



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE (NEW)
MUSIC
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2019

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

Online Results Analysis

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

Annual Statistical Report

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

Unit	Page
Units 1 and 4 Performing	1
Units 2 Composing	4
Unit 3 Appraising	9
Unit 5 Composing	19
Unit 6 Appraising	25

MUSIC

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1 AND UNIT 4 PERFORMING

General Comments

A warm welcome was given to all examiners and the majority of candidates performed to their highest personal standards and seemed to enjoy the experience of performing live.

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 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; commencing with AS, and moving on to A level is recommended. 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 are aware that parking is an issue at your centre.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Please note that A level Option A requires a minimum of THREE pieces, one of which must be a solo.

Most centres had downloaded the correct forms as required and, in some instances, these had been completed by the candidates themselves. Please double-check these for accuracy. In addition, forms need to be completed neatly and legibly. In some instances, examination 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.

Please ensure that the link with an Area of Study has also been completed. At AS level the links are Western Classical Tradition, Baroque, Classical or Romantic Music (NOT 20th or 21st Century Art Music), Rock and Pop, Musical Theatre and Jazz. At A level the links are Western Classical Tradition (Baroque, Classical or Romantic Music), 20th and 21st Century Music, Rock and Pop, Musical Theatre and Jazz. On occasions, the links made are rather tenuous.

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

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

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 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 vocal line has been added to lead sheets which also gives 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.

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.

In some instances, more care is needed in choosing ensemble repertoire in order to ensure that the individual parts are significant and of the required standard. These parts 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.

Standards of accompaniment were very good on the whole. Some centres now bring in professional accompanists.

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. 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. 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; also give careful consideration to the position of an audience if present, 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 Aircraft Mode.)

In most instances, electronic equipment had been set up and sound-checked in advance 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.

More careful timing of recitals is necessary in some instances in order to ensure that candidates do not fall short of the minimum requirement as stated in the specification. It should be noted that long piano introductions (e.g.) orchestral expositions in concerti, will not be included when calculating the time of a recital.

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.

Summary of key points

- Check the timing of all performances pieces to avoid penalties. Full details of the requirements and penalties are in the specification.
- Check that all forms are completed, including area of study links, and music is photocopied legibly.
- Check the sound levels and balance before the performance.
- Assist candidates in selecting the most appropriate repertoire to demonstrate their strengths.

MUSIC
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2019
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 2 COMPOSING

General Comments

Administration

The electronic submission process was generally successful this year for all centres. There were some missing signatures, incomplete portfolios and faulty recordings but issues were eventually resolved. Examiners in the team confirmed that files labelled according to the system as suggested in last year's Principal Examiner's report were much easier to navigate, and the identification of 'set' and 'free' compositions is far more useful than composition titles. Some portfolios were a little muddled, with audio tracks not matching the scores/leadsheets.

Certain centres uploaded the work as zip files; some examiners found these easier to navigate than others.

Candidate Logs

At times, the old log forms were used which were acceptable for the last time this year - please note that the up to date form is available on the website. Most centres submitted via the new, shorter, more condensed format which allowed the description of the piece to be seen in one discreet statement. Best practice here is when the log has been completed in Word and uploaded as a pdf document, as handwritten scanned in logs were less clear. The only additional documents that need to be uploaded are lead sheets when the notated score is not available. Perceptive candidates used the log to demonstrate thorough understanding of the features used in their work, explaining their initial intentions, musical influences, musical reasoning and any advice received from their teachers – though please note: there is no requirement to list all the musical features used in the pieces.

Conversely, many logs contained insufficient explanation, offering little insight into the composing process and giving little or no reference to musical elements or features included in the piece. These were felt to be insufficiently detailed, vague and at times, rushed. A few examiners expressed surprise at the number of basic spelling and grammatical errors on a word-processed document and advised that candidates would be well advised to read over their work.

Scores and recordings

Most scores were produced on Sibelius, Musescore or Noteflight, and all examiners felt that the use of ICT again this year generally was excellent. Scores created from a sequencer (e.g. Logic) were sometimes less successful because the outcome was not always legible and lacked some necessary musical details. Mostly, candidates selected the software most appropriate to their needs.

However, the level of detail on many pieces was very encouraging and in most cases displayed a high level of musical and digital understanding, resulting in professional scores; even when sequencer style programmes had been used to produce the music, in most cases time and effort had been taken to produce a more traditional score providing all instrument parts, melody lines and lyrics. A number of guitar scores had been submitted with both tab and notation, making it more accessible as a score. This was much appreciated. A good number of candidates produced lead sheets (usually for the ‘free composition’) and some of these really were superb. Other candidates just provided a list of the chords with an outline of melody, or a screenshot with a few annotations, which was less helpful. Song lyrics and melody lines were not always provided. There were candidates who submitted GarageBand screen shots for the WCT composition, though it was felt that the work in these cases was not always convincing.

Recordings were often taken directly from the computer program. These were mostly of excellent quality - the audio outputs from these software packages are more than adequate to be able to access and understand the intentions of the piece aurally. When live recordings were submitted these were usually extremely well done - but unfortunately, not always – as some recordings were unbalanced, or perhaps unrehearsed due to time constraints, or less effective aurally due to poor tuning. In such instances, it was felt that the audio outcome did not do justice to the pieces.

Examiners reported a number of instances where audio recordings stopped midway, the audio tracks were defective, or where tracks were poorly balanced, at times with lines inaudible. When exporting audio files it is imperative to check that all instruments can be heard (one centre submitted a recording in which only one line could be heard).

Comments on individual questions/sections

Some centres opted for set class tasks for Composition 1 (particularly where class sizes were larger). Please note that this specification encourages individual responses (this was not always felt to be the case). Greater freedom was given to students for the free composition, which was encouraging.

BRIEFS

The four briefs for WCT were once again well received by centres. Extremely short pieces were non-existent this year, with almost all candidates composing at least one minute’s worth of music.

Western Classical Tradition

AS Brief 1: Compose the first two sections of a solo piece intended for performance by music students in Bangor University. It may be vocal or instrumental, and must include an accompaniment.

This was quite a popular brief, particularly with brass and woodwind players. Whilst it was well executed by many, a significant number of candidates presented more than two sections as stipulated in the brief and in several submissions, distinct sections were very unclear. This did affect the outcome for some, resulting in a broad range of marks for this brief. Many candidates included an exact repeat of their A section (some with development) to make their piece sound finished ; however, this was not required.

Musical influences were mainly Baroque and Classical with a few Romantic offerings, and many candidates captured a very good sense of style with clear structures and appropriate melodic shaping; other pieces lacked a convincing feel of the WCT, with changing time signatures, overly fussy accompaniments and a lack of clarity, syncopated 'jazzy' rhythms, while the styling of contemporary brass writing or film music crept in at times. Most of the accompaniments were written for piano, although there were some harpsichord and string quartet accompaniments as well.

AS Brief 2: Compose the opening section of a choral piece commissioned by a County Youth Choir in celebration of their 30th Anniversary. You may write your own words, or choose appropriate words. The piece may be accompanied or unaccompanied.

There were very few examples of this brief. Those that chose it tended to be singers with experience of singing in choirs; most of the writing was suitable for the chosen voices and word setting was successfully handled in some cases. At times the melodic ideas were simplistic, but there were candidates who submitted very interesting pieces.

AS Brief 3: Compose an instrumental Minuet to be performed at a banquet taking place in Caerphilly castle.

This was also popular. Some substantial and mature compositions were noted here, well within the remit of the brief, gaining marks on the top band, with a variety of instrumentations on offer. Most cited Baroque or Classical influences. Some of the Minuets were a little more waltz-like in character but most candidates captured the required character, though the tempo of many was questioned (either too fast, or too slow). Examiners commented that on occasion that the content was lacking adventure, and melodically narrow and simplistic, not sufficiently exploring the full ranges of the chosen instruments.

AS Brief 4: Compose a short trio to be performed as part of a classical music programme for BBC Radio Cymru. The trio may be written for voice or instruments (or a combination of the two).

This was by far the most popular choice of brief. In some centres, all candidates had opted to choose this, and there were definite similarities between the compositions – at times this was felt to be restrictive, (bordering on a set task), as the cohort followed the same, extremely prescriptive plan/outline/scaffolding. Examiners reported cases where candidates all wrote for the same three instruments, used the same texture (bass line, quavers in the middle line, melody in the top line,) used the same key and chord structure/cadences, modulated to the same key in the same place, same time signature, used an upbeat etc. Although the resulting pieces were fairly successful there was no individuality (or, indeed, creativity) observed in the submission and resulting marks were obviously similar.

In other work, the instrumentation was varied and often interesting, resulting in successful WCT outcomes. The best examples not only had clear control of harmony but presented creative ideas, interesting contrapuntal textures and beautiful lyrical writing. Some of compositions were rather short, just reaching the minimum time requirement. Common faults included lack of musical invention and textural variety, and an over-reliance on exact repetition. Certain pieces were not felt to be a convincing response to the brief as the outcomes were more akin to duets with accompaniments rather than bone-fide trios.

Style

Successful realisation of the WCT style was evident in much of the work and this reflected well on the teaching. Examiners identified best practice as highly effective technical control of the musical elements (particularly melody, harmony, structure and balance) to achieve coherent compositions with excellent understanding of instrumental (and vocal) usage and interesting thematic material. Centres have clearly spent time developing a good understanding of the harmonic and textural procedures associated with the Western Classical Tradition, and this had a positive impact on pupils being able to access the higher bands for composition 1. A significant amount of WCT compositions were approached with a clear study of the style and communicated an encouraging degree of musical understanding and focused listening, achieving marks in the top band and at the top of Band 2.

The usual weaknesses were ever-present, however; busy textures, reliance on basic repetition, unpredictable harmonies, lack of structural focus, balance and melodic shape and direction. Such pieces presented unconvincing melodic work which was overly reliant on triadic and scalar ideas – whilst these are obviously stylistic features, they often did not seem to fulfil a compositional purpose. In such cases, the control of the elements of music needed more focus. This included harmonic progress (need more variety of chords, thoughtful chord progressions e.g. cycle of 5ths /modulation and the use of inversions), variation of texture (not all homophonic bustle), instrumentation (use of range and techniques), structure and the use of devices in general (to aid development).

Some work was far too reliant on the musical influences quoted by candidates in their logs. Many compositions began well, with promising initial ideas, but the initial potential was not fulfilled as the musical ideas become less convincing as the work progressed. A small number of candidates did not compose in a WCT style (we had film, rock and pop) and candidates lost marks. Thankfully this type of response is in decline.

Free Compositions

There were many examples of excellent vocal and instrumental compositions covering an incredible amount of styles. Some of the briefs selected by the candidates were interesting and appropriate, others were vague, bizarre or non-existent. The most successful briefs were those where the aim of the composition and the style were outlined clearly, and details of the audiences were also offered. These compositions offered the most coherence and conveyed that the finished composition was a successful product of clear and effective planning. Candidates would be well advised to give this requirement careful consideration as their work is assessed directly in outcome to the selected brief.

The best compositions displayed clever and complex musical invention and understanding where much thought had gone into the method of composing. There were excellent examples of rock, pop and musical theatre focused compositions, well thought out and helpfully annotated serial pieces, jazz inspired works, impressionist compositions and exciting film pieces which were really professional. Less successful compositions were lacking in harmonic exploration and sufficient development in melody, texture and structure; such work sometimes lacked stylistic understanding, and often lost focus, again relying heavily on repetition.

It was a little disappointing to read that some candidates were not allowed any say in their choice of 'free' brief as they were encouraged to select the same task. Please allow candidates to follow their individual interests here.

A note regarding composing workshops for candidates/opportunities to write for ensembles:

It is an excellent opportunity for candidates to work with an ensemble in residence, and to hear their compositions performed live was clearly a rewarding and fulfilling experience.

However, please be respectfully reminded that this is an examination and the candidate's submission is marked 'according to the content' in accordance with the relevant mark scheme. Examiners expressed concern that in some cases, marks were limited due to the musical content and quality of musical ideas. Whilst they were enjoyable pieces, many ideas were very repetitive and simple, and at times did not correspond to the brief - resulting in some limited marks and not allowing for 'sophisticated' musical recognition at the top level. Where those that gave an effective response to the brief were credited, development and technical control at times was limited (e.g. where ideas were simply ostinato patterns with no modulations, or based on simple rhythms and primary chords). Candidates should be reminded to ensure that they satisfy the mark scheme as well as compose a suitable piece for the performance.

Summary of key points

- Label all work as according to guidelines issued by WJEC.
- Do not include an analysis of the music in the candidate log. If the score is not included, an additional lead sheet giving a structural outline and all musical details is what is required (please refer to guidelines)
- Complete all sections of the log, especially in the case of live performances and use of automation / loops / pre-existing ideas etc. Guide tracks should be included when there is no score for performers.
- Rock / pop songs without a score must include lyrics and chords in addition to the leadsheet.
- Sufficient time should be given to both compositions – they are of equal weighting
- Candidates should not be too ambitious in terms of scoring – challenge is always something to be supported but decide on what is manageable and appropriate for each candidate's musical understanding.
- No marks are awarded for existing musical ideas – credit is only given for original work.
- Avoid using repeat marks to extend ideas. Within an accepted structure (i.e. binary) they may be appropriately placed to evidence understanding of the form; however they are often randomly positioned in the work. Using the repeat marks in this way simply limits the candidates from developing ideas.
- Ensure that all briefs for the free composition are achievable and clearly stated in the log; part of the assessment is directly related to 'the response to the chosen brief'.
- Research the WCT style to improve individual understanding; also research chosen style for free composition to support the use and application of musical ideas.
- Always keep the requirements of the assessment criteria at the forefront of all thinking.

MUSIC

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 3 APPRAISING

General Comments

Terminology

“Polyphonic” and “unison” (especially) continue to be misunderstood and are responsible for many contradictory statements as well as the loss of countless marks throughout the papers. This is particularly regrettable when the responses would appear to be correct apart from the incorrect use of terminology. Harmony/tonality and metre/rhythm/tempo are also repeatedly confused. “Phrase structure” can elicit answers on virtually anything, encompassing such diverse features as pizzicato and lyrics. The majority of candidates – even some of the best – just do not understand what is meant by the term.

Location

Although the majority of candidates are aware of the importance of supplying relevant locations for particular answers, some are still careless in this respect. Even though the need to give locations was sometimes mentioned in the wording of the question, there were some instances this year of candidates scoring no marks for a question simply because none were given to support their answers. Occasionally, too, even when locations were given, there was some carelessness when writing them down – for instance, bar 125 could be written as bar 25 or 225 etc. Examiners try to be lenient in such cases, but it could well depend on the type of question/answer as to how far such leniency can extend. Candidates need to take particular care in vocal questions in which musical notation (e.g., a lead sheet) is provided. In such a case, as is stated in the introductory remarks to the CDs provided, an examiner might need to refer to either line or bar numbers in the question. Confusion on the candidate’s part as to which is being used in a particular question can lead to them providing answers on a completely different music passage from that intended. There were several examples of this in the recent examination. In Q3 (j), for example, “**lines** 19-25” was occasionally misread as **bars** 19-25.

Extended writing

- (i) This year, all options had the same question (Qs 2, 4 and 6) focusing on the use of texture. There was a tendency for candidates to devote too much time and space on answers on other musical aspects, such as structure or instruments used. (There is, of course, a subtle but important difference between “use of instruments”, which could well encompass texture, and “instruments used”). A good number of candidates merely listed the instruments (or voices) that featured in a certain piece without mentioning the resulting texture. Antiphonal/call-and-response and a cappella were quite frequently given incorrectly as examples of texture. Since different types of texture are possible in each of these musical features, they do not constitute illustrations of texture in themselves. In questions on a particular musical feature, too, candidates should beware against merely writing general notes on the piece(s) chosen for discussion since they are likely to contain information not connected to the question.

With this in mind, candidates should be encouraged to study rather more representative examples of the genre opted for.

- (ii) Incorrect terminology marred the work of many candidates in the comparison questions (Qs 8 and 10). Sometimes monophonic, homophonic and polyphonic were used indiscriminately, with, at times, just the words being written immediately after each other in the form of a list, without any explanation, or even rough location, as to their use.
- (iii) There were many examples of candidates not reading a question carefully enough. This led, for instance, to a question on melodic material being answered with information relating to tempo.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Rock and Pop

Q.1 (a) (i) and (ii)

were the favourite choices here.

- (b) All options were taken, but only some were correct.
- (c) Some answers were rather imprecise – e.g., “just plays bass notes of chords”. A number of candidates considered that the bass played the “root notes of chords throughout”, which was incorrect. Sometimes, too, bar numbers were not given. A small number thought the bass guitar was playing (or even strumming) chords. “Walking bass” was also found.
- (d) “Major key” was the most popular (acceptable) answer. Some failed to address the question, merely writing comments such as “synth is playing the same notes as the singer”. “High tonality” was given by one candidate, while another mentioned the “voices harmonising”.
- (e) Disappointingly, there were a good many incorrect answers both on “melisma” (examples of which appeared on the lead sheet) and “falsetto”.
- (f) This was better answered, though “interrupted” was occasionally found.
- (g) The return of the synth melody and the vocal harmonies were the most popular answers here. This was mostly well answered, however.
- (h) The introduction of the acoustic guitar was by far the favourite response. A small number merely referred to the change of speed, already mentioned in the question itself.
- (i) The omission of an F# was the most common error here, though some answers introduced Bbs and/or Dbs. There were only a small number of answers that did not stick to the traditional 3rd-based chord structure, such as G-B-C#-D. One candidate wrote C-E-G-B.
- (j) Some noticed the “atypical” structure and a number of interpretations were accepted. Some, however, considered line 6 as the start of a chorus, despite its repetition of what they had previously called a verse.

There were several instances (both here and in the Musical Theatre and Jazz options) where the start of a section was often identified as being in an unusual location, such as, in the present question, line 8. Lines 17-19 were often correctly recognised as a type of bridge/transition. Unfortunately, some wrote about other musical features – e.g., “the lyrics are very syllabic”. A small number were more concerned only with the lyrics and mentioned rhymes. Disappointingly, a few candidates lost marks simply by not supplying bar/line numbers. Others mentioned the instrumental introduction, which did not feature as part of the question.

Q.2 The weaknesses here were due mainly to candidates not answering the question. Responses often focused on structure or (especially) use of instruments rather than texture. The reason for this usually appeared to be that candidates had studied particular songs and merely wrote generally on them, perhaps reproducing the notes that they had been given without attempting to tailor them to the needs of the question. Even in such cases, however, a good number of “essays” were marred by inaccuracies as regards the content of the song in question and, more generally, by a misuse of technical terms.

There were, for example, several disappointing accounts of The Beatles’ “Yesterday” – otherwise a perfectly appropriate song for the discussion of texture. For such an “iconic” song it was quite perplexing to read of drums and bass guitar entering for the chorus, or the answer that listed the use of “12-bar blues, jazzy, double bass, saxophone, trumpet and drum kit”. Similar descriptions of this song were found in a selection of centres, with the use of the string quartet being totally ignored. The opening lyrics were considered the start of the chorus by one candidate. Choice of contrasting songs was usually appropriate, though a small number did write on two similar songs by the same group within their choice of three. One candidate initially named his first song choice “Queen”, thereafter being simply referred to as “the Queen song”. It is likely that the song in question was “Bohemian Rhapsody”, another good song choice, and a firm favourite with very many candidates.

Many had good points to make on the use of texture in this song, but, unfortunately, the comments were often marred by the use of incorrect technical terms. As mentioned in previous reports, “polyphonic” is regularly used as though meaning “use of many instruments” with no connotation of counterpoint. Even when many instruments are involved, texture can be monophonic, homophonic or polyphonic/contrapuntal – the last term equally, if not more, appropriate than polyphonic, and one lacking the misleading (at least to candidates) “poly-“. More than one candidate considered the antiphonal section in “Bohemian Rhapsody” to be polyphonic, for instance. In a question on texture, such basic errors are bound to entail penalties. Some regarded “a cappella” as a texture in itself, which is not the case. Others thought the same about antiphony or call-and-response – also wrong, since two individual voices can indulge in an antiphonal exchange as well as two large and entirely different instrumental groups, with antiphony/call-and-response giving no clue as to the instrumental/vocal forces employed in its use.

Sometimes, too, volume appeared to be synonymous with thick texture and vice versa. Occasionally, songs were mentioned that were recorded outside the given exam time span of 1965-1990 – e.g., “Blue Suede Shoes” by Elvis Presley (1956) or Bob Dylan’s “Death of Emmett Till” (1962).

- Q.3**
- (a) As with the similar question in the previous option, this was disappointingly answered overall, with second inversion seeming to be the favourite (but incorrect) answer.
 - (b) Full marks were a rarity here, but two correct answers were quite common. A few considered the spoken “Hey, look” in bar 12 to be an appoggiatura. There were some candidates who failed to register a mark here. A very small number merely ticked one or two boxes.
 - (c) The chorus repetitions towards the end were commonly identified. As in the Rock/Pop option, however, there were examples of confusion as to the beginnings/endings of phrases/sections, some of which occurred part the way through a phrase. Bars 8-15 were regarded in several ways, with different terminology being used. Any feasible/appropriate nomenclature was accepted here. Sadly, a few candidates lost marks (sometimes all three) by not supplying the requested bar/line numbers.
 - (d) Despite being warned about doing so, many candidates (working from the notated change of key signature) merely named the two keys involved, ignoring the fact that the question was centred on harmony rather than tonality. There was only a very small number of excellent answers here. A few disregarded harmony completely, choosing to write on matters such as rhythm instead.
 - (e) The bass line was a little more difficult to pick out than the melodic fragments in the other two options perhaps, but the intervals contained in the music were easier and the tempo was slower. The result was that there were a good many correct answers.
 - (f) Answers here were mostly correct. Some, however, introduced unnecessary accidentals, including one very good candidate who wrote F#-A#-C#-E#, presumably having misread F7 as F#7. (In fact, this was not the only careless misreading of questions on this particular candidate’s paper.)
 - (g) As in (d), some failed to answer on melodic material, choosing instead tempo etc. The rising sequences were often mentioned.
 - (h) Most recognised the major tonality and a good number commented on the modulatory nature of the section. Again, however, there were a number of comments not related to harmony – e.g., “speeds up”.
 - (i) Sadly, as mentioned above, some candidates (including very able ones) misread “lines 19-25” for “bars 19-25”, so losing out on two marks. (They were alerted to this in the preliminary announcement on the CD.) Many recognised the major key, while the more discerning candidates were able to mention the constant changes of tonality (tonicisations).
 - (j) Answers were mostly correct here, but all four options were found.
- Q.4** Statements such as “drum kit and bass guitar create an upbeat and challenging texture” illustrate that some candidates had a rather unusual idea of what constitutes texture in music. For instance, in a general statement on texture, one candidate named each of the types of texture (monophony etc.) but then puzzlingly added “the interval of a 3rd, 5th and a 6th and even 8ves.”

Another candidate referred to a “sleazy texture” in “Kiss me Kate” and “Phantom”, but gave no indication what made it sleazy in textural terms. Again as elsewhere on the paper, there were instances where the term “polyphonic” was used to mean “numerous instruments” rather than a contrapuntal texture. Occasionally, strands within a particular texture led to inaccuracies in technology. An example is the candidate who described an instrumental part doubling the vocal melody (in an otherwise homophonic, melody/accompaniment texture) as monophonic. There was a tendency again this year for candidates to write all they knew on a certain number/chorus without limiting their comments to texture, occasionally hardly including this aspect at all in their work.

It did appear, too, that some candidates had a limited number of pieces in their musical armoury, some of which were better suited to answer the question than others. Candidates should be encouraged to expand their range of “exemplar material” to meet the possible needs of specific areas of the genre. (This remark is equally pertinent to the Rock/Pop and Jazz options). Incorrect use of terminology again marred some work – e.g., “a piano, which plays either in unison with the vocalist or plays a homophonic rhythm”.

- Q.5**
- (a)**
 - (i)** Some merely wrote “saxophone”, so ignoring the question. Some thought it was the alto variety. One candidate considered it to be a bassoon.
 - (ii)** Dave Brubeck and, especially, Dizzy Gillespie were found, but the majority could match the saxophone with John Coltrane.
 - (b)** The melodic content of the piano’s opening material escaped many candidates, some of whom appeared to consider the piano to be merely improvising. More candidates were able to comment on the increased prominence of the drum kit in the vamp.
 - (c)** This was not well answered on the whole, particularly the location of an appoggiatura, of which there were several examples. Some gave answers that were outside the bar numbers stipulated in the question.
 - (d)** The third (incorrect) option seemed to be the favourite. As with the same type of question in other options, this caused problems.
 - (e)** As did this. Answers were disappointing on the whole, with “second inversion” being a common answer. “Slash chords” seem to be a problem for candidates in general.
 - (f)** Some heard (or perhaps assumed the presence of) a walking bass. The pedal generally went unnoticed, as did the ostinato-like nature of the bass part.
 - (g)** As in the Rock/Pop option, which asked for the identical chord, the F# was sometimes omitted. It is quite possible, however, that some candidates still consider a major 7th chord to mean a dominant 7th.
 - (h)** A small number seemed to be unaware of the meaning of “structure”, choosing instead to write comments such as “conjunct or disjunct melodies” or “syncopated piano rhythm”. The two blank bars (9-10, the subject of question (d)), caused some confusion as to where the phrase concerned actually began/ended.

- (i) A good number found it relatively easy to score marks here. The trills, scales or the more improvisatory nature of the sax part were the favourite answers.
- (j) (i) As in (h), some ignored the question and wrote on anything but harmony/tonality – e.g., “diminuendo” and “arpeggiated left hand.”
- (ii) For those who hadn’t used it as a previous answer, “improvisation” was the favourite response. Others chose to comment on the change in the use of the drum kit.

Q.6 Again, there was some confusion as regards texture. For instance, one (good) candidate confusingly described a particular texture in a jazz piece as “unison and homophonic”, explaining this as being where “solos are accompanied by the rhythm section”. Surely, this is merely melody and accompaniment – i.e., homophonic texture overall. Perhaps more so than with the other options, there was a tendency to merely write about a piece (or style of jazz) without due regard to its use of texture. There were more examples of misattribution of pieces to performers (in some instances even style), too.

For instance, “So what” was cited as a Big Band/Swing composition by Charlie Parker, “Anthropology” as a piece by Miles Davis, and the “A-Train” as an example of cool jazz. Additionally, bebop is apparently consistently monophonic. Sometimes, texture was questionably linked to other musical elements – e.g., “there is not an easy melody to follow and so the texture is more complex”; or “Texture was developed because the music was produced in reaction to the Great Depression”. Occasionally, a candidate discussed hypothetical situations involving different textures without naming a specific piece in which they were found.

- Q.7**
- (a) Surprisingly (and disappointingly) this question caused problems for many candidates. All options were ticked, with “compound duple” seeming to get the most votes overall.
 - (b) Some missed the minor 3rd interval from B to D, often writing C instead, which tended to have an adverse effect on the next three notes. The rhythm was better managed, but many heard the initial G and A as both being semiquavers.
 - (c) (i) There were few correct answers here.
 - (ii) This was more successfully answered, though some merely gave one bar and beat number. Several candidates, however, wrongly considered that melodic repetition (bars 14-15) constituted sequence.
 - (iii) This was rather “hit and miss”, but, probably because of the presence of a Bb in the melody, there was a very pleasing number of correct answers.
 - (d) The majority of answers were correct here, but all options were given, including more than one “heterophonic” (which was occasionally used incorrectly elsewhere in the paper). At least one candidate, who answered the remainder of Q7 faultlessly, lost a mark here – for “heterophonic”! In a very small number of cases, strangely, this question was not attempted at all.

- Q.8** A poor understanding of the meaning of technical terms was a problem for many here, which was a pity when it appeared that what they actually intended to say was correct. For example, one candidate described Extract 1 as having “a very homophonic texture with instruments often playing in unison”. The predominant texture in this extract was indeed homophonic, but there were also short passages (e.g., the opening) of 8ve/unison writing.

The candidate’s remark, however, implies that the term “unison” means “together, at the same time”, a misunderstanding commonly encountered throughout the paper. Similarly, another candidate heard “imitation between upper and lower strings played in unison”, which could easily be interpreted in more than one way – neither of which is entirely correct for different reasons. It is more than likely that both these candidates simply were unable to properly express what they were hearing; perhaps the problem being more to do with grammar than with terminology. Other statements, however, involved more outlandish use of terminology, such as the Schubert extract having a “slow, arpeggio tempo”. Others include “rhythm is clean” and “harmony is obvious”. Some comments were just very vague – e.g., “instruments play a variety of notes”. A small number described the first extract as being in a major key, despite having been told at the start that both extracts were (began in) minor keys. Many candidates listed instruments that were not present in the score – flutes and clarinets in Extract 1, for instance. In such cases, it sometimes appeared that candidates were basing their answers on what they assumed to be the historical norm rather than what was in evidence in the extract itself. (One candidate mentioned the use of valves on woodwind instruments.)

Only a small number noticed the brief imitation between Vlns1 and VC at the start of the transition (regarded as the start of the second subject by some). Contrast in articulation was sometimes equated with a change of tempo by one candidate. A very small number (here and elsewhere on the paper) referred to “syllabic” melodies/writing even though there were no voices/text involved.

- Q.9**
- (a) Answers were mostly correct here – as they should have been – but 1785 was quite common. 1765 was also found.
 - (b) A wide range of answers was accepted here and the question was generally answered well. One candidate mentioned the “repeated unison chords” in bars 35-39, again clearly demonstrating the confusion surrounding the term “unison” – and the needless loss of valuable marks it can cause.
 - (c) Bb major and perfect cadence were quite common incorrect answers.
 - (d) All sorts of answers were found, including 1st subject, transition and recapitulation. The majority of candidates had no problem in recognising the 2nd subject, however.
 - (e) A small number of candidates ignored the word “compare” in the question (some very good ones, too), merely giving a brief analysis of the bars concerned, occasionally picking up marks more by luck than judgement. Some answers were just too vague to award marks – e.g., a lot more going on from bar 179”. A good number, however, managed to get all three marks (and could have scored more had the mark scheme allowed it). It was unusual to find answers that were totally inaccurate.

- (f) Unfortunately, some candidates did not restrict their answers to the given bars, with a small number providing all four answers from earlier sections. Again, “monophonic” was misunderstood by some, while one candidate merely ticked three of the four boxes.
- (g) The word “rhythmic” was often ignored, with answers such as “sequence” or even “double stopping” being given. One (extremely good) candidate merely wrote “bar 88 – violin I&II”.
- (h) Again “rhythmic” was misunderstood and a wide variety of answers was given, frequently referring to tempo. “Modulation” and “repeated pedal note” were given, and several candidates referred to a non-existent change of time signature.
- (i) Occasionally, correct answers appeared to have been given but no bar numbers were supplied. A number of candidates provided information on harmony rather than tonality or made vague comments such as “the tonality is major which changes at 134 bar 131 is of major tonality also accidentals infer the key is minor in Vlns 1 and 2”. The distinction between tonality and harmony was sometimes blurred – e.g., “tonality is diatonic”. A small number managed to fill all the lines provided (sometimes even more) without mentioning a single specific key.

Q.10 In Extract 1 the organ was identified as a piano by some, a harp or harpsichord by others – even as a flute by one candidate. As in the Symphony comparison question, but to a greater extent, some candidates hedged their bets by refusing to be drawn into identifying specific woodwind or brass instruments, persistently choosing instead to use the family name. The relationship between the organ and vocal melodic material was often missed, with the organ’s participation being reduced to a mere link by some. The doubling of the vocal melody with the violins was sometimes described in incorrect terms, such as “imitation”. The contrapuntal nature of Extract 2 was almost universally recognised, though fewer candidates heard the doubling of the vocal parts by the instruments, some even detecting the presence of countermelodies in the orchestra.

The more discerning candidates were able to accurately describe which instruments doubled which voice parts! The use of instruments in general was a problem for some. A full orchestral complement of woodwind, brass, percussion (timpani) and strings was identified by a number of candidates. In fact, the extract, apart from strings, only included oboes and bassoons. As was the case last year (and a little more so than in the Symphony component), it was not unusual to find candidates packing their answer with often contradictory information without any explanation or approximate location, especially terms such as homophonic/polyphonic, conjunct/disjunct or syllabic/melismatic. A response such as “syllabic and melismatic” could refer to any number of vocal compositions. Some qualifying information needs to be given with such answers. A blanket description of an entire extract as conjunct or disjunct is, more often than not, also likely to be incorrect.

The more perceptive candidates provided locations/text in answers concerning such matters. Some candidates chose not to comment on the soprano solo towards the end of the extract while others could mention the change of key, the melismatic treatment of the text, the initial “off-beat” accompaniment, final imperfect cadence etc. in this final passage.

As elsewhere in the paper (Q6, for example), a few candidates regarded the two elements of a simple homophonic texture (melody/accompaniment) in Extract 1 as two separate components – e.g., “monophonic melody against accompaniment”. Tempo and metre were sometimes confused, too, – e.g., “the second extract has a faster tempo of 4/4”. A very small number of candidates spent too much time discussing the meaning of the text and its possible reflection in the music in general. More specific comments on word-painting, such as the ascending semiquaver scalar passage on oboes leading to the soprano’s solo in Extract 2 were, of course, worthy of comment.

- Q.11**
- (a)** Answers were mostly correct, but all options were underlined.
 - (b)** Again mostly correct. Some candidates omitted translating every word – for instance, sometimes ignoring “Rex” in their answer.
 - (c)** A variety of correct answers was in evidence here. Many, though, found it difficult to achieve the full three marks. The *f* dynamic, the dotted rhythms, slow tempo and minor tonality were all popular acceptable answers. The incorrect use of “unison” needlessly lost one candidate a mark here. “Vocals enter in unison on Rex” is not the same as the mark scheme’s “full homophonic setting”.
 - (d)** Answers were mostly correct, but other keys (particularly D minor) were given.
 - (e)** A pleasing number could relate the dotted rhythms to the French overture.
 - (f)** As in (c), there was a wide range of acceptable answers. This was not answered quite so successfully, however. The change in dynamics and the reduction of voices/change in texture were the answers most often encountered. Other answers (such as the contrast of tonality and reduction of instrumentation) were less in evidence.
 - (g)** Only the better candidates could identify the Neapolitan 6th or circle of 5ths progression. More were able to locate an example of a homorhythmic texture.
 - (h)** A good number seemed not to be aware what was being asked of them, with answers such as “mass” being found. Several answers, some unrelated to text setting, were given. Again, only the better candidates gained marks here.
 - (i)** The key was quite often incorrectly given, meaning that those who had a mark for “perfect” probably did so through chance.
 - (j)** There was some confusion here. A small number thought the counterpoint started at bar 6, and sometimes there was uncertainty about what constituted “statement” or “answer”. Only the more discerning were able to successfully unravel the different contrapuntal strands or to identify the diminution and/or inversion of material. This sometimes led to an incorrect order of vocal entries being given. Some lost marks either by not supplying bar numbers as requested or by not confining their answers to “fugal texture”. One candidate filled the seven lines provided for the answer (plus a few more) with answers related to bars 1-6. Her answers related to the question took a further five lines, while nine more lines gave information on antiphony, homophonic texture, contrary motion, arpeggios etc.

Her final mark for the question was 2/5, disappointing, since the candidate's previous answers had been of a very high standard. The usual confusion over terminology was apparent at times – e.g., “the metre is moderato with a 4/4 rhythm” – not that this had any relevance to the extract's use of counterpoint.

Summary of key points

Candidates' marks could be substantially improved by heeding the following points:

- Read the question properly and concentrate on only what is being asked. Also, be sure of the location of the focus of the question. In this year's exam, several candidates, for instance, gave information on the form of a **whole piece** rather than the given **extract**, as required.
- Gain a thorough knowledge of musical elements and use musical terms correctly. Carelessly answering a straightforward question on rhythm with information on metre or tempo, for instance, results in needless loss of valuable marks, especially in a paper in which the grade boundaries are so constricted.
- In Qs 2, 4 and 6, choose a wide selection of appropriate pieces for study throughout the year, subjecting them to some detailed analysis so that they can be used for a range of likely exam questions.
- Become thoroughly acquainted with the chosen set work. Correct use of musical terminology is crucial here – as it is, too, in the comparison question. It is often evident that a candidate knows the correct answer. The problem is that he/she has expressed it in the wrong way, so giving an answer that does not make sense or contradicts what has actually occurred in the music.
- In the set works questions, avoid analysing music purely visual, commenting only on isolated, superficial events such as routine changes of dynamic markings or clefs etc. Do not make obvious (random) statements such as “the violins are playing four crotchets in bar 15” since it is highly unlikely to be of interest as far as the overall significant musical detail is concerned.

MUSIC

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 5 COMPOSING

General Comments

(There is much to say which is in common with the AS submissions)

Administration

The electronic submission process was generally successful this year for all centres. There were some missing signatures, incomplete portfolios and faulty recordings but issues were eventually resolved. Examiners in the team confirmed that files labelled according to the system as suggested in last year's Principal Examiner's report were much easier to navigate, and the identification of 'set' and 'free' compositions is far more useful than composition titles. Some portfolios were a little muddled, with audio tracks not matching the scores/leadsheets.

Certain centres uploaded the work as zip files; some examiners found these easier to navigate than others.

Candidate Logs

At times, the old log forms were used, which was acceptable this year for the final time - please note that the up to date form is available on the website. Most centres submitted via the new, shorter, more condensed format which allowed the description of the piece to be seen in one discreet statement. Best practice here is when the log has been completed in Word and uploaded as a pdf document, as handwritten scanned in logs were less clear. The only additional documents that need to be uploaded are lead sheets when the notated score is not available. Perceptive candidates used the log to demonstrate thorough understanding of the features used in their work, explaining their initial intentions, musical influences, musical reasoning and any advice received from their teachers – though please note: there is no requirement to list all the musical features used in the pieces. The majority of candidate logs were descriptive rather than explanatory.

Conversely, many logs contained insufficient explanation, offering little insight into the composing process and giving little or no reference to musical elements or features included in the piece. These were felt to be insufficiently detailed, vague and at times, rushed. A few examiners expressed surprise at the number of basic spelling and grammatical errors on a word-processed document and advised that candidates would be well advised to read over their work.

Scores and recordings

Most scores were produced on Sibelius, Musescore or Noteflight, and all examiners felt that the use of ICT again this year generally was excellent. Scores created from a digital audio workstation (e.g. Logic) were sometimes less successful because the outcome was not always legible and lacked some necessary musical details. Mostly, candidates selected the software most appropriate to their needs.

However, the level of detail on many pieces was very encouraging and in most cases displayed a high level of musical and digital understanding, resulting in professional scores; even when sequencer style programmes had been used to produce the music, in most cases time and effort had been taken to produce a more traditional score providing all instrument parts, melody lines and lyrics. A number of guitar scores had been submitted with both tab and notation, making it more accessible as a score. This was much appreciated. A good number of candidates produced lead sheets (usually for the ‘free composition’) and some of these really were superb. Other candidates just provided a list of the chords with an outline of melody, or a screenshot with a few annotations, which was less helpful. Song lyrics and melody lines were not always provided. There were candidates who submitted GarageBand screen shots for the WCT composition, though it was felt that the work in these cases was not always convincing.

Recordings were often taken directly from the computer program. These were mostly of excellent quality - the audio outputs from these software packages are more than adequate to be able to access and understand the intentions of the piece aurally. When live recordings were submitted (less common at AL than AS) these were usually extremely well done - but unfortunately, not always – as some recordings were unbalanced, or perhaps unrehearsed due to time constraints, or less effective aurally due to poor tuning. In such instances, it was felt that the audio outcome did not do justice to the pieces.

Examiners reported a number of instances where audio recordings stopped midway, the audio tracks were defective, or where tracks were poorly balanced, at times with lines inaudible. When exporting audio files it is imperative to check that all instruments can be heard (one centre submitted a recording in which only one line could be heard)

Comments on individual questions/sections

As with AS, some centres also opted for set class tasks for composition one at this level (particularly where class sizes were larger). Please note, this specification encourages individual responses (this was not always felt to be the case). Greater freedom was given to students for the free composition, which was encouraging.

Overall, the standard of compositions was very pleasing at this level. It was clear that candidates had strengthened their composing skills throughout the course, presenting more clearly structured and well-balanced pieces, displaying a more in-depth understanding of compositional devices and harmonic progressions.

Most candidates selected Option A for composing.

BRIEFS

The four briefs for WCT were once again well received by centres. Almost all candidates composed at least one minute’s worth of music. The work ranged from rather basic to excellent.

Western Classical Tradition

AL Brief 1: Compose the exposition section of an instrumental piece in sonata form, intended for performance in a school awards ceremony.

The influences mentioned here covered a mixture of Baroque, Classical and Romantic styles. There were some truly impressive compositions, well within the confines of the appropriate WCT style. This choice of brief was generally well executed, and a clear understanding of the structural and harmonic conventions was evident in most cases.

Some of the melodic ideas were fantastic and displayed a real sense of musical shape, although there were also examples where the melody line was rather disjunct, overly triadic or lacking any real sense of shape. There were impressive examples demonstrating competent and sophisticated control of harmony though at the opposite end of the spectrum there was evidence of limited harmonic choice and control. Key conventions were followed carefully in most cases, with a fairly good attempt overall to make a smooth transition to the new key from the 2nd subject. It was common for the first subjects to be stronger (and longer) than the second subject. Downfalls observed were ineffective modulations (or lack of) to the second subject theme, and the lack of transition sections. Many candidates also provided the final cadence of the second subject section in the tonic key, affecting the overall effectiveness in response to the brief.

Accompaniment patterns took an obvious influence from Mozart and Haydn piano sonatas, with Beethovenian influences observed in some of the more complex attempts. The vast majority of candidates attempted to emulate a Classical style. Although solo piano work was common, there were also examples for clarinet, flute, violin and viola and piano, to name but a few.

AL Brief 2: Compose the first two sections of a vocal solo with accompaniment to be performed at a local musical event 'In Celebration of Song'.

As at AS, vocal compositions were few and far between, covering the full range of standards and marks. The more successful pieces displayed competent control of the chosen style in terms of harmony, structure, melodic shape, dynamics and compositional devices chosen. (There was a particularly good Baroque inspired song). Less successful attempts lacked a clear control of harmony/phrasing with word setting that was poorly executed; structure tended to be 'unadventurous' (e.g. an unsubstantial 'strophic' piece with very few noticeable changes between the two sections). Some responses here were very slow and 'dirge-like', which was not considered to be an appropriate response for this 'celebratory' type request: candidates must respond realistically to the selected brief.

AL Brief 3: Compose a short musical prelude to set the scene for a sixth form production about Owain Glyndŵr. You may write an instrumental piece, or a piece for voices with or without accompaniment.

Candidates who selected this option interpreted the brief in different ways, including a few orchestral interpretations, piano music and a song. There was a tendency for those choosing to use instruments connected with Wales, such as the harp, to stray towards a more 'folky' style, therefore compromising the mark. WCT influences were noted and in evidence, but the concept of a prelude / programmatic work / use of descriptive elements were not fully explored or always effectively executed. Examiners commented on candidates not capturing the WCT style as convincingly in these pieces, tending to produce work that was more 'film-like' in character.

AL Brief 4: Compose a short instrumental trio to be performed at a chamber concert to be held at St. Bueno Church in Caernarfon.

A very popular choice, with many string and woodwind trios. The only downside here was the brevity of some compositions – there were a few that were barely a minute – 1'02, 1'04 – hardly long enough to explore and vary initial musical ideas. Similarly to Unit 2, a few weaker submissions were not strictly a 'trio', at times more of a duet with accompaniment with only **some** technical control of the musical elements shown. Busy textures reared up again in many works, as well as predictable phrases, weird harmonic shifts and very long phrases, especially for wind instruments.

On the whole, the standard was, as hoped, better than that of the trios submitted in Unit 2. At the top of the range, there were some superb compositions, with excellent instrumental variety, interesting and lyrical thematic material, noticeably written in a controlled and coherent style with appropriate use of devices to show interplay between the instruments. Many compositions included successful part writing and much of the work was well structured e.g. minuet and trio, rondo, variations, sonata form. Writing for instruments was well handled in the majority of cases, and harmony was fairly well controlled, if a little lacking in ambition/variety at times. In some cases, there was a good use of terraced dynamics to create interest.

Examples of 'Sonata de Chiesa' pieces were noted, inspired by Corelli and displaying the hallmarks of Baroque works of this type. As with AS, there was also some rather 'unplayable' work (often in piano writing), with harmonic content that lacked refinement and complexity.

Style

Successful realisation of the WCT style was evident in much of the work to produce outcomes from some candidates that displayed a truly excellent understanding of the WCT style. Examiners identified best practice as sophisticated technical control of the musical elements (particularly melody, harmony, structure and balance) to achieve coherent compositions with excellent understanding of instrumental (and vocal) usage and interesting thematic material. Centres have clearly spent time developing a good understanding of the harmonic and textural procedures associated with the Western Classical tradition, and had a positive impact on pupils being able to access the higher bands for composition one. A significant amount of WCT compositions were approached with a clear study of the style, and communicated an encouraging degree of musical understanding and focused listening, achieving marks in the top band and at the top of Band 2. Examiners acknowledged that at A level candidates had spent time developing their musical knowledge, evident from the more advanced harmonic and textural procedures noted within their work (use of suspensions, cycle of 5ths, diminished chords, well-worked modulations and cadential progressions and procedures, polyphonic and contrapuntal textures etc). This has such a positive impact on candidates being able to access the best marks.

The usual weaknesses were ever-present, however; busy textures, reliance on basic repetition, unpredictable harmonies, lack of structural focus, balance and melodic shape and direction. Such pieces presented unconvincing melodic work which was overly reliant on triadic and scalar ideas – whilst these are obviously stylistic features, they often did not seem to fulfil a compositional purpose. In such cases, the control of the elements of music needed more focus. This included harmonic progress (need more variety of chords, thoughtful chord progressions e.g. cycle of 5ths /modulation and the use of inversions), variation of texture (not all homophonic bustle), instrumentation (use of range and techniques), structure and the use of devices in general (to aid development). Some work at this level was considered to be limited and not appropriate for AL standard.

Some work was far too reliant on the musical influences quoted by candidates in their logs. Many compositions began well, with promising initial ideas, but the initial potential was not fulfilled as the musical ideas become less convincing as the work progressed. A small number of candidates did not compose in a WCT style (we had film, rock and pop) and candidates lost marks. Thankfully this type of response is in decline. It was felt that some candidates managed to emulate the WCT in parts of their music, but were not able to sustain the style throughout their piece.

Free Compositions

There were many examples of excellent vocal and instrumental compositions covering an incredible amount of styles. Some of the briefs selected by the candidates were interesting and appropriate, others were vague, bizarre or non-existent. The most successful briefs were those where the aim of the composition and the style were outlined clearly, and details of the audiences were also offered. These compositions offered the most coherence and conveyed that the finished composition was a successful product of clear and effective planning. Candidates would be well advised to give this requirement careful consideration as their work is assessed directly in outcome to the selected brief.

The most sophisticated compositions displayed clever and complex musical invention and understanding, where much thought had gone into the method of composing. Development of ideas was organised well, and there was skilful technical control of most musical elements with instances of mature and emotive writing, where the style was completely captured and the lyrical writing described as 'sublime'.

Overall, there were examples of excellent rock and pop compositions, interesting jazz inspired works, impressive impressionist compositions and exciting film pieces which were really professional. There were also examples of very well planned serial pieces, with a particularly clever 'serial-inspired' composition based on the Enigma Code; this was described as 'fantastic', with a different 'code' (tone row) created for each part of the story. There seemed to be fewer 'Musical Theatre' pieces this year, though the best were very successful.

In the rock pieces, examiners reported of some excellent bass and drum writing, including instances where the drum part had been carefully inputted into the computer. There were also occasions where the composer had 'taught'/explained to the drummer/bass guitar what to play, which were less convincingly the candidates' own work.

Weaker compositions were felt to be lacking in harmonic exploration and sufficient development in melody, texture and structure; such work sometimes also lacked stylistic understanding, and often lost focus, again relying heavily on repetition. Examiners felt that the mid-range compositions suffered a little from over-long melodies, unusual or basic harmonic progressions and modulations, and a lack of musical coherence. Lower band work did not progress beyond the appearance of the initial idea, failing to significantly organise and focus the melodies after the appearance of the initial idea and these works were often very limited, simplistic and inconsistent.

It was a little disappointing to read that some candidates were not allowed any say in their choice of 'free' brief as they were encouraged to select the same task. Please allow candidates to follow their individual interests here.

A note regarding composing workshops for candidates/opportunities to write for ensembles:

It is an excellent opportunity for candidates to work with an ensemble in residence, and to hear their compositions performed live was clearly a rewarding and fulfilling experience. However, please be respectfully reminded that this is an examination and the candidate's submission is marked 'according to the content' in accordance with the relevant mark scheme. Examiners expressed concern that in some cases, marks were limited due to the musical content and quality of musical ideas. Whilst they were enjoyable pieces, many ideas were very repetitive and simple, and at times did not correspond to the brief - resulting in some limited marks and not allowing for 'sophisticated' musical recognition at the top level.

Where those that gave an effective response to the brief were credited, development and technical control at times was limited (e.g. where ideas were simply ostinato patterns with no modulations, or based on simple rhythms and primary chords). Candidates should be reminded to ensure that they satisfy the mark scheme as well as compose a suitable piece for the performance.

Summary of key points

- Label all work as according to guidelines issued by WJEC.
- Do not include an analysis of the music in the candidate log. If the score is not included, an additional lead sheet giving a structural outline and all musical details is what is required (please refer to guidelines)
- Complete all sections of the log, especially in the case of live performances and use of automation / loops / pre-existing ideas etc. Guide tracks should be included when there is no score for performers.
- Rock / pop songs without a score must include lyrics and chords in addition to the leadsheet.
- Sufficient time should be given to both compositions – they are of equal weighting
- Candidates should not be too ambitious in terms of scoring – challenge is always something to be supported but decide on what is manageable and appropriate for each candidate's musical understanding.
- No marks are awarded for existing musical ideas – credit is only given for original work.
- Avoid using repeat marks to extend ideas. Within an accepted structure (i.e. binary) they may be appropriately placed to evidence understanding of the form; however they are not included in the overall timing, and often are randomly positioned in the work. Using the repeat marks in this way simply limits the candidates from developing ideas.
- Ensure that all briefs for the free composition are achievable and clearly stated in the log; part of the assessment is directly related to 'the response to the chosen brief'.
- Research the WCT style to improve individual understanding; also research chosen style for free composition to support the use and application of musical ideas.
- Always keep the requirements of the assessment criteria at the forefront of all thinking.

MUSIC

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2019

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 6 APPRAISING

General Comments

The general tendency this year was for many of the papers to be of uneven standard. This was evident both within and between questions. There was often a discrepancy, for instance, between the marks of Qs1&2 (a)-(g) and (h), while, perhaps not surprisingly, the questions on the Brahms and Verdi set works were both better answered than those in the three options groups. Disappointingly, the context questions in Qs1&2 - (a) and (d) respectively - often drew a poor (or no) response from candidates – sometimes even with those who excelled in the remainder of the questions. It would appear, too, that knowledge of the “associated” set works in Area of Study F (Strands 1&2) is generally not all it should be, with many instances of confusion among all three sets works in each strand – even as to who composed which work! In Strands 3, 4 and 5, far more answered on Musical Theatre this year, with fewer opting for Jazz Legends.

The overall standard in each strand was quite similar, with misunderstanding of terminology being responsible for many candidates not achieving better marks – e.g., the difference between rhythm, metre and tempo, or between tonality and harmony seemed unclear to many candidates. Some terms, such as “phrase structure”, appear not to be known at all. In Qs 6, 8 and 10, candidates generally gave adequate responses as far as the extract is concerned, but demonstrated rather less precise musical knowledge of other examples of the genre in question. Q9 (musical dictation etc.) continues to cause problems for the majority of candidates, especially so this year, with many valuable marks being lost – and to candidates of all abilities. Continued practice would appear to be the only solution here.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1 (a)** Not a good start! Answers were extremely disappointing here, with a multitude of incorrect works given, some by Debussy, some not. It became a source of relief to find a “La Mer” (or even “La Mère”, which was accepted!) among the various suggestions.
- (b)** Similarity – A few candidates gave differences here, though the same melodic fragment or same underlying harmonic progression were the favourite answers of the many that responded correctly.
- Difference – This caused few problems for the majority. The arpeggiated or triplet version of the chords were the favourite answers.
- (c)** This was not answered as well as (b). Most responses focused on the 3-note motif, but some candidates were unable to put the connection accurately into words.

- (d) Anything involving harmony appears to alarm candidates! Many scored at least one mark here, the more perceptive candidates getting both. For some reason, the vast majority of both types of candidate puzzlingly answered in terms of scales rather than harmony. Marking was lenient in this respect. Only a small number answered in terms of “half-diminished 7th” and “augmented” chords.
- (e) Marking was lenient here, too, with most candidates answering with respect to the LH/RH placement of the melody. This was accepted as long as it gave some indication of what had actually happened. A very small number, however, merely explained that the tune was “in the RH”, which was what had already been stated in the question.
- (f) (i) There was only a small number of correct answers here. Few drew attention to the dominant 7th/minor 9th chords. Rather more could comment on the octatonic element or the chord roots being a minor 3rd apart.
- (ii) There were more (just about!) appropriate answers here, but very few stated the true function of the chord as the dominant of the dominant.
- (g) A small number outlined the form of the whole piece rather than the phrase structure of the extract, while others appeared to have “correct” answers that, unfortunately, did not fit in with the bars stipulated in the question. Some tried to relate the extract to the overall formal design. Sadly, many appeared to have no idea what “phrase structure” meant, supplying a raft of inappropriate answers, such as “staccato quaver chords”, “ascending and descending arpeggiated” or “it goes to the major”.
- (h) While there were a fair number of perceptive answers here that matched programmatic elements with specific musical events, many candidates merely wrote generally about the works without relating their comments to the actual music. A very small number did little more than list characteristics of the Impressionist style. Unusually, the marks for this question were occasionally at odds with those for (a)-(g). Some candidates who had done very well up to this point scored next to nothing for this final question, while others who had scored virtually no marks thus far excelled here! One candidate, for example, had managed only 1 mark for (a)-(g) but scored 9/10 for (h).

Another candidate somehow managed to write three pages in the time allowed for the exam, giving an answer so comprehensive as to be worth far more than the 10/10 awarded to him. At the other extreme, a disturbing number of candidates confused “Ma mère l’oye” with “Colloque sentimental” or the composers of all three set works – surely inexcusable when they have the scores in front of them! More than one candidate (one a very good one) tried to explain the different ways in which the music of “Ma mère” imitated the characteristic movements of a goose and other farmyard animals. A small number of candidates failed to answer the question at all.

- Q.2 (a)** Similarity – Most mentioned the bass riff here, a smaller number a specific thematic connection.

Difference – Responses were not quite as successful here, but there were several correct answers that tended to be given, mostly that the melody now occurred in the piano rather than the flute.

- (b) There were a good many correct answers here. At least one candidate, however, wrote “antiphonal”, which is not a term specifically associated with texture. Highlighting the perennial difficulty experienced by some candidates as far as texture is concerned, one candidate answered “homophonic with imitation”.
 - (c) There were few correct answers here. A small number, however, were very perceptive.
 - (d) Most knew the composer was Bach, but a number of different pieces by the composer were suggested – including more than one numbered Symphony. Some did not attempt the question at all – including quite a number of good candidates.
 - (e) As in the Debussy option, “phrase structure” bewildered all but the best. There were examples of two correct answers here, but they were few and far between, with most answers being wide of the mark – e.g., “Dance 1b followed by Dance 2b”, “four crotchet beats in a bar” or “long flute notes on top of semiquavers”.
 - (f) Again, the majority of candidates found it difficult to get the mark here, with a small number (including some very able candidates) answering in terms of the piano rather than the flute.
 - (g) This was better answered, but, for a question that required description, some answers were far too vague to be awarded marks – e.g., “the harmony moves through the different keys”. There were some good answers in evidence, but some good candidates mistook the E in the bass in bar 57 for the root of an E major chord. There were also some unusual answers, like D minor, as well as some that did not address the question.
 - (h) A few candidates gave an account of each of the Night Dances without addressing the structure/organisation of the work **as a whole**. As with the similar question in the Debussy option, there were a couple of bizarre responses, including the candidate who was under the misapprehension that Rhian Samuels’ “Ariel” told the story of “The Little Mermaid”! Some did little more than paraphrase the composer’s note in the score in this piece, while, occasionally, descriptions of “Night Dances” seemed to bear a close resemblance to “Ariel”. Few candidates managed to answer this final section appropriately or successfully, with a lack of knowledge of all three pieces and a failure to note any descriptive elements both in evidence. The remarks on “tango passacaglia” were often more successful, with a number of candidates having the presence of mind/courage to state that the programmatic element in this piece was not as strong as the other two – but still finding something pertinent to say about the piece in this respect.
- Q.3**
- (a) A remarkable number of candidates answered this correctly, with wrong answers being almost non-existent!
 - (b) This, too, was answered well on the whole. The humming and the increased vocal support at the end of phrases were the popular answers.
 - (c) Even when the instrument was incorrectly named (viola and ‘cello were occasionally found, for instance), most candidates had a mark for a musical feature. Both parts were usually answered well.

- (d) There were many good answers here, too, with “melismatic” being the favourite.
- (e) As in the similar question in the other options, there appeared to be much uncertainty as to what constitutes “phrase structure”, with some candidates failing to attempt the question. While a good number of candidates recognised the 4-bar phrases – “each line is a phrase” was a straightforward, correct answer given by several candidates - , there were also some puzzling responses – e.g., “longer notes” and “irregular phrase tempo”.
- (f) The more perceptive candidates heard the static harmony and the chord extensions. “Stepwise” and “flowing” were some of the incorrect answers encountered.
- (g) All options were found, including atonal, which some candidates seem to consider as somewhere between major and minor rather than having no sense of tonality at all.

Q.4 Terminology was a problem for some again – e.g., “the harmony of this is atonal, sometimes major sometimes minor” (see Q3 (g) above). Some candidates made much of the structure itself, even though this had been given to them in the question. References to other songs often contained rather scant information. Very often, they were restricted to the comment that the same thing happened in another (named) song. Those who attempted to answer the question appropriately (i.e., on melody and harmony) were usually more successful. The repetitive and sequential nature of the verse’s melody, its relatively restricted range and the differences in the chorus’ (and particularly the bridge’s) melody were all mentioned.

Some could comment on the hint of harmonic modality in the verse (E major → D major chords etc.) and the chorus’ unusual (though characteristic) harmonic twist in lines 5-6. There were, however, quite a number of inaccurate statements concerning the supposed harmonic content of the extract, with a good number stating (perhaps assuming) that the underlying harmony was confined only to tonic and dominant chords. A small number did not include reference to at least one other song by the band. Comments were occasionally either too general (superficial) or too centred on the instrumental/vocal technology employed by the band.

- Q.5**
- (a)
 - (i) “Blues” was a very common incorrect answer here. Only the more perceptive recognised the whole-tone motif.
 - (ii) Some candidates ignored the word “changed” here, so failing to address the question. Others gave answers on features such as harmony. A good number, however, heard that it ascended rather than descended. A correct answer here, of course, did not depend on (i) being accurate.
 - (b) This was not well answered. The use of full chords only starting from line 2 went unnoticed, as did the chord inversions. Some heard the blue notes, however. Others, though, commented on tonality rather than harmony.
 - (c) The AABA/32-bar-form structure was recognised by a pleasing number, but other answers, such as ABA and rondo form were also found.

- (d)** Many candidates did badly here, often simply because their answers did not reflect the question.
- (i)** A disappointingly small number recognised the change from swing to straight rhythm; the more perceptive also heard the 3+3+2 groupings of the 4/4 time signature. The triplets were noticed only by a very small number. There were also answers such as “metre becomes faster”.
 - (ii)** Some heard the change from major to minor the wrong way round; others identified the hint of modality.
 - (iii)** Some heard the use of the sus4 chords, but few identified more general features such as the repetitive chord progressions. “Harmony” is a mystery to some candidates, as answers such as “homophonic” and “conjunct melody line” indicate.
 - (iv)** The sequences; the more conjunct nature of the melodic line and its parlando-like quality were the most common correct answers.
- (e)** The increased prominence given to the kit and/or trumpets/brass and the syncopated chords were the answers most often given. Sadly, some did not focus on the accompaniment.

Q.6 The vast majority of candidates had no problem describing the different ways in which Sondheim depicted both LRRH’s character and her encounter with the Wolf, with most giving pertinent information on the melodic and harmonic features. The change of key, the increasing chromaticism and the instrumental effects employed to depict LRRH’s mounting fear – these, too, were explained, though more effectively (musically) by some than others.

Many successfully linked these musical characteristics to other pieces by Sondheim, too. However, only the better candidates supplied specific relevant information on these other pieces. As in the Pop music option, many candidates merely made statements such as “This is very similar to what happens in (for example) “The worse pies in London” from Sweeney Todd”. Rather more musical detail on the chosen piece(s) is required in this aspect of the question to achieve marks in the top box. However, a small number of candidates devoted far too much space on this other piece, sometimes giving more (prepared?) information on its musical content than on the extract itself. A couple even listed three other Sondheim numbers and wrote copiously on all three. Candidates should try to strike the right balance between the information given on the extract and the other piece(s).

- Q.7**
- (a)** Virtually everyone scored at least one mark here, often for the imperfect cadence. “Diatonic harmony” was the incorrect answer most often encountered. Some ticked one (or even three) boxes, while a very small number did not attempt the question at all.
 - (b)** Some chose to comment on features not related to the melody – e.g., “alternating Bbm⁶ and Abm⁶ creates tonal ambiguity”. Some noted the repetition and scale-like contour; only a smaller number picked upon the diminution of bars 2-3 in bar 4.

- (c) Various types of saxophones were given as answers, as well as trombone and bassoon. Some ignored the wording of the question and merely wrote “saxophone”.
- (d) There were very many correct answers here.
- (e) “Compin” was found occasionally, though this was an inappropriate term in this instance. The arpeggio figures and the melodic nature of the piano part were the favourite correct answers.
- (f) A small number merely mentioned the new key of E major, or made very general statements that gave no real information on harmony. The more perceptive candidates recognised the ii-V-I progression, (far fewer) the change from “tonic” major to minor in bars 23-24, and (only one) even the fact that the final Db^{9(#11)} chord was a whole-tone chord.
- (g) The clarinet playing the melody along with the saxes was rarely detected, with a good many considering the clarinet to be a trumpet. Most also missed the obvious, not only not recognising that the melodic material was entirely new, but also that the DB had elements of a walking bass line at times. Rather unusually, few bothered to comment on the piano part here, either. Those who did usually picked up a mark.

Q.8 Pleasingly, the vast majority of candidates were fully aware of Davis’ jazz-rock style, some being able to cite the album/soundtrack on which “Yesternow” appeared. Features such as the inclusion of electric piano and organ, the use of studio effects and post-production techniques etc. were all mentioned by candidates. There was, however, a tendency for many candidates to stop short there without providing precise musical information on the extract itself, with only the most perceptive being able to describe features such as the underlying ostinatos, the nature of the trumpet and guitar “melodies” and the use of the drum kit etc.

A few listed features associated with Davis’ jazz-rock style but not present in the extract. The harmonic content was mostly ignored, with a fair number of candidates appearing to believe that the harmonic style was merely a continuation of that found in Davis’ cool jazz style. Most candidates had little problem referring to pieces by Davis in a similar style, either, though some seemed to be restricted to the “Kind of Blue” album in this respect. As in the other two options, even though suitable pieces were cited, there was often little precise information provided on these additional works.

- Q.9**
- (a) Most spotted the rhythmic error, though they were not always able to correct it properly. Identifying and correcting the mistake in pitch, however, was beyond the majority of candidates. Some thought they had spotted two rhythmic errors, a few spotted more than two (whether in pitch or rhythm), but, on a more positive note, far fewer this year attempted to correct music in bars not stipulated in the question.
 - (b) Since bar 23 contained an arpeggiated version of the chord (which was an ordinary triad), it was a little disappointing to find so many incorrect answers. Neither the augmented 6th or diminished 7th consist of only three notes.

- (c) Many candidates did not notice that bars 11-14 were rhythmically identical to bars 1-4, while the G# in bar 13 also could have been deduced from the double sharp in bar 3. Some (perhaps understandably) heard the B natural in bar 14 as a Bb; bars 1-4 could well have been a hindrance here.

Q.10 (a) Most answers were correct.

- (b) Some merely mentioned the C# (or other accidentals) without any reference to the harmony concerned. A small number (here and elsewhere on the paper) mentioned “3rd harmonies”. Others merely commented on “long sustained notes”, the timpani “playing three short and quiet notes” or the cryptic “harmony is quite straightforward with just chords being played”. A number of candidates mistook the D minor chord for D major. More than one considered the passage as “entirely diatonic”, while one candidate described it as “bitonal, C minor, diatonic”.

Perhaps the most common fault was to regard each individual chord as a tonic chord of its own key – particularly the opening A major chord, which only a few appeared to understand as the dominant of the following D minor chord. Consequently, some answers simply turned into a list of “keys”, each based on an individual chord. It is important to realise that the question called for a description of the harmony/tonality, not just the naming of individual chords.

- (c) Disappointingly, a surprising number of candidates considered the 1st subject, both here and in (d), to be the Alhorn theme. There were many comments that could not be construed as analysis – e.g., “strings are marked as playing pizz”, without any attempt being made to describe the derivation of the pizz material. There were also vague statements such as “woodwind begin to play a theme ...”

Many marks were lost by candidates describing the woodwind at the start of the extract as playing in unison, while more than one considered the change of clef in the bassoons to be worthy of comment. One candidate took all 8 lines to discuss the dynamics in the passage, while, at the other extreme, another had picked up all 5 marks by the start of the 4th line, despite continuing writing additional pertinent answers for a further 5 lines! The problem in such questions is that some candidates merely comment on simple (plainly visual) musical features such as dynamics, note lengths etc. There were a few examples, too, of candidates not restricting their answers to the given bars (204-19) – in one instance, bar 17.

- (d) More than one candidate considered this to be part of the exposition. The homophonic (mostly homorhythmic) chords in bars 389-90 were quite often described as “unison crotchets”. Many comments were so superficial – e.g., “horns are playing various dynamics” - or irrational – e.g., “VC and DB play in pizzicato to add some structure”- that marks could not be awarded. Several candidates described the timpani as playing trills. Fortunately, there were examples of very knowledgeable accounts of the music with correct locations supplied. The set works question (both here and in the Choral Music option) significantly boosted some candidates’ marks.

Q.11 The standard here varied considerably! The more successful candidates wrote clearly and logically, referring to several pertinent works in the process of addressing the question.

On the other hand, there were many candidates who appeared to be struggling to fit a prepared essay to a question that was not particularly well suited to it. This probably accounts for the several candidates who discussed works by Beethoven, not having noticed that the question's starting date of 1830 precluded even the 9th Symphony. Sadly, too, there was a small number who totally ignored the question and wrote a general (prepared) essay on the development of the symphony, without mentioning a single instrument or use of the orchestra.

As usual, there were a number of inaccuracies – though perhaps not quite as many as in previous years. There appears to be quite a common misapprehension that clarinets were a very recent addition to the orchestra – e.g., “its use in Brahms’ 3rd Symphony (1883) introduced a new sound to the symphony orchestra”. Others, though, thought that it was Beethoven who had “introduced the use of the clarinet”; one candidate even wrote about Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto. There were the usual examples of composers and works being mismatched, or of incorrect information being provided on individual symphonies – e.g., “Dvorak’s “New World” Symphony including a tenor soloist and male choir, needing 1000 performers”, an answer that seems to imply a combination of three different works by three different composers – Dvorak, Liszt and Mahler!

One essay contained references to two “Symphonies Fantastiques”, one by Berlioz, one by Liszt. Undoubtedly in an attempt to make their prepared essay work for them, several candidates were of the opinion that the increased size of the orchestra was solely responsible for the developments in harmonic practice, proposing that the greater number of performers allowed a composer to expand the number of component notes in a chord. Not surprisingly, no specific, relevant examples were given. Strange then that of all the representative works mentioned in the Symphony essays, the most harmonically “advanced” was almost certainly Schoenberg’s 1906 Chamber Symphony – scored for only 15 instrumentalists! One candidate devoted 16 lines to an account of Tchaikovsky’s “Nutcracker”, well aware that it was, in fact, a ballet rather than a symphony. Very occasionally, an essay was encountered that consisted of little more than a list of the instrumentation in several symphonies, with no relevant detail on the music itself.

- Q.12 (a)** Since the question was quite general and open-ended as to the information required, the majority of candidates did very well here. As in the Brahms Symphony, however, a number lost marks by referring to timpani trills/tremolos rather than rolls – as well as for other examples of incorrect use of terminology.
- (b)** Lack of relevant detail was a problem for some here, while others scored full marks with little difficulty. Answers such as “bass enters” or “full choir is now audible”, unfortunately, give no information as to the music sung – necessary in an analysis question that asks for “musical features”. There were more references to timpani trills here.

Timpani roll was an acceptable answer in (a) since the question there required information as to how the instrumental music creates suspense/tension. However, as (b) was an analysis question, the same simple answer was not acceptable here, unless supported by some additional musical comment, such as “plays a dominant pedal” (just about acceptable harmonically speaking in the passage concerned). There was a perfect example (from a number of candidates) of how incorrect terminology can result in a needless loss of marks here - in the description of the 8ve/unison string passage at bar 117 as “the strings imitate each other”.

- (c) There were similar weaknesses in evidence here. The “musical devices” were sometimes ignored and comments merely mentioned such generalities as “the voice reflects suspense”. While the writing for the bass was generally explained well, the musical devices reflecting the text proved more difficult for a good number. There were, though, many examples of candidates who had obviously analysed the work in some detail and had little problem in attaining full marks (or nearly so).
- (d) This proved problematic to some, with the third option being a common answer – even with some very good candidates.

Q.13 The essay is traditionally one of the weaker aspects in the exam. This year, however, there were rather more examples of musically mature essays that contained relevant musical detail. (Hopefully, this was not the result of the essay question just happening to be tailor-made for the prepared essays that are already starting to crop up.) Many answers focused effectively on the question, with a wide variety of representative works in evidence – not that all the details were always correct.

One candidate, for instance, referred to (and provided a little information on) the (non-existent) Gloria from Brahms’ German Requiem, another on the music for the tenor soloist in the same work. Overall, however, there were fewer faux pas in evidence this year than in previous years. A few essays, disregarding the wording of the essay question itself, focused too heavily on Verdi’s Requiem, with the set work taking up at least half of the essay. Similarly, one candidate’s essay centred almost exclusively on Berlioz’s Requiem, also referring to the same composer’s “Symphonie Fantastique”, which apparently includes three choirs!

Summary of key points

- Candidates should become as familiar as possible with their set works – particularly those in Area of Study F, since there are more of them and the musical style is a little more challenging overall. Candidates should be discouraged from analysing “visually” and persuaded not to confine their answers to superficial responses.
- In Strands 3, 4 and 5, candidates should try to approach the study of different representative pieces in a little more musical depth and to be able to refer to particular sections of a piece as well as the piece in general. They should also try to broaden their knowledge of the genre in question.
- Adopting a similar approach in the Western Classical Tradition would also be beneficial. Candidates should try to study sections of some representative works in a little more detail, attempting to come up with material that might be of use in a range of essay topics – i.e., they should not focus on one aspect of a work, such as instrumentation.
- Ensure that all musical terms are used correctly. Using terms such as “unison” and “polyphonic” incorrectly (in the latter case, why not use “contrapuntal” instead, which candidates always tend to employ appropriately?), for instance, is the reason for an inordinate, and usually unnecessary, loss of marks.

- There was a small number of candidates this year whose handwriting caused problems for examiners, sometimes because of its microscopic proportions or else (at times even additionally!) in the formation of characters. This made some portions of a script almost illegible. Examiners understand that the sense of urgency under examination conditions can result in a slight deterioration in handwriting. However, there were instances of candidates' handwriting being actually quite neat and tidy but still illegible in parts because of poorly formed letters. The work of more than one of these candidates was of a high standard. It should be remembered that examiners cannot accurately mark what they cannot read!



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