



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**MUSIC
GCSE**

SUMMER 2023

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

Online Results Analysis

WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

Annual Statistical Report

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

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MUSIC

GCSE

Summer 2023

COMPONENT 1 PERFORMING

General Comments

This year saw the return to the full requirements for Component 1, Performing and centres are to be praised for their diligent preparation of candidates. Moderators have commented on the enjoyment they experienced listening to the young diverse talent on offer from centres. I should like to extend a warm welcome to those centres who have submitted to Eduqas for the first time this year and hope that they found the process easy to navigate.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Many centres completed the administration carefully and uploaded clearly labelled submissions with the required "GCSE Music Performing Candidate Mark Penalties Form" (all candidates should be listed). Please check during the coming year for communications from Eduqas for instructions for uploading work correctly.

Successful submissions included:

- Completed marksheets with candidate and teacher signatures (both may be typed). PDF files are preferable to Word documents.
- This year's marksheet downloaded from the website
- The "GCSE Music Performing Candidate Mark Penalties Form" which was available to download from the "Non-Exam Assessment" section of "Key Documents" on the GCSE Music Home Page
- Correct timings of recordings (from the start of the candidate's singing or playing)
- Difficulty Levels for each piece
- Explanation of the candidate's role in ensemble performances (if necessary)
- Correct additions and submission of marks to Iamis
- Clearly labelled recordings and scores/lead sheets e.g., "John Smith, 12345, Solo 2"
- The compulsory ensemble as the first submitted piece.

Sadly, very many centres did not complete the above requirements correctly, resulting in delays to moderation whilst centres were contacted to provide the correct information or upload correct recordings, scores or marksheets. Please ensure you contact the exam board if there is a problem meeting the deadline for submission.

Thanks must go to Exams' Officers and music departments for uploading the extra requirements promptly in most cases.

Clerical errors were in evidence for a variety of reasons:

- Marks not added/subtracted for awarded difficulty levels
- Incorrect difficulty levels on marksheets
- Timing penalties not applied correctly or at all
- Incorrect addition of marks on marksheets
- Marks inputted into Iamis which did not match the marksheet.

All clerical errors were rectified by moderators.

TIMINGS:

Most candidates achieved the minimum timing requirement of four minutes and their performances had been carefully timed with penalties correctly awarded for under-time performances as detailed on the centre's "GCSE Music Performing Candidate Mark Penalties Form".

Moderators reported that some centres submitted a third or fourth piece when the candidate's folio was already over four minutes long. Perhaps centres felt that this practice would bring up the average mark on a lower-marked compulsory ensemble. I ask centres not to encourage this practice amongst candidates.

I should like to remind centres that they should:

- Record from the candidate's entry – long introductions and sections performed by non-candidates (especially in ensemble pieces) should not be included
- Not have verbal announcements at the start of recordings (in some instances, these were included in the timings).

RECORDINGS:

It was pleasing to hear from moderators that most recordings were excellent, and candidates were clearly identified, especially in ensemble recordings. A few centres submitted recordings where it was almost impossible to identify the candidate. It is imperative that centres check the balance before recording takes place and listen back after recording.

Fewer centres were identified as adding effects such as reverb to enhance the candidate's performances. Centres are to be reminded that, as stated in the specification, recordings should be "unedited".

SCORES/LEAD SHEETS

Many centres submitted scores and lead sheets with careful and accurate annotations which made the moderation of Accuracy marks a smooth process.

It is vital that scores and lead sheets are annotated with the candidate's intention prior to recording. Such annotations could include:

- Melodic or rhythmic variation – this can take the form of a bracket over a few bars with a comment such as "melodic ornamentation here"; or actual notes may be changed
- Performance directions
- Repeats
- Cuts to the score
- The candidate's role within the ensemble if not stated on the marksheet and especially if parts are swapped over. Individual parts may be highlighted
- Lead sheets with details of structure, chords, melodic and rhythmic patterns, and clear performance directions

Issues which arose with the submission of scores this year:

- Absence of scores
- Unannotated scores or scores with blanket comments at the start such as "Melodic variation throughout". Please note that this will affect marks for Accuracy
- A lack of performance directions on the score – dynamics, tempo, phrasing, articulation
- Lyric sheets for singers with no melodic outline
- Guitar tab with no rhythmic patterns nor performance directions
- Scores uploaded as separate files
- Missing pages or incorrect order of pages
- Photographs of scores with missing lines and blurred images
- Reference recordings which are not accepted in lieu of scores.

Centres were contacted for clarification as necessary.

Please think carefully: "Is this truly what my candidate intends playing?"

DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Overall, centres had judged difficulty levels well, following the performance descriptors in the appendix of the specification. If pieces had been checked by the exam board, this was often indicated on the marksheet, which was of huge help to moderators.

Most centres stated the abbreviations of ESL (Easier than Standard Level), SL (Standard Level), MD (More Difficult than Standard Level) or the exam board grade indicated on the mark sheet. However, I would urge centres to be mindful when submitting a piece which has an agreed level of difficulty or a graded piece, with the candidate then performing an easier arrangement of the piece or making a cut in places. A word of caution regarding the use of “wider exam board repertoire”, whose grades may not be in keeping with the more formal exam board grading system or the difficulty criteria in the specification.

There were many more “Easier than Standard Level” performances submitted than in previous years. Perhaps this reflected the impact that covid restrictions have had on the development of students’ performing skills and confidence in performing at KS3.

Please note carefully that pieces deemed to be easier than “Easier than Standard Level”, such as simple right hand melody piano pieces, repeated 4 bar chord sequences or simple tuned percussion pieces, will not reach the higher bands for Technical Control as the evidence of technical control is limited. There is also limited opportunity for Expression and Interpretation in very simple pieces.

Regarding click tracks, if moderators felt that the “click” offered too much support to the candidate, either marks for Technical Control could be affected or the Level of Difficulty brought down.

This year, incorrect difficulty levels were amended as Clerical Errors by the moderators. Please contact the exam board if in doubt regarding the difficulty level of a piece, if it cannot be worked out from the performance descriptors in Appendix A of the specification.

REPERTOIRE

Repertoire had been carefully chosen by most centres to reflect the candidates’ abilities and interests. Moderators reported a significant rise in the submission of pop and rock performances for all voices and instruments. Particularly popular songs were “Smells like Teen Spirit” (guitar/bass guitar/drum-kit) and “Come Together” (drum kit).

For the most part, centres submitted pieces found in the syllabuses of music boards including Rockschoool, ABRSM and Trinity. There were several outstanding “classical” performances where candidates excelled and were fully deserving of the full marks awarded by the centres. Some candidates attempted pieces beyond their capabilities which sadly meant that vital marks were lost, especially for Accuracy and often Technical Control.

Moderators reported clear evidence that many dedicated teachers have worked really very hard to support students who are not at the required standard or have been supporting students to ensure they had appropriate ensemble pieces by arranging them themselves.

There were many solo and ensemble submissions of rap, beatboxing, sequencing and DJing with detailed lead sheets and very often, useful teacher comments on the marksheets in support of the marking. Rap scores should include rhythms and performance directions as detailed above.

There were very few instances of inappropriate language or content this year and centres had substituted non-offensive words where necessary.

It was reported by some moderators that several centres had chosen the same piece of music for a whole cohort or range of candidates to perform. Whilst this may aid teachers in preparing their candidates for the performance element of this qualification, especially if there are issues with convenience, time, student motivation and large GCSE cohorts, many such candidates could have scored higher marks performing pieces more suited to their ability.

ENSEMBLE

There were very many submissions where the requirements for ensemble were fully met, and those centres are to be applauded for choosing appropriate repertoire.

The requirement is that candidates must submit an ensemble performance of a minimum of one minute duration with at least one other “live” performer and no more than eight performers taking part. It is not permitted to submit two ensembles of less than a minute to meet the requirement.

The primo parts of bona fide ensemble pieces are acceptable if there is evidence of empathy between the candidate and the members of the ensemble. Care must be taken, with vocal duets especially, that there is one minute of ensemble taking place, not including any doubling of parts.

Many centres struggled to submit ensemble pieces this year, submitting a solo with an accompaniment under the guise of an ensemble, resulting in a mark of 0 for ensemble and the submitted piece moderated as another solo.

The ensemble is an essential requirement of the exam. If an ensemble is not submitted, please award 0 for ensemble, add the marks together of all the pieces, divide by the number of pieces and multiply by two.

There is much discussion on forums as to what constitutes an ensemble and again, if in doubt regarding the validity of an ensemble, please contact the music team for confirmation.

ASSESSMENT/OVERALL STANDARD:

Most centres had used the assessment criteria carefully and thoughtfully offering very accurate marks within the correct bands of the three assessment criteria.

Moderators reported that Accuracy was very often the column where centres had marked generously. Centres were either overly harsh, awarding 0 or band 1 marks for performances which did not contain “rhythm and/or pitch inaccuracies throughout”, or over generous, awarding band 4 marks for performances that lacked fluency and had more than occasional slips. The lack of annotations on scores and lead sheets accounted for some of the largest discrepancies where teachers had awarded high marks, with unannotated scores or lead sheets not supporting those marks.

Marks for Technical Control were mostly accurate with centres awarding marks which had been carefully considered. There was still a tendency to double-penalise middle to lower candidates under Accuracy and Technical Control. If a performance contains intonation issues throughout the performance, then marks should be lowered for Technical Control.

However, if there are occasional moments when notes are not on pitch, then marks for Accuracy would be compromised.

As mentioned above under “Difficulty Levels”, marks for pieces below “Easier than Standard Level” should not be awarded marks in the higher bands due to the limited evidence of technical control offered by the candidate.

It was felt by moderators that Expression and Interpretation centre marks were generally very secure across all bands with the highest marked candidates performing with maturity and a great deal of expression.

I ask centres to please take note of advice given in previous moderator reports to centres, as there was a tendency for the same issues of marking, administration, scores or levels of difficulty to be repeated this year.

As moderators we would like to acknowledge how difficult it may have been to prepare candidates for submission this year and we would like to pass on our genuine congratulations and thanks to all teaching and peripatetic staff who have persevered and helped all candidates to provide musical performances to be proud of.

Summary of key points

- Please check all administration and uploads carefully.
- The candidate must be audible on the recording.
- Scores and lead sheets must be annotated where necessary to support centre marks.
- The ensemble should not be an accompanied solo and the candidate must perform a significant part for at least one minute.
- Very simple pieces will demonstrate only limited technical control.

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COMPONENT 2 COMPOSING

General Comments

Administration

Most of the administration this year was correct, although there were issues of concern reported by the moderating team. For the most part, these included minor clerical errors, unsuccessful or incorrect uploading of work and missing recordings, scores or leadsheets and authentication signatures. Most centres responded swiftly to requests for replacement or additional work.

Moderators felt that PDFs worked best for typed documents as they opened quickly online. There were still some handwritten logs and marksheets and these are still acceptable.

Uploading

Some centres, for one reason or another, were late or slow in uploading the centre submission. All moderators reported efficient moderation when the files/documents were uploaded and labelled correctly as according to set WJEC guidelines. For clarification, five files are expected:

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

Please check the online guidance for any further information, including what should be presented in each document (i.e., some candidates presented leadsheet content within the log).

Scores and Recordings

Many **scores** were of excellent quality, with detailed markings of performance directions and articulation. Others were more difficult to navigate and read, at times including little information as regards instruments, tempo, dynamics and so on. Some candidates presented a mix, with a score for one piece and leadsheet/annotated screenshot with explanatory information for the second composition. Although this has been reported every year, please advise future candidates that screenshots without any specific musical information on the content are of no use. 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 reasonably well. Some candidates submitted scores in excess of 40 pages, displaying only one bar per page. This made following scores tricky and was distracting from the music itself, and requiring multiple replays of the audio track. Other scores had structural or musical features signposted, which was useful. The weakest scores were unannotated screen shots of software tracks – these really needed extracting separately with an explanation. Certain candidates included a commentary with detailed explanation under headings such as Melody, Timbre, Rhythm and so on. These were excellent and helpful. Some scores did not have the instruments labelled with the number of tracks, and with staves that were different on each page, with no guidance as to who was playing where.

Some centres uploaded multiple files per piece, while others did not upload anything in the way of scores. Candidates did not always include the lyrics for songs on the lead sheet/score/annotated screen shots.

Where no score was available, best practice was acknowledged as a screenshot accompanied by detailed explanation and additional snipped extracts of the piece with specific information. Scores printed from some sequencing packages are unhelpful as the music is not accurately notated; many DAW screenshots showed just one section or part of the composition. There were a few centres that had produced TAB scores where the fret numbers had been replaced by question marks (presumably notes that are out of the range of the instrument). This can be rectified by centres facilitating the capacity to convert the TAB to staff notation instead.

Please be advised that a leadsheet must contain the melody, chords and structure, with explanation of specific musical details. Some centres decided to make PowerPoint presentations instead which was a slightly different way of providing the written commentary but worked well.

Overall, **recordings** were of excellent quality, as they were taken often directly from software. In several cases there seemed to be DAW software (e.g., Sibelius / MuseScore) that was recorded through speakers of the piece playing rather than exported as an mp3, which affected the quality of the audio. In some live performances of compositions, the balance was not always good, and it was difficult to hear individual parts (e.g., the singer); in other recordings there was background noise, or the recordings were a little muffled, making it difficult to appreciate the finer details. Some centres obviously benefit from (or arrange) superb recording facilities which enabled the results to be very professional – this obviously enhanced the recordings, though it must be stressed that it is the actual musical content which is assessed.

Moderators enjoyed recordings where live vocals were realised instead of a 'digital' vocal sound, commenting that the word setting was far better in pieces that were sung live. Please remind candidates to check that the metronome/click is turned off.

Candidate Logs

Many logs were informative and thoughtfully completed, using a broad range of descriptive and appropriate music vocabulary, including the correct details of musical influences and intentions, explanation of the composing process, clearly stated briefs, advice given by teachers and the authentication signatures. Most are word-processed, which are easier to read (please note that the most up-to-date versions of the log are available to download from the website). Many candidates made note of composers and performers whose work had influenced them: for the Reggae piece this included (unsurprisingly) Bob Marley and UB40; film composers mentioned included Hans Zimmer and John Williams; composers such as Bach, Mozart and Beethoven were often included as influences, and more contemporary composers such as Einaudi and Yiruma were also mentioned. There were some less well-known composers, and there was evidence of wider listening. In terms of pop/rock there was, again, a wide breadth of bands/performers by whom candidates had been inspired.

Some composition logs were missing entirely or were thought to be limited, with no description of the compositional process. Many candidates simply listed the tracks and the order in which they composed them rather than discussing and justifying their decisions. There was a lack of detail when it came to borrowed material such as lyrics, loops, sampled material, the use of autoplay, chord patterns or arpeggiations and the like, often not credited in the appropriate place on the candidate log.

Very few teachers added comments. Where they did, these were helpful, though they are optional. Some moderators felt that in the case of a candidate not completing the log, or perhaps a second composition, these details could be included in the teacher comment box.

The majority of candidates stated their chosen **briefs** clearly but a small number of candidates still left the box blank. Most tasks/briefs were suitable, while others were rather vague and lacking in detail (e.g., just stating 'film music' or 'piano piece', or indeed, 'free piece'). Some were not considered to be appropriate - there were instances of drum/untuned percussion pieces that could not access the highest bands, as there was insufficient opportunity to display technical control of a wide range of compositional devices and musical elements. Some candidates stipulate a 'song' when they mean 'piece', as there were no vocals/lyrics at all in the actual composition.

In free compositions, the individual brief must not be cited as an area of study. It must give the purpose and intention so that column 3 can be marked effectively. Candidates should also detail the thinking behind the musical choices made in relation to the brief, always keeping in mind that the composition is directly assessed 'in response to the brief'. In a few instances, candidates moved away entirely from their chosen brief to create something entirely different! Please monitor and advise candidates in their responses to ensure that a candidate is not submitting work that moves away from the given task. If the intentions are unclear, marks will be affected.

To sum up, moderators reported a number of inappropriate issues this year.

- When the logs did not match the compositions submitted
- When lyrics were not included with a song
- When all sections of the candidate log had not been correctly completed
- When the realisations of the pieces had been re-created by someone other than the candidate, without sufficient explanation of the communication of the composer's precise intentions.
- When it was not clear what the exact contribution of the candidate has been to a live recording – or how the parts have been taught (this also applies to such ideas as layered harmonies if they have not been performed by the candidate themselves). 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. Someone else should 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.
- Candidates are expected to give details of what computer programs have been used (this is often omitted) – and how they have been used (i.e. what features, any loops, backing, autoplay, automations, arpeggiations, accompaniment ideas etc). If candidates have created their pieces/chord patterns in this way, very little actual 'composing' has taken place and this must be taken into account when assessing the outcome. If any candidate uses an 'autoplay' feature – it must be declared in their log (it is considered to be the same as if a candidate uses a loop) – or perhaps, detailed by the teacher in the optional comments section at the end of the candidate log.

Comments on individual questions/sections

1. **Forms and Devices: Compose a piece of music in Theme and Variation form, to be performed in a showcase for young composers organised by the Chesham Arts Festival. (You must compose your own theme and include a minimum of one variation).**

In some centres this choice was adopted by the entire cohort. Generally, the expected structures were followed, and though there were examples of highly creative responses, many compositions in this genre achieved mid-range marks. Candidates who chose this brief and who were more successful in their musical outcomes considered how melodies can be varied and developed simultaneously, with evidence of wider listening in the composition logs to back up their personal research. Although only one variation was required, most candidates wrote several variations, sometimes to great effect; there were examples of pieces that followed Baroque style fugal work as well as some outstanding piano pieces. Less successful candidates relied heavily on repetition, offering quite simplistic exercises that moved through very basic rhythmic values. Repeat marks were used by several candidates – this decision was a lost opportunity to show development techniques, and the outcomes did not always flow musically. Some responses had considerable harmonic misconceptions or inaccuracies, while others lacked a convincing initial melodic idea (some themes were too short, others way too long), so then it was very hard for candidates to vary the material effectively and convincingly.

2. **Music for Ensemble: Compose a piece of music for four instruments to be performed as part of a student evening at the Bristol International Jazz and Blues Festival.**

The compositions offered here were varied in standard and understanding. Some excellent pieces were reported. Many candidates were successful in creating a sense of style and character, writing stylistic and substantial compositions fully deserving of credit in Band 4. The more successful compositions added several other considerations to the process, such as key changes, development of harmonic language and chord sequences, ‘free’ improvisatory sections and so on (although improvisation-type sections in the music were absent far more than they were present). Some work exploited the idea of dissonance and chord extensions without the musical skills to handle those aspects.

Blues compositions were sometimes problematic again as the fixed chord sequence did not allow for development (especially an issue with guitar based pieces which used chord riffs rather than melodies); many twelve bar blues relied on predictable patterning and offered very little original material, while some tried more adventurous harmonic choices which unfortunately did not always work well. Basic stylistic elements were used without much thought given to how to develop initial ideas. Others relied heavily on existing chord patterns/walking bass lines, meaning there was little individuality. At this level, there was, again, an over-reliance on loops and preset sounds/automations as some pieces struggled to explore basslines or develop material beyond the basic 12 bar Blues structure.

The response to the brief was misjudged at times, with some candidates writing for less than four instruments – other candidates wrote for larger ensembles beyond the number required.

3. Film Music: Compose theme music for a new film about ‘King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table’.

This was a popular brief which was handled with imagination by many, reflecting some excellent teaching. Some responses captured an authentic flavour, with the modal writing and authentic instrumental medieval sounds; brass fanfares supported by marching-type percussion sounds abounded, and suitable content with lots of textural contrasts and layered melodic ideas reflected the intentions of the candidate. Some compositions incorporated leitmotifs or recurring and transforming themes, producing thoughtful and truly immersive pieces that used all available resources effectively.

At this level, initial ideas were well crafted, and ideas were developed skilfully. Excellent use had been made of a wide range of elements. There were some fantastic pieces for whole orchestra, (with idiomatic use of instruments), but also some effective pieces for various groups of instruments, as well as solo piano pieces. Others wrote using Baroque instruments and techniques, with lots of strings, also including the harpsichord.

Some mid-range pieces presented individual and generally successful ideas, but the results lacked coherence. Many were through-composed, and rather than developing material, candidates created many different sections taking us through multiple potential different scenes which were often unrelated musically. Others, at times less successful stylistically, focused more on the ‘film’ aspect of the brief, and had given thought to the characters in the story, with much emphasis on battle sequences within their music.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were some very weak, limited pieces. Some candidates did not really construct any melodic or rhythmic ideas, instead relying on a collection of sounds and effects (like a ‘soundscape’). There were also some pieces based completely on loops and automations from Garageband, often just a collection of different ideas, one after another. Here, there was clearly minimal input from the candidates. Some of the less successful compositions reused fanfares throughout, without sufficient thought given to changing harmonies, chord sequences, rhythms or thematic development. There were a few candidates that opted to write a ‘song’ that bore little resemblance to the brief.

4. Popular Music: Compose a song in Reggae style to be performed in a summer festival ‘Ramsgate Rocks’

There were varying levels of success here. The Reggae composition was handled most effectively when students broke the mould beyond the standard Reggae features such as the offbeat chords, three / four chord tricks, Reggae instrument sounds, and repetition of rhythms. There were some very well written songs which were ‘authentic sounding’ and inventive. However, this was perhaps the brief which attracted the lowest-scoring marks overall, especially where candidates had followed a simple, formulaic structure unfortunately with very little evidence of development or skilful use of the elements.

A noticeable number of candidates notated a vocal part, with lyrics, but used a software export instead of singing. This is acceptable though obviously less effective. There was a significant issue with Reggae songs without lyrics, however. A song must be sung. There is compositional credit in lyrical phrasing. When lyrics were used, it was much more helpful to have them on the recording rather than follow a score. Some centres included lyrics, but no score - so it was guesswork as to how they phrased with the melody.

A significant proportion had no vocal line or lyrics, and some didn't even have a melody, just a drum beat and chords. Many candidates chose an appropriate reggae style drum loop or created their own. Most were able to create a simple chord pattern and used them in the typical offbeat, syncopated reggae style. Some pieces contained only two or three different chords, usually in root position, and some candidates didn't choose a reggae beat, instead just using a rock beat loop.

Reggae pieces at times struggled to achieve higher marks/bands as they were presented as simple 'backing tracks' with a repetitive melody, displaying limited development of ideas.

Free Composition

Candidates explored a plethora of compositions in response to a wide range of briefs and it was clear that many centres had given most candidates the opportunity to explore their favoured musical interests, which is commendable. This diverse range of genres covered styles including EDM, film and game music, chamber music, rondo and ternary form pieces, jazz, hip-hop, minimalism and popular song. Much work was highly creative, especially perhaps the film pieces, some of which were excellent in all aspects.

Some candidates elected to compose to another of the set briefs, some chose to focus on content with a heavy reliance on technological effects, and some chose to compose in a contrasting area of study. There was evidence here also of whole-class same-task activities, which affected outcomes for some candidates. Centres that allowed students to investigate their own passions and interests in composition with some appropriate guidance were felt to yield more interesting and successful compositions.

Some free briefs were less suitable, e.g., the solo drum kit pieces or 'made-up' structures such as ABCD; in one way or another, when considered in response to the assessment criteria, these lost marks.

There were many examples of solo piano pieces which ranged from excellent to limited. At the upper end, the writing for piano was idiomatic, showcasing skilful development of ideas. The more basic attempts often consisted of a few root position chords and little else.

Songs were also a popular choice. While some were absolutely excellent (sung live), other 'songs' didn't have any words, or even a tune. Many songs (both with words and without) were reliant on four chord patterns, repeated throughout the piece with little variation. Some songs showed a real understanding of style, and had well written melodies, but the accompaniment patterns were often simple and remained the same throughout the pieces, rather than varying/developing.

In many EDM/game pieces, weaker candidates tended to utilise drum loops and layer different ideas on top. Such pieces often lacked development as they were based on repetition, and in these instances, moderators reported on a lack of rhythmic, harmonic and textural variety.

Assessment

The majority of centres completed their internal marking to a high standard and presented their coursework submission well. However, there were significant inconsistencies on occasion where the assessment as suggested by the centre was overly generous and unrealistic, or inconsistent where the rank order of candidates was not agreed. Some marking was felt to have been harshly assessed and the work deserved more credit overall.

Creativity and Development of musical ideas

It was in this column that marks tended to be generously applied. While some candidates created suitable material, other ideas were short and simplistic (as opposed to simple but effective). Refinement of the initial material (both melodic and harmonic) is advised. Many compositions presented good material which offered excellent potential; however, these ideas were often not developed competently or skilfully enough to gain marks in the upper bands (as suggested by the centre). Some candidates used a range of composing devices to extend and develop ideas, and marks for these candidates were more fairly awarded, but often the candidates were reliant on repetition to extend their work. By their very nature, such work did not contain contrasts in mood and tone colour. For these reasons, it was felt that some Teacher Assessors gave too much credit for creativity in column 1; ideas which are 'generally effective' and 'competently' developed are commensurate with the assessment criteria in Band 3.

As implied already, the use of repetition marks were cited as one reason why ideas lacked sufficient development. Another issue was when credit was apparently given to content which had clearly not been composed by the candidate (such as autoplay, loops or arpeggiation, given chord progressions and the like). Such work involves little creative compositional input from the candidate and as such did not deserve recognition in bands 3 or 4.

Much of the work which had been overmarked was therefore where there was little evidence of 'skilful' development, little contrast/variety in tone colour/mood/texture, and insufficient harmonic understanding and exploration. Precious time dedicated to the development of such knowledge will pay dividends.

Technical control of musical elements

In this column, marks were often fairly awarded by the centre, as most assessors were comfortable in recognising whether the technical control of musical elements and resources was highly effective or limited; it was the mid-range pieces that were sometimes misjudged.

Most candidates made at least some effective use of elements, although it was noticeable that dynamics, tempo markings, articulation details or performance details had not been considered in many cases, and this would have enhanced the compositions. Issues with some generously awarded credit arose when the harmony was misjudged with melody and there were uncomfortable clashes; when melodic shapes, decoration, focus and content was awkwardly placed; when there was a lack of rhythmic variety and control, and when textural contrasts were not evident.

Structure and stylistic coherence

Marks in this column also tended to be a little generous. There were many examples of well-structured pieces with an excellent understanding of style, and such pieces deserved the higher marks they had been awarded. There were some fantastic pop / rock songs and film compositions.

Some work lacked a sense of overall coherence and cohesion; such pieces tended to be fragmentary and episodic, often through-composed, presenting ideas which lacked coherence as the work was lacking in suitable contrasts. These were not thought to be commensurate with Band 4 criteria. Candidates were often let down in this column with the transitions between musical ideas/sections being ineffective or abrupt in their work. Equally, many successful compositions finished rather suddenly, or abruptly with no real consideration for ways to finish (ritardando, reinforcement of the tonic, cadences, diminuendo, build to a climactic tutti, return to the tonic chord etc). On the contrary, many compositions had considered their introductions, and often these initial ideas were the most effective. In terms of the overall structure of a piece, not having a clear conclusion to the piece must be considered when making the assessment judgement in this column.

Some compositions were simply too long and lost developmental focus and musical conviction.

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.
- All files must be uploaded and labelled as according to WJEC guidelines.
- Centre should encourage candidates to adopt an individual approach – if a class task must be set then it must allow for differentiation in their responses. The same key, rhythms, patterns and similar styles of accompaniment used by the whole cohort is not what is required.
- 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 must be kept at the forefront of all musical decisions made, and guidance given.
- Make sure that all paperwork is signed and completed for every candidate in the cohort as it may be requested by the Board.

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COMPONENT 3 APPRAISING

General Comments

Just over nine thousand candidates sat the appraising examination this year. This produced consistencies with the 2018, 2019 and 2022 exam papers which are worthy of comment.

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 second 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 taken place 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 and modulations.
- Describing musical elements and features – specifically melody and/or rhythm and metre – 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 rhythm and metre, they should focus on note lengths, rhythmic patterns, syncopation, time signatures and regular or irregular metres. Unfortunately candidates frequently made reference to other, unrelated, musical elements instead.
- The dictation question caused problems for many candidates this year and a significant number were entirely perplexed by the use of accidentals, the compound time signature and the E major key signature. Many candidates found it difficult to complete the pitch of the melody 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

Q.1 SET WORK – Section B from *Badinerie* (Musical Forms and Devices)

- (a) Most candidates answered this well.
- (b) Many candidates failed to identify the first chord as a dominant 7th and chose instead to call it A major. There was a much higher rate of success with the identification of the second chord.

- (c) The identification of the cadences was very much a stab in the dark.
- (d) This was answered very well.
- (e) The identification of D major was the most reliable answer here, followed by E minor and then G major. However, many totally unrelated keys were also provided by many candidates.
- (f) Most achieved at least one mark here with the most common correct answers being harpsichord, ornaments, terraced dynamics and sequence in that order. 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 *He Shall Feed His Flock* (Musical Forms and Devices)

- (a)
 - (i) Candidates found this incredibly difficult. Many struggled to choose the correct accidental and almost all failed to place it before the correct note on the score.
 - (ii) A significant number of candidates correctly identified the perfect cadence.
 - (iii) The first, fourth and fifth pitches proved to be most reliable, followed by the third and then the second.
 - (iv) Most candidates chose one of the related key choices rather than the dominant.
- (b)
 - (i) The identification of the compound time signature caused significant problems for almost all candidates, many of whom offered 3/4 as their answer.
 - (ii) Most candidates were extremely confused by the key signature provided and the answers ranged from related keys to wildly unrelated ones.
 - (iii) This was a stab in the dark for most candidates.
 - (iv) This was answered well and the most common correct answers were conjunct, descending and sequence in that order. This year we were also prepared to accept the terms syllabic, melismatic and legato which were offered by many candidates. However, as these terms relate, in fact, to performance techniques rather than constituent ingredients of a melody, they will not be accepted from 2024 onwards.

Q.3 *I Love Paris* (Music for Ensemble)

- (a) Many achieved full marks for this question.
- (b) Most identified only three instruments, however the extract actually contained four (double bass, acoustic guitar, violin and accordion).

- (c) This was mostly correct.
- (d) The change of instrumentation was unanimously identified here, along with the change of key/pitch and the slower tempo. As with question 1f, 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) Again, the change of instrumentation was the most frequently provided answer here, along with the fact that there were two singers and that the tempo was significantly slower than before. As with the previous question, candidates were expected to discuss the musical features contained within version 3 rather than version 1.

Q.4 *Fight Scene from West Side Story (Music for Ensemble)*

- (a) Almost entirely correct.
- (b) Slightly more problematic, but well identified on the whole.
- (c) Candidates are now far more prepared when it comes to answering this question and a significant number scored very highly indeed. The most successful answers discussed the use of structural devices, instrumental techniques, textural devices, dynamic effects, the use of tonality and harmony, melodic features, rhythmic features and compositional devices and linked them to the chaos and tension of the fight scene 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 word(s) chaos and/or tension as the links at the end of each statement which, once again, didn't score very well.

Q.5 *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves (Film Music)*

- (a) Approximately half of all candidates identified the French horn as the instrument playing the opening melody.
- (b) Anacrusis was the most frequently identified feature, with pedal or perfect cadence coming a close second. This question was the first that required candidates to place ticks in boxes, choosing in this case from a choice of six possible answers. If a candidate ticked more than three boxes then they had one correct mark deducted for each additional tick.
- (c) Most achieved at least one mark here with the most common correct answers being driving rhythms, syncopation, ostinato and 4/4. However, many candidates struggled to describe the use of rhythm and metre and many answers contained information about other musical elements instead. Fortunately, as no specific number of answers was requested, examiners were able to pick out the correct observations.

- (d) This was answered well and most candidates explained how the music changed during the extract (louder, thicker, higher etc.).
- (e) This was mostly correct.
- (f) This was surprisingly hit and miss with many choosing the opposite answer.

Q.6 *Mission Impossible* (Film Music)

- (a) This was mostly correct.
- (b) This was mostly correct.
- (c) Riff was the most reliably identified feature, with sforzando or trill coming a close second.
- (d) Despite the first three notes of the melody forming a minor chord, many candidates underlined the word major.
- (e) Many candidates correctly identified the disjunct, descending shape of the melody, but only a small number correctly identified three musical features.
- (f) Candidates gave very much an 'all or nothing' answer here as they were expected to use very specific terminology. However, the vast majority included the word synthesized in their answer.

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

- (a) This information was either known or not known. Unfortunately many candidates provided the correct answers but the wrong way around.
- (b) Approximately half of all candidates were able to identify the correct location of the extract.
- (c) Approximately a third of all candidates were able to identify the length of the first section.
- (d) Either synthesizer or flute were underlined by candidates in response to this question.
- (e)
 - (i) As with question a, this information was either known or not known.
 - (ii) This was very hit and miss.
- (f) This was very well done on the whole, although the identification of grace notes and a semibreve rest proved to be elusive for some.

Q.8 *I Get the Sweetest Feeling* (Popular Music)

- (a) This was mostly correct.
- (b) This was mostly correct.
- (c) This was mostly correct.

- (d) Whilst most correctly identified the tenor voice, candidates were uncertain about whether Verse 1 was mostly melismatic or mostly syllabic.
- (e) Many candidates identified the octave correctly.
- (f) Many candidates identified the second beat of the bar correctly.
- (g) Arco, legato and conjunct were most frequently stated.
- (h) Vocalisations, harmony and semibreves were most frequently stated.
- (i) This was mostly correct.
- (j) Only a very small number of candidates identified the triplet rhythm.

Summary of key points

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 the use of structural devices, instrumental techniques, textural devices, dynamic effects, tonality and harmony, melodic features, rhythmic features and compositional devices 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.



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