

January newsletter – Music

Happy New Year to all Music teachers – I hope you have had a chance to relax over the Christmas break, after all the festivities and performances of last term. I know how hard you all work on those extra special events, so on behalf of your students (in case they forget to say it!) – thank you.

This newsletter is a quick round up and some key reminders for this term.

Key dates:

Deadline for entries – 21st February.

GCE Performing visits begin – 4th March.

GCSE Performing and Composing sample submission deadline – 5th May.

GCE Composing submission deadline – 15th May.

AS exam – 15th May.

A Level exam – 10th June.

GCSE exam – 17th June.

GCE results day – 15th August.

GCSE results day – 22nd August.

Contact us:

If you have any questions or you need any help or advice, please contact the Music team:

Subject Officer, Music – Rachel Edwards

Subject Support Officer, Music – Natalie Harvey

Subject Support Officer, GCE Music Routes – Romi Lawrence

Subject Adviser, Music and Drama – Elise Arnold

We all monitor the Music inbox and phone line.

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General news

We are planning to reorganise the materials on the Music [GCSE](#) and [GCE](#) webpages, which we hope will help teachers to find the documents they need more easily. (For an idea of what it will be like please visit the Drama pages.) This should happen in the New Year once we have checked and updated everything. There are FAQs and other guidance already available, so please do have a good look!

The secure website has also undergone the first stage of a large-scale improvement. It is now called “[WJEC Portal](#)” and again the aim is to make it easier to navigate, but also to enhance the security of confidential materials. For this reason, there will be a need to go through some initial authentication processes. If you need assistance with logging in there are some FAQs on the website [here](#).

Exemplar materials

There are new exemplars for all aspects of GCE and GCSE Music – performing, composing and appraising – available to download from WJEC Portal.

CPD

Please see the website for details of our [CPD programme](#). Materials from previous events can be downloaded from WJEC Portal.

GCSE

There is a new [teacher guide](#) on the website which contain procedural information for performing, composing and appraising. Please share this with your exams officer too.

In readiness for the 2024 series it may be useful to remind yourself of the comments made in the [Principal Examiners' report](#) which is available on the website.

Performing

You will no doubt have GCSE performances underway and may have recorded your candidates already. You can submit recordings made at any time in the year of assessment which is generally Year 11. If you are planning to record this term, please take a moment to remind yourself of the requirements:

- 1 ensemble piece lasting at least a minute.
- At least one other performance to take the total length of the submission to at least 4 minutes. These can be solo or ensemble. (Solos are not compulsory.)
- A score or leadsheet for **every** piece performed. "Guide recordings" are not accepted.
- A programme note for one piece which details the link with an Area of Study. (Not required for Eduqas.)

A few procedural things to remember too:

- You (the assessing teacher) **MUST** be present when all recordings are made.
- You cannot edit recordings or add any effects.
- For an ensemble performance the performers must play at the same time, not individually to create a multitrack recording.
- When timing a performance, start when the candidate sings/plays their first note, and end when they finish their last note. Do not include any long periods when the candidate is silent.
- No announcements are required, but if you need them to help you identify recordings, please keep them as short as possible.
- The live part in a sequenced performance should be played "out loud" and an audio recording made, not played into the sequencer.
- Tab is perfectly acceptable as long as it contains rhythms as well as pitches, and performance directions.
- For music from cultures where notation is created in a different style, please include a "key" to symbols to enable the moderator to understand and credit accurately.
- Please annotate scores before the performance to show if the candidate plans to deviate from what is printed.
- You will also need to complete the timing sheet giving details of the length of the performances of every candidate.

We have produced some additional information regarding GCSE performing. You can find the following on the website:

[Selecting repertoire for GCSE Music](#) – guidance regarding levels of difficulty and different repertoire.

[GCSE Music Performing Criteria Amplification](#) – guidance to assist teachers when using the criteria for assessment.

The [flowchart](#) for selecting ensemble repertoire has also been revised, so please download the new version.

If you need assistance or guidance regarding suitability or level of difficulty after looking at these documents please email the music team with a copy of the score.

Composing

The composing briefs were released as normal on 1st September and can be downloaded from WJEC Portal. Please read these carefully with your candidates, and make sure they understand the requirements. They are very open and there will undoubtedly be a huge variety of responses, but it is important that the instructions are followed. Unless the brief mentions a specific style or genre, candidates can compose in any style of music. For the free compositions it is essential that candidates write their own brief. Please do not just call it “free composition.” Part of the assessment concerns the response to the brief, so without a stated brief there is no evidence on which to award marks for this. Here is just a quick reminder of the requirements for each candidate:

- 2 compositions, one to a brief and one free
- 2 audio files (wav or mp3) – one for each composition
- 2 scores or equivalent - one for each composition
- 1 log and marksheet
- 1 evaluation of the composition to a brief (Not required for Eduqas)

Remember that for authentication purposes you are required to monitor the compositions on at least 3 occasions, but this should be more if necessary for you to be confident to sign the authenticity declaration. This has been updated this year to include the use of AI. Candidates are not permitted to use Artificial Intelligence to create or enhance their compositions, although this does not include any lyrics. The lyrics are not assessed in a song so these can be pre-existing (from another song,) a poem, or from any other source including AI. Please give details in the log, including the prompt given to the AI if used.

If a candidate will be asking another person to perform any aspect of their composition, it is vital that it is made clear on the log how the performer knew exactly what to play. The easiest way to show this is via a score, but if the candidate records a guide track this can also be submitted as evidence of the authenticity.

We have produced some additional information regarding GCSE composing, which is available on the website:

[GCSE Music Composing Criteria Amplification](#) – guidance to assist teachers when using the criteria for assessment.

There is also a pre-recorded webinar which goes through the application of the [NEA criteria](#).

Appraising

There is no change planned for the set works. Past papers, mark schemes and audio files are available to download from WJEC Portal.

GCE AS and A Level

There is a new [teacher guide](#) on the website which contain procedural information for performing, composing and appraising. Please share this with your exams officer too.

In readiness for the 2024 series it may be useful to remind yourself of the comments made in the [Principal Examiners' report](#) which is available on the website.

Performing

You should have submitted your "impossible dates" form in the Autumn. If not, please look in the September Circulars folder on WJEC Portal to find the information and link. You should hear from your performing examiner by around February half term to arrange your visit. They have been given your term dates and the impossible dates you specified. Please bear in mind that they are trying to construct a viable route, so it will only be possible to rearrange if there is a genuine reason why you cannot accept the date offered.

Please refer to the specification to confirm what is required in terms of timings and numbers of pieces. There are no changes or adaptations in place in 2024. For each candidate, please prepare the following in advance of the visit:

- A mark sheet with the school and candidate details completed, and the titles and composers of pieces, and the level of difficulty if known.
- A photocopy of the score of every piece to be performed, labelled with the centre and candidate details.

It is also very helpful to provide a running order for the day, and please deal with practical considerations such as parking, a suitable performing venue etc. The examiners thoroughly enjoy their visits, and we appreciate the efforts of centres to make sure things run smoothly.

If there is a last-minute emergency, please contact your examiner directly by email and cc the music team so that we can make further arrangements if necessary.

Composing

As with GCSE the Composing briefs were released on 1st September and can be downloaded from WJEC Portal.

Please remember that the composition to a set brief MUST demonstrate an understanding of the Western Classical Tradition, which for this purpose is defined as Baroque, Classical and Romantic

music. If they compose an excellent piece but do not demonstrate aspects of the WCT they will not be able to access the higher mark bands, so this is absolutely vital.

The requirements for each candidate are as follows:

AS, or A Level Option A:

- 2 compositions, one to a brief and one free
- 2 audio files (wav or mp3) – one for each composition
- 2 scores or equivalent - one for each composition
- 1 log

A Level Option B:

- 3 compositions: one to a brief and two free, one of which must link to a different Area of Study.
- 3 audio files (wav or mp3) – one for each composition
- 3 scores or equivalent - one for each composition
- 1 log

Just as with GCSE, for authentication purposes you are required to monitor the compositions on at least 3 occasions, but this should be more if necessary for you to be confident to sign the authenticity declaration. This has been updated this year to include the use of AI. Candidates are not permitted to use Artificial Intelligence to create or enhance their compositions, although this does not include any lyrics. The lyrics are not assessed in a song so these can be pre-existing (from another song,) a poem, or from any other source including AI. Please give details in the log, including the prompt given to the AI if used.

If a candidate will be asking another person to perform any aspect of their composition, it is vital that it is made clear on the log how the performer knew exactly what to play. The easiest way to show this is via a score, but if the candidate records a guide track this can also be submitted as evidence of the authenticity.

We have produced some additional information regarding GCE composing, which is available on the website:

Composing: Amplification of the Criteria of Assessment – this gives further details on how the examiner will use the criteria for assessment, so that you can advise your candidates and give them effective feedback.

Appraising

We recently consulted on possible changes to set works. Thank you to all of you who responded. There results were varied, and we are still considering the best steps to take, so at present there will not be any changes made. When a final decision has been reached this will be communicated officially to centres via circular, and there will also be information shared using banners on the website, and via social media channels.

Past papers, marking schemes and audio files can be downloaded from WJEC Portal.



Questions?

Please get in touch if you need to ask any questions. We are here to help.

Music@wjec.co.uk