GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Music

A Level

Summer 2026

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026



Introduction

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

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

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

Further support

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

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

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

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

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Contents

	Page
Executive summary	5
Component 1 Performing	7
Component 2 Composing	11
Component 3 Appraising	21
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	40

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Executive Summary

The Summer 2026 A Level Music report presents a largely positive picture across all three components, with many candidates demonstrating strong musical understanding, creativity and commitment. Across the qualification, successful candidates were those who combined secure musical knowledge with careful preparation, stylistic awareness and attention to assessment requirements. The principal concerns across all units related to administration, accuracy of documentation, limited understanding of stylistic conventions in some areas, and weaknesses in analytical and developmental skills.

In Component 1 Performing, candidates generally performed to a high personal standard and displayed clear enjoyment of live performance. Many centres organised examinations efficiently, provided strong accompaniment support and ensured that examination venues were suitable. Strong performances demonstrated technical control, accurate execution, effective communication and appropriate repertoire choices. The use of professional accompanists and thorough rehearsal practices contributed positively to outcomes. However, recurring administrative issues continued to arise. Some candidates failed to meet minimum timing requirements, submitted incomplete or incorrectly labelled scores, or provided forms with missing information. Problems also occurred when backing tracks were absent, incorrectly prepared or streamed rather than downloaded. In terms of musical skills, some candidates selected overly ambitious repertoire or relied heavily on music during vocal performances, affecting projection and communication. Examiners also identified weaknesses in dynamic contrast, particularly among drummers and guitarists, and noted that ensemble parts were not always sufficiently challenging or independent.

Component 2 Composing demonstrated considerable creativity and variety. Many portfolios displayed originality, strong musical ideas and sophisticated control of musical elements. The most successful candidates responded effectively to briefs, developed material purposefully and showed an informed understanding of stylistic conventions. Strong work was often supported by thorough research, effective planning and detailed composition logs. Performance standards in recording quality were generally high, and many candidates submitted clear scores, commentaries and supporting materials. Nevertheless, administrative difficulties were frequent. Errors included incorrect option entries, missing files, inaccessible recordings, poor file labelling and incomplete documentation. Candidate logs were often inconsistent, with some lacking sufficient evidence of musical influences or compositional development. Across the unit, common weaknesses included repetitive ideas, limited melodic fluency, narrow harmonic language, overreliance on homophonic textures and insufficient structural coherence. Some Western Classical compositions failed to reflect the required Baroque, Classical or Romantic styles, while free compositions sometimes depended too heavily on repetition and lacked development. Examiners emphasised the importance of originality, effective research and secure understanding of stylistic conventions.

In Component 3 Appraising, performance was similar to previous years, although average marks were slightly lower. Candidates demonstrated a wide range of strengths, with some excelling in listening and dictation tasks while others performed better in prepared areas such as set works and essays. Strong responses showed accurate use of musical terminology, detailed analytical understanding and effective application of contextual knowledge. However, weaknesses in musical vocabulary remained evident throughout the examination. Many candidates struggled to describe melodic features precisely, locate examples accurately and use specialist terms correctly. Knowledge gaps were particularly apparent in harmony, tonality and stylistic identification. Examiners frequently reported missing bar references, vague answers and confusion between related musical concepts. While some essay responses demonstrated thoughtful contextual understanding of

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

symphonic development, weaker responses lacked detailed supporting evidence and often focused on limited areas of the specification.

Across all components, the report highlights the importance of secure musical knowledge, accurate terminology, stylistic understanding and careful administrative procedures. The strongest candidates demonstrated originality, analytical confidence, technical proficiency and thorough preparation. Future success would be enhanced by more rigorous checking of submissions, stronger engagement with stylistic conventions, improved use of musical vocabulary, greater attention to documentation requirements and a clearer focus on developing and refining musical ideas

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

MUSIC

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 1 PERFORMING

Overview of the Component

PLEASE READ THIS IMPORTANT INFORMATION AS THE ISSUES MENTIONED IN THIS REPORT RECUR YEAR AFTER YEAR

Once again, a warm welcome was given to all examiners. The majority of candidates performed to their highest personal standards and seemed to enjoy the experience of performing live.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Timing:
There were still some issues with candidates not performing for the minimum time once again this year. Please note that the visiting examiners time **from the start of the candidate's first note to the end of the candidate's final note of each individual piece performed.** Brief rests, which are written into the work by the composer in order to give the performer a rest, would be included in the time. However, if there were long periods when the candidate was not performing (eg) a DC return to a long introduction, a 2nd verse in a duet which is sung by another singer, or a 32-bar break for solo piano in a jazz piece, or other long interludes when the candidate is not performing, **these would not be included in the time.** Centres should carefully check the timings of each piece (allowing for a slightly quicker performance on the day due to nerves) but should not enter these timings on the mark sheet. The visiting examiner will be responsible for timing the individual pieces as they are performed, live. **Please note that, when using a backing track, the length of the candidate's performance is not the total length given of the track. Candidates who do not meet the minimum time requirement for this component will face a penalty deduction from their total mark.**

Live accompanist v Backing track:
In most cases, and if at all possible, the flexibility and support afforded by a live accompanist, is preferable to using a backing track. Standards of accompaniment were very good on the whole. Some centres now bring in professional accompanists.

Missing Backing tracks:
On a few occasions this year, candidates have chosen to perform pieces which require a backing track WITHOUT the necessary Backing track, resulting in the candidate accompanying a vocal which is not heard or resulting in some silences which would be filled by the track. This is musically unsatisfactory.

Performing Extracts:
Performing extracts of pieces is also musically unsatisfactory and devalues the concept of the recital. However, musically sensible cuts may be made, and should be clearly marked on the score.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Page turner and audiences:
Do arrange for a page turner if this is necessary or helpful to the candidate or the accompanist. There is no restriction on others, whether members of staff, students or parents and friends, being in the examination room as long as all mobile phones are turned off and they do not overlook the examiner's desk. Please note, **nobody** other than the examiner is permitted to record the exam, and there must be no live-streaming.

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

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

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

Administration, Paperwork and Preparation:
In most cases, the administration and timetabling of the examinations was excellent with many centres providing running orders. In the case of longer sessions at colleges and where there are consortium arrangements between centres, please continue to build into your timetables comfort breaks for the examiners. Allowing 15 minutes, possibly 20 minutes for the longer recitals, for each candidate seems ideal in most cases. Please be aware of school bells and tannoy announcements which may impact on your candidate's performance. If at all possible, please timetable AS and A level examinations separately. **Please note that examiners may arrive up to 30 minutes before the examinations are due to commence in order to set up and ensure a prompt start.** Thank you for reserving a parking space for the visiting examiner, especially if you aware that parking is an issue at your centre.

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

Links to Areas of Study:
PLEASE NOTE, THERE IS NO LONGER A REQUIREMENT TO LINK PIECES PERFORMED IN THIS EXAMINATION TO AREAS OF STUDY.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

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

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

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

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

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

Performance requirements:
Performers need to ensure that they pay attention to the performance directions on the music. Some **drummers and guitarists** are not aware of the need for contrast, especially of dynamics. **There should be no audible click tracks**. If a backing track is used by the candidate through headphones, **it must also be audible to the examiner, without an audible click.**

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Vocal performances:
Some singers lack projection and communication due to over-reliance on their music. If the music or lyrics are needed, it would be preferable for them to be placed on a stand, slightly to the side of the performer.

Rehearsals:
Best practice includes rehearsing the performances “in situ”, giving careful consideration to the position of the candidate in relation to the accompanist and the examiner. Try to create a sense of the occasion by involving other students as an audience and use this as an opportunity to check all the equipment which will be used.

The audience:
Give careful consideration to the position of an audience if present on the day, behind, and not encroaching on, the examiner, especially considering the recording equipment the examiner is using. As per examination guidelines, there should be no mobile phones present in the examination room (other than that being used by the examiner as a timer, which is preset to Airplane Mode.) Nobody other than the examiner is allowed to record (or live stream) any performance.

Sound checks and balance:
Please carry out sound checks **in advance** of the examination. In most instances, electronic equipment had been set up and sound checked allowing the examination to proceed without hold-ups. Take care with the positioning of microphones and consider carefully whether microphones need to be used for an acoustic performance, especially in a small room or classroom. As well as carrying out a sound-check for balance with any backing tracks used, also check the balance between the candidate and an accompanist. Please remember that a microphone does not replace the need for vocal technique and projection.

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

Eric W. Phillips

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

MUSIC

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 2 - COMPOSING

Overview of the Component

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

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

Any submission awarded full marks would have been checked to see if it met the time requirements, and if not, a mark would have been deducted from the total, as the regulators have stated that a candidate not composing for the minimum time may not be awarded full marks. There were no examples of this, this year.

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

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

Centres are reminded of the importance of drawing candidates' attention to the marking criteria and assessment bands at the outset of the composition process. The standard of candidates' work this year covered a wide range of achievement, with a significant number of submissions demonstrating a high level of innovation, creativity, musicality, and many of these folios deserved full marks. These compositions exhibited highly effective musical ideas, purposeful and organised development, and sophisticated control of musical elements. A smaller number of compositions contained limited musical material and showed weaknesses in the organisation and development of musical ideas. Some submissions presented inconsistent musical concepts and would have benefited from greater structural coherence to demonstrate more effective development. Examiners agreed that a stronger awareness of stylistic conventions was needed to enhance the effective use of the elements of music. Many mid-range submissions were well structured and made use of a variety of compositional techniques.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Comments on individual questions/sections

Uploading Work

Centres are strongly advised to verify that all submitted files are accessible and functioning correctly before uploading them to Surpass, as this significantly supports the efficiency and accuracy of the examining process. This year, some candidates were entered for Option A instead of Option B, or vice versa. Centres should ensure that all entry information is carefully checked with examinations officers prior to submission and that each candidate has completed the appropriate log form for their selected option. There seemed to be a considerable number of instances where files were missing, could not be opened, or compositions that had been labelled incorrectly. Careful checking prior to submission would help to minimise these issues. Centres were very responsive in rectifying any issues. Centres should also ensure that compositions are correctly identified according to the specification requirements. For Option A candidates, Composition 1 must be a response to the set brief, while Composition 2 is a free-choice composition. For Option B candidates, Composition 1 must be a response to the set brief, Composition 2 must be linked to a different area of study, and Composition 3 is a free-choice composition.

Candidate Logs

The primary purpose of the composition log is to document the process of development and refinement throughout the composing journey. Examiners require a clear understanding of the candidate's creative process, including the rationale behind musical decisions and any guidance provided by the teacher, in order to track progress and assess the authenticity of the work. Some logs were completed to a high standard and almost all teacher and candidate authentication signatures were present but examiners noted that a significant number of candidates did not identify or discuss musical influences. Reference to influences can provide valuable insight into a candidate's creative thinking and compositional approach. On the contrary, many were inspired by composers such as Shostakovich and Stravinsky for their Western Classical composition which caused issues when composing in a Baroque, Classical or Romantic style. Many logs contained extensive analytical commentary and diary-style accounts of the compositional process; however, detailed written explanations did not always correspond to the quality of the final composition. Conversely, a minority of candidates provided very limited information about their compositional development, making it difficult for examiners to assess the creative process effectively.

For any additional compositions, candidates must ensure that they write their own brief(s) in the appropriate sections of the log. As the effectiveness of a candidate's response to a brief forms part of the assessment criteria, briefs should be sufficiently specific and include relevant details such as style, ensemble, mood, and the intended type of work. Some briefs for free compositions were very vague and it was difficult to examine effectively (*e.g.* compose a string quartet for a concert). It would be helpful to know if the intention were to compose in a Classical way or more modern style. It is difficult to know if large sections of dissonance were intended or not. In film music, many candidates wrote that they composed music for a film without any context of the storyline, characters, intended mood or style. Other candidates mentioned in their briefs that they were writing in sonata form and this was not the case and as a result meant the response to the brief was inaccurate.

Examiners also identified a small number of cases where candidates had used pre-existing musical material without acknowledging it within the log documentation. It is essential that candidates clearly identify any musical ideas that are not their own and provide an accurate explanation of how the final recording was produced. While drawing inspiration from existing works is encouraged, centres should note that the first assessment criterion focuses on the creation of original musical ideas. Consequently, the use of existing thematic material may

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

have an impact on the marks awarded. For example, in a theme and variations composition, the creation of an original theme is generally more advantageous than adapting an existing one. Music programs used for composing work also need to be mentioned in the log.

Where compositions are presented through live performances without an accompanying score, additional supporting information is required. Candidates must clearly explain how the music was communicated to performers and, where appropriate, submit a guide track, keyboard reduction, or other suitable supporting material that accurately reflects their compositional intentions. It is not acceptable for candidates to tell other performers what to do – evidence is need of written commentary or audio clips. There were instances where performers were instructed simply to play along, embellish, or improvise. Such contributions cannot be considered in the assessment process, as they do not constitute the candidate's own work. Where the role of the composer is unclear, examiners may request further information from the centre through Eduqas to support the assessment process.

Scores and Recordings

Centres are reminded that scores and written commentaries should be uploaded as separate supporting documents rather than incorporated into the composition log. A minority of candidates submitted scores that lacked sufficient musical detail, particularly with regard to performance directions such as dynamics, tempo markings, and articulation. Examiners also noted that a number of compositions were submitted without titles, which can make it difficult to establish the intended context or character of the work. However, the majority of candidates provided clear and informative scores or written commentaries, and it was encouraging to see an increase in the use of annotated screenshots, which were generally more effective and efficient in communicating compositional intentions this year. Many candidates enhanced their scores with labels identifying sections, compositional techniques, and examples of motivic development. While such annotations can be helpful, they are not a formal requirement of the qualification. Centres are reminded that where a full score is not provided, candidates must submit a detailed written description of the composition accompanied by an outline of the melodic and harmonic content. For example, an unannotated screenshot from software such as GarageBand does not provide sufficient information to support the assessment process and should be accompanied by explanatory notes. Lead sheets are very beneficial; they are an abbreviated form of musical notation that specifies the essential framework of a song; the melody, lyrics and harmony. The examining team saw some excellent examples of lead sheets and commentaries this year which will be used in CPD conferences.

There were many live realisations submitted this year. It is important to emphasise that assessment is focused on the composition itself rather than the quality of the performance. Consequently, minor inaccuracies in pitch or rhythm within live recordings were not taken into account when awarding marks. It is important to note that candidates should think carefully when uploading live realisations as the complexity of some compositions make the piece almost impossible to perform accurately. Some candidates submitted both live and computer-generated recordings of their compositions, providing examiners with an additional reference point and helping to ensure that compositional intentions were communicated accurately. Although live performance is not a requirement of the qualification, these submissions often brought the compositions to life and demonstrated a commendable level of commitment from candidates. In contrast, songs featuring computer-generated vocal parts were generally less effective in conveying musical expression. Examiners felt that, where possible, the inclusion of a live vocal recording or audio guide from the original composing process alongside the computer-generated accompaniment would have resulted in a more convincing and engaging realisation. The overall quality of recordings was very high. However, some recordings exhibited issues with the balance of individual parts, low volume levels and instrumental lines missing from the audio. Centres are encouraged to review audio files carefully before submission. Careful checking of audio quality and playback levels

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

prior to upload would help to avoid such issues. Please remove any click tracks or metronomes from the audio before submitting as this detracts from the outcome.

Composition Briefs in a Western Classical Style

Please make sure that briefs are chosen from GCE A Level Eduqas Music as this year we had some briefs chosen which were released for GCE AS Music. Candidates selected one of the four prescribed A Level composition briefs. The majority of submissions were composed in a Baroque, Classical, or Romantic style, however, a minority of candidates drew heavily on the influences of twentieth- and twenty-first-century composers, resulting in compositions that reflected more contemporary musical styles. In these cases, the response to the brief was often less successful, as the compositions did not sufficiently demonstrate an understanding of the musical language, techniques, and conventions associated with the Baroque, Classical, or Romantic periods. While some works adopted a cinematic style that could be interpreted as late Romantic in character, others were composed in rock, pop, or musical theatre styles, creating difficulties in assessing their suitability as responses to the chosen briefs. Compositions in a style similar to the Renaissance period or in a folk genre also struggled to access the higher marks of the criteria. In addition, some compositions contained harmonic practices that were not stylistically appropriate and consequently detracted from their idiomatic quality. Centres are encouraged to ensure that candidates undertake thorough research into the stylistic features of the relevant historical periods before applying this understanding through their own original musical ideas and ensure that these compositions are in an actual key. Listening is key to ensure that candidates have experience in appraising to employ the conventions, techniques and devices in their own work. The most successful submissions demonstrated both a secure grasp of stylistic conventions and a strong sense of individual creativity. A number of compositions were in a Western Classical style to begin and then moved to a more modern style as the piece progressed – this made it difficult to access some of the higher band marks as a result of not fulfilling the specification requirement.

Examiners observed that, in some centres, all candidates had selected the same brief. While it is understandable that teachers may focus on a particular brief as a teaching and learning tool, outcomes are often stronger when candidates are able to select briefs that align with their individual strengths, interests, and musical experiences, including their preferred instruments, voices, and compositional styles. A number of individual compositions exceeded seven minutes in duration, which is broadly equivalent to the expected length of an entire Option A portfolio. While several of these extended works achieved full marks, others lost focus and coherence as they progressed, resulting in less effective musical development. Candidates and centres are reminded that duration alone does not determine success. Shorter compositions containing sophisticated and well-developed musical material were assessed equally positively. For example, some relatively concise fugues demonstrated a high level of compositional skill and achieved excellent outcomes against the assessment criteria. Please ensure all portfolios are above the minimum time requirement (4 minutes for Option A and 8 minutes for Option B).

The main three aspects which could be strengthened to improve the Western Classical brief compositions were:

- Melodic construction – ensuring that melodies are structured in sensible balanced phrases not overly disjunct and awkward; showing effective fluency in instrumental and vocal content
- Harmonic procedures – using more imaginative chord progressions in a greater variety of inversions and the potential use of diminished and augmented chords

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

- Textural variety – ensuring there is contrast in the use of texture by including imitation, call and response, question and answer and countermelody in addition to monophonic, homophonic and polyphonic texture

Brief 1: Write a piece of music which demonstrates the use of countermelody to be performed at the Lichfield Festival.
Many candidates did useful research on the venue and the festival which was positive to see. This brief was quite popular and the majority of submissions demonstrated good use of countermelody. There were examples of excellent fugues which showed sophistication in the use of subject and answer thematic material and a large proportion were written with Baroque music in mind. A number of candidates showed confidence in how their melodies were shaped and were able to control texture in a successful way. A minority of candidates struggled with the operative word 'countermelody' in the brief and wrote in a homophonic / melody and accompaniment format with little or no use of another complimentary theme. A minority of candidates were confusing 'counterpoint' with 'countermelody.

Brief 2: Compose a vocal duet with accompaniment to feature in a Winter Concert.
This was the least popular brief this year and it was clear that more candidates than in previous years chose not to write a vocal piece for their first composition. In terms of melody lines, it is always beneficial to check if the vocal parts are singable and in a number of submissions that was not the case with melodic leaps containing tricky intervals and an irregular number of bars within phrases. It was also felt that word-setting and accents were not thought out before composing in full. Rhythmic innovation is needed in these compositions as many only used straight rhythms which made the pieces quite static. Many chose to write in a John Rutter or Ralph Vaughan Williams style and although these hinted at a later era of music at times, did show some traits of the Western Classical style. Part-writing was not sympathetic and often used narrow ranges of pitch. Many compositions did not modulate and were crying out for contrast in harmonic processes. Finally, the accompaniment writing was over-complicated from many candidates and did not gel with the vocal lines. More research through planned listening exercises is needed to support idiomatic writing in this style. Accompaniments must be interesting and not the same rhythmic and chordal patterns throughout.

Brief 3: Compose an instrumental ensemble (for between 2 and 8 performers) entitled 'Allegretto' to be premiered in the 'Last Night of the Proms' at the Royal Albert Hall, London.
This was the most popular brief and a range of ensembles were used for this composition from sonata-style pieces with melody and accompaniment to larger instrumental combinations. No pieces were reported as having more than 8 performers which was positive. The application of Western Classical techniques in these compositions was mainly good but main issues experienced by examiners were related to tempo. Some brief compositions were too slow for Allegretto so could not be judged a mature response to the brief and others changed tempi throughout, some beginning with a slow introduction and changes of metre and tempo later in the piece of music.

Brief 4: Create music to celebrate St. George's Day.
Some candidates planned musical content for this brief in an effective way and the narrative in their logs was helpful in the examining process. Logs were detailed and linked to the story/occasion and featured storylines, characters and moods related to St. George such as fighting the dragon, marching, fanfares and journeys. A large number of pieces were programmatic and this caused issues for some candidates who struggled to employ the Western Classical style. Large parts of compositions were in a modern style (*e.g.* overly cinematic) with some candidates intending to write in a film style after being inspired by composers such as Hans Zimmer, John Williams and Howard Shore and their common production of leitmotifs and heroic moods. There was also a lack of clarity in structure and a general rambling of unclear themes which did not demonstrate sufficient development.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Own Choice Briefs

Examiners would like to reiterate the importance of candidates providing a clear and detailed brief for their free-choice composition(s). A small number of candidates either failed to include a brief altogether or provided only limited information regarding their intentions. As the effectiveness of a candidate's response to a composition brief is an integral part of the assessment criteria, it is essential that candidates clearly define the purpose of their composition. Briefs should include as much relevant detail as possible, such as the intended style, theme, mood, occasion, audience, and any other contextual information that will assist the assessment process. A wide variety of musical styles was represented in the free-choice compositions. Some candidates chose to compose additional works in Baroque, Classical, or Romantic styles, while others explored a diverse range of contemporary genres. Many free compositions were highly imaginative and, in numerous cases, achieved higher marks than the set-brief composition. This was particularly evident where candidates composed confidently within styles and genres with which they were familiar. Centres are encouraged to support candidates in composing to their strengths rather than restricting themselves to styles or genres in which they have limited performing, listening, or analytical experience.

Candidates demonstrated considerable stylistic diversity. Popular genres included rock, pop, musical theatre, soul, jazz in addition to music created for film, television or video games. These ranged from sophisticated and engaging submissions to compositions that relied heavily on repetitive and fragmented material. Examiners also encountered a number of distinctive and less commonly chosen styles, including folk, big band, ragtime, fusion, and electronic dance music. When composing a piece in a modern dance style it is important to remember that ideas need to be innovative and show variation rather than repetitive loops and other layered effects. Some examples demonstrated a strong sense of creativity and effective integration of musical and extra-musical concepts. Some candidates chose to compose in expressionist, impressionist and neoclassicist styles. While these submissions often showed ambition, examiners felt that a more detailed understanding of the stylistic characteristics of these genres would have strengthened the outcomes. Greater attention to aspects such as melody, harmony, texture, structure, and part-writing would have helped to ensure a more authentic and convincing stylistic response. There were occasional successful examples of minimalist compositions; however, some relied too heavily on repetition and lacked sufficient contrast, variety, and development to access the highest mark bands. In contrast, a number of candidates produced sophisticated works in experimental styles, clearly articulating their compositional intentions within the log documentation. These explanations proved particularly valuable in supporting the assessment process. Some candidates used another brief from the list released by Eduqas which is not a requirement nor penalised.

Examiners also noted that some briefs provided insufficient detail to enable meaningful evaluation of the candidate's response. For example, a brief such as "Compose a string quartet to be performed in a church" offers limited information regarding the intended style, mood, character, or structure of the work. More detailed contextual information would support more accurate assessment against the relevant criteria. Many submissions demonstrated excellent balance, coherence, and control. These compositions featured effective use of instrumental resources, engaging thematic material, fluent and lyrical melodies, and appropriate harmonic language. Musical elements were combined skilfully to create convincing and well-structured works, and candidates generally responded effectively to their chosen briefs. In popular music genres, however, a minority of candidates relied on simplistic musical ideas and excessive repetition. The most successful songwriters enhanced repeated sections through the addition of new layers, varied textures, and developmental techniques that maintained musical interest throughout the composition. Candidates are advised to avoid the excessive use of repeated bars, as this can draw attention to a lack of development and may limit achievement within the higher assessment

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

bands. Similarly, in drum kit and percussion writing, examiners frequently encountered patterns that were repeated with little variation. Greater use of fills, breaks, contrasting rhythmic material, and occasional reductions in percussion texture would have enhanced variety and contributed to more effective structural development. The strongest submissions demonstrated an awareness of how percussion can be used creatively to shape musical form and sustain listener interest.

Examiners again emphasise the importance of clearly stating compositional aims and objectives within the log documentation. This information is essential in enabling examiners to evaluate the effectiveness of a candidate's response to the brief and to understand the artistic intentions underpinning the work. Candidates should clearly identify aspects of the composition that are deliberate and explain the reasoning behind significant musical decisions. Such contextual information can be particularly valuable where stylistic choices may appear unconventional. While many compositions demonstrated confidence and musical imagination, examiners noted that some submissions contained elements of predictability, with limited development of musical ideas. Conversely, other compositions lacked clear structural direction, with musical material moving between contrasting ideas without sufficient coherence or a convincing sense of conclusion. Candidates are encouraged to focus on maintaining a clear musical purpose throughout the composition and to ensure that development, contrast, and structural organisation contribute to a satisfying overall outcome.

Centres should also encourage candidates to make effective use of the terminology contained within Appendices B and C of the A Level Music specification. A secure understanding and accurate application of appropriate musical vocabulary can strengthen both the composition log and supporting documentation, helping candidates to articulate their intentions more clearly and demonstrate a deeper understanding of compositional techniques and musical concepts.

Option B Compositions linked to a different Area of Study

A number of submissions demonstrated a high level of musical maturity and a strong understanding of the stylistic characteristics associated with the areas of study. Many candidates produced compositions featuring effective musical ideas and secure control of the musical elements, particularly within the Rock and Pop, Musical Theatre, and Jazz contexts. While there were many successful responses, examiners identified areas for further development in some submissions. Greater attention to textural variation, harmonic progression, and the development of musical material would have strengthened a number of compositions and supported access to the higher assessment bands. In compositions linked to the Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Music area of study, examiners occasionally felt that a more secure understanding of the stylistic conventions and musical language of the chosen genre was required. A deeper engagement with the defining characteristics of the style would have resulted in more convincing and effective responses.

Centres are reminded that candidates following Option B must ensure that their portfolio reflects the requirements of the specification and that all compositions are appropriately linked to the designated areas of study. It is not permissible for candidates to submit three compositions within the Western Classical Tradition. Candidates are strongly encouraged to undertake thorough research into the stylistic features, conventions, and musical language of their chosen genres before commencing the compositional process. Effective planning and informed stylistic understanding frequently underpin the most successful submissions. Finally, centres should carefully consider whether candidates are best suited to the performance or composition pathways within the qualification. Ensuring that candidates pursue the option most closely aligned to their strengths and musical interests can play an important role in maximising achievement and overall outcomes

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Assessment Criteria

Creating Musical Ideas

In the majority of submissions, the overall structure provided an appropriate and effective framework for the composition. Candidates who engaged in focused listening and thorough stylistic research generally produced the most successful responses to their chosen briefs. This was often evidenced through the influences identified and discussed within their logs, which helped to demonstrate a clear understanding of the musical conventions and characteristics relevant to the task. A small minority of compositions showed little or no connection to the stated brief. In such cases, the effectiveness of the response was significantly limited, restricting access to the higher mark bands within the assessment criteria. The creation and development of melodic material presented challenges for some candidates. As melody is often central to the success and identity of a composition, it is important that melodic ideas are carefully shaped, coherent, and musically convincing. Candidates are encouraged to engage with a wide range of exemplary repertoire, particularly within the Western Classical Tradition, to develop an understanding of effective melodic construction, phrasing, and contour. While many submissions contained effective melodic ideas, examiners noted that some melodies lacked a strong motif, clear sense of direction and fluency. In certain cases, phrasing was uneven or unbalanced, and melodic lines were excessively disjunct, limiting their musical coherence. Some candidates relied heavily on notes drawn directly from the accompanying harmonic progression, resulting in melodies that lacked independence and expressive character. Rhythmic writing was often more successful, particularly in compositions that demonstrated variety and flexibility in the treatment of rhythm. Effective submissions made imaginative use of contrasting rhythmic devices, including dotted rhythms, triplets, syncopation, and other forms of rhythmic variation. Such approaches contributed positively to musical interest, momentum, and stylistic authenticity.

Developing Musical Ideas

The inclusion of a wider range of compositional techniques can significantly enhance musical interest and contribute to a more engaging and sophisticated composition. Examiners observed that the most successful submissions demonstrated purposeful development of musical ideas through the effective manipulation of thematic material and musical elements. A variety of developmental techniques can be employed to extend and refine musical ideas, including decoration, ornamentation, imitation, sequence, textural variation, countermelody, modulation, augmentation, diminution, inversion, fragmentation, alternative harmonic treatment, and thematic transformation. Effective development involves taking an initial musical idea and shaping it into a more fully realised and musically satisfying outcome. This may be achieved through the variation of melody, rhythm, texture, timbre, harmony, or other musical elements. In particular, when thematic material is repeated, candidates are encouraged to introduce subtle but meaningful changes that maintain listener interest while preserving coherence. Examples include transferring the melody to a different instrument, introducing a countermelody, employing carefully considered modulations, or varying dynamics, articulation, and texture. The strongest compositions demonstrated a thoughtful integration of these techniques, resulting in music that was coherent, stylistically convincing, and capable of sustaining interest throughout. Candidates who developed their material creatively and purposefully were generally more successful in accessing the higher assessment bands.

Technical and Expressive Control of Musical Elements

Examiners felt that a more secure understanding of individual musical elements and stylistic conventions would have benefited some candidates during the compositional process. Greater preparation through focused listening, analysis, and practical exploration of relevant styles would help candidates make more informed musical decisions and produce more convincing outcomes. In many compositions, there was scope for a wider variety of

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

harmonic language. Examiners frequently noted a reliance on a limited range of chords and chord progressions, and many submissions would have benefited from more imaginative harmonic treatment, including the use of inversions, stronger cadential structures, and purposeful modulation. Conversely, a number of candidates demonstrated excellent harmonic awareness through the effective use of devices such as suspensions, tierce de Picardie, and Neapolitan sixth chords, which added both stylistic authenticity and musical interest. Texture was another area where greater variety could have enhanced many compositions. While homophonic textures were often used effectively, some submissions relied on them almost exclusively. Candidates are encouraged to explore a broader range of textural possibilities, including imitation, contrapuntal writing, and the more sophisticated development of accompanying material, in order to create contrast and sustain musical interest. Careful consideration should also be given to the practical and expressive possibilities of the chosen musical resources. The most successful compositions demonstrated an understanding of effective melodic writing, balanced phrasing, appropriate use of instrumental and vocal ranges, and, where relevant, a thoughtful application of music technology. Attention to these aspects helped ensure that compositions were both idiomatic and musically effective. Finally, dynamics and articulation remain important components of expressive musical writing. Their effective use can add colour, contrast, and character to both scores and recorded realisations, helping to communicate the composer's intentions more clearly and enhancing the overall impact of the composition.

Summary of Key Points

- Candidates should be encouraged to compose in styles and genres that align with their strengths and musical experience. Work is often less developed when candidates attempt genres with which they have limited familiarity.
- Candidates should avoid being overly ambitious in their choice of forces. Writing for a full orchestra does not attract additional credit; a well-crafted duet can achieve full marks if the assessment criteria are met effectively.
- Centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with the composition assessment criteria from the beginning of the course. Establishing clear aims and objectives at an early stage will help candidates understand assessment expectations and support effective planning throughout the compositional process.
- Candidates should be encouraged to generate and develop original musical ideas. While existing music may provide inspiration, compositions that rely heavily on arrangements or adaptations of pre-existing material may limit opportunities to demonstrate originality, which is a fundamental aspect of the assessment criteria.
- All compositions should demonstrate sufficient contrast, development, and progression. Candidates should avoid excessive repetition through copying and pasting sections and instead employ a range of compositional techniques to vary, extend, and transform musical material, maintaining both interest and structural coherence.
- Where a conventional score is not submitted, candidates must provide a detailed commentary with appropriate explanatory notes. This documentation should clearly communicate compositional intentions and support the assessment process.
- For live recordings involving additional performers, centres should ensure that the candidate's contribution is clearly documented within the composition log. Where musical material has been taught to performers by the candidate, supporting evidence such as guide tracks or reference recordings must be provided to clarify their role.
- Composition logs should focus on documenting the development and refinement of the composition rather than providing a detailed analysis of the completed work. Logs should clearly evidence the evolution of ideas, decision-making processes, and, where relevant, the nature and extent of teacher guidance.
- Candidates should undertake thorough research into the stylistic characteristics of their chosen genres and areas of study. A secure understanding of musical conventions and

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

effective use of the elements of music will support the creation of more convincing and successful compositions.

- The recommendations outlined throughout this report are intended to support centres in further enhancing the quality of composition portfolios and improving candidate outcomes within this component of the A Level qualification.
- Composition 1 must be selected from the published **A level Eduqas briefs** and composed within the **Western Classical Tradition**. Candidates should demonstrate a clear understanding of the musical language, techniques, and conventions associated with their chosen period (**Baroque, Classical, or Romantic**). Wider listening and research into representative repertoire from these eras will support more stylistically secure responses, particularly in relation to instrumentation, vocal writing, harmonic practice, formal structures, and other defining features. For Option B candidates, composition 2 must be linked to a different area of study.
- Candidates should be encouraged to review, refine, and check their work carefully before submission to ensure that all compositions, supporting documentation, and recordings fully meet the requirements of the specification and assessment criteria.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

MUSIC

GCE A level

Summer 2026

COMPONENT 3 APPRAISING

Overview of the Component

Performance on this component was broadly similar to previous years, although the mean total marks scored this year was slightly lower than in 2025. Examiners reported seeing answers that covered a very wide range of the marks available.

This component tested AO3 (demonstrating and applying musical knowledge) and AO4 (using analytical and appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements about music). The content included one compulsory Area of Study: AoS A The Western Classical Tradition, and then candidates had a choice of one of either AoS B Rock and Pop, or AoS C Music Theatre, or AoS D Jazz. In addition, they had a choice of either AoS E Into the Twentieth Century or AoS F Into the Twenty-First Century. For the compulsory Aos A, candidates had a choice of answering on either Haydn's Symphony No. 104 or Mendelssohn's Symphony No 4.

A significant majority of candidates (>90%) answered on Haydn rather than Mendelssohn for AoS A. A similar majority of candidates answered on AoS E Into the Twentieth Century, rather than AoS F Into the Twenty-First Century, although more candidates answered on AoS F than in 2025. For AoSs B, C, and D, the numbers were very similar.

As in previous years, the balance of marks across the paper varied significantly between candidates, demonstrating their different strengths in relation to the skills and understanding being tested. For example, many candidates showed particular strength in the unprepared listening questions while others gained most of their marks in the questions that are easier to prepare for, such as those relating to set works and the essay. Some candidates excelled at the aural dictation question, gaining all the marks available, while many others scored very few or even zero marks here. The general trend was that only when candidates performed equally strongly across the whole did their total marks exceed the boundary for a grade A and beyond.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Note on melody questions (mainly in AoSs B, C, and D)

Often there are a number of questions in Areas of Study B, C and D that require candidates to describe the melody. The principles outlined below also apply in relation to AoSs A, E, and F, although these types of questions are less common in those parts of the paper.

The same issues tend to arise each year so, in addition to comments about individual questions, the following types of statements tend to attract marks:

- General type of movement (for example, conjunct or disjunct) **with appropriate qualification**. It is unlikely that any of these terms will be wholly true of a given passage referred to in a question. Therefore, candidates should not provide unqualified answers such as 'conjunct' unless there are hardly any leaps, nor 'disjunct' unless it is notably lacking in stepwise movement. Often, neither of these statements will be sufficiently true. It is more likely that a melody is **mainly** conjunct or leaps in a particular segment, and the answer needs to be qualified accordingly to gain credit.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

- Specific type of movement; for example ‘starts with ascending arpeggio in line…’ or ‘goes up a major scale in line…’
- Prominent intervals, for example ‘rising fifth at the beginning of line…’
- Shape, for example ‘leaps up and then comes down by step’
- Repetitions, for example ‘lines… are the same’ or ‘the four-note motif is repeated many times in a row’. Responses describing repetition should make clear whether they are describing a single repeated pitch, a repeating motif, or an entire line or phrase.
- Accurate references to scale degrees, for example responses such as ‘begins on the dominant’. This type of answer requires a high level of aural perception and is rare but often results in candidates gaining all the available marks on a question.
- References to rhythmic features if these are particularly prominent, such as the use of syncopation, push rhythms, or dotted rhythms. It should be noted, however, that at least some syncopation is a common feature of most melodic ideas and responses relating to rhythmic features need to be either appropriately qualified or sufficiently true of the whole extract/passage to gain credit.

Common pitfalls in answers to melody questions

- Responses which are overly general when more specific vocabulary is appropriate. Common examples include the use of the term ‘diatonic’ when describing melodies which use pentatonic or major scale outlines, or ‘ascending’ and ‘descending’ without further qualification.
- Responses which are not located with line numbers or references to the text, where appropriate (especially in AoSs B and C). Where they are not appropriately qualified, answers are taken as applying to the whole passage and are therefore much less likely to be wholly correct.
- Responses which are only partially true, for example describing a ‘repeating rhythm’ where in fact the entire melody repeats: this does not demonstrate sufficient understanding.
- Responses which do not use appropriate vocabulary, for example an answer describing ‘a repeating pattern but higher up’ when the correct answer is ‘ascending sequence’ would not receive credit.
- Responses which misuse specific musical vocabulary. A common example is the term ‘sequence’ being used to describe a pattern of notes, when in fact sequence has its own specific meaning. Another example is the use of the word ‘sequencing’ to describe a melodic sequence: these terms have distinct meanings which do not overlap. It was pleasing to note that this issue was less prevalent this year than in previous years.
- Responses which are overly specific, rendering them untrue. Examples include describing a ‘sequence’ when material may be broadly sequential but not a literal melodic sequence, or describing two different lines as ‘the same’ when they may be similar but not identical.
- Responses which are directly contradictory, for example describing a melody as ‘conjunct and disjunct’ without further qualification. While such a statement may be a true literal description of a melodic line it does not demonstrate sufficient understanding of the specific music in the given extract. This is a common pitfall in AoS D, where candidates may be asked to describe the melody in a particular section of the music but without line numbers to anchor their answers. In such cases, qualifications such as ‘begins with’, ‘then’, ‘ends with’, ‘prominent use of’ help to clarify meaning and demonstrate understanding.
- Responses which describe instrumentation rather than melody.
- Syllabic or melismatic descriptions do not gain marks; they are aspects of word setting not vocal melody. This is a common source of confusion. It should be noted that the kinds of questions at AS level may invite such descriptions (where, for example,

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

candidates may be asked to describe the 'vocal part') but at A level questions focus more specifically on vocal melody.

Note on comparison questions in AoS B, C, and D
The last question in Areas of Study B, C and D is always a comparison question, requiring candidates to note similarities and differences across a pair of extracts. The following are some general observations and guidelines for answering this type of question:

- It is a **comparison** question, so marks are not earned by simply giving information without comparing.
- **State the obvious**. If the melody, harmony, structure etc. is the same, then state this in similarities before going on to more granular observations.
- Appropriate musical vocabulary should be used with precision in this question, as elsewhere in the paper. As with the information above relating to answering questions on melody, vague statements such as 'similar melodic rhythms' when in fact the melodies are the same do not contribute positively to answers.
- Candidates must compare extract 2 with extract 1, not the other way around.
- Candidates should not spend time just describing extract 1 on its own; there are no marks for doing this.
- The most successful answers tend to outline several broad similarities between the extracts and then more detailed descriptions of differences in extract 2. Answers need some granular detail to achieve marks in the highest bands.
- Answers presented in tabular form are entirely acceptable if they still compare extract 2 with extract 1. Many candidates achieve all available marks with tabular answers.
- Answers presented in tables tend to be most successful when the columns are presented as 'similarities' and 'differences' rather than 'extract 1' and 'extract 2'. Where tables include further breakdown by individual musical elements there is sometimes a danger that more granular details are missed because points are shoe-horned into a particular category, or that general points are repeated several times in different categories. **Organising answers in a similar manner to the indicative content in the mark scheme – firstly by similarities/differences, and then by grouping together different but closely related musical elements enabling some more detailed discussion – is a good model for maximising success.** This would enable candidates to demonstrate a highly perceptive comparison which is effectively structured and thus achieve marks in the highest band of the marking criteria.
- Some candidates plan an answer in tabular form and then go on to repeat the same information in prose. There is no requirement to do this, and the time would be better spent making more detailed points in tabular form if this is how they prefer to organise their initial ideas. There is no additional credit for saying the same thing twice. These are not an essay questions, and candidates are not required to write in prose. However, they may wish to present their answer in this manner, and many candidates achieve all available marks by doing so.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Note on references required in answers:
A number of questions throughout the paper state that bar and beat and instrument references must be given, where necessary. The use of these last two words denotes that there may be creditable points which do not require all three pieces of information, or that al three may not be appropriate for some parts – *for example,* if a question asks for the location of a change in tonality, or a harmonic device then it would be unlikely that an instrument reference would be needed, however if a melodic feature was required then a bar, beat and instrument reference would describe the location more fully. It is expected that candidates will be aware of the level of detail required to locate an answer sufficiently, and this should be part of the teaching of the set works.

Section 1
Area of Study B: Rock and Pop

Q.1

(a) Surprisingly, fewer than half of candidates correctly identified the (tonic) pedal, which was accepted irrespective of qualification (accurate or otherwise). 'Drone' was not accepted. A commonly seen incorrect answer was 'broken chord': this is a feature of the texture and not a harmonic device.

(b) Several candidates correctly identified the alternation between 4/4 and 3/4. Some candidates identified the resulting 7/4 as a single metre and then were unsure what to write as their second answer. All three of these time signatures were accepted as correct in any combination. Most candidates secured at least one of the available marks. Common incorrect answers included 7/8 and 6/8.

(c) **See note above on melody questions in AoSs B, C, and D.** Most candidates achieved at least one mark, but few received all three marks available. Several candidates identified the narrow range and repetition between lines 1-4 and lines 5-8. A commonly rejected answer was '(mostly) conjunct' without further qualification/location references: while this is true of some lines it is not sufficiently true of the whole passage. Few candidates identified the largely pentatonic outline or that repeated pitches were a recurring feature. Few candidates identified that all the lines were similar to one another or that all had the same rhythm, but several incorrectly stated that all lines were the same.

(d) Most candidates identified the bass drum on each crotchet beat, and many also identified the quavers at the end of the pattern. Some identified that this was a repeating pattern and many answers also identified the tom-tom fill in line 13 (with appropriate location reference). Some candidates referred to music played by the shaker, but such points were rejected as this is not part of the drum kit.

(e) Any one of the ten years around the correct date of 1977 was accepted and many candidates achieved this mark. Answers included a range of dates from the early 1960s to the late 1990s.

(f) Many candidates correctly identified Peter Gabriel as the performer. Sting was the most common incorrect answer.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.2

(a) Most candidates correctly identified a tenor voice. Gender qualifications, e.g. 'male tenor' were not uncommon, with examiners reporting seeing these more often than in previous years. This led to some improbable answers such as 'female tenor' and 'male alto' which were rejected. Some candidates misunderstood the question, with answers including 'falsetto' and 'chest voice'.

(b) Most candidates correctly identified the 4/4 time signature, but some very surprising incorrect answers were seen.

(c) **See note above on melody questions in AoSs B, C, and D.** This was answered similarly well to question 1(c), with most candidates securing at least one of the three available marks. Many candidates identified the similarity between lines 3 and 5, and lines 4 and 6 (although rarely both in the same answer). The descending sequence in lines 3 and 5 was also commonly identified. Few explicitly identified the triadic movement, and it was also this which rendered unqualified 'conjunct' answers as incorrect.

(d) Surprisingly few identified the correct interval of an octave. Common incorrect answers included other perfect intervals such as 4th and 5th, but a full range of incorrect intervals were seen.

(e) Very few candidates identified the modal tonality, and hardly any stated the Dorian mode. Many candidates stated that the tonality was minor, but this was rejected due to the absence of raised sevenths (and corresponding major dominant chords). The question asked for a word that 'best' described the tonality and, unfortunately 'minor' was not sufficiently correct. Surprisingly, some candidates stated that the tonality was 'major' or 'atonal'.

(f) This question asked candidates to describe the use of string instruments in the extract, and most candidates achieved at least one mark. As with other similar questions across the paper, a common pitfall was the failure to specify instruments when making points. While some more general observations could be credited without specific instrument references (e.g. 'staccato chords', which were often described somewhat inaccurately by candidates as 'stab chords'), many more granular details required more precision. Similarly, some answers were rejected because they were not anchored with a location reference but not sufficiently true of the whole extract: examples included vague points such as 'use of countermelody'. 'Arco' was rejected by examiners as this is the default playing technique for string instruments and this did not demonstrate sufficient understanding of how the instruments are used in the extract.

(g) Any one of the ten years around the correct date of 1966 was accepted and many candidates achieved this mark. Incorrect answers tended to fall narrowly outside of this range, although some candidates gave answers in the 1980s.

(h) **See note above on comparison questions in AoSs B, C, and D.** Performance in this question appeared to be slightly better than in the comparable question in the previous year overall. Many of the best answers were presented as tables and gave a list of similarities in one column with related differences in extract two in another. Breaking answers down by musical elements, particularly when these were grouped together as in the marking scheme, helped many candidates but this sometimes encouraged them either to give a lot of peripheral detail or state only vague comparisons, both of which resulted in the main obvious points being missed. For

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

example, some candidates dedicated much of their answer to outlining which instruments were present in extract 2 but not in extract 1 – each as a separate point – without providing any detail about what these instruments played or how that contributed to the overall stylistic difference between the extracts. Answers varied in quality across the full range of available marks, with many candidates scoring in at least Band 3 of the marking criteria.

Area of Study C: Musical Theatre

Q.3

(a) Most candidates correctly identified 3/4 or an acceptable alternative such as 6/8.

(b) Many candidates accurately identified both the minor tonality at the start and the major tonality from line 5. Very few identified the more granular details about tonality in the remainder of the extract. Some candidates did not achieve a mark because their answer did not refer to line numbers, which were specifically required by the question.

(c) Many candidates correctly identified the AABA structure. Common incorrect answers included verse/chorus, binary and ternary forms. Rounded binary form was a slightly more reasonable incorrect reponse, but was nonetheless rejected because it does not align with the conventions for describing musical forms in this style of music.

(d) Approximately half of candidates correctly identified the melodic sequence which was accepted irrespective of additional qualification (accurate or otherwise). 'Sequencing' was rejected, although examiners reported that fewer candidates offered this as an answer than in previous years.

(e) **See note above on melody questions in AoSs B, C, and D.** Many candidates correctly identified the narrow range and conjunct movement in lines 1 to 4. Several also identified the repeating (tonic) note, and the repetition of material in these lines. Fewer candidates referred to details in lines 5 to 8, but some that did notice the ascending chromatic movement in line 5 and that line 7 is a repeat of line 5. Some perceptive answers stated specific intervals such as the falling perfect 5^{th} at the end of line 8. However, answers which described this as a 'perfect cadence' were rejected as this describes a harmonic rather than a melodic feature.

(f) A good number of candidates correctly identified Richard Rodgers as the composer of this extract. 'Rodgers and Hammerstein' was also accepted by examiners. All composers named for this Area of Study in the specification were given as answers. Listening to lots of relevant repertoire by each composer will make it more likely that candidates can tell their work apart.

(g) Any one of the ten years around the correct date of 1949 was accepted but surprisingly few candidates achieved this mark. Most incorrect answers were either narrowly too early or too late, but appropriately within the period that Rodgers was working. However, some answers were significantly wide of the mark, giving dates in the 1980s and beyond.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q.4

(a) Many candidates identified the voice type either correctly as mezzo soprano, or as alto, which was accepted as an alternative. The gender qualification 'female' was also frequently added, and this was surprising given that such observations have not been common in previous years. Several candidates incorrectly identified the voice type as soprano, and these answers were rejected.

(b) Surprisingly few identified the correct interval of an octave. Common incorrect answers included other perfect intervals such as 4th and 5th, but a full range of incorrect intervals was seen.

(c) Many candidates correctly identified the difference between strummed and arpeggiated/broken chords, enabling them to achieve both available marks. Points relating to the bass line were often less successful as they did not include sufficient specificity. Answers which referred only to 'guitar chords' without further qualification were rejected.

(d) **See note above on melody questions in AoSs B, C, and D.** This was answered noticeably less well than 3(e), with few candidates securing all available marks. The most common correct answers related to line 12, referring variously to the use of a repeated pitch, conjunct movement, or longer note values in this line. Few answers referred to more than one of these points, although collectively these points would have secured all three available marks. Commonly rejected answers included describing line 10 and/or line 11 as 'conjunct' without further qualification, and 'diatonic': this is both too general for this question and was available as the (correct) multiple choice option on question 4(e) directly below. Few candidates identified the triadic movement at the end of line 10 into line 11. The most successful answers often included accurate references to specific intervals and/or scale degrees.

(e) Most candidates underlined the correct answer of 'diatonic'. All three incorrect answers were chosen across the cohort of candidates.

(f) Many candidates correctly identified Andrew Lloyd Webber as the composer, although Schwartz and Schönberg were commonly seen incorrect answers. Sondheim, Rodgers and Bernstein were also offered as answers, both less frequently and less plausibly. Few candidates correctly identified the decade as 2000s, with many suggesting 1980s or 1990s. Some candidates offered a specific year, which is not what is asked for in the question.

(g) **See note above on comparison questions in AoSs B, C, and D.** Performance in this question appeared to be better than in the comparable question in 2025. Many of the best answers were presented as tables and gave a list of similarities in one column with related differences in extract two in another. Breaking answers down by musical elements, particularly when these were grouped together as in the marking scheme, helped many candidates but this sometimes encouraged them either to give a lot of peripheral detail or state only vague comparisons, both of which resulted in the main obvious points being missed. For example, answers often described features of the melody in both extracts without identifying that the melodic material is substantially the same in both songs, which was spotted by relatively few candidates. Answers varied in quality across the full range of available marks, with many candidates scoring in at least Band 3 of the marking criteria.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Area of Study D: Jazz

Q.5

(a) Many candidates identified the structure of the head as AABA (or an appropriate alternative), and these answers were credited. Significantly fewer candidates identified the strictly correct AABBA structure.

(b) Candidates need to identify the **type** of saxophone correctly in this type of question: in this case the correct answers were both **alto** saxophone and **tenor** saxophone. Many candidates achieved both available marks for this question. Common incorrect answers included clarinet and, rather more implausibly, trombone.

(c) Approximately half of candidates underlined the correct answer of 'modal' to describe the harmony. 'Blues' was the most common incorrect answer, but all answers were seen across the entire cohort of candidates.

(d) Most candidates secured at least one mark, and many achieved both available marks. Common answers related to the conjunct melodic movement, staccato articulation (in the A section) and homorhythmic texture between front line instruments. Fewer candidates described features relating to the B section. A surprising number of candidates described material played by the rhythm section, and such points were rejected.

(e) Many candidates secured all three available marks, with the most frequently accepted answers relating to syncopation, blue notes, scalic movement, and chromaticism. 'Virtuosic' was rejected by examiners as this is more descriptive and is not a 'feature', as specified in the question.

(f) A good number of candidates correctly identified Miles Davis as the trumpeter, although fewer than expected given that the title *Milestones* was disclosed in the information at the beginning of Q5.

Q/6

(a) Many candidates correctly identified the **alto** saxophone in this extract, although several misidentified the type of saxophone as tenor. Fewer candidates were able to identify the vibraphone, with both xylophone and glockenspiel being commonly seen incorrect answers.

(b) Approximately half of candidates correctly identified the compositional device as a sequence. A commonly rejected answer was 'anacrusis': while this is a feature of the melody at the start of the head, it is not a compositional device.

(c) Candidates who could accurately describe the most common accompaniment functions in jazz (like piano comping and double bass playing walking bass) scored well in this question. Many achieved all three available marks. Most candidates achieved at least one of their marks for an accurate description of the drum kit part, the most common of which related to 'dropping bombs'. Surprisingly few candidates described the change of groove in the head.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

(d) **(i)** Most candidates correctly identified the style of jazz as bebop. A commonly seen incorrect answer was ‘cool jazz’. More surprising but not infrequent incorrect answers included ‘Dixieland’ and ‘early jazz’.

(ii) Candidates could score both marks for this question irrespective of their answer to (d)(i). Many secured at least one mark, with most correct answers relating to the fast tempo and instrumental virtuosity. References to the small ensemble were also a commonly credited answer. Fewer candidates answered in relation to harmonic features of the music. The most commonly rejected answer was ‘improvisation’, which is broadly true of all jazz rather than a specific feature of bebop.

(e) Any one of the ten years around the correct date of 1952 was accepted and many candidates achieved this mark. Incorrect answers tended to fall too early, with many candidates offering dates in the 1930s and early 1940s.

(f) **See note above on comparison questions in AoSs B, C, and D.** Performance in this question was noticeably better than in the comparable question in 2025. Many of the best answers were presented as tables and gave a list of similarities in one column with related differences in extract two in another. Breaking answers down by musical elements, particularly when these were grouped together as in the marking scheme, helped many candidates but this sometimes encouraged them either to give a lot of peripheral detail or state only vague comparisons, both of which resulted in the main obvious points being missed. Many candidates described similarities and differences with some precision. Less successful answers focused on more generic points such as both extracts having a rhythm section or improvised passages without drilling into the detail of how these features are different in extract 2. Very few candidates spotted that both extracts quoted from *Ornithology,* although some candidates identified this in relation to one of them, noting this as a difference between the two. Answers varied in quality across the full range of available marks, with many candidates scoring into Band 4 and above.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Section 2

Area of Study E: Into the Twentieth Century

Q.7 This question appeared to be less well answered overall than in 2025.

(a) This question asked candidates to describe the use of instruments, and most candidates were able to achieve at least two of the four available marks. Commonly credited answers related to the piano accompaniment and antiphonal exchanges between the oboe and bassoon in bars 45 to 48. Few candidates made the distinction between imitation (in bars 45 to 46) and repetition (in bars 47 to 48), which could have resulted in an additional mark. A common pitfall was the failure to give bar numbers which prevented some candidates from achieving marks for features they had spotted. For example, the oboe plays the melody for much of the specified passage, but not for all of it, and so credit was not given unless an accurate location was specified. Many candidates achieved a mark for accurate descriptions of ornamentation when appropriate bar and beat locations were given. Several candidates got caught up describing specific features of the piano part – not always correctly – rather than making a range of points, and this often limited the number of marks achieved.

(b) Some candidates achieved all three available marks on this question, although many scored zero. This question was noticeably less frequently attempted than other parts of Q7, and parts of it were often left blank even when other parts were attempted. A common issue was not specifying beat numbers which were needed for some of the chords, although this was not a problem when the specified chord was maintained throughout the whole bar. Several candidates confused the diminished 7^{th} and half diminished 7^{th} chord, offering these answers the wrong way around. Fewer candidates correctly identified the location of the minor chord with added major 6^{th} and major 7^{th}, with a commonly given incorrect answer being bar 64, beat 4. A surprising number of candidates either provided the same answer for all three chords or provided all three correct locations but in a muddled order resulting in zero marks, which was especially unfortunate.

(c) Very few candidates correctly identified the use of the Lydian scale, which was the only answer accepted. The most common answers were whole-tone and C major, both of which were somewhat plausible but nonetheless incorrect. Other commonly seen, but much less plausible, answers included octatonic and G major.

(d) This question asked candidates to comment on melodic material and was poorly answered overall. Many candidates achieved one mark, but very few achieved all three available marks. The most commonly credited point was the identification that the material here repeated the melody from the beginning of the movement, although fewer candidates achieved the related additional mark for stating this was now transposed to the key of F major. The most common pitfall in answers to this question was candidates describing the use of instruments, much as they had done in Q7(a): relatively few candidates observed the different focus of this question. Very few candidates made more granular points about features of the melody, although some identified the Lydian inflection in bars 56-57 despite having not given this as their answer to Q7(c): in these cases, this observation was credited here.

(e) A reasonable number of candidates made an accurate observation about the texture here, but fewer than expected given the number of potentially creditable points for a single available mark. Most candidates who achieved this mark did so for describing the prevailing (melody dominated) homophonic texture, or for referring to the octave

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

doubling between the oboe and piano RH. More vague and unqualified answers on this point, such as ‘octaves’ or ‘unison’ alone were rejected. Both ‘polyphonic’ and ‘monophonic’ were surprisingly commonly seen incorrect answers.

(f) Despite the broad scope of the question, encompassing both harmony and tonality, and the many potentially creditable observations, this question was poorly answered overall. Most candidates inaccurately referred to a pedal, but the sustained F does not function as a pedal at this point as there are not sufficient dissonances above it: these answers were rejected. Many candidates also simply described individual chords – including those whose location had already been credited in 7(b) – and these answers were also rejected, with the singular exception of the highly unusual final Fm(maj7). Some candidates correctly identified the modal mixture between F major and F minor tonalities (which were credited separately when appropriately located) although more described these as chords rather than keys and such answers were not credited. Other correct answers seen included the use of octatonic harmony from bar 62 and, less commonly, references to plagal cadences and/or altered subdominant chords. Few candidates achieved more than one of the three available marks.

Q.8 This question appeared to be slightly less well answered overall than in 2025.

(a) This question asked candidates to describe the use of instruments. A common pitfall was the failure to specify any instruments, and this meant that otherwise correct points could not be credited. The most commonly credited answers related to the arpeggio-like material in the clarinets and solo violin and, separately, the imitation between the two. Several candidates also achieved a mark for describing klangfarbenmelodie, which was the only answer credited without further qualification/specification of instruments. Fewer candidates observed that some pitches were sustained in the clarinets once sounded.

(b) Few candidates secured the mark for this question, with the most commonly credited answers relating to the initial perfect fifths aligning with the open strings of the violin, and the sequential treatment of melodic material. A commonly rejected answer was ‘atonal’.

(c) Many candidates accurately described the texture as homophonic. The most commonly rejected answer was ‘melody-dominated homophony’: there is no texturally separate melodic material at this point in the music.

(d) Surprisingly few candidates identified that the harmony here is both entirely triadic and functional, observations which could have secured both available marks. Most candidates stated, literally to the contrary, that the music was atonal and that the harmony is entirely non-functional. Answers which related to tonality rather than harmony were rejected.

(e) Few candidates correctly identified that the material (in this case the tone row) is built largely of 3rds. The most commonly seen answer was tritone, but examiners reported seeing a wide range of incorrect intervals.

(f) This question asked candidates to describe features of the music played by the orchestra. A common pitfall was describing music played by the solo violin, rather than the orchestra. Very few candidates secured even one of the two available marks here. The most commonly credited answer related to material played by the flute towards the end of the extract. Examiners were able to credit fairly general answers which provided some appropriate qualification to demonstrate features candidates

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

had heard. For example very brief answers such as ‘flute countermelody’, ‘syncopated woodwind chords’, and ‘descending cello arpeggio’ were each enough to achieve a mark. However, many candidates simply did not provide enough detail, instead relying on single word answers such as ‘syncopation’ and ‘atonal’ and it was not possible to credit these.

(g) Fewer than half of candidates correctly identified the use of inversion to develop the violin melody in its second phrase. Retrograde was both the most plausible and the most commonly seen of the three incorrect answers. Some candidates provided more than one answer and in such cases all answers were rejected, even if one of the given answers was correct.

(h) This question takes broadly the same form every year and requires candidates to discuss given musical elements in relation to a work of their choice. The question usually specifies if the chosen piece should be in a similar or different style to that heard in the extract for Q8, in relation to the prescribed ‘-isms’ from the AoS (namely impressionist, serialism/expressionism, or neo-classicism). On this occasion, due to the unique nature of the extract, which employs serialist techniques but has tonal features, it was felt that it would be unreasonably difficult for candidates to accurately determine the ‘-ism’ of the music they had heard, and therefore to choose a piece that was appropriately similar or different. As such, the question invited responses in relation to any appropriate work from the AoS. **It should be noted that this was a singular exception based on the specific extract: candidates and centres should not necessarily expect this more relaxed framing of this question to be repeated in future examinations.**

There are a number of potential pitfalls in this question. Important points to note include:

- This is NOT a comparison with the given extract, just an explanation of the chosen piece. Fewer candidates attempted a comparison than in previous years, but this was still not uncommon.
- If candidates choose an inappropriate piece they score ZERO:
  - Notwithstanding the more relaxed framing of the question this year, as detailed above the chosen piece must be selected **from one of the ‘-isms’ prescribed for this area of study**, namely impressionism, serialism/expressionism neo-classicism. Pieces in other styles even if they are by prescribed composers and composed within the time period were not accepted (e.g. Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*).
  - the chosen piece must fall within the timespan of this area of study (i.e. 1895-1935). The singular exception to this was Debussy’s *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un faune,* which was accepted despite being composed in 1894 because it is both by a named composer and is an appropriately illustrative example of the impressionist style and it features in the textbook guide, so many candidates may have prepared it. Other earlier works by Debussy were not accepted.
  - the chosen piece must not be a set work (so not Debussy *Nuages* or Poulenc Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano).
- the piece must be clearly identified.

This year, the focus was on sonority and texture, and candidates appeared to perform better in this question than in the comparable question in 2025. Candidates who scored highly wrote succinct answers (in prose or bullet points) that clearly

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

described features of sonority and texture and provided specific examples to illustrate the points they had made.

The most successful answers were on well-chosen works where it was possible to make several specific points. Answers on relatively short works scored for reasonably small ensembles tended to be more successful than large scale works where clear parameters were not defined. For example, descriptions of works by Webern or specific poems from Schoeberg's *Pierrot luniere* tended to score well because candidates could hang their answer on specific moments in the music and drill into appropriate detail. Conversely, when candidates chose large-scale works such as Berg's *Wozzeck* or Prokofiev's Classical Symphony, but without specifying a movement or section, the chosen work's scope was often too broad to make sufficiently detailed points. Poorly chosen works limited how much candidates could say in relation to the question.

Area of Study: Into the Twenty-First Century

Q.9

(a) Few candidates correctly identified the section which begins at bar 25. This was surprising, given that they have studied this work.

(b) Most candidates secured at least one of the available marks in relation to the use of rhythm, with common responses including details relating to crotchet triplets and syncopation.

(c) **(i)** Very few candidates accurately described the instruction to place the bow directly on the bridge, but some stated the bow must be 'very near the bridge' which was accepted as an alternative. Answers which described the meaning of the more conventional *sul pont.* were rejected. A reasonably commonly seen incorrect answer stated the bow should be placed behind the bridge.

(ii) few candidates identified the meaning of *poco ruvido.* Most answers suggested candidates believed this was a tempo indication rather than a performance direction.

(d) Few candidates achieved a mark in relation to the harmonic change at bar 41. The most commonly credited answer related to the removal of the pedal D. A commonly seen incorrect answers implied a new pedal point was added at this point.

(e) Many candidates secured both available marks, with several identifying the reduced texture created by the woodwind parts dropping out. Other commonly seen correct answers included the addition of new chromatic material in the double basses and, separately, new material in the percussion.

(f) Despite the breadth of potentially creditable responses, this question was answered poorly overall. The most commonly credited points related to the return of melodic material in the woodwinds, now with additional notes, and the combination of this material with the chromatic motif in the double basses. Examiners reported that a common pitfall in this question was the failure of candidates to specify either which previously heard material was being developed and/or how it was being developed. Responses which simply described features of the music, but which did not specify which/how material was being developed, were not credited. Very few candidates achieved more than three of the five marks available.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

(g) Very few candidates accurately stated a feature of the harmony which had not previously been heard in the extract. The most commonly seen answer referred to the re-introduction of the pedal D, but this had previously been heard at the beginning of the extract.

Q.10

(a) A good number of candidates correctly identified the 6/8 metre at the start of the extract.

(b) Very few candidates accurately described the ambiguous tonality resulting from a modal mixture. Most candidates identified either a major or minor tonality alone and these responses were not credited. 'Modal' alone was also rejected.

(c) Few candidates achieved even one of the two available marks, with the most common successful responses relating to the oscillation between two neighbouring pitches and the relatively narrow confines of the piano register.

(d) **See note above on melody questions in AoSs B, C, and D:** while these types of questions are less common in relation to AoS F, the principles are equally applicable here. Many candidates achieved at least one of the two available marks, often in relation to the repetition of pitches along with the repetition of the text "have mercy". Surprisingly, fewer candidates identified that the general movement of the line was mostly disjunct, although some candidates accurately identified the quartal/quintal and triadic construction of different parts of the melody, with appropriate location references.

(e) Few candidates answered with sufficient accuracy to secure the mark available although the most commonly seen correct answers related to the reduction in texture and return of the material from the introduction. A commonly rejected answer referred to chromatic scales in the piano: the motion was rarely chromatic for more than a couple of pitches at once.

(f) Some candidates correctly identified the use of triadic harmony or the use of implied quartal chords, while a few perceptive responses identified the tertiary relationships between chords. Most candidates did not answer with sufficient accuracy or precision for credit.

(g) There are several potential pitfalls in this question, which takes the same form each year. Candidates are asked to explain the use of a given musical element in a piece of their choosing. Important points to note include:

- This is NOT a comparison with the given extract, just an explanation of the chosen piece.
- If candidates choose an inappropriate piece they score ZERO:
  - the piece must fall within the timespan of this area of study (i.e. after 1980)
  - the piece must not be a set work (so not Ades *Ecstasio* or Beamish *String Quartet No. 2*)
- the piece must be clearly identified.

Candidates who scored highly wrote succinct answers (in prose or bullet points) that clearly identified features relating to texture and sonority in their chosen work, and offered some specific details to exemplify these points.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Section 3
Area of Study A: The Western Classical Tradition (The Development of the Symphony, 1750-1900).

Q.11

(a) Candidates appeared to perform less well on this question than in 2025. It is important that the circling of each error is as precise as possible and candidates should remember that there is another mark available for correcting each of the two errors they have identified: this can be done by writing on or above the score or describing nature of the error in words.

Many candidates identified the rhythmic error, although fewer provided a sufficiently accurate correction. In this case, both rhythms (dotted quaver and semiquaver) needed to be corrected to quavers to secure the second mark. Significantly fewer candidates identified the pitch error but when they did this was also appropriately corrected in most instances.

It is also important to note that while there are four marks available for this question, there are only two errors to be corrected: the first two errors identified on the page were the answers taken by examiners (unless crossed out). This meant that some candidates who went on to correctly identify and correct at least one of the errors scored zero because they had already used up all their chances for credit on incorrect attempts which had not been crossed out. Candidates should ensure that their final intended answer is clear to avoid missing out on marks in this manner. Some candidates circled parts of the notation beyond the bar range specified in the question.

(b) Very few candidates correctly identified the dominant 9^{th} chord. The most commonly rejected answer was dominant 7^{th}: this did not include the required level of precision. Responses which described cadential progressions were not uncommon and demonstrated a significant misunderstanding of what had been asked for in the question.

It should be noted that both the 9^{th} (C) and 7^{th} (A-flat) were visible to candidates in the skeleton score: candidates are reminded that they should make full use of the resources available to them in answering this question.

(c) Performance in this question appeared to be significantly better than in the comparable question in 2025. Many candidates accurately notated the complete rhythm, and this alone was enough to secure three of the five available marks. Others secured two marks by getting the first 8 semiquavers correct. A good number of candidates also notated the pitches fully correctly, and this was highly commendable. The most common error in otherwise wholly accurate answers was the omission of the natural sign in the third pitch of bar 11: many candidates did include this but placed it next to an incorrect pitch (often rendering two pitches incorrect). A common pitfall with this question was rhythmic answers which did not add up to the correct number of beats, or rhythmic errors earlier from which subsequent parts the answer did not recover because otherwise correct gestures were displaced to the wrong part of the bar.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Q12

This question appeared to be significantly less well answered overall than in 2025.

It was noted that at least one candidate had used a copy of the score with incorrect bar numbering. In this specific case, the candidate had explained this sufficiently to allow the examiner to assess their answers fairly, but centres are reminded that they should check the examination scores carefully: it is not the candidates' responsibility to identify issues in the score they have been given in the examination. In this movement the correct bar number for the second time bar is 118 (not 122, as in some editions). This is an important point as incorrect bar references lead to marks not being awarded.

(a) Approximately half of candidates correctly identified that it is the transition section which begins at bar 19. This was surprisingly few given that candidates have studied this work. Commonly seen incorrect answers included '1st subject', '2nd subject', 'exposition' and 'development'.

(b) This question was poorly answered when compared with similar questions in previous years. Examiners credited answers which demonstrated sufficient understanding of the holistic similarities and differences between the transition sections in the exposition and recapitulation, but many candidates focused on superficial details such as features of specific instrumental parts. Many candidates noticed that the melodic/thematic material was the same in both sections although others described only the 'same rhythm' and this was rejected without further qualification. A commonly rejected similarity was that both extracts are in the same key, but without specifying that this is only true of the start of the extracts. Surprisingly few candidates stated that the extracts end in different keys, given that modulating to a new key is a central function of the transition section in an exposition, and not modulating in the recapitulation is a central tenet of the principle underpinning sonata form. Several candidates correctly identified that thematic material is developed much more extensively in the first extract. Many candidates then also went on to detail how the second extract instead continues with violin quaver passage: these answers were taken as making the same broad point, and candidates were credited for either one alone but were not separately credited for making the point both ways. Many candidates incorrectly referred to tonic pedals in the first extract: there are no such pedal points in the exposition (as with Q7(f) there are not sufficient dissonances for the sustained D to function as a pedal), although some candidates did identify the use of a dominant pedal at the end of the second extract.

(c) **Due to an error in the question paper, the first part of this question was void and no answers to this part of the question were marked for any candidate.** The remainder of the question was examined.

Many candidates correctly identified the location of the circle of fifths progression. Some candidates successfully located the interrupted cadence, although many placed it either a bar too early or a bar too late. Fewer candidates correctly located the lower chromatic auxiliary note, and some of these failed to specify either the beat or the instrument, which led to the answers being rejected.

(d) Very few candidates achieved all five marks available on this question, which was surprising given that comparable questions on tonality have been well answered in previous examinations. Many candidates correctly stated that the passage begins in A major, although several incorrectly identified the key here as D major. Many accurately identified one or two of the keys explored in the middle of the extract,

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

although few identified more than this, and it was not uncommon for candidates to confuse dominant chords for tonic chords, causing them to misidentify key areas. Curiously, the key of F-sharp major at bar 156 was frequently misidentified as F-sharp minor by candidates. A good number of candidates correctly stated that the passage ends in the tonic key of D major. One common pitfall with this question was the failure to provide bar numbers: these were specifically required by the question. Another frequent issue was the inclusion of long and detailed descriptions of harmonic features: such detail was neither necessary nor creditable given that the question asked candidates to outline the use of tonality.

Q.13

(a) Very few candidates answered this question well, any many did not accurately locate any of the specified features. This was surprising not only because candidates have studied this work, but also because there were many potentially creditable examples of certain features.

(b) Many candidates correctly identified the (1st) development section, although a range of incorrect responses seen included second subject, recapitulation, and coda.

(c) This question was not well answered overall. Examiners credited answers which demonstrated sufficient understanding of the holistic similarities and differences between (1st) development section and the false recapitulation, but many candidates focused on superficial details. Surprisingly few candidates identified that the same thematic material (S1) was presented in both extracts, and/or that the extracts begin in different keys. Very few candidates indeed referred to the different modulatory trajectories of the extracts. Most candidates who achieved marks did so for noticing that the repeated note Saltarello rhythm (Fig. x) was used in both extracts (though it was rarely precisely described), and for differences in orchestration and dynamics.

(d) Very few candidates achieved all five marks available on this question, with many achieving one or two marks only. This was surprising given that comparable questions on tonality have been well answered in previous examinations, and that candidates have studied this work. Many candidates correctly stated that the passage began in G minor, although a range of alternative keys was suggested here. Very few candidates accurately located and described keys used in the middle of the passage, although some correctly identified the return to the tonic key of A minor at the end of the extract. One common pitfall with this question was the failure to provide bar numbers: these were specifically required by the question. Another frequent issue was simply pointing out that this was the development section, so it was tonally unstable, but without identifying any specific keys.

Q.14

This essay question focused on the how the social, cultural and historical changes between 1750 and 1900 influenced symphonic music. The question invited responses in relation to a wide range of relevant issues detailed in the specification, and responses seen by examiners covered the full range of marking bands from ‘very limited’ to ‘highly perceptive’. Performance on this question appeared to be slightly better overall than the comparable question in 2025, perhaps because of the wider scope of the question.

In general, the best essays covered the whole date range from 1750 to 1900, making equal references to works from different periods, and locating these with appropriate contextual detail. Weaker essays tended to focus on set works or to leave large sections of the period unaddressed, commonly stopping at Mendelssohn or Berlioz.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Commonly discussed themes across the cohort of candidates included patronage, (usually with references to a surprisingly limited number of symphonies by Stamitz and Haydn across the entire cohort of candidates), and the growth in public concerts (often with reference to the Haydn set work), which was often conflated with the rise of the middle class. Many candidates referred to the commissioning of works (often citing symphonies by Beethoven and the Mendelssohn set work), and the increasingly programmatic nature of music from the early nineteenth century onwards (Beethoven's 6th Symphony and Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* being commonly cited works). Relatively few candidates went on to explore more nuanced but related contextual issues, such as literary influences, the interlinking of the arts, or the rise of the middle class (which tended to be discussed, somewhat erroneously, in relation to earlier in the period), and music education.

Nationalism was also a commonly discussed theme, and this was often conflated with the influence of folk music and different national styles (especially in relation to dance styles): while there are clear relationships here many candidates treated these issues as synonymous and discussed them in very broad terms without attempting to distinguish between them and thus develop a more nuanced discussion. This meant that musical examples on this point were not always well chosen. For example, both set works were reasonably commonly discussed in relation to nationalism due to the influences of folk music seen in them, but neither work is really an example of the kinds of nationalist ideas which became more prominent later in the nineteenth century. Better examples cited included works by Dvořák, Smetana, Liszt, and Sibelius (although some candidates entered a larger discussion of several tone poems which had the effect of derailing their answer from the topic of the symphony), as well as works by Tchaikovsky, Mahler, and Bruckner.

It was noted that some candidates used problematic and outdated language when discussing Dvořák's use of melodic material in his Symphony No. 9 "From the New World", and the framing of content is something that should be carefully considered by teachers.

Most candidates made more sophisticated points in relation to the earlier part of the period, with discussions of both contextual and musical details being less convincing overall in relation to the later nineteenth century. Few candidates discussed any works from the middle of the nineteenth century, often jumping from Mendelssohn to works by Dvořák, Mahler, and/or Tchaikovsky. Other issues discussed surprisingly infrequently included technical developments in musical instruments and more widespread musical education which led to both the increased technical capabilities of performers and increased musical understanding of audiences. Few candidates referred to works by composers such as Schumann, Lizst, or Brahms, and similarly, works by French composers were very rarely cited. Very few candidates cited works by women composers, although some made sophisticated points on this topic and evidenced them with relevant examples.

Some common problems identified in previous years were seen again, including:

- Candidates writing lengthy introductions outlining what their answer will discuss, rather than launching straight into the detail. The same is true of writing conclusions at the end. Given the limited time to answer the question and the scope of material to be covered, candidates' time would be much better spent including both a broader range of points and discussing them in more detail, rather than attempting to write a beautifully signposted essay.
- Candidates discussing Mannheim as if it were an actual school rather than a court at which a group of composers worked in a similar style. Stamitz was often presented as a figurehead of a prestigious educational institution rather than an employee.
- Chorological issues, such as discussing Berlioz as a late Romantic composer when in reality he was writing early in the period; or treating composers such as Stamitz and Mozart as direct contemporaries.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

- Candidates continuing to suggest that audiences routinely got to their feet and danced during symphonic movements based on minuets and other dances.
- Candidates discussing works beyond the scope of the Area of Study, for example works in other genres such as concertos and operas, or symphonies outside the time period such as later works by Mahler or most symphonies by Sibelius. Some candidates referred to composers and works from well into the mid twentieth century, with Shostakovich being a reasonably commonly seen example. Unfortunately, none of this detail could be credited.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.
Tel: **029 2240 4300**
Email: music@eduqas.co.uk
Qualification webpage: https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/music-asa-level/ -tab_keydocuments

See other useful contacts here: Useful Contacts | Eduqas

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/

Regional Rep Team

Our regional team covers all areas of England and can provide face-to-face and online advice at a time which is convenient to you.

Get in contact today and discover how our team can support you and your students.
Regional Support Team | Eduqas

Eduqas Qualifications

We are one the largest providers of qualifications for schools, academies, sixth form and further education colleges across England, offering valued qualifications to suit a range of abilities. Each and every one of our qualifications is carefully designed to engage students and to equip them for the next stage of their lives.

We support our education communities by providing trusted qualifications and specialist support, to allow our students the opportunity to reach their full potential.

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk

© WJEC CBAC Ltd.2026