



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**EDUQAS MUSIC
AS**

SUMMER 2023

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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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EDUQAS MUSIC

GCE AS

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 1 PERFORMING

General Comments

A warm welcome was given to all examiners and the majority of candidates performed to their highest personal standards and seemed to enjoy the experience of performing live. There were, understandably, still some cases of nervousness and anxiety amongst candidates. The return to the full requirements has been an issue for some centres.

Perhaps I should begin with a reminder of these requirements: for Eduqas AS Component 1 candidates are required to perform 2 pieces for a minimum of 6 minutes and a maximum of 8 minutes.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Timing:

There were some issues with candidates not performing for the minimum time this year. In an effort to clarify this for future examinations, the Board has decided that the visiting examiners will time **from the start of the candidate's first note to the end of the candidate's final note of each individual piece performed.** Rests, which are written into the work by the composer in order to give the performer a rest, will be included in the time. However, if there are long periods when the candidate is not performing (eg) a 2nd verse in a duet which is sung by another singer, or a 32 bar break for solo piano in a jazz piece, these will not be included in the time. Centres should carefully check the timings of each piece (allowing for a slightly quicker performance on the day due to nerves) **but should not enter these timings on the mark sheet.** The visiting examiner will be responsible for timing the individual pieces as they are performed, live.

In most cases, the administration and timetabling of the examinations was excellent with many centres providing running orders. In the case of longer sessions at colleges and where there are consortium arrangements between centres, please continue to build into your timetables comfort breaks for the examiners. Allowing 15 minutes for each candidate seems ideal in most cases. Please be aware of school bells and tannoy announcements which may impact on your candidate's performance. If at all possible, please timetable AS and A level examinations separately. Please note that examiners may arrive up to 30 minutes before the examinations are due to commence in order to set up and ensure a prompt start. Thank you for reserving a parking space for the visiting examiner, especially if you are aware that parking is an issue at your centre.

Most centres had downloaded the correct forms as required but, in some instances, these had been completed by the candidates themselves. Please double-check these for accuracy. Candidates' full names, rather than shortened forms or nicknames, should be entered on the forms. In addition, forms need to be completed neatly and legibly. In some instances, examination numbers were missing from the forms when they were given to examiners. Please include the names of composers, in addition to the titles of the pieces to be performed.

Please ensure that the link with an Area of Study has also been completed. At AS level the links are Western Classical Tradition, Baroque, Classical or Romantic Music, Rock and Pop, Musical Theatre and Jazz. On occasions, the links made are rather tenuous.

Examination rooms were, on the whole, fit for purpose. Please ensure that the instruments used, particularly the pianos, are in good working order (including the pedals) and have been recently tuned. Some centres choose to use electronic keyboards.

In cases where the standard of the repertoire is known, it would be helpful if this information was given on the form.

Most candidates provided copies of their music for the examiners. Photocopies of the originals on A4 paper need to be made as the examiners will take these away at the end of the session. Please ensure these are complete and in order and are correctly labelled with the candidate's name and number. Please ensure that the music provided accurately reflects the performance being given, especially when downloading tab from the internet. In order to achieve the top marks for accuracy, singers must ensure that the vocal line has been added to lead sheets which also gives lyrics and chords. Please clearly mark any repeats, cuts or any other modifications on the copies. In addition, ensure that the edge of the music has not been cut off on the photocopy.

There were many excellent performers, but some candidates need to give more careful consideration to their choice of programme as some are over-ambitious. Conversely, the occasional candidate performed a lower standard piece (amongst more difficult repertoire) which resulted in a lower overall mark. When using a backing track, please ensure that the track is a true backing track, with the candidate's part omitted, not a complete recording which includes the part the candidate is performing. In some instances, extracts from works were performed. It should be noted that the playing of extracts will, in most cases, lead to a lowering of the level of difficulty for the work performed.

There is no requirement to perform an ensemble at AS level, but some candidates choose to include an ensemble piece in their programmes. On occasions, more care is needed in choosing ensemble repertoire in order to ensure that the individual parts are significant and of the required standard. These parts must not be doubled by any other performer. Candidates also need to be aware of the technical challenge afforded by their own compositions. Teachers and candidates should familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria.

Standards of accompaniment were very good on the whole. Some centres now bring in professional accompanists.

Performers need to ensure that they pay attention to the performance directions on the music. Some drummers and guitarists are not aware of the need for contrast, especially of dynamics. There should be no audible click tracks. However, if a backing track is used by the candidate, through headphones, it must also be audible to the examiner (without the click). Some singers lack projection and communication due to over-reliance on their music. If the music or lyrics are needed, it would be preferable for them to be placed on a stand, slightly to the side of the performer. Best practice includes rehearsing the performances "in situ", giving careful consideration to the position of the candidate in relation to the accompanist and the examiner. Try to create the sense of occasion by involving other students and use this as an opportunity to check all the equipment which will be used. Give careful consideration to the position of an audience if present on the day, behind, and not encroaching on, the examiner, especially considering the recording equipment the examiner is using. As per examination guidelines, there should be no mobile phones present in the examination room (other than that being used by the examiner as a timer, which is set to Airplane Mode.)

Summary of key points

In most instances, electronic equipment had been set up and sound-checked in advance allowing the examination to proceed without hold-ups. Take care with the positioning of microphones and consider carefully whether microphones need to be used for an acoustic performance, especially in a small room or classroom.

On the whole, the feedback from the examining team was very positive and I am very grateful to all those involved, including the team based in the office in Cardiff.

EDUQAS MUSIC
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COMPONENT 2 COMPOSING

General Comments

Administration

There was a continued improvement in administration this year, and in most centres, procedures were correctly adhered to.

Uploading work/ Labelling

There were occasional issues with incorrect (or missing) scores, leadsheets, audio and candidate logs. Please take heed of the board's recommendations for 'how to label the candidate's work' as detailed in previous reports from the Principal Examiner. To adhere to a set protocol is a tremendous help when processing the submissions. Composition 1 must be the composition written in response to one of the briefs as presented by the Board and must be in the Western Classical Tradition. Composition 2 is the free composition. Candidates must check that their work is presented and submitted in this order.

Candidate Logs

Most of these were completed correctly, including relevant and adequate information. Some centres mistakenly used A level logs; on occasion, the authentication signatures were missing and needed to be requested. Please be mindful that these are a compulsory requirement.

The information required in the candidate log is important for the examiner to appreciate and understand the creative process of the composition, including the musical influences, the reasons why certain musical choices have been made, and details of the advice given by the teacher.

One extremely important part of the log is the section which refers to any live performances of the candidate's work. Candidates often state that they had taught the line to the designated performer, but they do not always explain how. For example, when a candidate describes that they have sung the vocal line to the vocalist, the question arises as to why they did not sing the vocal part themselves if they were obviously able to do so. If they choose to have a more proficient vocalist, then the guide track or keyboard guide must be clearly audible. Please note: the examiner can only assess what is clearly the work of the candidate. In some cases, in a live group performance of a composition, it is not always clear what part the candidate actually plays. The content is what is assessed, not the performance.

It would be helpful if candidates included the titles of compositions on the logs. There were examples where titles of pieces bore no significant (or even remote) link to the brief; this is advisable as candidates are directly assessed on their response to the selected brief. The best examples of candidate logs presented informative explanatory details, displaying an in-depth understanding of the devices and techniques employed throughout the compositional processes. Rather too many candidates still gave extremely detailed musical analyses of their work, which is not required when the score has been presented.

Scores and Recordings

There was excellent use of ICT to present scores, often thoughtfully marked up with appropriate performance directions to indicate expression in the music. Where scores were not presented, most compositions were supported by explanatory leadsheets or annotated screenshots. In such instances, the specification requirements are for a detailed written description of the piece, accompanied by an outline of the chords and melody. This was not always the case.

The quality of recordings was generally very good indeed, although a careful consideration of balancing all parts in terms of volume is advised – some work had not taken this into consideration and there were times when certain lines were missing or not clear. There were fewer live realisations of compositions this year, but when submitted they were of impressive quality; in such cases, however, it is the compositions, not the performances that are the main focus - especially if there are inconsequential slips in pitch, rhythm, or timing.

Candidates are advised to check that the correct files have been attached, and that they open and work correctly.

Comments on individual questions/sections

The requirement this year was to present two pieces as per the specification, with a total duration of 4½ - 7 minutes: the first one in the WCT style, and the second being a free choice. No folders were considered to have been under time this year, though the duration of some was over ten minutes. In overly long pieces, the melodic ideas often lose focus and lack sufficient interest in terms of development, with the result that the work weakened slightly as it progressed.

The brief

Composition 1: WCT.

As usual, there were four set briefs this year. Candidates chose their preferred option, and best practice was evident when the style had been carefully researched, resources were appropriate, and the requirements of the assessment criteria were kept at the forefront of thinking and the creative responses. All four set briefs elicited responses, but the first was the most popular – i.e., ‘Compose a ternary form piece which features textural contrast and counterpoint.’ Some centres adopted a teacher-led approach whereby all candidates had been given the same brief. This was felt to be overly restrictive as the outcomes were overly similar and lacked individuality. While the benefits of this as a teaching approach is appreciated, it is not considered good practice for examination purposes.

Please note that this specification encourages candidates to be given the freedom of choice supported with teacher guidance, as they will generally succeed more in something that is of personal interest to them. Compositions should be inspired by candidates’ strengths, interests, and focused research. In choosing the ternary form option, most candidates satisfied the requirement of ternary form, but responses were – at times - less convincing in terms of textural contrasts and counterpoint. Future candidates should be advised that when there is a requirement for a device to be ‘featured’ within a composition, then it is expected to be made a convincing feature of the music – just placing it once or briefly within a work is insufficient.

The most successful WCT pieces were instrumental pieces this year – it was felt that effective textural variation, development, and appropriate control of the elements were lacking in some of the vocal pieces. Some vocal pieces were not a successful reflection of the WCT.

Composition 2: Free

The free composition offers candidates the opportunity to select their own briefs, according to the talents and interest of the candidates. Still too many candidates did not state the brief, while some others wrote 'Free piece.' As stated in previous reports, this is not satisfactory and not in the best interests of the candidates. Examiners need more information. The first column of the assessment criteria relates to creating ideas and the success of the response to the brief - and it is difficult to judge a composition if no brief is stated, or there is a lack of the intention and a clearly identified outcome. A specific style, theme and mood with brief commentary is required (please refer to the specification/

Teaching Guidance for further explanation of this requirement). Some candidates therefore lost marks when the brief was not clearly stated.

Generally, teachers are to be applauded for encouraging candidates to compose in their preferred styles here – the range was incredible; from Baroque and WCT pieces, examiners were treated to such a variety of styles, including Romantic piano pieces and songs, pop and rock songs (including heavy metal and funk), contemporary choral pieces, musical theatre and film compositions, jazz, and impressionist pieces.

Content

The standards achieved covered the full range. The work at the top end was extremely impressive, well planned, imaginatively developed and superbly presented. Many pieces were mid-range, including effective content which was competently developed, controlled, and organised. A lot of pieces fell into Band 2 category, where the work was not only inconsistent but at times lacking the required musical understanding, technical control and sufficient development of the initial material as required for AS level.

Creating musical ideas

The appropriate selection of musical ideas was most effective when considered directly in response to the chosen brief and selected style. This choice is inextricably linked to the success of the outcome.

The candidate must be set to impress with an understanding and command of the musical language to achieve at this level. This demands content which relates to the musical elements and ideas listed in Appendix B and Appendix C of the AS specification in Music.

Examiners expressed their main concerns over first compositions that did not thoughtfully reflect the language, techniques, and conventions of the Western Classical tradition. Inappropriate instrumentation or stylistic features cost marks - for example, pieces which tended to be Minimalist or perhaps Impressionist in style. Some candidates made little or no attempt to compose in the WCT style, and as a result, the work could not access top marks (there were even examples of jazz and rock pieces).

In this specification, Impressionism is linked with the 20th century area of study (even though there were famous pieces composed earlier in terms of the date), but it is the styling that is important. The relevant appendix at the end of the specification clearly lists the requirements of the WCT styling, and future candidates must remember to consult this (page 31 of the specification). There were some ambitious compositions which were so imaginative in terms of texture and timbre but unfortunately failed to successfully capture the stylistic characteristics of WCT melody / rhythm / harmony.

The strongest submissions here were absolutely excellent and reflected secure musical understanding.

Many candidates needed to focus on creating musical ideas more effectively. The quality of the initial material is crucial; weaknesses here will transcend into later working. In terms of the WCT, firm establishment of the home key, interesting yet secure harmonic understanding, characteristic melodic creation and careful attention given to textural variety will impress.

Examples were noted by examiners of candidates who had been heavily influenced by one particular piece. While analysis of a composition by Bach, Mozart (or whoever), is valued, too much emphasis and reliance on one particular composition curbs individual creativity. Accepted practice and exemplars from a variety of composers is far more beneficial. Armed with the tools of stylistic features from an area of research, candidates can then go and create their own individual ideas.

Developing Musical Ideas

Some compositions presented effective basic ideas, which remained undeveloped in their work – this affected potential credit in this column. If necessary, the initial material needs refinement and imaginative reworking, manipulation, and developmental planning and execution. Candidates must consult the wide range of compositional devices suggested in the specification to develop melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic content in a structured and thoughtful manner.

Some pop and rock songs were fantastic – others were too repetitive. In such cases, candidates would be well advised to consider how ideas could be contrasted, as this would enhance marks in the ‘development of ideas’ criteria. For example, structures could be rearranged, with additional contrasting sections and parts/counter melodies/additional harmonies added. It was also felt that minimalist, serialist, and experimental pieces needed careful attention to structure, thus achieving meaningful textural contrast and further changes using a variety and range of musical elements. Some compositions lacked stylistic coherence.

Technical and Expressive Control of Musical Elements

Technical control of the elements of music needed more focus in many compositions. Please note the following suggestions:

Harmony - using a greater variety of chords, thoughtful chord progressions and the use of inversions, modulation.

Texture - a variety of textures should be utilised to show the depth of musical understanding (homophony, imitation, fugal ideas, countermelodies)

Instrumentation – display a knowledge of ranges, appropriate use of techniques, and imaginative employment of timbres.

Structure - keeping to the ‘rules’ if a particular form / structure has been named and considering the overall structure of a work; quite a few compositions finished abruptly and unexpectedly and this weakened the structure.

Devices - include a variety, to aid development. In more modern styles research will also aid success but candidates must consider how to fulfil the assessment criteria e.g., how will a minimalistic piece achieve imaginative development? Candidates should also consider whether experimental styles are suitable to achieve the requirements of the composing criteria. Some serial pieces written for instruments were unplayable.

Summary of key points

- All files must be clearly labelled as according to WJEC Eduqas guidelines.
- Briefs must be clearly stated, and the response to the brief is assessed.
- There is no need to provide a detailed musical analysis of their composition if a musical score is submitted. All pieces without a conventional score must include additional explanatory notes which includes the specific musical details.
- All sections of the log must be fully completed, with particular attention paid to the recording details in the case of a live recording. Remember that guide tracks should be submitted if a notated score is not available, and the candidate is not the performer.
- Candidates should not be too ambitious in terms of scoring – challenge is always to be supported but decide on what is manageable and appropriate for each candidate's musical understanding.
- Refine all initial ideas then develop and extend to create a substantial outcome that reflects the AS standard.
- Work to the suggested time requirement – but remember that there is no penalty for a piece which falls a little short of this. Overly long pieces often lack focus and direction and are the result of poor planning. If shorter pieces contain sufficiently advanced and developed musical content, then the results will not be affected.

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COMPONENT 3 APPRAISING

General Comments

The paper was comparable with previous years, although the performance of the candidates was slightly better. There was fairly even distribution between AOSs B, C and D, though far more candidates answered on the Haydn set work than the Mendelssohn.

Comments on individual questions/sections

AOS B Rock and Pop

- Q.1 (a) Generally, well answered. Answers that highlighted specific detail (e.g., “open and closed hi-hat”) scored well.
- (c) Successful answers focused on the music played.
- (d) Answers hearing 7/4 as a time signature were accepted.
- (e) Answers that highlighted specific features, or gave accurate descriptions of what happened scored well. More general comments such as “conjunct” were less successful.
- (f) Comments that were not specific to the style (e.g., “drum plays in 4/4”) were not credited.
- Q.2 (a) Answers other than 3/4 and 4/4 were accepted if they were logically derived.
- (c) Some perceptive comments here.
- (e) Successful answers homed in on specific rather than general features of the vocal melody. Some answers failed to gain credit as they did not include line number references as asked.
- Q.3 Successful answers related points to “timbre and music technology” as specified in the question. There were some excellent responses which described specific features of music technology and how these had changed over the thirty years of the time period, citing at least three contrasting songs. Answers that showed a clear knowledge of the music scored highly. Answers were less successful if the points made were not related to timbre and music technology or if they did not include sufficient references.

AOS C Musical Theatre

- Q.4 (a) Generally, well answered.
- (b) This was well answered on the whole, though less successful answers did not discuss the vocal melody specifically.

- (e) Successful answers gave specific examples to support points made, commenting on the instruments used, tonality (with perceptive points on Lydian mode), and rhythmic features. Less successful responses were generalised, lacking specifics.
- Q.5 (a) Some perceptive answers which highlighted accurate features of the vocal melody.
- Candidates are reminded that the descriptions “syllabic” and “melismatic” are relevant to the description of word setting, not melody, and gain no credit in questions asking for features of the vocal melody.
- (b) Less successful answers did not home in on the accompaniment, describing other aspects instead. There were some detailed descriptions of the role of the clarinet and harp which earned credit.
 - (d) Very few answers mentioned the French Horn, but the Tin Whistle (and acceptable alternatives) heard at the end of the line gained credit.
 - (h) Most answers supported points with line numbers as requested, but some lost marks by not doing this.
- Q.6 Answers that made accurate observations on “moods and settings” gained credit. Less successful answers were sometimes as a result of describing other aspects of the musicals, not those asked for in the question. Comments made on Sondheim’s or Lloyd Webber’s music were sometimes compared to other composers and works in this AOS which was acceptable. Examiners were looking for evidence of candidates knowing the music, and being able to support points on how composers’ styles reflected the desired mood/setting.

AOS D Jazz

- Q.7 (b) Successful answers homed in on specific features of the piano’s music. There was a tendency to include generalisations e.g., “comping” and “stride bass” which were not accurate in this instance. The most successful answers highlighted specific features that were present in the piano’s music.
- (e) Generally, well answered with some detailed description of melodic and rhythmic aspects in the most successful ones.
 - (g) Least successful answers did not focus on harmony and/or tonality, describing other features instead.
 - (h) The style was mostly correctly identified, and some convincing musical features highlighted in support, though scat was not credited as it is not specific to Dixieland only.
- Q.8 (b) Successful answers homed in on features of the melody as asked for in the question.
- (d) Some perceptive comments with accurate points made on harmony and tonality.
 - (e) No credit was given for “saxophone”. There needs to be further detail as to which saxophone, in this case, tenor.

- (f) Many successful answers here, commenting on the stylistic features such as comping, walking bass, and the contrast of swing rhythm in the drums and straight crotchets in the bass.
- Q.9 Successful answers kept comments focused on the rhythm section, and there were some detailed answers demonstrating close familiarity with a range of pieces. Less successful answers were more generalised, describing the chosen music in wider terms, sometimes homing in on the frontline or structures at the expense of the rhythm section, diluting the relevance of the answer.
- Q10 This question was well answered overall, many candidates scoring highly. Where answers were less successful, it was sometimes due to a lack of recognition of instruments (specifically the oboe), or cadences.
- Q11 Some candidates lost marks in questions 11b and 11c by not giving precise bar and beat references. Candidates should always attempt questions rather than leaving them blank. They are reminded that there are marks for both rhythm and melody in the dictation question.
- Q12 There were some very successful answers to this question. Many candidates chose to structure their answer in tabular form. This is fine as long as the points made show clear comparison of the two extracts. This could be by using comparative language or by connecting points by links in other ways. Answers that wrote about each extract independent of the other with no comparison did not score as highly. There was sometimes a tendency to over-generalise, but less frequently than in previous years which is encouraging. Candidates are reminded that there is credit given for using appropriate specialist vocabulary.
- Q13 By far, most candidates answered on the Haydn, and there were some full, detailed answers which displayed a sound knowledge of the music, though there were very few accurate responses to Q13b and there was evidence of a lack of knowledge of the Italian instrument names used in the score in Q13c.
- (d) This was mainly well answered, though some responses failed to score due to not showing a clear contrast.
- (e) Answers that stated facts about each section rather than making comparisons did not gain credit. Sometimes points failed to gain credit because they were not located with specific bar and beat references as required.
- (f) Successful answers identified what melodic material was being used, and how. There were some detailed descriptions of melodic development, the music clearly known. Less successful answers discussed other aspects than melody or did not support points with bar and beat references.
- Q.14 Very few candidates answered on the Mendelssohn. Those that did showed a reasonable knowledge, with a few very good answers, though on the whole, answers on this symphony were less successful than those on the Haydn.
- Few candidates accurately answered Q14b and there was evidence of lack of knowledge of Italian instrument names as used in the score in Q14c.
- (d) This was generally successfully answered, most candidates able to find two examples of contrast in the opening section.

- (e) Some answers failed to gain credit due to lack of specific bar and beat references.
- (f) Successful answers identified what melodic material was being used, and how. There were a few successful descriptions of melodic development, knowledge of the music demonstrated. Less successful answers discussed other aspects than melody and were often quite generalised. Some answers did not support points with bar and beat references,

Summary of key points

It is important to support answers with specific references when instructed to do so in the question. This could be by bar, beat or line number. Answers gain less credit if they do not do this.

Candidates are reminded that the terms “syllabic” and “melismatic” are relevant when describing word setting. They do not gain any credit in answers about vocal melody. Greater familiarity with instrumental timbres, Italian nomenclature, and specific saxophones is advisable.

When questions ask for comparisons, comparative language is needed. Individual comments rarely gain credit in this type of question; two linked facts need to be made.



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