

Amplification and further support in applying the criteria.

This information does not replace the criteria in Appendix B of the published specification. It is intended to help teachers when applying the criteria before submitting marks. You can also look at:

- guidance in the Appendix B of the specification which follows the criteria.
- the moderator’s report to each centre every year – see your exams officer.
- the principals’ report, which can be found on the WJEC website.
- exemplar work which is published as part of the CPD materials.

Using the bands.

In each column of the assessment criteria there are 4 bands of marks. Overall, the consideration when deciding which band to place a mark in can be simplified to this:

Band 4 (10-12 marks)	Convincing all the time.
Band 3 (7-9 marks)	There are unconvincing moments, or development is less skilful, or less creatively handled.
Band 2 (4-6 marks)	At the top of the band half of the piece presents convincing musical ideas, but this is balanced by weaker ideas which do not work well. Control of the elements is not secure. Ideas don’t go beyond simple. There could be too much repetition, maybe it is not convincing aurally, but there are some good aspects.
Band 1 (1-3 marks)	Everything is limited, e.g., the melody is unconvincing, no phrasing, poor structure, lack of focus. It doesn’t work and the result is unmusical.
0	Nothing is submitted.

Overall, when you assess a composition, it may be helpful to listen to it first and consider some general approaches before looking at the criteria. Remember to refer to the candidate log so that you know exactly what the composer wanted to achieve.

- If it is a piece written for instruments or voices (rather than being for synthesized sounds) is it playable or singable?
- Does the composition make sense aurally, or are you left wondering why certain choices have been made?
- Has the candidate demonstrated considerations of tempo, pulse, melodic shape, use of suitable harmony, rhythm etc?
- Are the new ideas presented at the start appropriate? Are there too many things brought in all at once rather than during the piece, or is there a sense of planning?
- Is there a clearly stated brief? Does the piece meet the brief? Remember that the candidate can re-write the brief for the free composition.
- Is the piece actually substantial enough to meet the challenges of GCSE? Refer to exemplar material available on the secure website and also the terminology in the list in Appendix C.
- Are you happy to sign the declaration that the work is the candidate’s own? You must monitor it on at least 3 occasions during the composing process, but you may need to do more than this. Anything non-original (e.g., loops, borrowed themes) must be declared in the candidate log, and cannot be credited under the marking criteria. Are you certain that the music submitted by the candidate has not been generated by AI?

- In the case of a composition which has been performed live by people other than the candidate, are you certain that what was performed is what the candidate has composed, not an interpretation by experienced performers? It would be advisable for the teacher to be present during the recording process to be able to confirm authenticity.

AO2.1a – Develop musical ideas.

Refer to the assessment criteria and the advice in the table above regarding which band to place a mark into.

Assess how well the initial ideas allow for further development in the piece, for example:

- Are they appropriate to the style and the brief?
- Do they make musical sense aurally?
- Is there a good choice of a variety of harmony?
- Are the ideas original?
- Do they show potential for further development?
- Is the rhythmic content musically logical?
- Is the pitch controlled to make melodic shape?

Assess how well the thematic/harmonic material has been developed:

- Which compositional devices have been used?
- Does the development work aurally and is it appropriate to the style?
- How have the elements of music been used when developing the initial material? Some examples could be adding a counter melody, change of texture, extending a melody, sequence.
- Note that repetition is not development. Rather than just add new ideas, grow the original ideas. In a song, each verse should add something new, for example a countermelody, string section etc.

Assess how well the piece uses contrasts:

- Are there appropriate contrasts you can hear in the elements of music – tempo, texture, dynamics, rhythm etc.?
- Are the contrasts logical? Do they make musical sense, and sound like parts of the same piece? Too much change can be abrupt and not musically sensible unless well planned.

AO2.1b – Demonstrate technical control.

Again, refer to the assessment criteria and the advice in the table above.

Assess how well the choice of elements and resources are appropriate to the brief.

- Consider the elements of music – for example is the tempo appropriate for the sentiment behind the brief? Has the candidate used too many instruments, or too few? Are the chosen timbres appropriate? For example, there is no requirement for film music to be orchestral, but it could be. Candidates should select forces they can manage and are familiar with or prepared to learn about.
- If the brief was to compose for certain instruments, voices, in a certain style or using a particular element or device has this been taken into consideration? NB. In the context of GCSE composing briefs, a 'song' should have lyrics. If these cannot be performed for a recording, then an instrumental guide track must be included. This is also advised when the performer is not the composer.

- Lyrics do not have to be original, and they are not assessed, but consider how the selection of resources supports the lyrics in a song.

Assess how well the elements are used.

- Has rhythm been used effectively? For example, a rhythmic motif could be used, or contrasting rhythms could be used to increase drama.
- Has melody been used effectively? Consider phrasing, how the melodic ideas flow and develop, and if there are lyrics, how these fit with the melody.
- Is there an appropriate variety of harmony? Does it go beyond primary chords in root position? Is it used expressively in order to meet the brief? Is dissonance controlled in an appropriate way?
- Have dynamics been considered? These should not be an afterthought in the composing process.
- If the piece has been composed with technology what has been achieved musically? Examples could be an effective use of panning, using the velocities to create dynamics and articulation which improves the piece.

Assess how well resources, including technology are controlled.

- This column is about the use and control of compositional techniques and outcomes, not proficiency in using music software.
- If the composition is for specific instruments how well have their capabilities been exploited? It is not necessary for every string piece to use arco and pizzicato, but if they are there, consider how well that choice has been used to meet the brief. If the piece is a song, would it actually be possible to sing the vocal line? There are similar considerations for other instruments, such as the number of fingers a pianist has, and common practice such as strum patterns on a guitar which may make a chord sequence into an effective accompaniment.

A02.1c – Compose with musical coherence.

Again, refer to the assessment criteria and the advice in the table above.

Assess whether the musical ideas are structured and whether the piece is balanced.

- Is there a clear structure? It needn't be one with a name, such as ternary form, it could be that the piece is based around a story board using leitmotifs, or it could be a song with a verse-chorus structure. The thematic material of the sections in any piece must link together and feel that they 'belong' together. Does the order of musical ideas make musical sense? Is the piece balanced, taking into account repetition, development and change?
- Does the piece have a clear start and end? Fade-outs may be common in popular music, but they are not appropriate for an assessment as they represent a missed opportunity to show how the piece could be brought to an effective close. Is the ending section of the piece an appropriate length or does the piece stop abruptly and without musical conviction?

Assess how well the piece fulfils the brief.

- Have the elements been used appropriately? For example, a piece written for a funeral should not be at a presto tempo and is unlikely to create a happy, triumphant mood with such effects as trombone slides and extended percussion. Refer to the log carefully when considering the response to the brief. A detailed log will explain how decisions have been made musically to meet the brief. If this detail is

missing the candidate should not be penalised as the log is not assessed, but this guidance document can be shared with learners to impress upon them the value of the log.

- If no brief is provided in the log, the teacher can remind the learner of its importance before assessing the work and give them a chance to supply one. If there is still no brief, then the teacher will need to take a best-fit approach in this column.

Assess whether the piece makes sense as a musical creation.

- Consider the piece as a whole. Does it work? Is it “musically satisfying?”
- Is the piece coherent and unified – does it make sense, or are there sections which are unrelated to the initial material, with a completely different character? Are all sections in keeping with the piece as a whole?
- Does it communicate the intent to you as a listener? Does it have “character?”

The Composition Evaluation

AO4 – Make evaluative and critical judgements about their own music.

Again, refer to the assessment criteria and the advice in the table above.

The evaluation should not affect the way the teacher assesses the composition. Even if the candidate does not feel that the piece was totally successful, (or suggests that it was wonderful!) the teacher should make their own judgement.

This should be a substantial piece of written work. A top band evaluation will contain:

- Evaluation, not just description.
- Coverage of all 5 bullet points in the assessment criteria band.
- Details of how the composition does or does not meet the brief. Does the musical outcome “feel” right? Is it in the correct musical context? Does it capture the right atmosphere? Were appropriate resources chosen?
- An explanation of how the elements of music were used. Name each element, describe how it was used and the effect. Give reasons for the choices made, in relation to the brief, and evaluate their success.
- A perceptive critical judgement of the effectiveness of the final outcome. Was it a successful outcome in relation to the brief? What initial ideas did the brief suggest?
- An evaluation of the final recording – whether it was a line output from a computer, a live recording, performed by the candidate, performed by others. Was there a good balance? Was there background noise? If it was live, was it accurate? Did it include dynamics and other performance directions? Did any of the performers make an error?
- Accurate subject terminology, e.g., for elements of music, compositional techniques and devices.
- No excuses. Do not include a sentence which starts “if I had had more time...”
- Aspirations can be included, for example “I would love to hear my piece performed by a live full orchestra and choir.