

Units 2 / 5 Composing

1. Where do I find the composing briefs?

They are released to Portal every year on 1st September.

2. The brief says (for example) “write a piece for 3 instruments.” Can I add an extra one?
The brief says (for example) “write a piece for a specific instrument.” Can I use a different one?
The brief says (for example) “write a piece in ternary form.” Can I use a different form?
The brief says (for example) “write a piece in a jazz style.” Can I use a different style?

No. Follow the instructions given.

3. Can the brief piece be in a 20th century / 21st century / Renaissance / Popular music style?

No. The composition to a brief at AS and A Level **MUST** be in a Western Classical Style. For this purpose, we define Western Classical as Baroque, Classical or Romantic.

4. Can the free composition be in the same genre as the piece composed to a brief?

Yes, as long as there is different musical content in each piece.

5. Do I need to submit a score?

Yes, or a detailed lead sheet and written description giving information about the melody and harmony used.

6. Can someone else perform the compositions?

Yes, as long as it is clear how the performers knew EXACTLY what to play or sing. E.g. from a full score.

7. Are recordings direct from music software acceptable?

Yes.

8. Can compositions contain loops and samples?

Yes, but the candidate cannot gain credit for these if they are not their own work. Details must be given in the log.

9. Is it OK to write for solo drumkit, or solo melody instrument?

Yes, it is permitted, but it may be more difficult to access the higher marks as the range of musical elements being used is limited.

10. Is it OK to write variations on an existing theme?

It is allowed, but there can be no credit awarded for the theme, and often the harmony remains unchanged in the variations, and the melody is only marginally altered, so this can be very limiting.

11. Do lyrics have to be original?

No, there are no marks awarded for words, so it is fine to use lyrics from another song, or a poem, or created with AI. Be careful to compose original melodic/rhythmic material for the words.

12. What is the point of the log?

The log is not assessed, but it helps the examiner to understand the process of composing, to check for originality and also to make sure that marks are awarded for every credit-worthy aspect of the piece.

13. What happens if the compositions go over the maximum time? Is there a penalty for under-time compositions?

Generally, over-long compositions are self-penalising as they lose focus. Short pieces often do not contain enough musical material to access the higher bands, but there are no penalties. Remember that the recording does not need to include any direct repeats notated as II: :II

14. Is there any exemplar material?

Yes, within the CPD resources on the [portal](#).

15. Can I submit compositions by post?

No.