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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE  
MUSIC**

**SUMMER 2023**

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.

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## **MUSIC**

### **GCSE**

**Summer 2023**

#### **UNIT 1 PERFORMING**

##### **General Comments**

This year saw the return to the full requirements for Unit 1, Performing and centres are to be praised for their diligent preparation of candidates. Moderators have commented on the enjoyment they experienced listening to the young diverse talent on offer from centres.

##### **Comments on individual questions/sections**

##### **Centre Administration**

Many centres completed the administration carefully and uploaded clearly labelled submissions with the required "GCSE Music Performing Candidate Mark Penalties Form" (all candidates should be listed). Please check during the coming year for communications from WJEC for instructions for uploading work correctly.

Successful submissions included:

- Completed marksheets with candidate and teacher signatures (both may be typed). PDF files are preferable to Word documents.
- This year's marksheet downloaded from the website.
- The "GCSE Music Performing Candidate Mark Penalties Form" which was available to download from the "Non-Exam Assessment" section of "Key Documents" on the GCSE Music Home Page.
- Correct timings of recordings (from the start of the candidate's singing or playing).
- Difficulty Levels for each piece.
- Explanation of the candidate's role in ensemble performances (if necessary).
- Correct additions and submission of marks to lamis.
- Clearly labelled recordings and scores/lead sheets e.g., "John Smith, 12345, Solo 2".
- The compulsory ensemble as the first submitted piece.

Sadly, very many centres did not complete the above requirements correctly, resulting in delays to moderation whilst centres were contacted to provide the correct information or upload correct recordings, scores or marksheets. Please ensure you contact the exam board if there is a problem meeting the deadline for submission.

Thanks must go to Exams' Officers and music departments for uploading the extra requirements promptly in most cases.

Clerical errors were in evidence for a variety of reasons:

- marks not added/subtracted for awarded difficulty levels
- incorrect difficulty levels on marksheets
- timing penalties not applied correctly or at all
- incorrect addition of marks on marksheets
- marks inputted into lamis which did not match the marksheet.

All clerical errors were rectified by moderators.

## Timings

Most candidates achieved the minimum timing requirement of four minutes and their performances had been carefully timed with penalties correctly awarded for under-time performances as detailed on the centre's "GCSE Music Performing Candidate Mark Penalties Form".

Moderators reported that some centres submitted a third or fourth piece when the candidate's folio was already over four minutes long. Perhaps centres felt that this practice would bring up the average mark on a lower-marked compulsory ensemble. I ask centres not to encourage this practice amongst candidates.

I should like to remind centres that they should:

- Record from the candidate's entry – long introductions and sections performed by non-candidates (especially in ensemble pieces) should not be included.
- Not have verbal announcements at the start of recordings (in some instances, these were included in the timings).

## Recordings

It was pleasing to hear from moderators that most recordings were excellent, and candidates were clearly identified, especially in ensemble recordings. A few centres submitted recordings where it was almost impossible to identify the candidate. It is imperative that centres check the balance before recording takes place and listen back after recording.

Fewer centres were identified as adding effects such as reverb to enhance the candidate's performances. Centres are to be reminded that, as stated in the specification, recordings should be "unedited".

## Scores/Leadsheets

Many centres submitted scores and leadsheets with careful and accurate annotations which made the moderation of Accuracy marks a smooth process.

It is vital that scores and leadsheets are annotated with the candidate's intention prior to recording. Such annotations could include:

- Melodic or rhythmic variation – this can take the form of a bracket over a few bars with a comment such as "melodic ornamentation here"; or actual notes may be changed.
- Performance directions.
- Repeats.
- Cuts to the score.
- The candidate's role within the ensemble if not stated on the marksheet and especially if parts are swapped over. Individual parts may be highlighted.
- Lead sheets with details of structure, chords, melodic and rhythmic patterns, and clear performance directions.

Issues which arose with the submission of scores this year:

- Absence of scores.
- Unannotated scores or scores with blanket comments at the start such as "Melodic variation throughout". Please note that this will affect marks for Accuracy.
- A lack of performance directions on the score – dynamics, tempo, phrasing, articulation.
- Lyric sheets for singers with no melodic outline.
- Guitar tab with no rhythmic patterns nor performance directions.
- Scores uploaded as separate files.
- Missing pages or incorrect order of pages.

- Photographs of scores with missing lines and blurred images.
- Reference recordings which are not accepted in lieu of scores.

Centres were contacted for clarification as necessary.

Please think carefully: “Is this truly what my candidate intends on playing?”

## **Difficulty Levels**

Overall, centres had judged difficulty levels well, following the performance descriptors in the appendix of the specification. If pieces had been checked by the exam board, this was often indicated on the marksheet, which was of huge help to moderators. Most centres stated the abbreviations of ESL (Easier than Standard Level), SL (Standard Level), MD (More Difficult than Standard Level) or the exam board grade indicated on the mark sheet. However, I would urge centres to be mindful when submitting a piece which has an agreed level of difficulty or a graded piece, with the candidate then performing an easier arrangement of the piece or making a cut in places. A word of caution regarding the use of “wider exam board repertoire”, whose grades may not be in keeping with the more formal exam board grading system or the difficulty criteria in the specification.

There were many more "Easier than Standard Level" performances submitted than in previous years. Perhaps this reflected the impact that covid restrictions have had on the development of students' performing skills and confidence in performing at KS3.

Please note carefully that pieces deemed to be easier than “Easier than Standard Level”, such as simple right hand melody piano pieces, repeated 4 bar chord sequences or simple tuned percussion pieces, will not reach the higher bands for Technical Control as evidence of technical control is limited. There is also limited opportunity for Expression and Interpretation in very simple pieces.

Regarding click tracks, if moderators felt that the “click” offered too much support to the candidate, either marks for Technical Control could be affected or the Level of Difficulty brought down.

This year, incorrect difficulty levels were amended as Clerical Errors by the moderators.

Please contact the exam board if in doubt regarding the difficulty level of a piece if it cannot be judged using the descriptors in appendix A of the specification.

## **Repertoire**

Repertoire had been carefully chosen by most centres to reflect the candidates' abilities and interests. Moderators reported a significant rise in the submission of pop and rock performances for all voices and instruments. Particularly popular songs were “Smells like Teen Spirit” (guitar/bass guitar/drum-kit) and “Come Together” (drum kit).

For the most part, centres submitted pieces found in the syllabuses of music boards including Rockschool, ABRSM and Trinity. There were several outstanding “classical” performances where candidates excelled and were fully deserving of the full marks awarded by the centres. Some candidates attempted pieces beyond their capabilities which sadly meant that vital marks were lost, especially for Accuracy and often Technical Control.

Moderators reported clear evidence that many dedicated teachers have worked really very hard to support students who are not at the required standard or have been supporting students to ensure they had appropriate ensemble pieces by arranging them themselves.

There were many solo and ensemble submissions of rap, beatboxing, sequencing and DJing with detailed lead sheets and very often, useful teacher comments on the marksheets in support of the marking. Rap scores should include rhythms and performance directions as detailed above. There were very few instances of inappropriate language or content this year and centres had substituted non-offensive words where necessary.

It was reported by some moderators that several centres had chosen the same piece of music for a whole cohort or range of candidates to perform. Whilst this may aid teachers in preparing their candidates for the performance element of this qualification, especially if there are issues with convenience, time, student motivation and large GCSE cohorts, many such candidates could have scored higher marks performing pieces more suited to their ability.

## **Ensemble**

There were very many submissions where the requirements for ensemble were fully met, and those centres are to be applauded for choosing appropriate repertoire.

The requirement is that candidates must submit an ensemble performance of a minimum of one minute duration with at least one other “live” performer and no more than eight performers taking part. It is not permitted to submit two ensembles of less than a minute to meet the requirement. The primo parts of bona fide ensemble pieces are acceptable if there is evidence of empathy between the candidate and the members of the ensemble. Care must be taken, with vocal duets especially, that there is one minute of ensemble taking place, not considering any doubling of parts.

Many centres struggled to submit ensemble pieces this year, submitting a solo with an accompaniment under the guise of an ensemble, resulting in a mark of 0 for ensemble and the submitted piece moderated as another solo.

The ensemble is an essential requirement of the exam. If an ensemble is not submitted, please award 0 for ensemble, add the marks together of all the pieces, divide by the number of pieces (including the zero-scored ensemble) and multiply by two.

There is much discussion on forums as to what constitutes an ensemble and again, if in doubt regarding the validity of an ensemble, please contact the music team for confirmation.

## **Programme Notes**

Marks for the programme note were deemed to be generally too generous this year. Several centres awarded very high marks to candidates who did not evaluate the technical demands of their chosen piece, describing their own performance instead. Very often, links to an Area of Study were not mentioned, which is an important requirement of the programme note.

Many candidates provided accounts that were logically written, with plenty of relevant information and using appropriate musical terminology, thus gaining marks in the highest band. There were many in-depth accounts of the music, as well as detailed evaluations of the technical demands focussing on specific areas of the chosen music.

The weaker efforts rarely mentioned musical elements or the technical demands, concentrating instead on interesting facts about the composer/performer, or adding too much biographical or historical information. Several submissions covered too many elements in too little detail. The specification asks for detailed explanation of how three or four elements are used within the piece.

Unfortunately, there were some candidates and whole centres who did not submit a programme note this year resulting in a less-deserving overall mark.

### **Assessment/Overall Standard**

Most centres had used the assessment criteria carefully and thoughtfully offering very accurate marks within the correct bands of the three assessment criteria.

Moderators reported that Accuracy was very often the column where centres had marked generously. Centres were either overly harsh, awarding 0 or band 1 marks for performances which did not contain “rhythm and/or pitch inaccuracies throughout”, or over generous, awarding band 4 marks for performances that lacked fluency and had more than occasional slips. The lack of annotations on scores and lead sheets accounted for some of the largest discrepancies where teachers had awarded high marks, with unannotated scores or lead sheets not supporting those marks.

Marks for Technical Control were mostly accurate with centres awarding marks which had been carefully considered. There was still a tendency to double-penalise middle to lower candidates under Accuracy and Technical Control. If a performance contains intonation issues throughout the performance, then marks should be lowered for Technical Control. However, if there are occasional moments when notes are not on pitch, then marks for Accuracy would be compromised.

As mentioned above under “Difficulty Levels”, marks for pieces below “Easier than Standard Level” should not be awarded marks in the higher bands due to the limited evidence of technical control offered by the candidate.

It was felt by moderators that Expression and Interpretation centre marks were generally very secure across all bands with the highest marked candidates performing with maturity and a great deal of expression.

I ask centres to please take note of advice given in previous moderator reports to centres, as there was a tendency for the same issues of marking, administration, scores or levels of difficulty to be repeated this year.

As moderators we would like to acknowledge how difficult it may have been to prepare candidates for submission this year and we would like to pass on our genuine congratulations and thanks to all teaching and peripatetic staff who have persevered and helped all candidates to provide musical performances to be proud of.

### **Summary of key points**

- Please check all administration and uploads carefully.
- The candidate must be audible on the recording.
- Scores and lead sheets must be annotated where necessary to support centre marks.
- The ensemble should not be an accompanied solo and the candidate must perform a significant part for at least one minute.
- Very simple pieces will demonstrate only limited technical control.

**MUSIC**  
**GCSE**  
**Summer 2023**  
**UNIT 2 COMPOSING**

### **General Comments**

There were fewer problems with administration this year. These included minor clerical errors and unsuccessful or incorrect uploading of work. Most centres responded swiftly to requests for replacement or additional work.

### **Uploading**

All moderators in the team acknowledge efficient moderation when the files/documents were uploaded and labelled correctly as according to set WJEC guidelines. For clarification, six files are expected:

- Candidate Log (with both authentication signatures)
- Composition 1 (set brief) audio
- Composition 1 score/leadsheet
- Composition 2 (free brief) audio
- Composition 2 score/leadsheet
- Evaluation (of composition 1).

Please check the online guidance for any further information, including what should be included in each document (i.e., some candidates presented leadsheet and evaluation content within the log).

### **Scores and Recordings**

Many scores were of excellent quality, with detailed markings of performance directions and articulation. Others were more difficult to navigate and read, at times with little information as regards instruments, tempo, dynamics and so on. Some candidates presented a mix, with a score for one piece and leadsheet/annotated screenshot with explanatory information for the second composition. Although this advice has been issued every year, please advise future candidates that screenshots without any specific musical information on the content are of no use. In most cases the various types of DAW will automatically provide a more 'zoomed in version' when you double click on the part/idea, and a screen shot of that would work very well.

Overall, recordings were of excellent quality, as they were taken often directly from software. In several cases there seemed to be DAW software (Sibelius and MuseScore) that was recorded through speakers of the piece playing rather than exported as an mp3. This affected the quality of the audio.

In some live performances of compositions, the balance was not good, and it was difficult to hear individual parts (e.g., the singer); in other recordings there was background noise. Some centres obviously benefit from, or arrange, superb recording facilities which enabled the results to be very professional – this obviously enhanced the recording, though it must be stressed that it is the actual musical content which is assessed.

## Candidate Logs

Many logs were informative and suitably completed using a broad range of descriptive music vocabulary, including the correct details of musical influences and intentions, explanation of the composing process, clearly stated briefs, advice given by teachers and the authentication signatures.

Most are word-processed, which are easier to read. Many candidates made note of composers and performers whose work had influenced them; in the Jazz/Popular Music genres, these included Thelonius Monk, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Bon Jovi, Berry Gordy, Megadeth and Paulo Nutini. Many candidates writing Film Music mentioned John Williams and Hans Zimmer. There was also good evidence of wider listening, with some mentions of Vaughan Williams, Debussy, Mozart, Grieg, Chopin, Bizet and Malcolm Arnold. As ever, the set works (and Einaudi) were very popular.

Although the majority of candidates stated their chosen briefs clearly, a small number of candidates still left the box blank. Most tasks/briefs were suitable, but some were rather vague and lacking in detail (e.g., just stating 'film music' or 'piano piece', or indeed, 'free piece'). Some were not considered to be appropriate - there were instances of drum/untuned percussion pieces that could not access the highest bands, as there was insufficient opportunity to display technical control of a wide range of compositional devices and musical elements. Some candidates stipulate a 'song' when they mean 'piece', as there were no vocals/lyrics at all in the actual composition. In free compositions, the brief must not be cited as an area of study. The brief must state the purpose and intention so that column 3 can be marked effectively. Candidates should also detail the thinking behind the musical choices made in relation to the brief, always keeping in mind that the composition is directly assessed 'in response to the brief'. In a few instances, candidates moved away entirely from their chosen brief to create something entirely different. Please monitor and advise candidates in their responses to ensure that a candidate is not submitting work that moves away from the given task. If the intentions are unclear, marks will be affected.

Moderators reported a number of inappropriate issues this year.

- When the logs did not match the compositions submitted.
- When lyrics were not included with a song.
- When all sections of the candidate log had not been correctly completed.
- When the realisations of the pieces had been re-created by someone other than the candidate, without sufficient explanation of how the composer's intentions had been communicated.
- When it was not clear what the exact contribution of the candidate has been to a live recording – or how the parts have been taught (this also applies to such ideas as layered harmonies if they have not been performed by the candidate themselves). Please remind all future candidates it is not acceptable to state in the log 'I showed them what to play/sing' in the case of live recordings. Someone else should only perform the music or parts when a score has been submitted, or when a guide track written/performed by the candidate has been included for clarification.
- Candidates are expected to give details of what computer programs have been used (this is often omitted) – and how they have been used (i.e. what features, any loops, backing, autoplay, automations, arpeggiations, accompaniment ideas etc). If candidates have created their pieces/chord patterns in this way, very little actual 'composing' has taken place and this must be taken into account when assessing the outcome. If any candidate uses an 'autoplay' feature – it must be declared in their log (it is considered to be the same as if a candidate uses a loop) – or perhaps, detailed by the teacher in the optional comments section at the end of the candidate log.

## Comments on individual questions/sections

### 1. Forms and Devices: Compose a piece of music for performance in a student concert which makes use of ostinato.

The Ostinato brief produced lots of interesting outcomes, ranging from rock and EDM to more 'classical' chamber music and piano solos (with many mentions of Einaudi and minimalism). The more successful pieces (and there were some excellent examples) developed and transformed their ostinato ideas; some candidates combined a small number of ostinati, while others introduced new ones in each section. Ostinato ideas included rhythms, melodic patterns and chordal patterns. Less successful pieces lacked skilful development, with some moderators feeling that many candidates seemed to be inhibited rather than liberated by the use of an ostinato. The more limited pieces were those where a very short idea (e.g., a one bar ostinato) was repeated over and over through the whole piece, with a lack of development. New layers were sometimes added in but there were often no contrasting ideas. This also affected the overall structure, and the work lacked focus and direction. It was clear that some centres had set this as a 'class task' as the approach was extremely similar and left little room for individuality.

Some candidates chose this brief but wrote a pop/rock song, and it was felt that such candidates would, in many cases, have been better off if they had been steered to the Popular Music brief. Their interpretation of an 'ostinato' (for example, three repeated chords), meant that there was a lack of harmonic variety, and the songs were repetitive. Additionally, many Ground Bass type pieces were over-reliant on repetition and lacked meaningful development, and, in most cases were not considered 'competent' or 'skilful'. The nature and features of an ostinato were not understood by all. Some candidates presented devices such as an Alberti bass or a waltz accompaniment as ostinati.

### 2. Music for Ensemble: Compose a jazz piece for four performers to be included in a Junior Jazz live stream on BBC Radio Wales

This was not as popular as the ostinato or Aberfan briefs. There was a gulf between those who understood the genre and some of the more inconsistent/limited examples where the work was not convincingly 'jazz' in style. Some candidates created convincing chord progressions and interesting rhythmic ideas, and the best work showed interesting interplay between the four instruments and drew upon a good range of jazz compositional techniques. There were examples of existing 12 bar blues patterns and the 'typical' walking bass pattern, and while some candidates were really creative and were able to 'make it their own', other responses were far too predictable and lacking in individuality. A few candidates noted Brubeck's 'Take Five' as a stimulus, but several responses were too heavily influenced by the original piece, including rhythmic and chordal ideas. A few candidates struggled to write four individual parts which related together as one whole and musical exploration generally was inhibited.

### 3. Film Music: Compose music for the opening scenes in a documentary film about the Aberfan disaster.

An extremely popular choice, many candidates approached this topic in a mature and respectful manner (one candidate said they 'felt the weight of responsibility' to honour the victims). However, some of the factual historical accounts detailed in the logs could have been summarised more briefly. The best pieces were highly effective and sophisticated, ambitiously scored on occasion, while there were also examples of piano solos, string quartets, brass ensembles, wind quintets and other various combinations of instruments. One candidate's particularly effective introduction included a sampled sound of children playing on the schoolyard, layered over the music, which was quite haunting.

Many pieces were stylistic empathetic and drew upon a wide range of elements and resources, exploring imaginative and thoughtful contrasts of tone colour and moods. Predictably, there was also much use of the harp, and hymn-like, or folk-inspired ideas. A few candidates used an actual Welsh hymn – and while the relevance of this was acknowledged, it gained no credit in the piece. The weakest responses were often a collection of unrelated sections (more of a ‘sound scape’ than melodic ideas). In a film, these types of atmospheric ideas work, to a point, but they do not really fulfil GCSE Music criteria. Some examples were rather simplistic and often relied too much on long sustained chords which meant that development and exploration was limited - but most had at least attempted to portray the sombre mood.

#### **4. Popular Music: Compose a song to be performed by a student group in a ‘Sounds of Swansea Soul’ music festival.**

Not many candidates chose this brief. The best songs were professional - well structured, with intro/outro, clearly defined sections, a middle 8/instrumental, and a good range of solid chord progressions, including textural contrasts and development of ideas. In these pieces, the accompaniment patterns varied and there was clear control of the elements (including creating all the backing tracks themselves) – stylistic features were clearly understood. The least successful pieces relied on the same three or four chords throughout, with insufficient variety in the accompaniment and utilised preset drums/loops/patterns. Some candidates had not attempted to include a vocal line or lyrics. There were one or two extremely idiomatic pieces that stated that they were an instrumental, but if they had transferred one of the melody lines to a voice, it would have been a more accurate response to the set brief. Some of the more limited examples didn’t really have a melody.

#### **Free Composition**

Candidates explored a plethora of compositions in response to the free brief and it was clear that centres had given most candidates the opportunity to explore their favoured musical interests, which is commendable. Choices included: ‘jazz fusion’, ‘music for a ballet class’, piano miniatures and waltzes, a ‘Benedictus’ for choir and organ, music for documentaries, EDM pieces, cinematic compositions, music for brass/string ensembles, Celtic music, pop songs, video/computer-game music, heavy metal pieces and ballads. Some centres used another of the set briefs as the ‘free brief’, with many ostinato compositions also in evidence for the free composition, along with lots of ternary form and rondo pieces. Some free briefs were less suitable, e.g., the aforementioned solo drum kit pieces and ‘made-up’ structures such as ABCD; in one way or another, when considered in response to the assessment criteria, these lost marks. Candidates who wrote for their own instruments, to reflect their own interests, or for ensemble types that they engage with regularly were more successful.

#### **Assessment**

Moderators agreed with much of the judgement suggested by centres but there were occasions where the assessment was felt to be overly generous. Compositions that fell within the top marking bracket were stylistic and drew upon a wide variety of elements and demonstrated excellent understanding of the style and character in response to the chosen brief. Some students demonstrated excellent orchestration skills and made excellent use of technology to realise multi-tracked and polyphonic ideas. Compositions that fell within the middle marking bracket showed a generally effective degree of musical style and candidates drew upon a fairly wide range of elements and resources to create catchy ideas. Ideas were well-organised and the outcome was generally effective. Further work by candidates in this category to write more distinctive opening themes and explore a wider range of resources and elements within organised structures would have been beneficial.

A number of students submitted compositions which ended abruptly this year and the coda seemed to be a 'forgotten section'. It is really important that candidates consider how they finish a piece. Candidates should put as much thought and planning into the ending as into the opening.

Compositions that fell within the lower mark bracket were often quite short, simple and lacked musical direction. Limited understanding of harmonic progressions and cadential points made outcomes sound inconsistent and ideas were repeated rather than developed. These candidates are advised to write more substantial thematic material, consider harmonies and create a simple outline of their piece, planning how ideas are going to be explored and developed from the outset.

### **Creativity and Development of musical ideas**

It was in this column that marks tended to be generous. While some candidates created suitable material, other ideas were short and simplistic (as opposed to simple but effective). Refinement of the initial material (both melodic and harmonic) is advised. There were many examples of compositions displaying initial fine, musical, sometimes catchy ideas; however all too often the difficulty was in developing these ideas, resulting in extended random passages with no sense of direction. It would be beneficial if candidates spent more time refining their work, omitting weaker passages. Contrasting sections, modulation and control of harmonic progressions also proved problematic.

There was an attempt by some candidates to develop and extend ideas, using sequence, imitation, and augmentation. Many of the pieces which were generously marked were those where there was little evidence of 'skilful' development, little contrast/variety in tone colour/mood/texture, and insufficient harmonic understanding and exploration. Precious time dedicated to the development of such knowledge will pay dividends.

### **Technical control of musical elements**

In this column, marks were often fairly awarded by the centre. Most candidates made at least some effective use of elements, although it was noticeable that dynamics, tempo markings, articulation details or performance details had not been considered in many cases, and this would have enhanced the compositions.

Some work suffered from a lack of rhythmic/textural variety, although in many cases this was reflected in the centre marks. There were also several examples of pieces which lacked coherence, and these would have benefitted from further refinement or shortening of the sections (some pieces tended to wander without much direction). Conversely, stronger pieces displayed a highly effective control and use of elements and an idiomatic use of instruments, which was justly rewarded by the centre marks.

### **Structure and stylistic coherence**

Marks in this column also tended to be a little generous. While many pieces were very well structured (e.g. rondo, ternary form, 32 bar song), some work lacked a sense of overall coherence and cohesion. Such pieces tended to be fragmentary and episodic, often through-composed, presenting ideas which lacked coherence as the work was lacking in suitable contrasts. Most candidates were able to show some understanding of their chosen style, with some extremely good pieces showing real stylistic awareness at the top end.

As already mentioned, one common theme was that the endings to pieces had not been particularly well handled, with many pieces being cut off abruptly or fading out, and not having a clear conclusion. A number of compositions were simply too long.

## Evaluations

Many centres were very fair in their marking of the evaluations, though some moderators advised candidates to engage with the exemplar material. Those who used subheadings tended to produce an evaluation that was better structured, and more detailed. Many candidates missed out the requirement to comment on the quality of the final recording. There were some truly excellent examples of evaluations, as well as some very limited. In some cases, the information in the evaluation contradicted the info in the log or did not actually match the piece. There was often a tendency to describe their work rather than evaluate their work. A lot of candidates provided a list of elements or a 'play by play' account of their composing method, but really explaining **why** they made those choices or evaluating the success or suitability of their choices.

## Summary of key points

- Take note of advice in previous Principal Moderator reports.
- Refer to WJEC guidance for essential requirements, completion of candidate logs and exemplar materials.
- All files must be uploaded and labelled according to WJEC guidelines.
- Check all recordings for balance/missing parts/interference/background noise.
- When other performers have been involved in recording a candidate's composition, either the notation or a guide track performed by the candidate **must** be included. No credit can be awarded for the relevant ideas otherwise.
- All loops/autoplay/auto-accompaniments/auto chord patterns/arpeggiations etc., must be clearly credited by the candidate in the relevant section in the candidate log.
- The requirements of the GCSE Music assessment criteria must be kept at the forefront of all musical decisions made, and guidance given.

**MUSIC**  
**GCSE**  
**Summer 2023**  
**UNIT 3 APPRAISING**

**General Comments**

Advance information was published once again this year which provided details of genres, styles and also sections of the prepared works to help with revision, therefore it was a shame that many candidates struggled with certain questions and sections that were highlighted for enhanced focus. Teaching and learning must focus on the main elements of music and the use of musical terms as listed in the specification. Centres can use a wide range of musical examples from the four areas of study while giving the candidates experience of each element of music in a variety of genres.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Q.1 – Prepared Extract**

- (a) Many candidates identified that the melody was conjunct in bar 4.
- (b) Some candidates identified the accurate key at the start of the extract. The full name of the key was required. D major was a popular response but this was the key at the start of the extract not in bars 9-14 as requested.
- (c) There were a range of answers in the mark scheme to describe features of the accompaniment. Many candidates responded with pizzicato but in addition responses could have mentioned dynamics, musical devices and the specific features of the cello playing (i.e. arco and the slurred two-note pattern). A large number of candidates scored 1 out of 2 marks here.
- (d) Many candidates realised that violas imitated the first violins in bars 16 to 29.
- (e) Some candidates recognised the upper mordent and quaver rest and gave sufficient bar locations.
- (f) Marks were only awarded if candidates stated that the full meaning of poco rit. was 'a little slow down'. This is one of the prepared works and simply writing that the music slowed down did not achieve any credit.
- (g) There were a range of responses for the name of the author of Peer Gynt – a minority of candidates were correct.

- Q.2**
- (a) The vast majority of candidates positively identified the violin in the extract. Viola was accepted due to the lower range of the violin heard.
  - (b) Some candidates identified the monophonic texture at the beginning – both instruments were playing the melody at the same time.

- (c) A number of candidates recognised the arpeggio feature in the melody and hence selected the correct melodic shape.
- (d) Some candidates identified the accurate key at the start of the extract. The full name of the key was required and an example was given in the question. G major was a popular answer but only a few candidates correctly identified that it was the relative key of E minor.
- (e) Many candidates identified the correct tempo but needed to state an Italian term – English or Welsh words for tempo were not accepted. Moderato was not accepted as the time signature and opening bars were clearly shown in the question. Many responses included dynamics such as forte or mezzo piano – these were examples of candidates confusing different elements of music.
- (f) Many candidates responded positively identifying a musical sequence but fewer recognised the anacrusis (there was a clear upbeat).
- (g) There were a range of answers in the mark scheme to describe features of the piano part.

Many candidates responded with scalic movement but responses could have mentioned musical devices, melodic movement, phrasing and the piano performing the same material as the violin.

- Q.3**
- (a) Most candidates noticed that the phrasing was irregular. By process of elimination, it would have helped to notice that rubato or any paused notes were not present.
  - (b) Few candidates spotted the modal tonality in this piece of music. There was an equal split of major and minor incorrect responses. Successful candidates would have noticed that there was no sharpened seventh degree of the scale, therefore it could only be modal.
  - (c) Most candidates identified the 3-part texture.
  - (d) Many candidates were able to positively identify the musical term a capella.
  - (e) The majority of candidates identified folk music. Folk or Welsh folk were accepted but not simply 'Welsh' as that is not technically a musical style.
  - (f) There were very few incorrect responses here and this was the best answered question on the paper this year – male voices were performing.
  - (g) Responses for this question were varied but some candidates identified the rallentando effectively.
  - (h) Most candidates correctly stated that there were four beats per bar in the extract.
  - (i) Most candidates identified the dynamics by using an Italian term or symbol.

- Q.4**
- (a) Only some candidates named both chords in the extract– it followed a 12-bar blues pattern – it was surprising how many candidates did not identify the tonic chord here.
  - (b) The majority of answers were correct and the vocal performance technique was selected as scat.
  - (c) Many candidates recognised the instrument as a double bass but wrote walking bass as a performance technique. The technique was pizzicato/plucking. Walking bass is found under texture in the list of musical terms found in the GCSE Music specification. Several responses incorrectly identified the instrument as a bass guitar.
  - (d) Some candidates suggested words that correctly identified the rhythm of the vocal part.
  - (e) Popular responses for this question included louder dynamics and stated that the percussion stopped in the second half of the extract. There were several other responses in the mark scheme including the use of blue notes, syncopation, glissandi, ornamentation and changing mouth patterns. Few candidates achieved a maximum total of 3 marks for this question.
- Q.5**
- (a)
    - (i) Very few candidates achieved a maximum of 4 marks in total when completing the missing pitch in the treble clef. Candidates must try to make their note heads clearer. A pencil may be used for this section so amendments can be made during the examination. The pattern and direction of the melody was confused in many responses. The melody was mainly stepwise with one interval of a minor 6th at the end. Relative pitch was not accepted – each note was marked correct or incorrect. It is important for candidates to write the notes in line with the rhythms above to help in the examining process. Some candidates put all notes in one bar or had too many notes in total – this proved difficult to judge in some cases.
    - (ii) Many candidates identified the trombone and trumpet but unfortunately in the wrong order. A majority of candidates identified a trumpet and most responses were from the brass family. A minority answered with string, woodwind or percussion instruments.
    - (iii) Some candidates identified the imperfect cadence at the end of the extract.
  - (b)
    - (i) This question was completed more successfully than in previous years. A higher number of candidates identified the simple triple time signature but also placed it on the stave in the correct place.
    - (ii) Most candidates recognised that the note with the shortest duration was a quaver.

**Q.6** In addition to musical content, this question assessed the accuracy of specialist terminology and the quality of written communication. Candidates were required to describe five elements of music. Even though it has been mentioned in previous reports, many candidates wrote about many other elements of music not requested in this question. For future examinations, it is essential that candidates read the question carefully to ensure they do not merely list everything they hear in the extract of music. However, it was felt by many examiners that this question was answered more effectively this year and it was clear the candidates had an organised plan. Candidates had the option to write paragraphs about each element separately or write in a more chronological manner. They could also have used headings if they wished which would have focused their work more effectively and deterred them from writing about every element of music. It is important to note that bullet points were also accepted. Responses should include clear locations where appropriate, especially when elements of music change in other sections. Where instruments were acknowledged it was expected that candidates stated whether those instruments were part of the melody or accompaniment. This question was worth 9 marks and candidates were expected to write a number of points about each musical element. There were more responses this year in the 8-9 marks category because many candidates identified the changes in tonality, instruments, texture and tempo. The metre was the same throughout. More detail and information were required generally for each element of music and potential changes throughout the extract of music. Candidates did not need to write two whole pages to achieve maximum marks and it is important to note that rough notes in the box were not marked. Some candidates contradicted themselves and it was felt that the answer was inconsistent overall in such cases. To gain full marks in this question, candidates needed to describe all of the elements listed.

- Q.7**
- (a) The majority of candidates determined the correct time signature of the prepared work.
  - (b) There were several ways in which the word 'explanation' was performed differently later in the song and many candidates had one out of two correct answers on average ranging from the quality of the voice, melodic changes and duration. When comparing, detail is needed (e.g. 'pitch changes' needed more clarification for credit).
  - (c) The majority of correct answers mentioned arco and legato when describing features of the string parts. Many candidates answered one of the two features correctly. Imitation was a popular incorrect answer.
  - (d) A minority of candidates identified the chord. E major on its own was not enough information – this is a prepared work and the full name of E major 7th was required as the correct answer.
  - (e) Most candidates recognised the fill in the outro.
  - (f) The vast majority of candidates knew the title of the song.
  - (g) Unfortunately, many candidates did not know that the lead singer of Manic Street Preachers was James Dean Bradfield.

- Q.8**
- (a) Many candidates identified the correct structure.
  - (b) Major and minor chords were positively selected in the extract by many candidates.
  - (c) A large majority of candidates identified the instruments accompanying in this piece of music.
  - (d) The majority of candidates determined the correct time signature.
  - (e) Many candidates did not read the question and noted down differences between instruments and voices for this question. If a candidate only wrote a comparative word on one side of the grid they were credited as they were comparing extracts. Most candidates wrote differences on each side of the grid. It is important to note that candidates needed to compare different elements on the same line of the grid. There were several responses that stated that the dynamics and tempo were different but more information would be required for credit (e.g. slower or quieter). Very few candidates achieved the maximum of 4 marks in this question.

### Summary of key points

- Through the areas of study, elements of music need to be highlighted regularly (e.g. a lesson on texture could use examples from all areas of study).
- Several responses in the examination were incorrect but not even relevant to the element on which the question focused. Candidates require more regular test exercises on each element of music before attempting the identification of these in listening extracts. It is important to know the possible answers when asked about harmony, for example.
- Candidates must read the questions carefully and only respond with answers linked to specific elements of music requested.
- This year it was felt that more focus was needed on identifying tonality, texture, melody and rhythm.
- Candidates need more regular routines completing pitch and rhythm dictation exercises so they are well prepared for the examination. They must use a pencil for any musical dictation activities so they can erase work helping the examining process. Question 5ai was much more difficult to mark this year due to crossings out and illegible notes. If one large notehead was deemed to be on both a line and space they were marked incorrectly as it was not clear which note the candidate had written.
- Candidates must be encouraged not to leave blanks – 17 marks were multiple choice questions this year and candidates may have been credited if they had attempted each question.
- When comparing music, more information is needed from candidates than simply 'there are changes in structure and tonality'. Detail is needed to explain how those elements of music are actually different.
- Where one specific response was required and more than one answer was supplied, the first answer was accepted. If more than one answer was underlined for a one-mark multiple choice question, zero marks were awarded. Likewise, if more than two were underlined for a two-mark question, zero marks were awarded.
- Further information and exemplar will be available in the forthcoming CPD to assist with the extended SPAG question, pitch notation in addition to effective comparison techniques.



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