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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**MUSIC  
GCSE**

**SUMMER 2019**

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at:  
<https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?!=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 2019

## COMPONENT 1 PERFORMING

### General Comments

It has been most pleasing to observe that the process of uploading candidates' work to Surpass for the majority of centres this year has been successful. Moderators have reported that more centres have marked accurately and complied with the specification requirements in terms of uploading the appropriate materials (scores/lead sheets, recordings and marksheets). It is encouraging to see that so much hard work has taken place in centres to prepare for this element of GCSE Music and teachers and peripatetic staff must be congratulated for their perseverance and support, as well as the candidates on their willingness to learn and perform.

It was observed that most centres have acted upon the advice given in last year's moderators' reports and this is a practice to be encouraged.

### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### Centre Administration:

There were many very organised and efficient uploads where correct files were labelled in a uniform manner with candidate name or number and solo/ensemble clearly visible; mark sheets, on the whole were filled in correctly. For future submissions, please label folders with candidate number, candidate name, ensemble/solo (there is no need to give titles of pieces performed) e.g. '1234 Joe Bloggs Solo 1'.

Many marksheets were comprehensively filled out with candidates and teachers authenticating work through signatures (e-signatures are accepted). This is an essential requirement before moderation can take place and centres are urged to check all marksheets very carefully before uploading.

It was pleasing to note that the majority of centres gave clear information regarding the role of the candidate in the ensemble. Also, it aided moderation when a sentence was added stating that the difficulty level had been agreed by the exam board.

However, moderators have reported a number of errors encountered during the moderation process, which did result in several centres being contacted for clarification. Please ensure that:

- Marking is accurately inputted on the marksheets with the correct mark transferred to IAMIS.
- The addition of marks is correct
- The scaling of marks according to difficulty levels is correctly applied
- The scaling of marks due to undertime performances is applied (ensuring the most up to date marksheet is completed)
- Performance 1 is the compulsory ensemble; teachers should be reminded that if an ensemble is omitted, the mark for Performance 1 is 0.

Most issues were quickly rectified by the centres once informed.

Only one recording for each piece should be uploaded; some centres uploaded multiple recordings of the same piece for a candidate with the expectation for the moderator to listen to each and mark the best one! Centres are also urged to check that they have submitted the correct recording for the candidate; several moderators had to contact centres this year asking for correct recordings to be uploaded.

The majority of centres used the appropriate forms although a small number still submitted last year's forms, which were acceptable for the last time in 2019. For future submissions, please download the most up to date form from the website.

### **Timings:**

Most centres had chosen pieces carefully to fall within the 4 – 6 minute requirement and nearly all undertime folios had been awarded adjusted marks in line with the new sliding scale for time penalties. There were many submissions which exceeded the 4 - 6 minute requirement often including extra pieces which took folios way over 10 minutes duration. There was a reduction in the number of undertime performances this year with several centres taking full advantage of being able to submit more than two pieces to support candidates' abilities and to extend folios containing shorter examination pieces. There were, however, still a number of centres that stated inaccurate performance times on the marksheet quoting the length of the mp3 and not the actual performance time. Please do not introduce performances or candidates on the recording and time from the entry of the candidate. This is especially important in ensemble recordings where another performer may start the piece. Short introductions and links are permitted.

### **Recordings:**

The vast majority of recordings were of very good quality indeed. Moderators have reported a few instances where balance was an issue in ensemble recordings with the candidate's part being overpowered by other performers, but on the whole, centres have carefully checked the quality and placing of microphones. Drum kit recordings caused some issues this year, as it was evident that a few candidates were unable to hear their own backing track, so did not play in time, thus affecting marks; distortion was also reported on mostly drum kit recordings.

A few centres edited the raw audio recording by adding panning and digital reverb. Please note that in the specification, it states that recordings should be 'unedited'. MP3 uploads worked well yet there were still several issues with WAV files due to the size of the file and upload limits and AIFF files which were often incomplete. Please do not submit Zip files, these can hinder the moderation process.

### **Scores/Lead sheets:**

Careful annotations were made in many of the scores to accurately reflect the performers' intentions. There were also several excellent lead sheets detailing melodic, rhythmic and chordal patterns, tempo and expression marks with the structure of the intended performance clearly indicated.

However, some centres either failed to make appropriate annotations, or wrote vague comments like "sung ad lib" or "this score is as close to the performance as I can find" at the start of the score. This will affect marks for accuracy as the moderator has to assess whether the candidate has performed accurately to the score. Please bracket altered bars with a qualifying statement written at the appropriate place on the score such as "melodic ornamentation here" or "rhythmic variation".

Occasionally, candidates did not stick to the structure as laid out in the score; for example, they may have repeated a section or omitted a bridge. Such practice made following the score onerous and frustrating for moderators and centres should ensure that the score or lead sheet accurately reflects the intended structure of the candidate's performance. Transpositions or octave changes should also be clearly noted.

It must be emphasised that it is not acceptable to submit lyrics and chord progressions for vocal or drum performances. If chords are submitted for guitar performances, strumming patterns must also be included. Care must also be taken when downloading guitar tab as a score; it must be accurate to the performance.

Lead sheets for rapping performances need to give enough information to moderate marks for accuracy and expression and interpretation. Whilst on the subject of rap performances, any 'inappropriate' lyrics must be changed; some moderators reported that certain lyrics contained highly offensive language!

The practice of uploading a referenced recording for the moderator to compare with a candidate's recordings is also not accepted by the exam board and centres will always be contacted to ask for scores or lead sheets to be uploaded in lieu.

However, there were some teachers who had included incredibly detailed annotations to the scores/lead sheets and/or scored parts individually for candidates in ensembles at great personal effort which all moderators appreciated. The practice of highlighting the role of the candidate in ensemble performance scores made the identification of candidates much easier and was adopted by several centres this year.

Some scores had upside down or sideways pages or used double sided scanning for a single sided score, therefore presenting alternating blank pages throughout. It would help the moderation process if centres ensured scores were all the right way up and presentable.

### **Difficulty Levels:**

In the majority of submissions, the level of difficulty had been judged correctly and it was really helpful for moderators when centres indicated on the marksheet exam gradings of pieces or that difficulty levels had been agreed by the exam board. There are detailed descriptors for most performance disciplines in the specification and teachers are encouraged to contact the subject officer if unsure of the difficulty level of a particular piece. There were numerous cases, of vocal music in particular, which were often quoted at a higher level when some of the songs offered were limited in their vocal range. It would be useful if centres could adopt the following statements when completing mark sheets:

ESL (Easier than Standard Level), SL (Standard Level), MD (More Difficult than Standard Level)

### **Repertoire (Solo):**

Most candidates chose totally appropriate pieces for their solo repertoire, allowing them to showcase their performing skills to the full. All moderators commented on the pleasure of listening to interesting and musical performances in such a variety of performing disciplines. Centres are to be applauded for providing candidates with such a wealth of repertoire and it was obvious that the majority of candidates thoroughly enjoyed displaying their performing strengths.

There were some instances where MD pieces were submitted that were clearly beyond the candidates' current capabilities and submitting a SL or even ESL piece would have gained these candidates more marks. This was the case for some weaker candidates who, had they played simple pieces with dynamics and expression, would have fared better.

### **Repertoire (Ensemble):**

It was gratifying to see that so many centres are now choosing ensemble repertoire carefully ensuring that candidates are offered the opportunity to display empathy in an accompanying role. Marks were frequently higher for those candidates who offered accompaniment as they were often highly sympathetic to the other performer(s) playing/singing the melody. Most centres had clearly worked hard to meet the specification requirements and to provide their lower ability candidates with excellent opportunities for ensemble performing. One successful example noted by a moderator was a teacher arrangement for guitar, voice and keyboard, the keyboard part of which was played individually by several weaker candidates, indicating evidence of a class project.

Where arrangements had been created by teachers specifically for candidates, these seemed successful on the whole but needed more in the way of dynamics to access expression and interpretation marks.

Piano duets, where the candidate performed the primo part, taking the melody throughout, were less evident this year; candidates performing the secondo part often gained more marks for expression and interpretation, due to the sympathetic nature of an accompanying role.

Not all centres chose pieces to stretch their more able candidates. Parts may be swapped to ensure that there is challenge for all.

The nature of some ensembles heard was cause for concern. Several centres submitted ensemble pieces where candidates did not demonstrate a significant amount of ensemble performing skills which as a result were close to not fulfilling the minimum one minute requirement outlined in the specification. Most of these were vocal performances, where there was too much solo and unison singing, antiphony and too little singing in harmony. There were concerns where several ensembles were really accompanied solos with the candidate singing the melody line and the teacher adding in harmonies.

This year, there were submissions where candidates had performed the accompaniment to a song but the vocal line was not present (especially prevalent in Rockschool guitar pieces). In these cases, the candidate's accompaniment part is considered to be the main melodic part which results again in an unsuccessful ensemble.

### **Assessment/Overall Standard:**

Nearly all centres had used the assessment criteria carefully and thoughtfully and therefore marked candidates appropriately.

Several performances were truly excellent and some centres seemed reluctant to award full marks when it was fully justified at this level.

At the opposite end, there were a large number of centres who were very harsh in marking their less able candidates, penalising for both Accuracy and Technical Control. If a performance is accurate to the score and fluent, there is justification to award higher marks for Accuracy, even though the piece may be simple and repetitive. Lack of technique should be considered when marking Technical Control.

Some centres were generous in awarding Band 4 marks for Technical Control where the candidate performed very simple rudimentary parts. These parts failed to give candidates the opportunity to display the instrument specific skills commensurate with Band 4 marks. There were more examples of centres being overly generous this year and this tended to be in the accuracy and technical control columns. It was clearly apparent that these centres were not referencing the score whilst marking for accuracy and as a result gave high marks which could not be justified. There were also a number of examples where marks were lower than they should have been because mistakes by other members of the ensemble were taken into account when considering the candidate. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the candidate is not penalised for this – indeed it is a sign of good empathy with other performers to be able to cope in such a situation.

There were instances also where a mark of 0 was awarded, when there was clearly a performance which warranted marks.

### **Summary of key points**

- Please carefully scale marks for under-time performances and difficulty levels
- Avoid 'double penalising' under Accuracy and Technical Control, especially for the less able candidates
- Scores must be annotated carefully to justify marks for accuracy
- Secondo parts in piano duets will demonstrate more ensemble skills than primo parts playing melody throughout

## MUSIC

### GCSE

Summer 2019

## COMPONENT 2 COMPOSING

### General Comments

#### Administration

Generally, the process of uploading was successfully handled this year and the work was submitted mostly in accordance with requirements. There were some examples of late submissions and missing signatures (both candidate's and teacher's), blank mps3s and incorrect submission of work. Of more concern were missing or incomplete marksheets - these are essential, as the job of the moderator is to agree (or not) teacher assessment. Some centres had uploaded the composing and performing components together, which is not what is required, and caused delays to moderation as the correct moderator was not able to access the work. There were some errors on IAMIS (incorrect addition and incorrect input), though only occasionally this did affect the rank order. Where there were problems, most centres resolved the issues quickly.

#### Uploading work /Labelling

Files should be identified as 'set' brief or 'free brief'. Titles are far less useful – though a title on the log that corresponds to the title on the score / leadsheet is welcome. Detailed instructions for this were outlined in last year's Principal Moderator's report. Zip files were far less helpful than separate files, and some centres uploaded scores and marksheets as one document which was considered a little cumbersome by some moderators, though certainly not all.

#### Candidate Logs

The standard of the logs ranged from extremely basic to excellent. In the best examples, the musical detail and explanation was succinct and appropriate; weaker efforts included irrelevant information, at times presenting tokenistic, seemingly rushed offerings. A few candidates did not attempt to complete the log at all, and some centres used the older version of the log which was acceptable for the last time this year. The updated version is available to download from the website. Almost all moderators felt that the section of the log where candidates have to note their use of loops, chordal realisations and the use of automation, and any other non-original material was not completed in sufficient detail; even when it was clear that these features had been employed, their use had not been explained. Occasionally, general information supplied by the candidate did not match with the selected brief or title of a piece (for example, a candidate stating that they were selecting the film brief when the commentary was evidencing the rondo brief; some titles on the logs did not match the titles stated on the uploaded work e.g. 'Alien Attack' on the log, but 'Haunted House' on the mp3 file and lead sheet). There were a number of instances where the role of the candidate was completely unclear in the composition process (particularly where they were not performing on the live recording), when an explanation had not been provided with regards to how parts had been taught to others. Description of any help or advice given by the teacher was considered good practice.

Moderators felt that some candidates would have benefitted from typing up the log when handwriting was illegible, and for reference, scanned in documents were often unclear - or, at times- even impossible to read.



Candidates mentioned an incredible range of musical influences in their logs, which was encouraging to see. Others noted their use of existing melodies even though this has been identified as a practice best avoided, as candidates cannot gain credit for any material which is not their own.

There were very few teacher comments on the marksheets (this is optional). Some used the opportunity to clarify missing or incomplete items, while some focused on the level of candidate effort rather than the quality of the composition.

### **Scores and recordings**

Most **scores** generated by Sibelius or similar programs were excellent and there were also scores (of sorts) from GarageBand and Logic. These were not as easy to follow and at times it would have been more helpful if candidates had annotated them. Others used a combination of printouts and leadsheets and on occasion these really were impressive; other lead sheets and annotations lacked detail and were basic. Songs were not always accompanied by a copy of the lyrics and chords – please advise that this is a firm requirement when the score is not available. One candidate presented 36 pages of screenshots without any annotation, and while this seemed extreme, it was not by any means the only example of this practice; another candidate submitted of separate parts of a GarageBand composition totalling over 50 pages. The ‘hide empty stave’ function was advised for some musical scores. Submitting all the separate instrumental parts for a composition is not really helpful to the moderator. There were also examples of incomplete scores and chord charts that did not tally with the audio.

There appeared to be a large number of candidates working on a variety of sequencing packages who then export scores to Sibelius for printing. These scores are often very confused and difficult to follow, virtually meaningless in some cases. They do not aid moderation, and moderators were in agreement that a detailed explanation in a lead sheet and annotated screen shot would be preferable.

Most **recordings** from the chosen programs were of very good quality- just a few crackly files or a file where not all tracks were audible; some tracks and wav files caused a problem by cutting out part way through the track even after downloading.

Live recordings (especially when there were vocals) were extremely successful, as the word-setting was considered to be far more effective than computer-generated vocals. The quality of live tracks varied; in some cases other candidates could be heard playing instruments in the background, at other times general classroom (and outside the classroom) noise was evident. A very small number supplied an incorrect recording or a recording that cut off in the middle of the piece by mistake. Occasionally, a click track was left in place.

Please check before submission!

### **General Standards**

The standard overall spanned the full range; there were plenty of excellent pieces and conversely, a fair number that were ‘limited’. The majority fell somewhere in between. Some candidates submitted similar compositions for both the free brief and the set brief. While this can play to their strengths, it does not always allow the individual to display contrasts in their work.

It was good to see candidates exploring more complex time signatures this year; some were quite adventurous and successfully placed, others employed to impress but were musically a little out of place. Texture and layering was often effectively worked in compositions, with imitation and sequence being very well used in the best pieces.

Many centres presented work that demonstrated a good understanding of harmony (with thankfully fewer examples of the 4 chord trick); developed melodic ideas using a variety of techniques; utilised interesting and appropriate rhythmic features and encouraged outcomes from candidates which demonstrated consistency of style focussed on responding to the selected brief.

Less effective outcomes presented ideas which

- were dependent on basic repetition and lacked creative development, particularly in melodic and harmonic content
- lacked refinement and control (e.g. when the melody was 'at odds' with the accompaniment in a composition)
- were overly busy in terms of texture resulting in a lack of clarity and focus
- were too many in number, resulting in a lack of organization, unity and coherence.

Most tasks were considered to be appropriate with many candidates composing for musical instruments and resources that they played or knew about. This ensured that the lines flowed musically and were idiomatic.

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

At times it was evident that candidates in some centres did not have any choice over which brief they attempted, as there were examples of class tasks set for both the 'Set' and 'Free' briefs. While it is recognised that many candidates benefit from this supported working, differentiation of response and individual creativity is to be encouraged.

**GCSE Brief 1:** Compose a piece of music in Rondo form for a showcase performance for Young Composers organised by the Severnside New Music Festival.

This was a very popular choice of brief, and a range of ensembles were employed. Some moderators felt that higher ability students with more notation scoring skills were often directed towards this brief.

Centres had clearly worked with their cohorts as a class on how to approach the task of composing in Rondo form, highlighting the necessity of developing the returning A section and providing contrast in the B and C sections. This was effective but tended to result in the submission of a large number of similar compositions. The best examples felt natural in their transitions from section to section, utilised prepared modulations well and genuinely developed melodic material, managing the form in a musical fashion. In less effective examples, sections frequently felt completely separate, with changes of metre, key, articulation and overall character inserted for the sake of contrast – this meant there was a lack of unity and coherency. Other common features were: a fairly random use of dynamics; an initially strong A section to a piece which lost its way by the arrival of the C section; melodic ideas which lacked shape or remained very simple in content; copy and paste of the A section, or a very basic re-working of the content.

Compositions covered a range of styles, from Classical pastiches to electronic dance. A few candidates who wrote in a rock style would possibly have been better advised to respond to the set brief for area of study 4.

**GCSE Brief 2:** Compose a jazz trio intended for performance in a local Jazz club.

Perhaps the least popular brief. Some candidates achieved an excellent sense of style which reflected very good research of the genre and moderators described the strongest works as truly exceptional. The most successful candidates were those who reflected musical characteristics of the style in their work, including jazz scales, swung rhythm, extended chords, syncopation, walking bass, typical jazz instruments and so on. A smaller number of jazz compositions failed to incorporate a good range of these idioms or were overly basic, reliant on the 12 bar blues styling and use of root position chords and the blues scale, without exploring the wider possibilities offered by the brief. Some pieces were considered to be overly dissonant.

There were a few responses that were not considered as a 'trio' (e.g. a piece for one synthesizer; a trio, with a drum kit added; a score with 4 instruments.)

**GCSE Brief 3:** Compose music for the opening sequence of a science fiction movie entitled 'Alien Attack'.

Unquestionably, the most popular brief. Responses here covered everything from highly sophisticated orchestrations and imaginative development of leitmotif (thoroughly explained in relation to a devised scenario), through to fragmented series of sound effects, synth noises and single instance simplistic ideas; much of the musical content was considered to be limited and below the standard required for this level. There was some very good usage of synthesized sounds and effects to enhance thematic material. However, many compositions relied on a repeated leitmotif that often lacked development, and some responses seemed unusual for the opening credits of a film, and/or lacked the direction of a clear narrative.

The main weakness was that much work was hugely reliant on the use of technology and synthesized sounds/timbres and effects and the actual musical input in terms of controlling the elements was questionable. Many of the lower scoring candidates organised sound effects to create a soundscape; although this might have been effective in a different context, it is the candidates' composing skills which are being assessed.

Some candidates added information regarding the story behind their pieces, or even a storyboard; others ignored the requirement for an 'opening sequence' of events. Moderators also felt that far too many candidates missed the "attack" element of this brief with atmosphere being created but no climax point being reached at any point; other candidates had focused purely on the word 'attack' resulting in a collage of lazer fire, gun shots, weird sci-fi noises which presented appropriate 'sounds' but did not really impress as a musical composition.

**GCSE Brief 4:** Compose a Rock song to be performed by a student group in the Weyfest Festival.

Whilst there were a few tenuous claims to being a piece of rock music, there were many excellent songs which demonstrated the impressive control of this genre. Most pieces showed at least a good sense of style and it was interesting to hear work in the more specific sub genres.

The best pieces were songs with lyrics and a singer; there were some superb performances, displaying highly creative work with contrasting chord patterns, varying structures and excellent melodic content, often with the work performed by the candidate through multitracking.

Some candidates did not include vocals and lyrics, tending to use the guitar as the main melodic line; at times this was considered lacking with only a riff being presented. This was accepted this year but in future, a 'song' as a set brief will specify the need for a response that needs to be 'sung'.

This was the area which caused the most complications with the contribution of live performers not always being explained as to who was playing, what they were playing and how it had been realised.

## **Free Compositions**

Some of the free briefs were extremely vague, as not all were sufficiently detailed and some were not stated at all. This did not give the moderator a clear idea of what the candidate's intentions were. Simply stating a genre of music, or stipulating an area of study (without musical details, an occasion or audience) is not sufficient for the free composition briefs. There were some imaginative 'free' briefs set, including 'A Melodic Journey through the Alpine Countries', a Bollywood piece, music for computer games (with specific details about the exact level the music is to accompany) and many TV themes and music for adverts. Some candidates used last year's briefs as a stimulus.

Some of the 'class tasks' here produced responses that were formulaic, and whilst this approach may well have suited weaker candidates, it appeared to restrict creativity for some (e.g. a class set of waltzes). Many centres allow candidates to work to their strengths and personal musical interests, which is to be commended.

Many candidates decided to link their free brief to 'Musical Forms and Devices', with compositions being written in binary, ternary, and rondo forms. Some theme and variation pieces had used existing melodies and even nursery rhymes as their themes; please be respectfully reminded that candidates must be encouraged to compose their own themes. Film music was a popular choice, often with interesting use of dissonance and a good use of instrumental effects to create mood and atmosphere. Pieces linked to area of study 4 were also commonplace. There were a few club dance compositions which were very repetitive, and all produced very similar results showing little creativity using the same drum line and often modulating up a tone. Blues pieces often focussed heavily on the 12-bar progression with typical patterning, and showed little development of the melodic and harmonic content. There were more examples of solo drum kit pieces this year, but often these did not exploit the possibilities of the drum kit. Other free compositions delved into serialism and minimalism, with a few achieving highly effective outcomes.

## **Teacher Assessment**

Much teacher assessment was felt to be fair, though there were a substantial number of centres where the marking was considered to be overly generous, or in a smaller number of cases, overly severe. In the overly severe cases, it tended to be due to having a comprehensively talented cohort and approaching the marking from a 'top down' perspective. There were reversed instances of centres appearing to have applied top band marks to the most effective of their candidates' work and working down from there, being generous in their assessment of simple or repetitive pieces. Not all moderators agreed with the rank order as suggested by some centres.

Without doubt, the area most affected by unjustifiable assessment was the 'Alien Attack' film music brief, in which far too many compositions were awarded marks that could not be justified within the mark scheme.

Some centres had assessed compositions as Band 4 but work did not show the musical skill, enough development of ideas and suitable harmonic language to be awarded these marks. Mid-range compositions lacked development of ideas and skilful control of elements and resources. Compositions that failed to convince often had melodies that were triadic, ideas that were overly repetitive, fade-outs used in place of cadences, producing outcomes that relied heavily on ostinati, textural and timbral changes rather than creative development of the initial ideas.

N.B.:

\* One centre had applied a time penalty – please note this is not relevant in Component 2.

\* One centre marked a piece down as it was not WCT – please note that this is not a requirement in composition at this level, though the area of study focuses on the WCT.

Centres are reminded to consider CPD materials, where exemplars of high / mid / low scoring compositions are available and hopefully will be of ongoing guidance.

### **Summary of key points**

- All files uploaded must be clearly labeled as according to guidelines issued by WJEC / Eduqas.
- Centres must always include the marksheets giving a full breakdown of the marks awarded – the total is not sufficient.
- All sections of the candidate log must be fully completed, and all authentication signatures supplied. This is especially in the case of live performances. Guide tracks should be included when there is no score for performers.
- Candidates submitting rock / pop songs without a score must present lyrics and chords in addition to the leadsheet.
- No marks are awarded for existing musical ideas – credit is only given for original work.
- Please avoid using repeat marks to extend ideas. Within an accepted structure (e.g. binary) they may be appropriately placed in the score to evidence understanding of the form; however they are often randomly positioned in the work and need not be included in the recording. Using the repeat marks in this way simply limits the candidates from developing ideas. Additionally – avoid over-use of ‘copy and paste’.
- Ensure that all briefs for the free composition are achievable and clearly stated in the log; part of the assessment is directly related to ‘the response to the chosen brief’.
- Candidates should be encouraged to omit weak sections of work, and be prepared to refine and rework ideas.
- Please encourage individual working and avoid ‘class tasks’ wherever possible.

## MUSIC

### GCSE

Summer 2019

#### COMPONENT 3 APPRAISING

##### General Comments

It was pleasing to see that candidates were more comfortable with the general format of the listening examination this year, although perhaps this was to be expected as teachers and candidates were able to prepare by referencing both the sample assessment materials and the 2018 exam paper. It was certainly apparent to those who marked the exam that candidates were more thoroughly prepared for each question type and if three musical examples were required then they ensured that they only gave three answers and that they were all written on separate lines. The longer answer question this year – explaining how the music introduced the character of Superman as a hero – was particularly well attempted and secured a large number of marks for a significant number of candidates.

Some of the more problematic issues for candidates were as follows:

- The set works seemed to cause problems for many candidates and provoked examiners to question whether or not candidates were familiar with the music at all.
- When describing three musical differences, it was essential that the differences matched up across the same line, for example 'quiet/loud', 'more chromatic/less chromatic' or 'moves in quavers/moves in crotchets'.
- Describing musical elements proved to be extremely difficult, particularly when related to tonality, harmony and structure. For a longer extract, it was crucial that candidates gave the specific locations of their observations if these features were not present throughout.
- Context proved confusing for many. If candidates are required to consider a piece of musical theatre, or, for that matter, any piece of music which includes lyrics, then the meaning of the text must be considered as well as the relevance of the song to the overall story.
- For the dictation question, candidates found it difficult to complete the rhythm of the melody and this skills needs to be developed generally.

##### Comments on individual questions/sections

###### Q.1 *Minuet from Eine Kleine Nachtmusic* (Musical Forms and Devices)

- (a) Lots were correct, but this proved to be problematic for many candidates.
- (b) Whilst many candidates were able to correctly identify the key of the Minuet, many said D major instead.
- (c) This was very hit and miss.
- (d) Lots were correct, but equally lots of candidates didn't understand the question and gave very random answers.
- (e) Many said 6/1, but most understood what was being asked of them.

- (f) This was very hit and miss, with many saying a 5<sup>th</sup>.
- (g) Very good responses.
- (h) This was either totally correct or totally incorrect. It appeared that many candidates were unable to read the C clef and/or were unable to demonstrate how a Bb on the C clef translated to the same pitch in the treble and bass clefs.
- (i) This was a really mixed bag. Many candidates failed to match up the statements across the columns (Bars 1-4 – quiet / Bars 5-8 – loud). Many also mentioned contrasting articulation, however this was not credited as it had already been asked about in question g. The most common correct answers were concerned with dynamics, ornamentation, note lengths and use of double stopping, although there were eleven potential correct answers in total.

(It is important to remind centres that where a specific number of answers is required – in this case three – only the first three answers were marked, even if one of the three was incorrect and a fourth (or even a fifth) were correct.)

**Q.2** *Dance of the Little Swans* (Musical Forms and Devices)

- (a) Quite disappointing responses, especially as the candidates had been given the A/B/A1 structure in the opening part of the question.
- (b) This was very hit and miss.
- (c) Mostly correct, although a number of candidates identified a piano and a few identified a harpsichord.
- (d) Almost totally correct.
- (e) Very good on the whole.
- (f) This was very hit and miss, with the majority choosing Classical.
- (g)
  - (i) Candidates found it very hard to verbalise their answers for this question and many failed to provide relevant locations with regards to the tonality and harmony. Many discussed other musical elements which obviously failed to secure them any marks.
  - (ii) This was more effectively answered, and many identified the homophonic texture.

(For both question (gi) and (gii) no specific number of answers was requested, consequently examiners were required to pick out the correct answers from the text.)

**Q.3** *Sue Me* (Music for Ensemble)

- (a) Fewer candidates than expected identified the correct tonality.

- (b)** Most identified a woodwind instrument but a significant number mixed up the glockenspiel with the xylophone. Lots of candidates were convinced they could hear a triangle.
- (c)** Mostly correct.
- (d)** Mostly incorrect with the vast majority choosing 2/4.
- (e)** Mostly correct although it was always interesting when a letter C appeared in the answer.
- (f)** A fairly strong response with a large number of candidates securing two out of a possible three marks.
- (g)**
  - (i)** Generally very well answered with candidates able to verbalise the change of sonority convincingly.
  - (ii)** This was an important question for the candidates to consider the context of the song. Many said 'to change the mood' but were unable to be given a mark as they failed to describe what the mood had become. However, many explained the change extremely well and gave joyous, romantic answers. There is love in the world after all!
- (h)** This proved problematic for many and the answers were very hit and miss. Cadences prove to be problematic for candidates generally.

**Q.4** *Schubert Trio* (Music for Ensemble)

- (a)** Most avoided choosing the first example, but the choices made between the second and third examples were fairly even.
- (b)** Mostly correct (thank goodness, as they had been given the score).
- (c)** Mostly correct, although a number of candidates chose the viola over the cello.
- (d)** Fairly well done overall with the vast majority achieving at least half marks. Most candidates correctly identified the articulation and the chordal texture.
- (e)** Almost totally correct.
- (f)** Almost totally correct, with most candidates identifying the trill.
- (g)** This was very hit and miss with most candidates choosing between imitation and sequence.
- (h)** Fairly well answered.
- (i)** Most candidates correctly identified at least one feature – most commonly the major tonality – with the vast majority correctly identifying at least two.

(It is worth noting once again that where a specific number of answers is required – in this case three – only the first three answers were marked. Many candidates lost marks on both 4(d) and 4(i) as a result of this oversight.)



**Q.5** *The American President* (Film Music)

- (a) (i) Mostly correct. However, many candidates stated 'legato' or 'piano'.
  - (ii) Mostly incorrect. Many were partially correct but failed to state both of the two required locations – frequently the vi but not the V.
  - (iii) Approximately half of all candidates were familiar with this term.
  - (iv) Mostly correct with violin being the preferred answer.
  - (v) Mostly correct.
  - (vi) The first and last notes were most frequently correct. Many candidates identified the second note as being a minim rather than a dotted crotchet. The other two notes were very hit and miss.
- (b) (i) Mostly incorrect, and many of the answers given were totally random.
  - (ii) This was answered fairly well with the most common correct answers being loud dynamic, legato and major key.

**Q.6** *Superman Theme* (Film Music)

- (a) Mostly correct.
- (b) Mostly correct.
- (c) This was answered very well on the whole and was generally more successful than the 2018 paper. It is obvious that schools have gone to town on this question in order to secure their candidates a good number of marks. The most successful answers to this question identified numerous contrasting musical elements contained within the extract and explained how they linked with the purpose and intention of the music. Some candidates simply gave a list of musical features without any links which didn't score very highly. Similarly, some candidates kept repeating the word 'heroic' as the link at the end of each statement which, once again, didn't score very well. The best answers, however, discussed the use of structural devices, instrumental techniques, textural devices, dynamic effects, tonality and harmony, melodic features, rhythmic features and compositional devices and linked them to the character of the hero.

**Q.7** *Since You've Been Gone* (Popular Music)

- (a) This was a bit of a mixed bag, however the majority of candidates were correct.
- (b) This was mostly incorrect, and the majority of the answers given had absolutely nothing to do with rhythm.
- (c) Very hit and miss, although the third chord was invariably the most reliable answer.
- (d) Most identified the broken chords or arpeggios but many candidates struggled to identify a second feature of the keyboard writing

- (e) Very hit and miss, especially when you consider that all the candidates really had to do was listen to the extract and identify the role of the drum kit.
- (f) Again, this question required no prior knowledge of the set work. Instead, candidates were required to listen to the extract and respond accordingly. Many mistakenly thought that the third answer was the correct one.
- (g) Most candidates correctly identified at least one feature with the vast majority correctly identifying at least two.

**Q.8** *Downside Up* (Popular Music)

- (a) Almost totally correct.
- (b) A large proportion were correct, significantly more so than question 3(h).
- (c) A large proportion were correct.
- (d) Candidates found this tricky, however a significant number correctly identified the bassoon.
- (e) A significant number of candidates were correct.
- (f) Most candidates identified the change of time signature but many were unable to decide between the third and fourth answer.
- (g) Many correctly identified one rhythmic feature – usually syncopation – but very few candidates identified two. Many answers had absolutely nothing to do with rhythm.
- (h) Lots of good answers were given to this question although very few candidates managed to secure full marks. Many included answers that had already been given in the previous questions.

(For questions 8 (g) and 8 (h) – and for other similar questions on the exam paper which have clearly designated lines given for each answer – a common error by the candidates was to write more than one answer on a single line. As only the first answer on a line can be credited, and therefore everything else on the same line is ignored, it means that candidates are potentially missing out on numerous marks.)

### Summary of key points

In summary, candidates should ensure that they adhere to the following exam techniques:

- Where a specific number of answers are required – for example, three – only the first three answers will be marked.
- 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, for example a candidate who describes what is not present in the music will not receive any marks. This is particularly pertinent when candidates are asked to compare unprepared musical extracts.



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