurring rather randomly. Many candidates started section B in a different (not always related) key – but ended in that key, which did not show understanding or achieve a coherent result overall; some candidates seemed to tag two stylistically opposite sections together with no apparent connection or relationship between the two.
Please remind future candidates to consider the entire brief e.g. some pieces were suitable for an Award Ceremony but not in binary form.

Brief 2: Music for Ensemble
(Compose a piece of music for 2-4 instruments suitable for use as an interlude between scenes in a musical of your own choice)

This brief was less popular with candidates. Some gave no indication as to the context of the music which made the musical response difficult to appreciate as a reflection of the brief. Other examples were really creative responses and very well done, while some lacked a clear sense of style. However, most fitted well with the scenes or theme of the play / musical they had chosen – some invented scenarios, which was perfectly acceptable.

Brief 3: Film Music
(Compose film music to accompany a scene set in a haunted house)
The brief most favoured, this offered scope for the candidates to be highly creative. Almost all pieces included appropriate sounds and ideas, though many were naïvely presented and constructed; the best were highly imaginative, atmospheric, full of originality and demonstrating excellent use of layering, contrasting timbres and textures, with ideas and motifs cleverly manipulated and developed. Many candidates used Logic Pro here to very good effect. Some film pieces seemed a little lengthy and repetitive, while the less successful were no more than a string of short unrelated ideas. There was much use of dissonance – not always well controlled; a number of pieces relied on elaborate storyboards and a series of sound effects. Some compositions felt like a musical exploration of noise rather than a focussed GCSE composition in terms of the way they relied totally on SFX (rather than use and development of the musical elements). Many candidates and centres mistakenly referred to this brief as 'Horror'. There were some individual takes on the brief, ranging from orchestral scores to piano solos; a few candidates wrote 'Haunted House' pieces for their own instruments and these were very successful – supporting the view by moderators that results were more stylistic and effective when candidates wrote with understanding and experience.

Brief 4: Popular Music
(Compose a piece of music to be performed by a student group in a youth Pop Festival to be held in your area)
This was also a very popular choice with variable results. Many candidates used GarageBand (some more successfully than others), others performed all their own ideas using multi-tracking facilities, while certain candidates created their own backing tracks (through programs such as Sibelius, Musescore or similar) and performed their ideas themselves – all excellent practice. There were some impressive rock songs, and indeed, most captured the style very well, with candidates demonstrating a true musical understanding of their chosen genre. I would advise against the use of a 'fade-out' at the end of a song; as it is intended for an exam where structure is assessed, a strong conclusion would be far more beneficial. The more successful outcomes varied the accompaniments, developed ideas, explored the textural possibilities by adding countermelodies and / or backing vocals and included a contrasting middle 8 / instrumental. Some songs included short sections of rap. Most of the lyrics were appropriate, but not all; please ensure that the content is appropriate for inclusion within a GCSE examination course.

Free compositions

These offered opportunity for contrast, but were most successful when the briefs were clear. There was a wide range of choices as expected, with extremely sophisticated and inventive material presented by the strongest candidates. On the odd occasion, the content was far too similar to the first composition.
Some candidates managed to impress in ***Minimalism,*** but they were in the minority; the weakest examples merely copied and pasted motifs/cells and layered them, with little development other than shifting the cells forward a crotchet beat, or producing endless loops with very little change. These pieces did not demonstrate development or contrast and were difficult to justify as band 4 compositions. Those that 'bent' the rules a little to produce outcomes that were interesting and more substantial were stronger.

Many candidates decided to link with *Forms and Devices* for their free composition, selecting from binary, ternary, rondo and ground bass pieces.

The best *Jazz* pieces demonstrated flair and true musical understanding, with some presenting detailed, annotated improvisatory sections. *Blues* pieces were still in evidence, again with the best work being more original and less reliant on set patterns; more often such pieces were very basic and overly repetitive. Many candidates also completed a *Pop* composition as their free choice, some of which were excellent; a good number failed to mention any audience for which the song was intended, and weaker pieces limited themselves to 4 chords, with much 'copy and paste' repeated sections.

A number chose to compose pieces in the *Western Classical style* and for the most part these were impressive and showed advanced understanding. Some *Film* scores were superb, full of intensity and imagination: some linked with video clips (timed well with scenes described on the score), others used storyboards or described the scenes appropriately. *Serial* compositions were in the minority, with the most effective being exciting and showing understanding of the genre; with the less able candidate the outcome was far less convincing.

Teacher Assessment

In many cases, moderators agreed with the centre assessments, where good value judgements had been made of the candidates' work. A few centres had underestimated the quality of their submissions where the work was considered to be above the standard judged by the centre; some moderators also commented on some of the more simple pieces – often bottom ranked by centres – being at times more musical than some of the more complex, often rather muddled work, as they presented successful initial ideas even if they were not developed. Some centres awarded too many marks for work realised or produced by a person other than the candidate (as clarified in the logs). Most disagreement was noted when moderators were unable to justify top band marks for work that did not develop ideas sufficiently, lacked clarity of form and suitable harmonic language; such pieces simply did not reflect the top band assessment criteria. Some marks were generous because the compositions fell short of the time requirement and lacked development.

As stated in previous reports, it is important for us all to apply the assessment criteria realistically; in this way we can work together to maintain consistency and achieve agreement in regard to the relative merits of the candidates' compositions.

Teachers are urged to attend CPD for continued training in this specification. Please also access the support material online.

COMPONENT 3 APPRAISING

Q1   ***Trio from Eine Kleine Nachtmusic* (Musical Forms and Devices)**
(a)   Very good, on the whole.
(b)   Although many candidates were able to correctly identify the key of the Minuet, a significant number were unable to state the *relationship* between the two keys.
(c)   This was fairly well answered, however two words were required and therefore just stating 'quiet' wasn't enough. Also, 'half voice' was incorrect.
(d)   Approximately half of all candidates were successful here. Many were able to identify chromatic movement but equally they had failed to notice that it needed to be chromatic *for the whole bar*.
(e)   Lots merely stated 'violin' which made us question whether or not candidates are generally aware there are actually *two* violins involved in the piece. There were a lot of cellos stated here too.
(f)   This question generally produced an all or nothing response. (I would encourage centres to focus on the development of harmonic understanding as much as possible as it is potentially one of the most problematic musical elements for the candidates to identify and describe.)
(g)   Very good responses.
(h)   This was a real mixed bag. Many candidates failed to match up the statements across the columns (Minuet – loud / Trio – quiet) and many repeated answers in more than one column (Minuet – trills / Trio – no trills / Minuet – ornaments / Trio – no ornaments). Many also discussed the relevant keys, despite the question instructing them not to do so.
(It is important to remind centres that where a specific number of answers are required – in this case four – only the first four answers were marked, even if one of the four was incorrect and a fifth (or even a sixth) were correct.)

Q2   ***Hebrides Overture* (Musical Forms and Devices)**
(a)   Fairly good responses.
(b)   Good, with 'sustained notes' being the most reliable correct answer. If candidates ticked more than three terms, then no marks were awarded.
(c)   Most identified 'sequence', with 'imitation' coming a close second.
(d)   This was very hit and miss. Many candidates had absolutely no idea.
(ei)   'Legato' and 'disjunct' occurred most frequently, but most candidates really struggled to identify melodic features and instead gave answers about texture, orchestration, harmony and/or tonality instead.
(eii)   This was more effectively answered, although 'wide dynamic range' and 'dynamic rises and falls through each phrase' occurred the least. Many candidates managed to identify specific dynamics, however they failed to state the *location* of the appropriate dynamic level within the extract.
(For both question (ei) and (eii) no specific number of answers was requested, consequently examiners were required to pick out the correct answers from the text.)

Q3   ***Recipe for Love* (Music for Ensemble)**
(a)   Lots of trumpets, saxophones and clarinets were identified, but not always in the correct instrumental section. Many said flute, which was incorrect.
(b)   Mostly correct.

(c)   Mostly correct.
(d)   Mostly incorrect - the candidates really struggled to identify the imperfect cadence.
(e)   Mostly correct.
(f)   Very mixed response. The concept of using letters to identify the sections of a piece was clearly an alien concept to many of the candidates. Lots of candidates used the letter C too!
(g)   Good, on the whole. Candidates most commonly identified the use of pizzicato and the walking bass. Lots said 'staccato', which was incorrect.
(h)   Again, good on the whole. Candidates most commonly identified a typical instrument of the style, the swung rhythm and the use of syncopation. Many identified some of the instrumental techniques employed (mutes/brushes).

Q4   *I Get a Kick Out of You* (Music for Ensemble)
(a)   Well answered, although lots of candidates failed to realise that they were identifying *two* statements rather than just one.
(b)   Very good with most candidates identifying 'theatre' or 'hall', however there were numerous opera houses, bars, restaurants, wedding receptions and even a tea dance!
(c)   Most identified either trio or quartet.
(d)   Fairly well done overall with the vast majority achieving at least half marks. Most candidates identified 'acapella' and 'slow tempo'. Many candidates identified what was missing from extract 1 rather than what was present in extract 2, which therefore couldn't be credited.
(e)   Again, fairly well done overall. Most identified the country music style. The inclusion of backing vocals also needed to refer to the specific location in the extract as they only occur in Section 2.
        (It is worth noting once again that where a specific number of answers are required – in this case four – only the first four answers were marked. Many candidates lost marks on both 4(d) and 4(e) as a result of this oversight.)

Q5   *Schindler's List* (Film Music)
(ai)   Mostly correct.
(aii)   Good on the whole, but lots said 'andante' or 'legato' and numerous candidates gave Italian dynamic markings.
(aiii) The first two pitches (A & D) were nearly always correct, and the last pitch (A) was fairly reliable, however pitches three and four (C & Bb) were very hit and miss.
(aiv)   Mostly incorrect and many candidates were absolutely clueless.
(av)   As with 3(d), most candidates really struggled to identify the interrupted cadence.
(bi)   Mostly correct, although the placement of the time signature on the score was occasionally extremely surprising!
(bii)   Mostly incorrect, and for every D minor there was at least one F major.
(biii) Very well done overall with the most common answers being 'slow tempo', 'minor key' and 'legato'.

Q6   *Dick Tracy* (Film Music)
(a)   Mostly correct, although some candidates appeared to be confused by the term 'ensemble'.
(b)   Mostly correct.
(c)   The most successful answers to this question identified numerous contrasting musical elements contained within the extract and explained how they linked with the purpose and intention of the music. Some candidates simply gave a list of musical features without any links which didn't score very highly. Similarly, some candidates kept repeating the words 'action and excitement' as the link at the end of each statement which, once again, didn't score very well. The best answers, however, discussed the use of structural devices, instrumental techniques, textural devices,

dynamic effects, tonality and harmony, melodic features, rhythmic features and compositional devices and linked them to contrasting features of both the title character's determined personality as well as the fictional criminal underworld.

Q7 *Since You've Been Gone* **(Popular Music)**
(a) Mostly correct, although candidates struggled if they began by identifying the first section incorrectly.
(b) Once again, this question generally produced an all or nothing response. Many said E but forgot that it was Em. Lots got the C. Far fewer identified the A, maybe because it wasn't a chord from the key of G.
(c) Good, although lots of candidates said 'electric guitar' instead.
(d) Again good, however lots of candidates said 'Section 1' or 'Verse' instead.
(e) Well answered.
(f) Less successful than (e), but still fairly well answered.
(g) Mostly correct.
(h) A lot of candidates knew the composer's name, although a lot said Richie Blackmore and more still said Rainbow. Billy Idol, Eric Clapton, Mr Tumble, Lewis Armstrong, ACDC and someone called Bob (?) all got a mention. One candidate stated 'how am I meant to know?' The best answer was a candidate who simply said 'mean question'.

Q8 *Shackles (Praise You)* **(Popular Music)**
(a) Mostly correct.
(b) This was very hit and miss. Candidates could either hear the chord pattern or they couldn't.
(c) Well answered.
(d) Mostly correct.
(e) Many candidates identified electronic effects, syllabic writing and melisma, but otherwise the answers were a very mixed bag. Many discussed features of the verse and/or chorus but failed to state which sections (as given at the beginning of the question) they were referring to. Similarly, many candidates correctly described the musical features but failed to identify the location(s) in which they occurred.
(f) Glissando was almost always identified, however candidates struggled to come up with a correct second answer.
(g) Mostly correct.
(h) Use of technology was almost always identified, however candidates struggled to come up with a correct second answer. Many gave answers which explained why it wasn't any of the other choices, which couldn't be credited.
(For questions 8 (e), 8 (f) and 8 (h) – and for other similar questions on the exam paper which have clearly designated lines given for each answer – a common error by the candidates was to write more than one answer on a single line. As only the first answer on a line can be credited, and therefore everything else on the same line is ignored, it means that candidates are potentially missing out on numerous marks.)