



GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Music
A Level
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.edugas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (edugas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.edugas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

Contents

	Page
Executive summary	5
Component 1 - Performance	7
Component 2 - Composing	11
Component 3 - Appraising	18
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	28

Executive Summary

Component 1 Performing:

Timing issues persisted, with some candidates not meeting the minimum performance time. The use of live accompanists was generally preferred over backing tracks, providing better support and flexibility. The administration and timetabling of the examinations were mostly excellent, however, there were instances where forms were incorrectly completed by candidates, and examination numbers were missing. It is important to choose appropriate repertoire - some candidates were either over-ambitious or selected pieces of lower standard, affecting their overall marks. There is a need for careful consideration of ensemble pieces and the technical challenges of performing one's own compositions. The support of an accompanist was often preferable to unaccompanied pieces, and performances from memory, were not required.

Component 2 Composing:

The administration saw improvements, particularly in the uploading of work, though issues persisted with missing or incorrectly labelled files. Candidate logs were generally well-completed, providing detailed analysis, but some lacked sufficient information about the composition process. Scores and recordings were mostly clear, with higher quality lead sheets aiding the examination process, though some lacked musical detail and proper labelling. The quality of recordings was excellent, but balance issues were noted. In terms of knowledge and content, candidates demonstrated a wide range of standards. Many compositions showed impressive musical ideas and control, though some lacked fluency and direction. The selection of appropriate briefs and adherence to stylistic features were crucial, with some candidates failing to meet these requirements. Skills in creating and developing musical ideas varied, with some candidates excelling in expressive control and technical elements, while others struggled with melody construction and thematic development. Overall, thorough preparation, accurate paperwork, and appropriate repertoire selection were emphasized as key to successful outcomes.

Component 3 Appraising

Candidates generally performed well, with many demonstrating strong musical knowledge and analytical skills, particularly in the Western Classical Tradition and Into the Twentieth Century areas of study. However, there were issues with some candidates not fully understanding key musical concepts, leading to incorrect answers. In terms of content, while many candidates referenced appropriate pieces and provided detailed analyses, others struggled with the selection and description of musical features, often lacking specificity. Skills varied widely; some candidates excelled in identifying and describing musical elements, while others had difficulty with more technical aspects, such as identifying intervals and describing textures.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Performances should achieve the minimum required duration. Repertoire should be carefully chosen to match the candidate ability.	NEA Walkthrough – Component 1. (Eduqas resources page.) Component 1 Performing FAQs. (Eduqas GCE music page)	NEA walkthrough for students. Frequently asked questions and guidance.
Focus on the development of ideas in both WCT style compositions and free compositions	NEA Walkthrough – Component 2. (Eduqas resources page.) CPD: Eduqas Music Getting started with Composing January 2020 CPD: Eduqas GCE Music CPD Teaching Composition December 2021 CPD: Eduqas AL Music Teaching Composing at A Level (2023-4) (All available via Portal)	NEA walkthrough for students. CPD resources from previous events which include handouts for both teachers and students.
Focus on the full requirements of every question. If references to other works are required, these should be specific. If bar or beat numbers are required then answers without these will not be credited.	Exam walkthrough – Component 3. (Eduqas resources page) CPD: Eduqas AL Music – Improving Attainment at A Level F2F CPD Material Winter 2024. (Available via Portal)	Exam walkthrough for students. CPD resources from a previous event which includes handouts for both teachers and students.

EDUQAS MUSIC

GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 1 – PERFORMANCE

Overview of the Component

Once again, a warm welcome was given to all examiners. The majority of candidates performed to their highest personal standards and seemed to enjoy the experience of performing live. Most examiners reported that cases of nervousness and anxiety amongst candidates were less prevalent this year.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Timing:

There were still some issues with candidates not performing for the minimum time again this year. In an effort to clarify this, the Board decided that the visiting examiners would 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, would be included in the time. However, if there were long periods when the candidate was not performing (eg) a DC return to a long introduction, a 2nd verse in a duet which is sung by another singer, or a 32 bar break for solo piano in a jazz piece, or other long interludes when the candidate is not performing, these would 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. Please note that, when using a Backing Track, the length of the candidate's performance is not necessarily the total length given of the track.

I should also like to mention the following when giving consideration to the candidate's choice of programme:

Live accompanist v Backing Track:

Candidates who use backing tracks are not penalised, however in most cases, and if at all possible, the flexibility and support afforded by a live accompanist, is preferable. Standards of accompaniment were very good on the whole. Some centres now bring in professional accompanists.

Page turner and audiences:

Do arrange for a page turner if this is necessary or helpful to the candidate. There is no restriction on others, whether members of staff, students or parents and friends, being in the examination room as long as all mobile phones are turned off and they are not affecting the progress of the examination.

Unaccompanied pieces:

Once again, the physical support given by an accompanist is often preferable to a candidate being “out on their own”. Whilst we realise that unaccompanied pieces, in particular, studies, often form part of the repertoire of many public exam boards, these are not always the best choice for this examination. There are exceptions, of course, such as the JS Bach unaccompanied violin or cello works, but these should only be programmed by the most accomplished candidates.

Performances given from memory:

Although this is to be commended, it is not a requirement of this exam. The examiner will allow a restart but not a second attempt. If a breakdown occurs well into the performance, “picking it up” is sometimes an issue when there is no score to refer to.

Second instrument or voice:

As this is not a requirement of the exam, there is no advantage to be gained by performing on more than one instrument or voice. Candidates should only perform on more than one if both are of an equivalent standard.

Administration, Paperwork and Preparation:

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, possibly 20 minutes for the longer recitals, 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 A level, the links are Western Classical Tradition, Baroque, Classical or Romantic Music, Rock and Pop, Musical Theatre, Jazz, and 20th or 21st Century Art Music. 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. When a candidate is not playing their own instrument eg. a piano, they should be allowed to familiarise themselves with it before the examination.

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 melody 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. Backing tracks should not be streamed live from the internet but should be downloaded and checked.

In some instances, extracts from works were performed. It should be noted that the playing of extracts will, in many cases, lead to **a lowering of the level of difficulty** for the work performed.

There is no requirement to perform an ensemble at AS or A 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 if they choose to perform their own piece. Teachers and candidates should familiarise themselves with the assessment criteria.

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 preset to Airplane Mode.)

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

GCE A level

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COMPONENT 2 COMPOSING

Overview of the Component

Component 2 assesses AO2 in its entirety. The total mark for option A is 72 and learners submit two compositions which have a total recommended duration of between 4 and 6 minutes.

One composition is in response to a brief set by Eduqas. Where a learner does not respond to this brief, demonstrating clear aspects of the Western Classical style, the composition will be unlikely to achieve the higher mark bands as it will not be an adequate response to the set brief. Learners set their own brief for the other composition, which must contain details of either the occasion or the audience for which the piece is being composed and extra musical information. The total mark for option B is 108 and learners submit three compositions which have a total recommended duration of between 8 and 10 minutes. In addition to the requirements of option A, learners must complete an additional composition which reflects the musical characteristics of a different area of study. Each composition is marked out of 36.

Learners are advised to consider the requirements of the marking criteria when planning and composing their music. The following is assessed:

- creating musical ideas (including musical ideas, structure and the response to the given/chosen brief)
- developing musical ideas (including organisation of thematic material, use of compositional techniques and the combination of musical elements to provide a coherent result)
- technical and expressive control of the musical elements (including communication of ideas, musical understanding and the control of chosen resources, including the use of music technology where appropriate)

The standards achieved by candidates this year covered the whole range. There were very few pieces which were limited in musical content and only a small proportion of candidates demonstrated limited control of the chosen resources and a lack of organisation regarding development. Some compositions were classed in band 2 in most of the criteria where creativity, development and control of musical elements were inconsistent. Many mid-range pieces were appropriately structured and used a range of compositional techniques and these pieces were coherent overall and demonstrated expressive control and musical understanding. There was evidence of highly impressive compositions featuring excellent musical ideas, organised development and polished control of the musical elements. A number of examiners said that more compositions belonged in band 4 this year and were impressive and sophisticated overall.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Uploading Work

It was felt that the administration was improved this year but there were still a number of files that were either missing or would not open and some compositions were labelled incorrectly. It is important to note that composition one is in response to the set brief and Composition two is a free choice piece for option A learners. For option B learners, composition one is in response to the set brief, composition two needs to be linked to a different area of study and composition three is a free choice piece. It is essential that centres double check that work is accessible before uploading to surpass which will help the examining process. In addition, this year, some candidates were entered for option A instead of option B or vice versa – please check the information carefully with examinations officers before uploading to surpass and that the candidate has completed the correct log form.

Candidate Logs

Most logs were completed to a high standard and the vast majority of all teacher and pupil signatures were authenticated. Many logs featured detailed analysis of the compositions but sometimes they did not always equate to high quality compositions. The main requirements were to outline the process of development and refinement in the log. The examiners need to understand the creative process of the composition which should include the musical influences, reasons for musical choices and advice provided by the teacher to track progress. A minority of candidates included hardly any information about the composition process and it was difficult to assess at times. For additional compositions, candidates must remember to write their own brief(s) in the correct place(s) in the log. Part of the criteria for this component is how effectively the candidate has responded to briefs.

It is essential for candidates to provide details of any musical ideas which are not their original work and to explain how the recording was produced accurately. More information is needed for live performances of compositions where a score is not provided. Candidates, where appropriate must explain clearly how they taught the music to other performers and an additional guide track or keyboard guide must be submitted with the clear intentions of the candidate being assessed. Examiners can request Eduqas to contact the centre for further information if the role of the composer is unclear.

Scores and Recordings

Most candidates provided clear scores or lead sheets and it was pleasing that there were more examples of screenshots which were clearly annotated this year. Often, instrument names were not specified on the score and at times these had to be identified from the logs. Please remember that if a score is not provided, the candidate needs to complete a written description of the composition accompanied by an outline of the melody and chords used (i.e. a screenshot from GarageBand does not help the examining process without annotated information). Scores or written descriptions should be uploaded as an additional file and not copied into the log. It was felt that lead sheets this year were of a much higher quality and helped the examining process overall. A minority of candidates submitted scores which lacked musical detail regarding performance directions (e.g. dynamics, tempo, articulation). It was also commented by examiners that many compositions did not even have a title which is necessary in order to establish the context for certain pieces.

The quality of recordings was excellent but there were some issues with the balance of individual parts at times so it is advised to check recordings before uploading the work. This was the case with computer generated output and live performances. There were fewer examples of live realisations this year but it is important to clarify that the compositions were assessed not the performances, hence audio containing inconsequential errors in pitch and rhythm for live realisations were not taken into account when assessing. One candidate had their actual composition performed at The Sage Gateshead which was included in the set brief and this must be applauded. While there is no need to perform compositions live, it brought the pieces to life. Candidates are applauded for their extra commitment. Examples of songs where the voice was generated from a computer programme had less impact than live songs and it was felt by examiners that candidates should have added a recording of the vocals over the computer audio for a more enhanced outcome. Some pieces began with long 30-second pauses before the composition audios started which elongated the examining process.

Composition Briefs in a Western Classical Style

Most candidates selected one of the four A level set briefs and composed in a Baroque, Classical or Romantic style. It is important to check the A Level set briefs when they are published in September of each year as some centres used incorrect briefs (i.e. from the AS music specification). In addition, a minority of candidates used influences by 20th century and 21st century composers to create a piece in a modern style. This resulted in the response to the brief being inadequate and did not illustrate the understanding of the musical language, techniques and conventions of either the Baroque, Classical or Romantic eras. A minority of compositions were heavily influenced by a particular piece of music and it was felt that this hindered personal creativity. Some overly long pieces lacked clear focus and direction which were the result of insufficient planning. If shorter pieces contained advanced musical content, then the marks would not have been affected. It is important for candidates to research the stylistic features of specific eras and then candidates should create pieces using their own independent ideas. Creativity always flourishes when candidates choose their own briefs from the set list each year. It was sometimes noticeable that all candidates from individual centres selected the same brief. While it is understandable that teachers may want to focus on one specific brief as a teaching tool, outcomes are significantly better when candidates compose to their strengths (e.g. instruments, voices, styles etc.).

Brief 1: Compose a vocal trio with accompaniment to be recorded for a Young Composers programme on Classic FM. You are advised not to choose words from a well-known composition as this may lead to a predictable response.

This was the least popular brief this year and the biggest challenge for candidates. Text setting needed more care in these compositions and for many candidates, voice writing was entirely syllabic throughout. There was insufficient attention to the metre of the text and its stresses. There were missed opportunities to develop vocal writing as pieces progressed via rhythmic and melodic innovation. A large number of responses were overly homophonic and in addition, the melody was limited to one part. Organisation needed more focus to varying certain sections which could have possibly modulated to another key – most pieces did not move away from the home key.

Brief 2: Compose a piece of music for a BBC documentary on the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries. You may write for any combination of voices/instruments.

Many candidates chose this brief but it was less successful for a number of candidates who composed in a cinematic style. Some candidates selected quite detailed programmatic elements, for example, children walking to factories, noise of machinery etc. which worked effectively in the pieces. Sometimes material deviated from the Western Classical style and many used familiar characteristics from film genres. Often, there was great detail in the scores aligning the music to the narrative. The instruments were mainly orchestral and specific resources were selected to create an effective atmosphere, such as glockenspiel, piano and even anvil in some cases. A minority of compositions for this set brief were outstanding and some demonstrated excellent musical understanding through clear technical and expressive control of the musical elements. Sometimes, melodic content had no fluency and there was a sense of rambling and monotony.

Brief 3: Compose an instrumental piece which features textural contrasts and motivic development of the initial ideas to be performed at The Sage Gateshead.

Some candidates elected to write for full orchestra and at times the focus of writing for such large forces distracted from showcasing the motivic development and adequate control of the musical elements. Many successful responses relied on solo piano pieces, more often than not in sonata form. Overall, this seemed an attractive and approachable brief to many candidates and more competent candidates utilised the textural contrast and motivic development effectively. Others failed to include suitable variation and development to fully enhance their compositions.

Brief 4: Compose a piece for four musicians for performance in a Music for Youth concert.

Many of the pieces submitted for this brief were string quartets structured in a variety of different ways. There were a range of instrumental combinations used as well as some vocal ensembles. Many submissions were accompanied by substantial logs analysing the music and there were some excellent examples with secure instrumental part writing that demonstrated secure knowledge of the Western Classical style. Many relied on simplistic accompaniment textures which did not develop or evolve during the piece and a few pieces relied on long repeats. Initial melodic ideas and harmonic progress within a clear form were executed productively from some candidates.

Own Choice Briefs

Part of the composition criteria is to assess each candidate's response to the brief. There were a wide range of styles examined with some candidates preferring to write another piece in a Baroque, Classical or Romantic style. Many free compositions were innovative, and in often scored higher than composition one, especially when candidates composed confidently in their preferred styles. Candidates must be clear about their own brief and give as much detail as possible to assist the examining process (e.g. style, theme, mood, occasion, audience etc.). There were a wide range of briefs written this year, the most popular including pop, rock, musical theatre and themes for television programmes, films or video games. There were also interesting examples of candidates choosing familiar styles to them, such as folk, ragtime, fusion and electronic dance music. Other candidates wrote in serialist and impressionist styles and it was felt that the candidates should have researched the characteristics of this music in greater detail to ensure that, for example, melody, harmony, structure, texture and part writing was appropriate to the style. There were occasional positive outcomes from minimalist pieces but they sometimes lacked variety and sufficient development to access the higher mark bands in the related criteria. Sometimes there was imaginative writing and much thought had gone into the method of composing which created successful outcomes.

There were some very well balanced and coherent compositions which showed excellent instrumental variety and interesting thematic material. Harmonic language was appropriate and melodies were fluent and lyrical within a coherent structure. Musical elements were effectively combined to produce competent compositions and there was effective control, as well as good responses to the chosen briefs. At times, when composing songs in a popular genre, a minority of candidates displayed material which was simplistic and overly repetitive throughout. The candidates composing the most successful examples of songs made every effort to add additional layers and enhance repeats of sections by using interesting developmental techniques.

There was an element of predictability in some compositions, and also some erratic moments, where the music veered off in various directions, without reaching a sensible conclusion. Candidates must refer to Appendix B and Appendix C in the A level specification of music to encourage full understanding of the musical terminology in order to impress.

Option B Compositions linked to a different Area of Study

A number of pieces were highly sophisticated and showed an excellent musical understanding of the different styles studied. There were effective musical ideas included and the control of the musical elements for the rock and pop, musical theatre and jazz areas of study. More focus was needed on varying texture, appropriate harmonic progress and general development. For pieces that were composed in a twentieth/twenty-first century it was agreed at times that more understanding of the style was required to access marks in the higher bands. Candidates cannot compose three Western Classical pieces for option B.

Assessment Criteria

Creating Musical Ideas

Composing initial melodic ideas caused problems for a number of candidates. It is so important that a melody is fluent and organised well as it is central to the overall success of the piece of music. Candidates should listen to some of the most famous works in Western Classical styles to acknowledge the quality of their pleasing melodic shape. Many melodies lost direction and lacked fluency and phrasing was occasionally imbalanced. Melodies were overly disjunct, and in some compositions solely used notes from the supporting chords. When constructing rhythms, compositions with varied treatment of straight, dotted, triplets and syncopation were effective. Generally, the structure of most pieces provided an adequate foundation for the piece of music. The effectiveness of the brief was successful when focused listening and research took place by the candidate as clearly noted in the influences mentioned in their logs. There were a minority of compositions where the piece of music did not match the brief in any way and in these very few cases higher mark bands were not accessible.

Developing Musical Ideas

Development is the bringing of something to a fuller or more advanced condition. This could, for example, have been achieved by varying the melody, rhythm, texture or timbre. It is important, especially when themes are repeated, to include subtle differences such as varying the instrument performing the melody, the addition of a countermelody, thoughtful modulations or varied dynamics and articulation. These musical elements would be combined effectively to produce a coherent outcome. Additional interest will freshen the composition and this can be achieved by using a wide range of compositional techniques. Some techniques for developing ideas more effectively could be decoration, ornamentation, imitation, sequence, textural variety, countermelody, modulation, augmentation, diminution, inversion, fragmentation, alternative harmony and thematic transformation.

Technical and Expressive Control of Musical Elements

This criterion needed more focus in several compositions. Individual musical elements and styles needed more revision and rehearsal for the actual composition process. It was felt overall that a greater variety of chords and inversions were required in many compositions, as well as strong cadential progressions and modulations. Texture needed variety as it was often overly homophonic. Additional features could be employed such as imitation and enhanced development of accompaniments. Structure needed to be planned effectively to ensure pieces were balanced and did not finish in an abrupt manner. Clear thought is required to the practicalities and possibilities of music, in particular the attention of attractive individual lines, phrasing, range of instrument/voice types and suitable selection of music technology resources, where appropriate. Dynamics and articulation also add colour to any score and/or audio.

Summary of Key Points

- Composition one must be selected from the published briefs for Eduqas and needs to be composed in a Western Classical style which illustrates the understanding of the musical language, techniques and conventions of the period (that is, Baroque, Classical or Romantic) and more examples of works from these eras need to be researched to enhance outcomes, for example, instrumentation and vocal writing, harmonic progress and main characteristics appropriate to the style. For option B learners, composition two should be a piece from a different area of study.
- All pieces submitted without a conventional score must include a commentary with additional explanatory notes.
- Live recordings, where the candidate is not performing all parts need more information in the log regarding the role of the candidate and other performers. If the candidate taught musical parts to others a guide track should be attached to the submission.
- Logs do not need to be a full analysis of the compositions but an outline of the process focusing on development and refinement and where appropriate, how support was given by the teacher.
- More research is needed on the main characteristics of chosen styles for composing and a focus on how to use the main elements of music effectively to create successful outcomes.
- The recommendations above for the assessment criteria will support centres to continue to improve the standards of composition folios for this component in the A level qualification.

MUSIC

GCE A level

Summer 2024

COMPONENT 3 APPRAISING

Overview of the Component

Overall, the performance of the candidates was on a level with pre-Covid times; examiners reported seeing answers that covered a very wide range of the marks available.

For this component, AO3 (demonstrating and applying musical knowledge) and AO4 (using analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music) are tested.

The content included one compulsory Area of Study: AoS A The Western Classical Tradition, and then candidates had a choice of one of either AoS B Rock and Pop, or AoS C Music Theatre, or AoS D Jazz. In addition, they had a choice of either AoS E Into the Twentieth Century or AoS F Into the Twenty-First Century. For the compulsory AOS A, candidates had a choice of answering on either Haydn's Symphony 104 or Mendelssohn's Symphony no 4.

The vast majority of candidates answered on Haydn rather than Mendelssohn for AoS A. Similarly, most candidates answered on AoS E Into the Twentieth Century, rather than AoS F Into the Twenty-First Century. For AOSs B, C and D, the numbers were fairly similar.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Area of Study B: Rock and Pop

- Q.1 (a)** Many correct answers here, though some put ostinato which is not the same and was not credited.
- (b)** Quite well answered, though some lost marks by not saying how the instruments were being used, simply listing instruments. This was not enough to gain marks.
- (c)** Sequence was given as the correct answer on many occasions, but there were also some responses that bore no relationship with a "compositional device" such as voice types or dynamics.
- (d)** This type of question - "describe features of the vocal melody" - comes up very frequently, and every year, sadly candidates lose marks by including points that are not features of vocal melody, or else, they lose marks by omitting points that are features of vocal melody. Description of melody must be about the series of **pitches** that are heard.

In an attempt help teachers and candidates with answering techniques for this type of question, below is a list of the types of observations that typically attract marks:

- General type of movement; but don't say 'conjunct' unless there are hardly any leaps, and don't say 'disjunct' unless it is notably lacking in steps. Sometimes neither of these statements will be sufficiently true.
- Specific type of movement; e.g. 'starts with ascending arpeggio on line...' or 'goes up a major scale in line...'
- Prominent intervals e.g. 'rising fifth at the beginning of line...'
- Shape e.g. 'leaps up and then comes down by step'
- Repetitions e.g., 'lines... are the same' or 'the four-note motif is repeated many times in a row'.
- Syllabic or melismatic descriptions do not gain marks; they are aspects of word setting not vocal melody.

Always remember to back up points with line numbers if the question asks for them. You won't get the marks otherwise.

- Q.1**
- (e)** This was poorly answered.
 - (f)** There were not many correct answers here.
 - (g)** This was well answered.

- Q.2** (a) Sadly, quite a lot of candidates did not seem to realise that a riff was a melodic device. There were many other incorrect answers given instead. Frustratingly, many candidates then went on to include the word in their following description in this question however.
- (b) Some candidates got this correct.
- (c) Very few wrote Hammond Organ, many just writing organ or synthesiser.
- (d) Not that many identified the style as Soul, though did go on to give accurate observations about the style.
- (e) There was quite a variety of years given.
- (f) As this comparison question features every year, similar to questions on vocal melody, there are certain pitfalls and omissions that regularly occur in answers. Here are some observations and guidelines for answering this question:
- It is a **comparison** question, so marks are not earned by simply giving information without comparing.
 - **State the obvious.** If the melody, harmony, structure etc. is the same, then state this in similarities before going on to more granular observations.
 - Remember you need to compare extract 2 with extract 1, not the other way around.
 - Do not spend time just describing extract 1 on its own; there are no marks for doing this.
 - Tabular form answers are fine as long as they still compare extract 2 with extract 1. Saying all that, there were some good answers here, many candidates noting the main similarities and differences and also some of the detail.

Area of Study C: Musical Theatre

- Q.3** (a) This type of question - “describe features of the melody” - comes up very frequently, and every year, sadly candidates lose marks by including points that are not features of melody, or else, they lose marks by omitting points that are features of melody. Description of melody must be about the series of **pitches** that are heard.

In an attempt help teachers and candidates with answering techniques for this type of question, below is a list of the types of observations that typically attract marks:

- General type of movement; but don't say 'conjunct' unless there are hardly any leaps, and don't say 'disjunct' unless it is notably lacking in steps. Sometimes neither of these statements will be sufficiently true (as is the case here).
- Specific type of movement; e.g. 'starts with ascending arpeggio on line...' or 'goes up a major scale in line...'
- Prominent intervals e.g. 'rising fifth at the beginning of line...'
- Shape e.g. 'leaps up and then comes down by step'

- Repetitions e.g., 'lines... are the same' or 'the four-note motif is repeated many times in a row'.
- Syllabic or melismatic descriptions do not gain marks; they are aspects of word setting not melody.

There were quite a lot of vague descriptions in answers to this question, though some identified the arpeggios and prevalent use of 2nds.

- (b) Many identified the cadence correctly as perfect.
- (c) Not many identified 'sequence'. Examiners did accept 'call and response', 'question and answer' and 'antiphony' though not imitation as this is incorrect.
- (d) This type of question on tonality often comes up. Candidates are reminded that stating **changes** and specifying whether the new key is major or minor is usually enough e.g., "a new key in line...".
- (e) The interval of a 3rd was often identified.
- (f) Most correctly identified 'strings'.
- (g) There is clear evidence from the answers that many candidates muddle up Sondheim, Schwartz and Schonberg, sometimes even so far as muddling syllables of the names themselves!

Q.4 (a) Some correctly identified 'sequence', though many did not.

- (b) This type of question - "describe features of the vocal melody" - comes up very frequently, and every year, sadly candidates lose marks by including points that are not features of vocal melody, or else, they lose marks by omitting points that are features of vocal melody. Description of melody must be about the series of **pitches** that are heard.

In an attempt help teachers and candidates with answering techniques for this type of question, below is a list of the types of observations that typically attract marks:

- General type of movement; but don't say 'conjunct' unless there are hardly any leaps, and don't say 'disjunct' unless it is notably lacking in steps. Sometimes neither of these statements will be sufficiently true.
- Specific type of movement; e.g. 'starts with ascending arpeggio on line...' or 'goes up a major scale in line...'
- Prominent intervals e.g. 'rising fifth at the beginning of line...'
- Shape e.g. 'leaps up and then comes down by step'
- Repetitions e.g., 'lines... are the same' or 'the four-note motif is repeated many times and a row'.
- Syllabic or melismatic descriptions do not gain marks; they are aspects of word setting not vocal melody.

There were some quite vague descriptions included as answers to this question, candidates not really nailing points about the vocal melody itself.

(c) Most identified 4/4 but very few indeed got the other time signature of 6/4.

(d) See points written above for Q4b, as they apply here too. On the whole, this question was better answered than Q4b.

(e) As with Q3g, there was a variety of answers, candidates clearly unsure between Sondheim, Schwartz and Schonberg. There were also other offerings here too though, including Rodgers. Depending on the composer stated, the decade stated varied considerably.

(f) As this comparison question features every year, similar to questions on vocal melody, there are certain pitfalls and omissions that regularly occur in answers.

Here are some observations and guidelines for answering this question:

- It is a **comparison** question, so marks are not earned by simply giving information without comparing.
- **State the obvious.** If the melody, harmony, structure etc. is the same, then state this in similarities before going on to more granular observations.
- Remember you need to compare extract 2 with extract 1, not the other way around.
- Do not spend time just describing extract 1 on its own; there are no marks for doing this.
- Tabular form answers are fine as long as they still compare extract 2 with extract 1.

Whilst there were some good answers to this particular question, on the whole, they were rather vague and generalised, many of the obvious similarities and differences omitted. Quite a few candidates did not seem to have noticed that some of the melodic material in the second extract was based on that of the first extract. Few acknowledged that it was an orchestra accompanying both extracts.

Area of Study D: Jazz

- Q.5**
- (a) Sadly, quite a lot of candidates did not correctly identify the trombone.
 - (b) This was not well answered overall.
 - (c) Some candidate correctly identified the interval, but many did not.
 - (d) Many correctly identified the structure as 12 bar blues, though there were some misnomers that did not get the mark.
 - (e) This question was very well answered overall, most candidates making some correct observations and many gaining full marks here. Some answers limited themselves unnecessarily by only referring to the Head section rather than the solos too, but there were many accurate descriptions.
 - (f) Many correctly identified the year the recording was released.
- Q.6**
- (a) As with the previous question, there were many full, accurate answers to this question too. Sometimes more detail was needed to fully nail the feature.
 - (b) Many correctly identified the AABA/32-bar song form structure, though some lost the mark by not having the letters in the correct order, or the wrong number of bars.
 - (c) Some correctly identified sequence.
 - (d) Quite a few correctly identified both piccolo and tuba, though nearly all got at least one right.
 - (e) Many correctly identified Ella Fitzgerald. Sarah Vaughan and Anita Oday were also accepted.
 - (f) As this comparison question features every year, similar to questions on vocal melody, there are certain pitfalls and omissions that regularly occur in answers.

Here are some observations and guidelines for answering this question:

- It is a **comparison** question, so marks are not earned by simply giving information without comparing.
- **State the obvious.** If the melody, harmony, structure etc. is the same, then state this in similarities before going on to more granular observations.
- Remember you need to compare extract 2 with extract 1, not the other way around.
- Do not spend time just describing extract 1 on its own; there are no marks for doing this.
- Tabular form answers are fine as long as they still compare extract 2 with extract 1. There were some convincing answers here, many noting the main similarities as well as some of the differences.

Area of Study E: Into the Twentieth Century

- Q.7** (a) Many failed to gain marks here due to answering technique. The “use of motifs” means candidates not only have to identify motifs in bars 1 to 8, but also state something about them – i.e., how they are used. It was fine to identify the X or Y motifs (according to the ‘Notes’), or the cor anglais theme, but there needed to be some further information on its use to gain the mark.
- (b) There were some convincing answers, many gaining the full three marks. Most correctly commented on the use of B as a tonal centre, its ambiguity in terms of mode, and the use of octatonicism. However, there were also some insightful comments on details of intervals used harmonically.
- (c) This was disappointingly answered on the whole, many candidates not knowing the meaning of the terms used in the score, though some did.
- (d) There was a wide variety of answers here, some too general to be credited, not including references as needed.
- (e) Many correctly identified the use of rotational form, and gained a second mark by giving further detail. In this sort of question candidates should state how the **extract** fits into the overall form. Usually, marks are given for bar numbers in this sort of question.
- (f) It is clear that some candidates are unsure about the meaning of texture and the terminology associated with it. Texture is **relationships between parts** (not just instruments) and the overall texture. Sadly, many used the technical vocabulary such as ‘monophonic’, ‘heterophonic’ incorrectly. There was a tendency to describe sonority (the use of instruments) rather than texture (the number of parts and how they fit together). Instruments should only need to be included to locate a feature like a pedal. Not that many scored the full five marks here.
- Q.8** (a) In general, candidates were not specific enough here, some making points on tonality rather than harmony.
- (b) This was a rare question where ‘syllabic’ was an accepted answer, but mostly, this was about **melody**, with specific observations about its shape required for marks.
- (c) This question was not very well answered overall, more precision needed in what the identified instrument did and where.
- (d) This was very poorly answered, most answers describing the violin writing rather than the cello writing. It is important to listen carefully to the instrument specified.
- (e) Both parts of this question were quite well answered on the whole.
- (f) Surprisingly, this question was very poorly answered, many responses inaccurate in the similarities they gave.

(g) In this question (a form of which always occurs), candidates need to give some specific details that show they actually know the music they are describing. Many answers are still too generic. This year's question was on harmony in another work and many used Webern op 22. Such detail as "at the beginning, the texture is very sparse, so there are rarely more than two notes at the same time, which means there is not any triadic harmony" would be an appropriate start. In addition, many candidates waste time comparing their chosen work with the given extract which is not needed and attracts no marks. Some gained no marks as the works they chose were either out of the time period, were set works or of the same style (neo-classical) as the given extract. Other answers were diluted by describing things other than harmony, often tonality.

Area of Study F: Into the Twenty-First Century

Q.9 (a) This was quite well answered, many answers focussing on the C major/minor ambiguity. The dominant F pedal and B flat tonality were also accurately highlighted.

(b) Candidates not only had to identify motifs in these bars, but also discuss how they were used. Many candidates did this successfully, supporting their comments with references as needed.

(c) Most candidates successfully identified this as a harmonic, but very few indeed correctly identified its pitch.

(d) This was quite well answered, though there were some errors.

(e) Most answers noted an accurate difference, often the use of monophonic texture.

(f) It is clear that some candidates are unsure about the meaning of texture and the terminology associated with it. Texture is relationships between parts (not just instruments) and the overall texture. Sadly, many used the technical vocabulary such as 'monophonic', 'heterophonic' incorrectly. There was a tendency to describe sonority (the use of instruments) rather than texture (the number of parts and how they fit together). Instruments should only need to be included to locate a feature like a pedal. Not that many scored the full five marks here.

Q.10 (a) Not all candidates recognised the bassoon.

(b) Some answers were too generalised, or else inaccurate, though there were some relevant observations.

(c) There were some correct observations, but candidates are advised that it is useful to describe particular features (e.g., tonic and dominant chords at the opening) as well as more general features (e.g., strongly tonal, dissonant etc.).

(d) This was not as well answered as Q10b. Candidates are advised to comment on such things as intervals, rhythmic patterns and shape.

(e) Many answers successfully identified a difference between the two sections, often centring around instrumentation, dynamics or harmony.

(f) This was not as well answered as desired, many comments not being specific enough.

(g) In this question (a form of which always occurs), candidates need to give some specific details that show they actually know the music they are describing. This year's question was on harmony/tonality in another work. Many answers are still too generic, though there were some more detailed responses. In addition, many candidates waste time comparing their chosen work with the given extract which is not needed and attracts no marks. Some gained no marks as the works they chose were either out of the time period, were set works or of the same style as the given extract. Other answers were diluted by describing things other than harmony/tonality.

Q.11 (a) There were quite a number of full mark answers which is commendable, though it is clear and understandable that many do find this dictation question challenging. Candidates are advised to use the rhythm in the rest of the extract to help them work out what the dictation rhythms are. Also, it is important to make sure that the rhythms written add up to the right number of beats.

(b) Most candidates scored at least one mark for correctly identifying a location, though some lost a mark by not including the correct accidental in the pitch correction. Candidates need to be aware that a rhythm correction usually involves changing two notes rather than just one.

(c) Very few candidates correctly identified the chord.

Q.12 (a) When giving bar and beat number references for the features required, it is important to note the difference in the features being asked about. For a specific chord, a **bar and beat** reference is needed. For a longer feature such as a cadence or sequence, then more than a bar and beat are needed. Instead, a **range of bars** is needed that includes a complete example of the feature asked for.

(b) Most candidates correctly identified the section.

(c) This was well answered on the whole, though candidates need to be discerning in what they consider important analytical points. Some lost marks through the lack of supporting bar and beat numbers.

(d) This was also well answered, though candidates need to be aware that a maximum of three marks are available for each column, so they cannot get all their marks from either similarities or differences only. Good practice is to start with the obvious similarities first (e.g. thematic material, harmonies, structure). Always look at the overall orchestration too. Be careful not to dwell on a small detail (the same rhythm in bar 1 and 74) that is part of a larger similarity (i.e., they are the same melody). The Haydn was well answered overall though.

Q.13 (a) When giving bar and beat number references for the features required, it is important to note the difference in the features being asked about. For a specific chord, a **bar and beat** reference is needed. For a longer feature such as a cadence or sequence, then more than a bar and beat are needed. Instead, a **range of bars** is needed that includes a complete example of the feature asked for. This is particularly true for 'pedals'.

(b) This was quite well answered, though sadly, some candidates did not add bar and beat numbers. Candidates need to be aware that a maximum of three marks are available for each column, so they cannot get all their marks from either similarities or differences only. Good practice is to start with the obvious similarities first (e.g. thematic material, harmonies, structure). Always look at the overall orchestration too. Be careful not to dwell on a small detail (the same rhythm in bar 1 and 57) that is part of a larger similarity (i.e., they are the same melody).

(c) This was not as securely answered as all that, unfortunately.

(d) This was fairly well answered, though candidates need to be discerning in what they consider important analytical points. Some lost marks through the lack of supporting bar and beat numbers.

Q14 Whilst there were quite a lot of essays that fell into the 'generally secure' and 'inconsistent' bands, there were far fewer that were 'convincing' and even less that were 'highly perceptive', sadly. Many answers focused heavily on the early classical period, and neglected much of the mid to late romantic era. Sometimes this seemed to be due to running out of time, but there was also evidence of a lack of knowledge in this area. A surprising amount of candidates erroneously discussed the baroque period, giving it more than a brief mention. A number of candidates only wrote about one of the set works. Others spent too much time discussing the two set works; the question asks for 'brief references' only.

Here are some pointers for writing the essay:

- Do not spend ages giving historical and contextual detail at the expense of actual description of the elements asked for
- Ensure you answer the **whole** question, referencing works from early, middle and late in the time period
- Only include **brief** references to the set works
- Show the examiners you actually **know** the music you are referencing by including precise details about it

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Tel: 029-2240-4300

Email: music@eduqas.co.uk

Qualification webpage: https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/music-as-a-level/?sub_nav_level=course-materials#tab_resources

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