



# GCSE Examiners' Report

Music  
GCSE  
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.<sup>1</sup>

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                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a> or on the Eduqas subject page                                                              |
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<sup>1</sup> 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.                                                      | <a href="#">Portal by WJEC</a>                                                |
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## Executive Summary

### Component 1

Solo and ensemble performances covered a wide range of marks, with most marking aligning with the standard. However, several issues with centre administration were noted, including missing work, errors in uploading, and clerical errors. Most candidates met the minimum timing requirement, but some centres noted incorrect timings, leading to penalties. Recordings were generally of excellent quality, but some had issues with balance and clarity. Scores and lead sheets were mostly clear, but some were missing necessary annotations. Levels of difficulty were generally well-indicated, but some centres incorrectly assessed difficulty levels, leading to clerical errors. Repertoire choices were mostly appropriate, with a wide range of instruments and styles represented. However, some performances were much easier than the standard level, and a few included inappropriate language. Ensemble performances were generally stronger, but some centres used the same repertoire for lower-ability candidates, which was not always suitable.

### Component 2

Administration was generally well-handled, with many centres adhering to guidelines, though issues such as missing files, clerical errors, and poor labelling were noted. Scores and recordings were mostly detailed and reflective of the audio files, but some lacked essential musical details. Candidate logs, while not assessed, are crucial for moderators, with the best logs being detailed and articulate. However, some logs were vague and lacked necessary information. The briefs for compositions were generally understood, but some candidates struggled with clarity in their ideas, affecting their assessment. The quality of compositions varied widely, with some exceptional pieces demonstrating advanced musical skills, while others were simplistic and repetitive. The use of technology in compositions was both a strength and a challenge, with some candidates relying too heavily on software features.

### Component 3

Candidates were generally comfortable with the format, but issues arose with questions on set works “Badinerie” and “Africa,” where lack of preparation was evident. Describing musical features such as melody, tempo, texture, and instrumentation continued to be problematic, with many candidates using incorrect musical vocabulary. The dictation question was challenging, with many failing to identify the key or complete the melody accurately. Comparing contrasting versions of the same piece showed significant musical awareness, though some candidates struggled with organization. Specific questions on pieces like “Intermezzo from Carmen” and “Satin Doll” had mixed results, with some candidates providing correct answers while others struggled with musical terminology. The longer answer questions required candidates to link musical elements to the purpose and intention of the music, which some did successfully while others did not. Overall, the document emphasizes the need for thorough preparation, familiarity with set works, accurate use of musical vocabulary, and clear organization in responses to meet the assessment criteria effectively.

| Areas for improvement                                                                              | Classroom resources                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Brief description of resource      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Performances should Achieve the minimum Required time, and Assessment standards should be checked. | <a href="#">Amplification of the criteria</a><br>found on the website<br><br><a href="#">GCSE Music FAQ - Performing</a><br>found on the website<br><br><a href="#">NEA walk through</a><br>found on the resources website | Guidance for teachers and students |
| Compositions should follow the stated brief, and assessment standards should be checked.           | <a href="#">Amplification of the criteria</a><br>found on the website<br><br><a href="#">GCSE Music FAQ – Composing</a><br>found on the website<br><br><a href="#">NEA walk through</a><br>found on the resources website  | Guidance for teachers and students |
| Candidates should focus on the element of music and exam technique                                 | <a href="#">Exam walk through</a><br>found on the resources website                                                                                                                                                        | Guidance for teachers and students |

## **MUSIC**

### **GCSE**

**Summer 2024**

## **COMPONENT 1 – PERFORMANCE**

### **Overview of the Component**

This year a diverse mixture of performing styles and disciplines were presented for assessment and moderators reported that the standard of work submitted was an improvement on last year's submissions.

Solo and ensemble performances covered the full range of marks and marking was mostly in line with the standard. More details on the assessment are covered in the relevant section.

This year many moderators reported several issues with centre administration.

Centres must read their centre reports and the Eduqas GCSE Music website information, especially the "Component 1 Performing Criteria Amplification."

Centres are also advised to read the "Guidance for Teaching", also available to download from the website.

### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

#### **ADMINISTRATION:**

Many centres completed the administration correctly with clearly labelled files, meeting the exam board deadline. It must be emphasised, that if centres are unable to upload work by the given deadline date, they must inform the Eduqas Subject Officer.

More centres this year submitted the required "Component 1 Performance Timing Mark Penalties" form with the first candidate (in alphabetical order). These centres submitted clear, completed mark sheets with candidate and teacher signatures, correct timings, appropriate difficulty levels, correct calculations and explanation of the candidate's role.

Centres that had uploaded PDF files, as opposed to Word documents, also helped to make the moderation process smoother and enabled moderators to minimise candidate data information.

However, several centres had to be contacted due to missing work or errors in uploading candidates' work and mark sheets. Most centres responded to moderator queries promptly and addressed the issues.

Moderators reported a large increase in clerical errors resulting in entire cohorts being called in, thus causing unnecessary extra work for centres and moderators alike.

Submissions should include:

- Completed mark sheets with candidate and teacher signatures (both may be typed). Without signatures, the submissions cannot be assessed
- The completed “Component 1 Performance Timing Mark Penalties” form to include all candidates in the cohort and uploaded with the first candidate alphabetically
- Correct timings of recordings from the start of the candidate’s singing or playing
- Difficulty Levels for each piece (SL, ESL, MD or exam grade)
- Clear explanation of the candidate’s role in ensemble performances
- Correct additions, scaling for levels of difficulty and submission of marks to Iamis
- Clearly labelled recordings and scores/lead sheets e.g., “John Smith 12345 Solo 2”
- The compulsory ensemble is “Performance 1”.
- Links to the relevant Area of Study

## **TIMINGS:**

Most candidates achieved the minimum timing requirement and almost all candidates where the requirement was not met were penalised accurately.

The “Component 1 Performance Timing Mark Penalties” form aided the moderators in identifying those candidates who did not achieve the 4-minute minimum timing for their performances.

Sometimes penalties were undeclared, which necessitated the moderation of whole cohorts. Also, some centres noted incorrect timings, especially if they were close to the 4 minutes.

The main errors came from:

- The duration of the recording was noted as the performance time
- Introductions and links were included in the timings
- The inclusion of sections where the candidate did not perform for several bars.

Centres need to note that the compulsory ensemble performance should be one performance of at least one-minute duration (“Summary of Assessment” on page 1 of the specification) and not two shorter ensembles to make up the one-minute duration. Centres should also be made aware that if the total timing of a folio (including the compulsory ensemble) exceeds six minutes, do not add one or more pieces to the candidate’s submission.

Some moderators reported that a few candidate folios were under-time and, had possible “musical” repeats been added to a piece, could have enabled that candidate to avoid a timing penalty. However, centres should avoid submitting short 2 or 4-bar patterns or chords, played repeatedly for several minutes. Such performances are not in the spirit of the NEA and do not offer evidence to award marks in the upper bands for Technical Control or Expression and Interpretation. Some moderators also reported “unmusical” repeats, where sections or pieces were repeated with long gaps of silence before the repeat was performed; this is not acceptable practice.

## **RECORDINGS:**

Most recordings were of excellent quality with the assessed candidate clearly audible in all performances. This is essential for the accuracy of the moderation process and centres should check all recordings before uploading to ensure that complete, balanced and unedited performances are submitted. Some centres gave verbal announcements at the start, which are not required.

However, there were several centres where the candidate was overpowered by the accompanist or other performers on the recording making moderation difficult and even, in some cases, where the candidate's performance was inaudible.

Some other performances were recorded in a large space, resulting in a considerable amount of echo. This was especially true of some rock-based ensembles. Moderators also reported distortion on some recordings.

## **SCORES:**

Many centres submitted clear scores and lead sheets which included all the necessary information to support marks for Accuracy. Performance directions were included, and annotations, repeats and cuts were clearly marked on the scores. Ensemble scores were marked/highlighted with the candidate's role. This practice helped the moderation process proceed smoothly.

Some pieces were missing performance directions on the score when these could easily have been provided to support the awarding of marks for Accuracy.

The main issue reported this year was the submission of scores with no annotation where the candidate had chosen to perform a variation from the printed score. This was especially evident in vocal performances.

If no score or lead sheet is supplied, there is insufficient evidence to award high marks for accuracy. A lead sheet must contain full details of pitch and rhythm.

Many centres had to be contacted to upload new scores due to the following issues:

- No scores uploaded with the performances
- Incorrect scores to those indicated on the candidate mark sheet
- Scores that bore no resemblance to the performance
- Ensemble scores with no indication of the candidate's role
- Tab with no rhythm or performance directions
- Lyric sheets or vocal lines with chord symbols for keyboard and guitar players
- Lyric sheets for vocalists with no melodic/rhythmic notation
- Lyric sheets only with no rhythmic patterns for rappers
- YouTube links or reference recordings (these are inadmissible)
- YouTube screenshots of tab which were impossible to follow
- Inadequate scans – blurry or poor ones submitted with musical lines missing (however, many less than in previous years)

## **LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY:**

There was an improvement in how levels of difficulty were indicated on the mark sheets with most centres correctly stating ESL, SL or MD. Some used this box to indicate an exam board grading instead of or in addition to back up their grading of repertoire. This was helpful.

There were several performances this year where difficulty levels were incorrectly assessed by the centre, which necessitated calling in whole cohorts to check all difficulty levels. Incorrect difficulty levels were reported as Clerical Errors by moderators on Iamis. Some centres uploaded sheet music with the grade printed but still stated a different difficulty level on the mark sheet.

A few centres had included exam board gradings of pieces or if the score had been checked by the exam board already which was helpful to moderators. I urge centres to carefully consider the level of difficulty criteria in the specification and, if in doubt, contact the Eduqas Subject Officer to receive confirmation of levels of difficulty.

There was also a large increase in instances where the level of difficulty scaling was not correctly applied. Some centres applied +/-3 marks for the level of difficulty as a blanket adjustment for easier or harder repertoire. Centres must reference the table provided in the specification.

## **REPERTOIRE:**

Most centres chose repertoire to reflect the ability of their candidates and it was clear from the variety in some centres that much care had gone into choosing music where the candidates were able to showcase their talent. Most candidates submitted two pieces while a few offered three or four performances to reach the minimum time of four minutes.

This year a wider range of instruments was offered, although mostly heavily in favour of rock and pop – electric guitar, bass guitar and drums. It is pleasurable to report that most orchestral instruments were offered, with some very highly marked performances. Vocal and piano performances in various styles – classical, musical theatre and pop were very popular and nearly all moderators commented on the centre practice of appropriate repertoire having been chosen to suit the ability of the candidate.

There were many examples of strong differentiation for higher and lower-ability candidates and once again ABRSM, Rockschoool and Trinity graded pieces tended to support candidates in accessing appropriate marks as well as providing clear scores. Particularly popular songs were “Smells like Teen Spirit” (guitar/drum-kit), “Come Together” (drum kit), the mash-up of “How Far I’ll Go/The Climb” and numbers from “Hamilton”.

Moderators reported excellent examples of traditional Indian performances including veena, carnatic violin and singing with appropriate scoring for the moderator to follow and agree on centre marks.

There were submissions of sequencing and DJ-ing with detailed lead sheets and comments on the mark sheet explaining the marking which were useful for the moderation process. It is important to note, however, that if submitting a sequenced performance, the candidate is still required to perform a “live” part.

Some centres submitted solo and ensemble performances which were easier than “Easier than Standard Level”. These performances were mostly 1 hand keyboard pieces, very simple tuned percussion pieces (e.g. “Lazy Latin”) or very simple chordal patterns (on keyboard) or rhythms (on untuned percussion) repeated many times. Very simple pieces, as described above, do not offer evidence to support a mark in the upper bands.

There were a few performances (mostly rap) which included inappropriate language. This practice is unacceptable and such performances are reported to the exam board. The choice of repertoire for ensemble performances was much stronger this year.

A few moderators experienced centres using the same ensemble repertoire, particularly for lower-ability candidates. Whilst this certainly helped many candidates and no doubt allowed for whole class/large group teaching of a piece, there were examples where this was not always suitable for candidates. This was mainly due to higher-ability candidates not being challenged.

Again, this year, there were many ensemble pieces in which the repertoire chosen did not meet the requirements outlined in the specification. Centres are advised to consult the “GCSE Ensemble Flowchart” which is available on the website.

These included:

- Accompanied solos, e.g. graded instrumental solos with an added drum accompaniment or a candidate singing a solo with piano accompaniment
- Vocal duets with mostly unison singing or alternating sung sections demonstrating little or no empathy with the other performer
- Solo performances with backing tracks (1 performer only)

There is much advice to be found in the Teaching Support Materials section on the Eduqas Music Home page, and centres should ask themselves:

“Is there evidence of effective rapport, empathy, and interaction between performers in an ensemble?” (taken from “Component 1 Performing Criteria Amplification”). Pieces such as the examples mentioned above, do not offer sufficient evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the highest band for Technical Control and Expression and Interpretation.

### **Assessment:**

Most centres used the assessment criteria carefully and fairly, awarding accurate marks within the correct band.

Some candidates could potentially have accessed more marks with easier pieces.

Sadly, some centres awarded zero marks for performances which demonstrated some accuracy, albeit deserving of marks in Band 1.

If the compulsory ensemble is below 1 minute in length it cannot be awarded a mark in the top band, in any column, as there is insufficient evidence to support this.

Middle-scoring candidates were the group most accurately marked.

There was a general trend to be slightly harsh towards the lower end of samples; it was felt at times that candidates were being penalised for performing easier pieces when there was often much to credit in their submissions.

### **Accuracy –**

Marks for Accuracy were generally well aligned with the standard, although some moderators reported that a few candidates who performed a piece mostly accurately throughout were marked in the lower bands for accuracy, ignoring the sense of fluency and appropriate tempo which should be considered alongside whether the notes are correct or not.

Accuracy marks were generous for some candidates where either an appropriate score had not been submitted or the candidate's performance did not match the score. Also, there were occasions when candidates made occasional slips and should have been awarded marks in Band 3 rather than Band 4.

### **Technical Control –**

Marks for Technical Control were generally correct. However, there were times when marks were generous in the top band where consistent technical control had not been demonstrated.

Some moderators reported that where centres were often severe with lower-scoring candidates, they would tend to double penalise the candidates across Accuracy and Technical Control when there were intonation issues rather than inaccuracies.

Marks for very simple pieces do not provide evidence to award marks in the upper bands in this column. Marks for poor choice ensembles do not provide evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the upper bands.

### **Expression and Interpretation –**

Marks for Expression and Interpretation were mostly in line with the expected standard, the only issue being that centres did not award full marks in this column when completely justified. As for Technical Control, very simple pieces do not provide evidence to award marks in the upper bands. Ensembles which do not demonstrate empathy and interaction between the performers do not provide evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the upper bands.

## **MUSIC**

### **GCSE**

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#### **COMPONENT 2 - COMPOSING**

##### **Component 2:**

##### **Composing – AO2 (Compose and develop musical ideas with technical control and coherence)**

Candidates are required to compose two compositions, one in response to a brief set by the WJEC, and a free composition. In total, Component 2 is worth 72 marks, as each composition is marked out of 36 marks.

The assessment objectives are:

- AO2.1a – Creativity and development of musical ideas
- AO2.1b – Technical control of musical elements and resources
- AO2.1c – Structure and stylistic coherence

##### **Administration**

Many centres uploaded the work according to guidelines, with audio files which had been checked and marksheets and candidate logs completed fully as required and marks correctly transferred to IAMIS. Where they occurred, errors in administration included missing signatures, missing files and marks, general clerical errors, incorrect scores/lead sheets, and incorrect forms/logs. In larger centres, the administrative demands were clearly more challenging.

Many centres submitted the work on time, though in cases of unexpected difficulties, extensions were granted by the WJEC. Some moderators reported late submissions without reason, which was felt to be unacceptable. When additional work was requested, most centres responded swiftly. The moderation process was hampered when there were delays in waiting for the correct/ missing pieces of work and /or signatures. Changes of candidate names were confusing when different names were noted on IAMIS and the coursework, and if future candidates could be consistent in this respect, it would be helpful. In some instances, the performance mark sheet (and work) was uploaded instead of the composing folios and information.

All moderators in the team acknowledge efficient moderation when the files/documents were uploaded and labelled correctly as according to set WJEC guidelines. Unfortunately, it seemed that poor labelling of files was rife.

For clarification, five files are expected:

- Candidate Log (with both authentication signatures)
- Composition 1 (set brief) audio
- Composition 1 score / lead sheet
- Composition 2 (free brief) audio
- Composition 2 scores / lead sheet

Please check the online guidance for any further information, including what should be presented in each document (i.e., some candidates presented lead sheets and evaluation content within the log, which is not what is required). It would be beneficial if centres checked all files before submitting the work.

## **Scores and Recordings**

Many candidates submit detailed scores and recordings or detailed lead sheets and recordings. Most scores were very useful and a true reflection of the audio files, though many lacked basic musical details, such as dynamics, tempo and articulation. Many were exported directly from the software, which presented parts that were unplayable by the instrument chosen, wrong clefs being used or scores spanning up to 96 pages. Such big scores are impractical to follow whilst listening to faster moving pieces – moderators suggest that perhaps, in these cases, a properly annotated score would be better. There were occasions where the scores had been poorly scanned, and where scores had been merged within the candidate logs. Other submissions included general lead sheets, and lyrics with chord symbols. Few candidates presented standard lead sheets with a melody line, lyrics and chords when a song was presented. However, there were lots of issues with lead sheets being extremely brief and lacking the right amount of detail to be able to fully credit compositional ideas. This was particularly an issue with guitarists and vocalists.

Some compositions created through software such as GarageBand were submitted as screenshots - many of which had no annotations; please advise future candidates that a screenshot without specific musical detail is of little use to the moderator. The annotations offered varied in quality, from the odd comment reiterating what was already on the screenshot and describing instrumentation and little else, to incredibly detailed comments about what pitch was used, where the rhythmic influences came from, why the instrument selections were made, the structural details, choices of harmony, devices and key. In most cases the various types of DAW will automatically provide a more 'zoomed in version' when you double click on the part/ idea, and a screen shot of that would work very well. Some candidates did not have scores of any kind (with no reason given), while some handwritten commentaries were illegible - several centres were contacted for clarification. However, many scores were printed from Logic, which often gave little or no indication of which instrument was on which line. Occasionally scores were incomplete, the bottom having been cut off in the copying process. The latest trend to arrive was screen prints taken from mobile phones, occasionally accompanied by chords, often just with lyrics.

Overall, recordings were of excellent quality, and parts were easily identified as they were taken often directly from software. Some centres obviously benefit from, or arrange, superb recording facilities which enabled the results to be very professional. This obviously enhanced the outcome, though it must be stressed that it is the actual musical content which is assessed. Use of music technology was at times impressive with candidates exploring automation for dynamics as well as some filtering, panning and EQ; it is encouraging that centres use and exploit a range of software and technology to encourage pupils to explore and exploit a wide range of musical elements, sounds and samples.

In several cases there seemed to be DAW software that had been recorded through speakers of the piece playing rather than exported as an mp3. The quality of such recordings was not always the best. Some live performances with chord sheets (singer-songwriters) were unfortunately also described by moderators as being of poor quality with background noises which made assessment difficult, these included sounds from the TV, phones, or other pupils chatting.

In some recordings taken from DAW software the balance wasn't always right, which meant that certain parts were not clear or audible - these parts were therefore difficult to appreciate and assess. Some tracks at times seem to have been muted (for obvious reasons); please be advised that the audio should match the score or lead sheet. Many exported audio tracks did not mute the onboard metronome track and some recordings of some live performances were at such low levels that actually distinguishing parts became challenging for the moderator.

Obviously, all such situations are best avoided. Candidates often use Garage Band and similar sequencers, and Sibelius composition tools were also referenced this year. The use of sequencing programs has led to unfortunate errors where the bass and other parts are not in sync, resulting in lost marks and a confusing result, as errors slip through, apparently unnoticed. Technology seems to be making it easier to compose and moderators feel that there is a worrying trend towards the quick and easy fix; some use loop-based programmes, and if any note manipulation has taken place, it is clearly only at a very basic level. This created a real problem for moderators in that it is almost impossible to discern and judge the original content.

Any reliance on technology to produce results **must** be described fully in the candidate log. Drum loops in DAW/Notation software are infrequently acknowledged as work that did not belong to the candidate. Teachers must support candidates with this in the log.

## Candidate Logs

While these are not assessed, they contain crucial and necessary information for the moderator. Almost all logs were word-processed which made them easy to read and allowed candidates to write as much information as required. Many candidates had been given clear guidance about how to write informative logs which included details of influences on the work, and the best logs were very impressive – detailed, articulate and thoughtful.

However, it was a concern for many moderators this year that some candidates had given little thought to the requirements necessary - some logs were extremely vague with very little detail provided by the candidates in the section about the composition process; briefs were unclear and lacked details about the style of music, event and intentions for the composition. Some logs contained inaccuracies in terms of musical information when describing the compositions and this, in some cases, affected outcomes. There were examples where candidates had not completed (or even attempted) logs, and simply signed the documentation. I hope the following points will assist teachers and future candidates.

- Please be advised that current forms, including the declaration and GDPR consent are available on the website (some centres used out-of-date forms).
- The marks cannot be processed without the necessary authentication signatures – check carefully that these have been included in the appropriate space in the log. The moderation process is slower when such information must be requested from the centre.
- The briefs

**Composition 1:** All candidates must state clearly the brief they have chosen from the list which is released in the first week of September in the academic year in which the assessment is to be taken. They must write the brief exactly as it appears in the instructions, and not merely state the Area of Study, or omit the details completely.

**Composition 2:** This is called a 'free composition' – but candidates must not write that in the space for the brief: it simply means that they can choose their own brief – i.e., by providing the details of the audience or occasion, plus a musical context (for example, a style, form, or device that is featured in the music). By not giving this information, the assessment is affected in AO2.1c where the effectiveness of the music in response to their selected brief is considered.

The majority of candidates understood the briefs that needed to be chosen for the first compositions. Good practice was noted when a free choice was given to the candidates, producing a variety of pieces, selected and completed usually to the candidates' strengths and personal musical skills. Some centres encourage the same set brief for all candidates, and in the best cases, there are very different and successful outcomes; however, the resulting compositions in many such cases are usually similar. Please be advised that the use of a 'class task' is not recommended as it may disadvantage some candidates who would have been more successful in writing a more individual response (and some candidates recognise this in their log). It can be more difficult to credit the candidate's input if the task is overly prescriptive. It was suggested that some centres presented class tasks/templates for their NEA submissions and perhaps did not offer candidates choice.

As already indicated, the free briefs were often vague and lacked the necessary intention, and as such did not provide sufficient direction as to the genre and elements of music needed to portray specific moods and colour tones. The better pieces were invariably the ones where candidates composed to a clear and specific brief. Some candidates stipulated a 'song' when they meant 'piece', as there were no vocals/lyrics in their actual composition.

- Candidates must indicate and respond to **all** sections of the log. This is how the moderator knows exactly what has been submitted.
- **Give an account of the composing and refining process**  
Some candidates fill this with an analysis or description of the music – even when a score has been submitted. This is not necessary. All musical details of the composition must be included on the score, or lead sheet/commentary/explanation, with a screen shot if they so wish. What is required here is clearly outlined on the form i.e., details of pieces which influenced them, the software used, any help or feedback given, and an explanation of how the musical choices made are linked to the brief. Such information could be kept as progress is made and transferred to the official documentation and checked prior to upload. Musical choices are not always fully apparent in the recordings. Moderators reported compositions where the material presented simply did not reflect the process as outlined in the composition log. On several occasions candidates wrote 'my teacher helped me within WJEC guidelines'. This does not provide sufficient information about the support received, and the opportunity to "speak" directly to the moderator has been missed as the content did not provide an insight to the creative process. Some candidates pasted screenshots into their logs, with no explanation of how the work was developed, thus lacking the specific explanation that is required.

- **Give details of any musical ideas which are not original**

This is not given sufficient attention. There were candidates who ‘borrowed heavily’ and did not state it in their log. This obviously affects assessment. All loops, intros and outros, Sibelius ideas/composition tools, accompaniment features, autoplay, arpeggiations and the like, must be declared – and used only in the knowledge that they will not be credited. This is where candidates must detail how they have used the technology.

If candidates have created their pieces/chord patterns in this way, very little actual ‘composing’ has taken place, and this must be considered when assessing the outcome. If any candidate uses an ‘autoplay’ feature – it must be declared in their log (it is the same as if a candidate uses a loop); if this is omitted by the candidate, the information must be detailed by the teacher in the optional comments section at the end of the candidate log. Too many candidates provided scant information. This can also affect the assessment.

### **How was the recording produced?**

- Some candidates fail to declare when they have recorded their own ideas. this is essential.
- If some parts – or all parts – have been performed by others reading from a conventional score, this is perfectly acceptable, but the score **MUST** be included.
- When some parts were performed by others without a conventional score  
This is extremely problematic for moderators. The candidate log states quite clearly “It is not sufficient to say ‘I told them what to do’” – and yet that is what seems to be the case on far too many occasions. There have been so many examples of others playing and singing compositions, with no indication of how this material was conveyed. Please be advised that moderators and teachers can only credit what the candidates have produced – this cannot be ‘interpreted’ by others. It is understandable that a candidate may want someone who they consider to be a more proficient performer to perform their ideas, but they must upload a recording where they play/sing their ideas themselves. This can be included clearly in the examination audio, or uploaded as a separate file, even presenting ideas separately and not as a fluent whole, if that is more manageable.

There were a number of candidates who stated that their teacher played the chords and others that they asked a friend to play. There were also examples when the teacher sang and accompanied the song with no further supporting explanation or a guide track. Again, this made it impossible for the moderator to realise what had been composed by the candidate and what the performer had interpreted themselves.

When it is not clear what the exact contribution of the candidate has been to a live recording – or how the parts have been taught, the content cannot be assessed fairly (this also applies to such ideas as layered harmonies if they have not been performed by the candidate themselves). A higher proportion of candidates than in recent years did perform their own compositions, including songs. Whilst the performances may have been less perfect than a DAW export, music is generally written to be performed and the composers’ intentions cannot be doubted if they are the performer.

Please remind all future candidates it is not acceptable to state in the log ‘I showed them what to play / sing’ in the case of live recordings. To recap: someone else must only perform the music or parts when a score has been submitted, or when a guide track written/performed by the candidate has been included for clarification. A candidate stating in the log that ‘I gave the content to the teacher, and they developed it for me’ is not appropriate.

Finally, some moderators felt that the comments included by some teachers were helpful in understanding the reasons given in support of the centre judgements and though this provides an opportunity for the teacher to communicate directly with the moderator, if necessary, please be reminded otherwise that these are optional.

Several centres seemingly direct the candidates to choose the same Free Composition or Set Brief. These centres run the risk of their candidates not composing using their strengths and thus perhaps not achieving their potential.

The coursework submitted for Component 2 was extremely varied in style, creativity, stylistic coherence, and in overall effectiveness. However, moderators felt that the standard overall was weaker than in previous years.

### **1. Forms and Devices: Compose a piece for performance in a musical showcase event which makes use of sequence.**

This brief was popular with candidates, particularly those choosing to write for classical ensembles. The work from some was excellent; well-structured with an interesting use of sequence, including the use of cycle of 5<sup>th</sup>s progressions. Development was skilful in such pieces, to produce impressive outcomes as candidates created excellent compositions which used sequences to great stylistic effect, integrating the use of sequence into a well-structured piece, such as ternary form or similar and effectively using imitation to control their ideas, and using sequences as a development tool to enhance their work. The compositions by candidates who chose to write classically based compositions were found to be more successful than those who wrote in a more contemporary idiom. There were also some interesting (but not in the spirit of the brief) examples of musical sequences as candidates-based ideas on the Fibonacci sequence.

For the most part scores were supplied, which was a valuable aid to moderation. In some cases, the sequences were not always immediately apparent aurally, and needed looking for carefully within the scores and supporting materials. Some centres struggled with the definition of the word 'sequence', which meant that Brief 1 was not always clearly met, if at all. The less successful pieces either relied on short phrasing or, in some cases, pure repetition which produced ostinatos rather than sequences. The weakest submissions were very simplistic where the ideas were often triadic and repetitive, and based entirely on repeated chord patterns. The sequence did not always fit with the chords/accompaniment, and the results were therefore inconsistent.

In less well-written pieces, it was clear that the candidate had understood how to write the sequence itself, but not how to place this in context, as the rest of the piece lacked harmonic and structural cohesion. The scores for these often confirmed this. Some candidates struggled as they simply moved a melody higher and lower with limited development. Many other compositions barely used sequences at all, failing to build strong melodic ideas, motifs or themes. Many candidates used a sequence only once or twice, barely addressing the brief, others simply presented a repetitive chord sequence. At times, there was an obvious misunderstanding of the term 'sequence' and instead included repeated ideas; in other pieces it was no more than a passing feature appearing briefly.

A few candidates submitted rock and pop versions with lead sheets and often very few comments and it was extremely difficult to pick out the sequences. Some of the candidates misunderstood 'sequence' and interpreted the intention as 'sequencing'. This affected credit in AO2.1c where the response to the brief is assessed.

## **2. Music for Ensemble: Compose a vocal duet, with or without accompaniment, for two characters in a new musical about family life.**

There were relatively few submissions here. Candidates were able to use this brief to combine good melodic and harmonic understanding with creative and well-structured development, resulting in some very imaginative outcomes. Outcomes overall (both in the quality of work and of the assessment) covered a wide range in terms of standards.

Some candidates clearly had an in-depth knowledge of - and love for- musical theatre, and stated influences like *Six* and *Hamilton* on their work, and the best duets were stylish, where technical control was impressive and word setting was competent. Some candidates incorporated rap (presumably influenced by *Hamilton*) with varying degrees of success. There were songs which were clearly solos, not duets, and some which had no lyrics, just a melody line played by an instrument. There were also some submissions where lyrics were provided, but they were not put on the score, and there was no singer, so it was impossible to know what the composer intended. Some works lacked vocal harmony and was presented as a song for two singers: other duets showed inventive and thoughtful interplay between voices with interesting harmonic support for the melodic ideas. One candidate wrote an imaginative (and really funny) piece which was utterly charming, with brilliant contrasts. Several of these pieces were submitted without a vocal recording, but the accuracy of the score, lyrics and instrumental guide track made their use of resources here very clear, nonetheless. Most candidates, however, sang their compositions in a musical style, and although accompaniment was not required, most chose to include it. This ranged from a full band to just a piano. Others were less successful, many recording songs in which they sang both parts, and it was often quite difficult to gauge the contrasts, especially when lead sheets were supplied as opposed to scores.

## **3. Film Music: Compose film music to accompany a scene in which a secret agent escapes a dangerous situation.**

This was by far the most popular option, and the outcomes were incredibly mixed. There were some truly exceptional pieces, and the topic really captured the imagination of some candidates. Some work was exciting and programmatic, and there as an effective use of the resources and elements to create tension and a sense of drama (including works for whole orchestra). There were some wonderful examples of very creative work where candidates opted to annotate their scores with the story, greatly aiding moderation as the response to the brief was so convincing. Less successful responses were evident when the outcomes attempted to capture the typical styling, but there was little or no attempt to reference the scene or any type of context, writing generic film music which was not always particularly fitting.

Many compositions featured heavy use of drums and semitones to create tension, along with cluster chords. More successful candidates here had really explored more interesting and challenging harmony to create suspense and tension. There was occasional clever use of silence.

Some pupils seemed to be able to create quite intricate pieces, others seemed to struggle to create anything other than a heavy use of drums and bass, with a play on various semitones - many done on a loop-based DAW with the students creating their own loops accompanied by a detailed commentary depicting the running story. Some of these were written on a traditional notation DAW, but they were less successful.

Percussion was often used effectively, but sometimes it took precedence over other instruments and there was insufficient melody or harmony in the piece, with limited textural variety. Weaker pieces relied on sound effects, and disjointed, fragmented ideas, with little overall coherence, often writing only for piano and not exploring other sounds. The less successful submissions were overly repetitive, often relied on triadic ideas and lacked harmonic cohesion. There were fewer scores for this brief, with lots of candidates relying on timelines and screenshots from DAW.

A worrying number of candidates submitted work based wholly or partly on Monty Norman's 'James Bond Theme' with no reference in the log; some pieces included clear influence of the chromaticism of James Bond but manage to manipulate the material in creative ways. Many of the weaker compositions lacked thoughtful development and felt disjointed, as the music had been created for a specific scene and so often the sections were not linked and any themes or motifs they had created were not used subsequently, as if they were creating soundscapes. As such through-composed pieces were made up of a succession of different motifs, the results were not always coherent and lacked development of a strong thematic idea which weaved throughout the composition. This affected the assessment in AO2.1a.

Many candidates presented rather complex (and long) story lines for their compositions which were not always clear, and the results lacked conviction and focus; some struggled to display an accurate representation of the style, resulting in repetitive compositions that were perhaps more suited to a different brief.

Many candidates did not respond effectively to the set brief, where the 'danger' of the situation was not always achieved, nor was the successful 'escape' realised musically... a number of secret agents met rather an untimely end, unfortunately.

#### **4. Popular Music: Compose a piece for performance in a youth environmental event dealing with climate change.**

Responses to this brief were extremely varied as candidates reflected on what this would mean in terms of harmony and timbres. Responses ranged from instrumental pieces to electronica, from RnB/Hip Hop to Indie, and anthemic songs. Lots were successful and gave candidates a chance to play to their strengths. There were some excellent environmental popular songs and the work (although simple in some cases) was musically shaped and well structured, with successful word setting with lyrics that were thoughtful and fitting. Some candidates wrote 'instrumentals' where the link to the brief was tenuous and there was a lack of convincing technical control. Some students used the brief to create a soundscape about climate change, which tended to be structurally fragmented with little melodic, motivic or thematic material tying ideas together. Occasionally candidates did not successfully reflect the area of study, as they presented 'classical' type responses.

Much work was not 'highly effective' in terms of creating coherent harmony and structure. Many candidates were completely reliant on block chords - generally root position triads - other songs had more complex harmonies. In some cases, it was clear that the candidates had recorded them themselves, but it was not clear, in other cases, where there was a tendency to rely on additional singers without guide tracks provided. There were many examples in this brief where someone other than the candidate had played or sung, and where there was no score, or a lead sheet with lyrics/chords provided. As stated above, despite the actual form stating not to, many candidates still said, 'I told my teacher what to play', 'we did this...' and 'we did that'; this is disconcerting when we are looking to assess the individual's creativity.

The less successful submissions tended to rely on samples of Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough to make the link to the brief clear and while these were effectively employed, they were often over-used and offered nothing in terms of musical content for assessment, seemingly expecting the spoken word samples to suffice. In the best examples of this approach, candidates had edited and manipulated the audio files and added sung or rapped choruses of their own. Some candidates composed instrumental pieces which had boxed text on the score relating specific musical features to a narrative about climate change. Sometimes teachers over-credited instrumental responses to this brief in AO2.1c, as the justification for meeting the brief was not always convincing.

## **Free Composition**

Some exceptional compositions were reported by moderators, when candidates were able to express their intentions with a considerable amount of musical skill and advanced understanding. There were some impressive examples of classical style pieces where candidates managed harmony in a mature and advanced way. Candidates who wrote for their own instruments, to reflect their own interests, or for ensemble types that they engage with regularly tended to be most successful. The best examples offered clear learner-created briefs which gave detail of the audience, occasion or context, with some candidates using previous past set briefs. Some moderators found the free compositions in their allocation to be weaker than the brief compositions overall, especially if the brief was not clear or lacked intention. Loops and overly repetitive passages tended to be even more prevalent though there were also some very good examples of students exercising creative freedom and invention.

There was an impressive variety of styles. Some songs were excellent, including hymns/ gospel music and more classical style pieces. but some were very short, with little development or variety in the accompaniment. There were excellent examples of popular songs where candidates were adept at setting words effectively, managing to ensure that the stresses of the words matched the metre and rhythms. Many of the songs were not sung live (even when the composer stated they were a singer) but some live recordings of choral pieces were appreciated.

Film music was very popular, ranging from 'limited' (just a simple monophonic line and some sound effects) to 'highly effective', and here also were found some impressive pieces where large ensembles were extremely well controlled. EDM was, again, very popular and there were a lot of pieces for video games (candidates tended to be very specific here and explained the type of game and even the specific level/scene/character). There were also some very skilful Minimalist compositions. Other pieces appeared slightly less appropriate, including very repetitive 'Lo-Fi' music, which is based almost entirely on repetition (and not much seems to go on), predictable and unimaginative 12 bar Blues pieces, and rap pieces which had no melody or harmony and often lacked effective styling and techniques. Plenty of hip hop music uses melody and harmony, and superb rhythmic creativity - but such genres can be extremely repetitious and require the repetitions to be developed to access higher marks.

## Assessment

Moderators agreed with the judgement suggested by many centres, but there were often occasions where the assessment this year was felt to be overly generous (sometimes particularly so) or even inconsistent. This tended to occur when centres had not misjudged by one or two marks in their assessment, but identified pieces as being in the wrong band of assessment completely.

Compositions that fell within the top marking band (Band 4) were *stylistic*, drew upon a *wide variety* of elements and demonstrated excellent understanding of the *style and character* in response to the chosen brief. Some students demonstrated impressive orchestration skills and made excellent use of technology to record multi-tracked and polyphonic ideas. It was clear that such candidates had clear guidance about how to write effective harmonic and melodic ideas and their logs reflected a thorough musical understanding. At the top end, the work was highly effective, with a sophisticated control of harmony in evidence in particular, handling circle of 5ths, cadences, and modulations competently.

Some weaknesses were highlighted when the initial ideas were excellent, but the work remained underdeveloped, with lack of variation in the musical elements (particularly texture), and with a reliance on a basic repetition of ideas. In such instances, insufficient consideration had been given to contrasts, textural variation, manipulation of the opening ideas through melodic extension, imitation, harmonic exploration, instrumentation and the like. Marking was usually generous for the development of ideas when pieces became static, or accompaniments, drum patterns or ostinatos were continuous and repetitive. Development could on occasion be seen clearly in more modern pieces, but when traditional structures were used, development of melodies was less successful and more formulaic.

Some compositions placed in the top band by centres should have been in Band 3 – or even Band 2. At other times, candidates who had written musically shaped melodies and used a clear structure appear to have been marked more harshly than candidates who had used a DAW and lots of loops (i.e., it sounded impressive - but there was far less actual original content). Compositions that fell within the second marking band (Band 3) displayed a *generally effective* degree of musical style and candidates drew upon a fairly wide range of *elements and resources* to create catchy ideas. Ideas were *well-organised* and the outcome was *generally effective*. Further work by candidates in this category to write more distinctive opening themes and explore a wider range of resources and elements within clearly organised and balanced structures would have been beneficial. Lots of pieces in this category were also overly reliant on repetition, melodically and harmonically, and were lacking in refinement, with some weaknesses evident. These tended to be overmarked, having been placed in Band 3 rather than Band 2. Conversely, there was a tendency for centres with lots of very high ability candidates to be slightly harsh with their marks for candidates in the mid-range, presumably as their ‘full mark’ candidates are so much better than the expectation for GCSE, which skews the expectation somewhat.

So many candidates submitted compositions which ended abruptly without a definite conclusion (the coda seemed to be a ‘forgotten section’). Candidates must consider how they finish a piece and put as much thought and planning into the ending as into the opening.

Compositions that fell within the third mark bracket (Band 2) were often quite short, *simple* and lacked musical direction. *Some* choices of elements and resources were effective, but unsuitable harmonic progressions and cadential points made outcomes sound *inconsistent*, only displaying *some* sense of coherence and not convincingly responding to the chosen brief. Musical elements such as harmony and melody seemed to lack long melody lines and harmonic progressions that made sense. It was felt that candidates did not always understand the use of cadences and there was a lack of cadential material in most projects with candidates just continuing to write and without any sense of harmonic structure.

These candidates are advised to write more substantial initial melodic material, consider appropriate harmonies and create a simple outline of their piece, planning how ideas are going to be explored and developed from the outset. An important consideration would be to refine the work more thoroughly to iron out potential weaknesses.

The lowest mark band (Band 1), applied to work that demonstrated only *limited* musical understanding, where ideas lacked conviction and refinement and were repeated (or not). Much of the work lacked coherence; ideas were rather 'random' and muddled, and there was an obvious lack of technical control. Work in this category needs to include clearer ideas which display musical understanding, before planning how to extend, vary and contrast the content to an improved degree.

Interestingly, the assessment of some work placed in this band by centres was felt to be a little severe.

## Some considerations for future candidates

### **AO2.1a: Creativity and development of musical ideas**

- The quality of the opening thematic material is crucial, so make sure that the musical ideas are distinctive, meaningful, melodic and well-shaped and balanced -the standard of melody writing is essential – generally need to be more expansive
- Refine and check all starting ideas and omit (or improve) any weaker passages
- Remember that one of the main criteria for assessment in this column is to produce a contrast in tone colour and mood – so plan how best to achieve this
- Make sure that all contrasting sections are purposeful and relevant
- When repeating a section of the music, develop ideas and avoid a direct ‘copy and paste’
- Plan how to develop ideas, using devices and musical features to achieve extension and contrasts.

Here are some suggestions:

- vary the texture (use layering, imitation or add a countermelody)
- extend and develop the melody (or melodies)
- check the harmony: vary the chords and perhaps change key when appropriate
- use inversion (for melodies and chords)
- expand the rhythmic content
- use devices such as sequence, pedal points, rhythmic augmentation and diminution, by taking an initial rhythmic motif and expanding it a step at a time to give both continuity and development to a section.
- include sudden and gradual changes in dynamics as appropriate to the style

**Avoid:** triadic ideas that never progress or develop, disjunct or dissonant content presented without conviction or reasoning, overly short ideas that lack scope and potential for development, and too many ideas which will be confusing and lack conviction.

It was in this column that marks tended to be particularly generous. Appropriate initial material, ready for contrast and development, is what is required here – simple and effective, not overly short and simplistic. The best pieces will present musical content that is substantial and reflective of the GCSE musical content as outlined in Appendix C of the specification. Precious time dedicated to the development of such knowledge will pay dividends for candidates.

## AO2.1b Technical control of musical elements

- Plan what musical elements and resources are appropriate to respond to the brief
- Show musical understanding and control of a variety of musical elements:
  - Melody – be inventive, show direction and balance, use phrase structures
  - Harmony - plan chord progressions, think about inversions and changing key, plot cadences carefully
  - IMPORTANT – make sure that the chords support the melody with no awkward clashes or amend parts of the melody to fit in with the chords - for example, if there is an awkward 'clash' of notes (remember that some 'clashes' can be very effective!)
  - Rhythm – vary and extend the patterns to achieve some variety and development beyond very basic ideas
  - Think carefully about correct instrumental use (i.e. not writing chords for single line instruments, consider the ranges and capabilities of instruments, and write idiomatically for piano)
  - Texture – show control by displaying variety, correctly worked and presented, showing some interplay between parts
  - Show understanding of how a performance would be controlled through tempo and tempo changes, dynamics and dynamic changes, and performance details and articulation (e.g. accents, legato and staccato)
  - If a candidate has written a song, and lacks the technical control and security to sing themselves, performing the melody on piano or 'synth' voice is best (if the score is not available)

**Avoid:** melodic ideas not supported by the appropriate harmony; unexplained or awkward dissonances; a lack of coherence between sections; being too ambitious by attempting to write for too many instruments (and then not involving most of them in the composition); writing for unfamiliar instruments without researching features to avoid awkwardly shaped melodic lines, poor piano textures (or just block chords throughout), or guitar strumming patterns which do not work; submitting a performance vocally where there are poor intonation issues as this is judged as insecure technical control (submit a score with another performer, or play the line on an instrument, ensuring that lyrics are carefully presented).

## Structure and stylistic coherence

- Make sure the selected brief is clear and manageable, and written as according to guidelines
- Plan the overall structure as the musical ideas need to be well organised (working within a set structure such as Ternary, standard song form, or Rondo may help – a planned sequence of events in a storyline also works well in film music)
- Remember to plan how the piece begins and ends, as 'codas' are as important (if not more so) than 'introductions'
- Plan the musical choices thoughtfully so that they are relevant to the brief - think about how the musical ideas will be best presented so that they can be considered 'effective', in terms of the musical style and character of the music

**Avoid:** forgetting to state the brief; not having a clear structure; repeating ideas without any kind of direction or focus; using random repeat marks; writing a piece that is simply too long with ideas that are repeated too many times, or that includes extended, random passages; letting the music 'fade-out' rather than finishing convincingly, as this weakens the overall structure; writing too many contrasting sections, so the finished piece may not feel 'coherent', as this affects marks.

In some cases, 'style' was over rewarded in column three, when structure was unclear or musical features obscured, particularly in heavy rock styles. Some candidates were disadvantaged using 12 bar blues or the continuous cycling of 4 chords or continuous guitar strumming patterns.

### Summary of key points

- Take note of advice in previous Principal Moderator reports.
- Refer to WJEC guidance as to essential requirements, completion of candidate logs and exemplar materials.
- Upload and label all files as according to WJEC guidelines.
- Check all recordings for balance/missing parts/interference/background noise.
- When other performers have been involved in recording a candidate's composition, either the notation or a guide track performed by the candidate MUST be included. No credit can be awarded for the relevant ideas otherwise.
- All loops/autoplay/auto-accompaniments/auto chord patterns/arpeggiations etc., must be clearly credited by the candidate in the relevant section in the candidate log.
- The requirements of the GCSE Music assessment criteria (for composing and evaluation) must be kept at the forefront of all musical decisions made and guidance given. Assess to the assessment criteria in the specification, not to the standards of the centre cohort.
- Where centre marking is considered inconsistent, centres are advised to engage with exemplar/CPD material and study past chief moderator reports, as well as their own centre reports.

## MUSIC

### GCSE

Summer 2024

#### COMPONENT 3 – APPRAISING

Just under twelve thousand candidates sat the appraising examination this year.

Once again, candidates appeared to be comfortable with the general format of the appraising examination, however some of the more problematic issues were as follows:

- Questions on the set works (*Badinerie* and *Africa*) were delivered for the third time this year. Whilst some parts of each question were able to be answered simply by listening to the extract and examining the score, the majority of the questions required learning to have taken place in advance. Unfortunately, it was frequently apparent to examiners that very little, if any, preparation had occurred, and centres are encouraged to ensure that their candidates are as familiar with all aspects of the set works as possible. In particular, candidates need to be able to identify the theoretical aspects of both works and should be familiar with chords, cadences, compositional devices and modulations.
- Describing musical features and elements – specifically melody, tempo, texture and instrumentation – continued to cause problems for many candidates. When asked to describe the constituent ingredients of a melody, for example, candidates should focus primarily on pitch and rhythm and should not include any references to performance techniques of any kind. When describing the constituent ingredients of tempo, texture and instrumentation, they should be using the appropriate musical vocabulary associated with these musical specific elements. Unfortunately, candidates frequently made references to other, unrelated, musical elements instead.
- The dictation question continued to cause problems for many candidates this year. A significant number failed to write the time signature in the correct place on the score and the majority failed to identify the key of E minor. Many candidates found it difficult to complete the pitch of the melody - almost all failed to include the D sharp - and this musicianship skill needs further development generally.
- Candidates demonstrated a significant amount of musical awareness when comparing contrasting versions of the same piece of music. However, some found the organisation of their answer problematic and provided answers referring to the original version of the piece rather than the contrasting version on which the question was based.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### SET WORK – *Section A from Badinerie (Musical Forms and Devices)*

- Q.1**
- (a)** Approximately three-quarters of all candidates identified the correct answer.
  - (b)** Almost entirely correct.
  - (c)**
    - (i)** The vast proportion gave the correct name of the curved lines, however some referred to them as slurs.
    - (ii)** Many candidates found this difficult to explain. References were made to a legato sound or that they 'smooth out' the notes. Some said that they 'made the notes last longer' or that the player had to 'hold the note over'.
  - (d)** This was surprisingly problematic for many candidates. Were they unable to identify the location of bar 11 or the cello part as the lowest stave on the score? Were they struggling to read the bass clef? Many said G or C and forgot to include the sharp.
  - (e)** This was almost entirely incorrect. Very few candidates achieved one correct answer and fewer still achieved two. Many did not attempt to answer the question.
  - (f)** This was also almost entirely incorrect. Many candidates forgot to include the beat numbers in their answers. Many did not attempt to answer the question.
  - (g)** A significant number of candidates identified the dominant key; however, many confused the minor with the major.
  - (h)** The answer to this question was entirely reliant on prior knowledge of the set work. Candidates who knew the piece well achieved at least one correct mark and many achieved two or three. This question contained a clearly designated line for each answer, therefore only the first answer on each line could be credited and everything else was ignored. Fortunately, candidates were, on the whole, careful to write only one answer on each line.

### **Q.2 *Intermezzo from Carmen* (Musical Forms and Devices)**

- Q.2**
- (a)** Most correctly identified the harp although there were a few harpsichords thrown in for good measure.
  - (b)** Whilst many identified the broken chord and the fact that the musical idea was repeated, a significant number gave legato as an answer. It is worth reminding candidates that melodic features can only refer to pitch and rhythm.
  - (c)** Largely correct.
  - (d)** Conjunct, triplets, ornaments, diatonic and a reference to the wide or high pitch range were the most common answers here. Again, answers were required to refer only to pitch and/or rhythm.
  - (e)** Mostly correct.
  - (f)** Mostly correct, although many candidates identified the oboe as the new instrument.
  - (g)** Mostly correct.
  - (h)** Mostly correct.
  - (i)** Not as many as you might expect were correct.
  - (j)** This was a bit of a stab in the dark, although a significant number managed to choose the correct answer.

### **Q.3 *Satin Doll* (Music for Ensemble)**

- Q.3**
- (a)** There were probably as many bass guitars stated as there were double basses.
  - (b)** Extremely hit and miss.
  - (c)** Mostly correct.
  - (d)** This was well answered on the whole and the majority of candidates achieved at least two marks. As with questions 1h and 2d, this question contained clearly designated lines for each of the four answers and this did not cause a problem for most candidates. A word of caution though is that candidates were required to restrict their comments to the version stated in the question - in this case version 2 - rather than to version 1. Consequently, those who provided answers explaining the ways in which version 1 was different were not awarded any marks.
  - (e)** A large proportion were correct.
  - (f)** Again, this was well answered on the whole and the majority of candidates achieved at least two marks. As with the previous question, candidates were expected to discuss the musical features contained within version 3 rather than version 1 and this seemed to cause slightly more problems than the earlier question had done.

#### **Q.4 *Oklahoma!* (Music for Ensemble)**

- Q.4**    **(a)**    Almost entirely correct.
- (b)**    Almost entirely correct.
- (c)**    Candidates found this slightly more difficult than last year which was probably due to the fact that they were required to discuss the mood of the music rather than the action. The most successful answers discussed the melodic features, the use of tonality and harmony, the tempo, the metre and rhythm, the textural devices, the structural devices, the dynamic effects and the instrumental and vocal sonorities and linked them to the exciting, happy and celebratory mood in a number of interesting and creative ways. Unfortunately, there were some candidates who simply offered a list of musical features without any links to the purpose and intention of the music, and these didn't score very highly. Similarly, some candidates kept repeating the words exciting, happy and celebratory as the links at the end of each statement which, once again, didn't score particularly well.

#### **Q.5 *The Windmills of Your Mind* (Film Music)**

- Q.5**    **(a)**    **(i)**    Surprisingly *lento* was by far the most popular answer.
- (ii)**    For most candidates this seemed like complete guesswork.
- (iii)**    The fifth, third and first pitches - in that order - proved to be the most reliable. Nearly all candidates failed to include the D sharp.
- (iv)**    Sequence was by far the most popular answer here, followed closely by minor key. *Conjunct* is frequently a default answer for many candidates when answering a question of this type which, on this occasion, was incorrect.
- (b)**    **(i)**    Many candidates identified the correct time signature, however it was surprising how many of them failed to write it in the correct place on the score.
- (ii)**    Only a small percentage of candidates identified the correct key. Many stated that it was in G major, however many others offered wildly unrelated ones.
- (iii)**    Ledger lines seemed to cause problems for a number of candidates.

### **Q.6 *The Big Country* (Film Music)**

- Q.6**
- (a)** Nearly all candidates achieved at least one mark.
  - (b)** There was a very high success rate for this question although quite a few named specific brass instruments rather than the orchestral section.
  - (c)** Almost entirely correct.
  - (d)** Nearly all candidates achieved at least one mark.
  - (e)** A large proportion were correct.
  - (f)** Approximately a third of candidates were correct.
  - (g)** This was problematic for many candidates, possibly due to the fact that the two sections that were being compared were part of the same piece rather than separate extracts. The most popular answers were concerning the instruments that played the melody, the lack of modulation and specific references to the dynamic range.

### **Q.7 SET WORK - *Outro from Africa* (Popular Music)**

- Q.7**
- (a)** This was mostly correct, although a few confused the extract with the introduction.
  - (b)** This was more problematic than **(a)**, probably because the candidates were required to have studied the set work in detail.
  - (c)** This was very hit and miss and was usually either totally correct or totally incorrect. The first chord was the most reliable correct answer.
  - (d)** Candidates really struggled to describe the musical features. Many said *ostinato* and/or *repetition*. Many said, 'played on a synth'.
  - (e)** As with 5a ii, this was mostly guesswork.
  - (f)** Many were incorrect here.
  - (g)** Generally well answered.
  - (h)** Very successful, although many gave the value of the rest rather than the name. There were, of course, lots of top hats offered.
  - (i)** Many were familiar with this symbol although some thought that it meant common time.

## Q.8 *Barcelona* (Popular Music)

- Q.8 (a) Mostly correct.
- (b) Mostly correct.
- (c) Not bad at all, although some failed to comment on the sonority and referred instead to the pitch or the dynamic.
- (d) Mostly correct.
- (e) (i) Candidates were required to provide locations for their descriptions in order to be awarded any marks. Simply writing *andante* was incorrect. Fortunately, as no specific number of answers was requested, examiners were able to pick out the correct observations.
- (e) (ii) This was more successfully answered than the previous question - many achieved a mark for homophonic - although candidates struggled to describe what the instruments were actually doing.
- (f) A significant proportion were correct.
- (g) Mostly correct.
- (h) This was well answered. Some of the candidates - clearly those who are amateur comedians - provided some interesting interpretations which included 'Spain', 'Barcelona' and 'Freddie Mercury's house'. My favourite though was the candidate who said, 'a concert hall, as far away from me as possible'.

## Summary of key points

- It is imperative that candidates are as familiar as possible with the set works.
- Candidates should be familiar with each of the musical elements and should be able to utilise appropriate musical vocabulary when describing them.
- On the exam paper, where a specific number of answers are required – for example, two – only the first two answers will be considered.
- Candidates must not write more than one answer on a single line as only the first answer on the line will be credited.
- Where no specific number of answers are requested, candidates are invited to describe as many musical features as possible and examiners will credit all correct observations.
- Negative answers will not be credited, and a candidate who describes what is not present in a piece of music will not receive any marks. However, this will not be the case when candidates are required to compare two pieces of music.
- Tick box answers should not exceed the number of ticks stated in the question.
- With regards to the longer answer question, candidates are advised to discuss a range of musical elements ensuring that they are linked to the purpose and intention of the music.
- For the completion of the dictation question, candidates are advised to write in pencil so that any amendments to the score can be made as easily and as clearly as possible.

## **Supporting you**

### **Useful contacts and links**

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029-2240-4300

Email: [Music@eduqas.co.uk](mailto:Music@eduqas.co.uk),

Qualification webpage: [https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/music-gcse/#tab\\_keydocuments](https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/music-gcse/#tab_keydocuments)

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