



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

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

SUMMER 2022

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

General Certificate of Education (New)

Summer 2022

Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level

UNIT 1 AND 4 PERFORMING

General Comments

Please note that some of the comments (*) contained in this report appertain to the expected return of the full specification in 2023. These requirements may change if there are new government directives regarding adaptations in the future.

A warm welcome back 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. There were, understandably, some cases of nervousness and anxiety amongst candidates who had not taken any public examinations for two years.

Comments on individual questions/sections

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.

Please ensure that you are aware of all the requirements of the examination. These are available on the WJEC website. Please also 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 but, 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. Examiners will time the live performances themselves and, therefore, timings should not be added to the marksheets in advance of the examination.

* 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 on every page. 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. Note that there is no requirement to include an ensemble in an AS or A Level performance. Candidates also need to be aware of the technical challenge afforded by their own compositions in this regard. 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 Airplane 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 intros (eg) orchestral expositions in concerti, and outros 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

Please check the website for the most up to date information regarding the duration of the performance, number of pieces required and links to Areas of Study.

Time all performances carefully in rehearsal.

Check levels of difficulty of pieces chosen.

Sound check the performing venue.

MUSIC
General Certificate of Education (New)
Summer 2022
Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 2 COMPOSING

General Comments

Administration

There was a general improvement in administration this year, and procedures were correctly adhered to in most centres. There were some issues reported with missing authentication signatures or logs, incorrect surpass codes, faulty audios and the like, but these were dealt with efficiently. Late additions were mostly due to legitimate reasons.

Please note that for Music submissions a ZIP file is not acceptable and centres will be contacted via the examinations officer or head of centre to provide the files in the correct format. The uploading of PDF and mp3 files as suggested by the Board provided the most time effective and convenient marking. Occasionally, uploads were labelled with candidate's first names only – please label fully with names, numbers and titles of pieces as according to guidelines.

Scores/Lead sheets/Recordings

The presentation of accompanying scores was generally very good, with effective use of ICT to create professional results. Very few candidates failed to upload a full and proper score, and the detailed writing, song lyrics and chords, and other descriptions were much appreciated. Many scores included bow markings, dynamics, phrase marks and other articulation and performance directions, which displayed a high level of understanding. This is very important as credit is given for 'expressive control and musical understanding' (column 3 of the assessment criteria.) It would also be beneficial for centres to ensure that candidates list the instruments on the left-hand side of the score to make the examining process more effective, and delete any empty bars at the end of the compositions (some pieces had lots of these).

Candidates had selected software most appropriate to their needs and it was impressive to see that even when sequencer style programmes had been used to produce the music, time and effort had been taken to produce a more traditional score providing all instrument parts, melody lines and lyrics, where necessary. This was most helpful, and very much appreciated although there are no marks awarded for the score itself.

There were still instances when additional information and details of composing were required (as with other programs such as *GarageBand*), and some of these were impressive and detailed. Please remind candidates that screenshots and photographs must be accompanied by lead sheets or annotations which must contain necessary musical explanation and details – including the melody, chords and lyrics in vocal compositions. Many candidates' compositions lacked a title and were simply presented as 'AS / A Level Composition' or 'Free Composition' – or indeed, no title at all. Unannotated screenshots are of little use.

It is clear that digital technology is being utilised effectively across many centres, especially within the use of sequencing programmes and live audio tracks. Overall, recordings were effective and mostly well balanced. On a few occasions, audio files appeared to be missing certain instruments (one completely blank track was received by one examiner). There were less live realisations of compositions this year but when submitted, they created an excellent atmosphere especially in pop /rock songs. There were also some fantastic live performances submitted in the more 'classical' styles. A few live recordings of vocal pieces were received where the intonation was not great, and the candidate helpfully included a Sibelius recording as well.

Use of ICT: Software used included: Sibelius, Logic, Fruity Loops, Flat, Cakewalk, Musescore, Ableton, Cubase, BandLab, and Mixcraft.

Candidate Logs

The quality of the candidate logs varied. All candidate logs were typed and either submitted electronically or scanned to provide documents of good quality. The most impressive and helpful log entries were those where candidates explained the composing, refining and developing processes, supporting the musical outcome in the compositions, and mentioning specific pieces that had influenced them (even giving bar numbers in some cases). These candidates successfully displayed their understanding of the composing process through the information they provided on initial intentions, influences, musical reasoning, recording processes and any advice received from their teachers. Some logs were very detailed, giving almost a bar by bar analysis of the composition (not necessary when a score has been included) and mentioning many influences on their works.

Many logs were too brief, and were considered to be lacking in any of the necessary explanatory detail; some candidates used their log as a place to put their 'detailed description' in place of a score, which is not what is required. In these instances, the information provided was insufficient and gave very little detail about the composition process. Most candidate logs were still descriptive, rather than focusing on what, and why, certain compositional techniques were chosen. Too many candidates failed to identify a clear brief for their free compositions which is of concern with regard to assessing the 'response to the given brief' (i.e. column 1 of the assessment criteria.) Examiners cannot gauge how well a composition has reflected the brief when there simply isn't one there to respond to.

Where direct quotes had been used (and this appeared to happen more this year) the vast majority cited the source material e.g., a drum beat from a song or an actual chord progression from a piece, or song. Examiners reported of some information which seemed to be a little confused and random (e.g. the candidate who apparently had been influenced by Beethoven and Elton John – though the music was unlike either.)

Please remind candidates of the necessary requirement to fully complete the section of the log which asks how the recording was produced. When there is no score and other performers are involved in a live recording, how the candidate retains responsibility for the creation of the musical content is often not at all convincing. Guide instrumental or vocal lines, either sung, or played on keyboard by the candidate must be included. Examiners can only assess what work is clearly the work of the candidate.

Comments on individual questions/sections

For 2022, the requirements for Unit 2 were amended:

One free composition. This may be in the WCT style but this was not compulsory. Use of the briefs was also optional (2-4 minutes).

Tasks/Briefs

The first column of the assessment criteria relates to creating ideas and response to the brief, but it was difficult to judge a number of pieces due to the lack of intended outcome. This year, possibly as a result of the briefs being optional, many briefs as stated by the candidates lacked detail and occasion, or were too vague. Many made little reference to style, type of ensemble or purpose (e.g. many pieces were entitled 'free composition' or 'composition', or did not suggest any brief at all; one brief stated that a composition would be created in 'any style'). Some compositions simply did not fulfil their own brief (e.g. an intended jazz piece which was more like a classical style waltz with a few dissonant notes).

Examiners considered the most successful briefs to be those where the aim of the composition and the style were outlined clearly, and details of the audience and musical style were also offered. The resulting pieces offered the most coherence and conveyed that the finished composition was a successful product of clear and effective planning. Whatever the chosen style, it was clear that when students had researched and understood their particular genre, they generally produced a more stylistic and creative outcome.

Some centres gave candidates the same brief and chose 'class tasks' which led to similar outcomes. It is very unlikely that one choice fits all; for example, one centre cohort all chose piano sonatas, another centre all wrote wind quintets, another all string quartets. Obviously the responses could be differentiated and individual, but examiners felt that while such choices were suitable for those who played/understood the selected instruments they weren't the best choice for others - and the outcomes varied considerably in terms of standard. (Some candidates said that they were not string players and not necessarily comfortable writing for strings). Please ensure the candidate is given the opportunity to choose freely from styles that are of particular interest to them, then support with guidance.

Range of styles was really diverse and included the following:

WCT: Baroque, Classical, Romantic (sonata, sonatina, nocturne, ternary, rhapsody, prelude, quartet, trio, duet, solo, chamber, rondo, minuet, trio, waltz, overture, programme music, and use of a technical device e.g. counterpoint, fugue)

Modern: Impressionism, Expressionism, Serialism, Neo-classicism

Film: TV, Video/computer Game,

Musical Theatre

Popular: funk, soul, rock, pop, ballad, jazz, blues, big band, swing, dance/club, fusion

World: Americas, Asia, Home Nations, use of Jewish scales, 'Klezmer' Music, Japanese Animé music

Music for an Occasion/Place: Queen's jubilee, concerts, fetes, Christmas carols, Lullabies and music for children, nature/earth/river journeys

Dance: Waltz, Bossa-Nova

Content

Within Unit 2 portfolios, there was a real range of marks across bands 2, 3 & 4. The most successful and creative melodies displayed a lyrical line and more complex underlying harmony creating variety and allowing the melodic line to develop and incorporate compositional devices and techniques. The circle of 5ths was again quite commonly used this year and provided good harmonic development within many chord progressions when used effectively. Musical elements were effectively combined and there was obvious effective technical control as well as good responses to the chosen briefs.

There were a significant amount of WCT compositions, approached with a clear study of the style and communicated with an encouraging degree of musical understanding and focused listening, thus achieving marks in the top bands. Stronger examples showed development of both thematic and textural ideas along with some interesting harmonies, whereas the weaker compositions struggled with organisation and development of musical ideas, having meandering melodies that lacked direction and relied too heavily on repetition.

Some works reflected WCT, even though the compositions were noted as 'free', and on the whole, these works used rondo or ternary forms in a clear and defined manner. There were also one or two theme and variation outcomes.

Instrumentation included orchestral efforts, works for piano, instrumental trios, string and wind quartets and quintets, jazz ensembles of varying size and timbres, pop and rock ensembles and a few compositions for harp. Many portfolios favoured popular music styles and film music, and these were mostly effective, on occasion really impressive. Some film music pieces were composed to accompany a video, with the YouTube link provided. Occasionally the structure of such pieces was compromised to satisfy the video, and the outcome would have gained further credit if the work had been structured coherently.

In other works, lack of development reigned supreme, as well as constant repetitions of the main idea. There was an element of predictability in many weaker compositions, and also some unpredictable moments, where the music shot off in various directions, without reaching a sensible conclusion; compositions lacked direction and indeed, a flowing melody – a minority of compositions were very triadic and basic. Once again this year, some candidates tried to add overly complex rhythmic patterns, which tended to cloud the flow and form of the music – some results were rather 'unmusical'. Weaker compositions consisted of unconvincing melodic and accompanying lines which were overly triadic/arpeggiated. These compositions often lost coherence as the piece progressed and appeared 'random' in its approach.

Examiners felt that many candidates needed to focus on creating musical ideas more effectively in the first instance. The control of the elements of music needs more focus in compositions when concerning harmonic progress (more variety of chords, thoughtful chord progressions and the use of inversions), variation of texture (not all homophonic bustle), instrumentation (use of techniques, ranges and stylistic awareness), structure and the use of devices in general (to aid development). Ideas need to be communicated with 'expressive control' and 'musical understanding'. Thorough research is advised to ensure candidates understand and can employ these musical elements and techniques in their own work.

Pop and rock songs were sometimes too repetitive. Please encourage candidates to think about **contrast** which will enhance marks in the 'development of ideas' criteria - for example, structure could be rearranged, or added to, with new sections and new parts added (such as layering and countermelodies, backing ideas, solos etc). It was also felt that minimalist, serialist and experimental pieces needed more structure, contrast and more meaningful changes using musical elements. Research and support of identifying compositional techniques and features are needed to highlight and strengthen the use of musical elements and their communication.

Even though it is continually mentioned in the exam reports, there was still a wide use of repeat marks. Most work was well structured, although some pieces were rather short and lacking in substance. Some pieces were only 36 bars long. The very short pieces tended to be in a WCT style often ABA with very little development on the return of the A section. One candidate used the same 16 bars over and over and just changed the key each time.

Summary of key points

- Please label all required uploads according to WJEC guidelines.
- Ensure that the chosen brief for a free composition piece is achievable and clearly stated in the log, remembering that part of the assessment is directly related to ‘the response to the chosen brief’
- Check all files before submission, including the audio files for clarity and balance.
- Best practice in completing candidate logs was noted when all sections were completed correctly and the information provided supported the musical outcome as heard. There is no need to include a detailed analysis of the piece if a score has been included
- Refine the initial musical content to ensure musicality, conviction, general theoretical and stylistic understanding, and coherence.
- Remember that no marks are awarded for existing musical ideas or an interpretation of an idea by a performer that is not the candidate. Guide tracks must be included when there is no score for performers other than the composer. Credit can only be given for ideas (including expression and interpretation) that is the work of the candidate.
- Avoid using repeat marks for the sole purpose of extending ideas.
- Keep the requirements of the assessment criteria at the forefront of all thinking.

MUSIC

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Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 3 APPRAISING

General Comments

This year - and there were indications of this pre-pandemic –some examiners reported that the most successful responses in Qs 8 & 10 (comparison questions) were by those candidates who chose to write essay-style answers; these resulted in true comparisons that were presented clearly and logically and in prose that was entirely lucid and comprehensible. That is not to say that there were not many very good two-column answers, but this approach has seemed to encourage some to exploit this format by merely writing little more than single, often disjointed, words which, in a handful of papers, almost resembled “word clouds”. To make matters worse, there was usually absolutely no attempt to locate these answers. Very often, candidates listed common musical terms that could be found in virtually any extract from any era – e.g., “perfect cadences”, “decoration”. Another such answer, encountered frequently, was “diatonic harmony”, which, if given without any indication of specific location, would need to be taken as referring to the entire extract and which would be highly unlikely to be accurate. Such answers, especially if laid out haphazardly and untidily, are impossible to mark, and rarely result in the comparison-type answers demanded by the question. Candidates should be warned not to answer in such a disorganised fashion, while some candidates might be better advised to adopt the essay method in their answers. (It was difficult not to suspect that such answers were, in fact, no more than random musical features/terms plucked out of the air merely to fill up the lines on the page.)

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. “Monophonic” and “homophonic” were also often confused. “Unison” does not merely mean “playing together”; and “monophonic” does not mean “not many instruments playing”.

Location

This is less of a problem than it used to be, but there were several examples in both the options and the set works questions of marks being lost because it appeared that candidates had just forgotten to write down bar or line numbers.

Extended writing

[See above for Q.8 & 10.] Candidates often tended to ignore the bullet points provided by the examiner in the Pop, Musical Theatre and Jazz extended writing questions. These provide helpful hints as to what the examiner is looking for in a very good answer. There were again examples of candidates not addressing the question and, for instance, launching straight into a potted history of Jazz. There were very many examples of candidates not reading a question carefully enough in other parts of the paper, too.

This led, for instance, to a question on melodic material being answered with information relating to the type of voice singing or vocal techniques (such as vibrato) – or even to matters not even closely related, such as tempo.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Rock and Pop

- Q.1**
- (a)** This was answered well on the whole, with “syncopation” and “triplets” being the most common (correct answers). The repeated (crotchet) chords on piano were also mentioned by several candidates, though they were occasionally described in unusual ways, such as “pedal chords” or as “rhythm is in the piano”.
 - (b)** Working out the correct accidentals was the problem here, with F naturals and/or Dbs being found quite often. (The (correct) notes are accepted in any order in such questions.)
 - (c)** A large selection of different chords was in evidence here, unfortunately with only a small number correct. A few heard F# minor rather than F# major (or F#7).
 - (d)** A disappointing number heard the verse as being in a minor key, so making the question even more difficult for themselves. The majority plumped for the more “logical” B major/E major option, which in this case was incorrect.
 - (e)**
 - (i)** Most candidates wrote trumpet – which was acceptable – with a small number knowing it was a piccolo trumpet. Incorrect answers included oboe, saxophone and flute.
 - (ii)** Conjunct or scalic were the most popular answers. Perhaps surprisingly, hardly anyone referred to the arpeggios towards the end.
 - (f)** The 3rd box (with the similar ending) was quite often chosen instead of the (correct) 2nd box, but a pleasing number of candidates gained the mark.
 - (g)** Even those candidates who had done very well up to this point were less successful here, and full marks were rare. Similar questions at A Level also caused problems, chief among which was the tendency to ignore the focal point of the question, which was the vocal melody. Instead, answers were provided on the use of backing vocals, homophonic texture, falsetto, instruments etc.
 - (h)** This was better answered, but, as usual, there were candidates who merely named instruments without giving any information as to what they played (or location) – e.g., “drums/vocals/bass used throughout piece”. More perceptive candidates tended to mention the descending bass line in the verse, the chordal nature of the piano writing or pertinent information on the flute or trumpet parts.
 - (i)** This was usually well answered, with many getting the exact year. (Any year between 1965 and 1970 was acceptable.) A small number merely wrote 1960s, which, for obvious reasons, was not sufficient for a mark.

Q.2 This question was generally well answered, but examiners reported that there was far too much “irrelevant” information provided – mostly on the general use of instruments, with no relation to the songs’ structure. The vast majority of candidates were able to mention different types of structures (such as 12-bar blues or verse-chorus) but, as in both the Musical Theatre and Jazz options, the same songs were occasionally described as having different forms by different candidates. Some songs were mentioned by a number of candidates – and for good reason – e.g., “Bohemian Rhapsody” and “Stairway to Heaven”, but a wide range of other songs was in evidence. (While the Pop/Rock specification starts in 1965, in this instance, since the question mentioned “1960s”, candidates who included information on songs prior to 1965 (and there were many) were not penalised. The odd songs cited from the 1950s, however, were deemed as inadmissible – unless they were merely mentioned in passing.) Terminology was occasionally suspect – e.g., “the structure is still stretto” or “overall, rock-pop songs from the 1960s and 1970s all had a stretto structure”. More than one candidate only mentioned the structure of “Penny Lane”. One such answer was incorrect, simply because it dealt only with the extract heard in the previous question rather than the entire song, and exhibited very little evidence of previous experience with pop structure. Another candidate wrote at length on The Beatles in general, without any mention of structure.

- Q.3**
- (a)** This was a mixed bag. Some recognised the pentatonic scale – or might even have made an inspired guess based on the extract itself – but answers such as chromatic, major and whole-tone were given. More dubious answers included “dominant 7th”.
 - (b)** Slash chords remain problematic. The slash suggested two different chords to some; another stated that it was an E7 chord “with an added B”. One candidate worked in the wrong direction, regarding it as a “B major chord with an E as the root”. Many answered in terms of inversion (E7 in 2nd inversion) rather than “with B in the bass”, which was perfectly acceptable. Another common fault persists, too. There are still candidates who call a dominant 7th chord a “major 7” chord – in this instance, Emaj7 rather than E7. Accordingly, a D# (rather than D natural) was incorrectly given in the second part of the answer. Some candidates failed to answer this second part, thus losing a mark.
 - (c)** There were few correct marks here. A variety of answers was found, with F# the most frequent.
 - (d)** Not all answers here could be regarded as a “musical device”. A favourite among them was “vibrato”.
 - (e)** A good number heard the triplets, but, again, some candidates wrote answers that were not related to “rhythmic feature” – such as “soprano”. A small number did not attempt the question, which was disappointing considering the limited answers to this particular question.
 - (f)** As is usual in this type of question, answers were rather hit-and-miss. There was a good number of correct answers, however.
 - (g)** Most candidates picked up marks here. Answers such as syncopation, repetitive rhythms and pedal point were the favourites.
 - (h)** Virtually all types of interval were found, from 2nd to (the correct) 8ve, which was recognised by some. Sadly, some weren’t prepared to guess.

- (i) Some failed to address the question here, instead mentioning such things as dynamics and melodic material rather than the use of accompanying instruments. Candidates need to be reminded that in such “describe” questions it is necessary to give some information on what the named instrument plays – e.g., the answer “harp” does not get a mark, while “harp plays arpeggios” does.
- (j) Again, all types of cadences were found, but there were many “perfect” answers.
- (k) There was a surprising span of years found here, extending well into the 1980s – occasionally beyond even this. Again, some candidates were not willing to hazard a guess.

Q.4 Most candidates managed to mention suitable structures and relate them to specific songs/choruses. A good number, however, talked too much about the use of instruments without relating it to structure. Some managed to address at least some of the question’s bullet points – such as the use of lyrics/plot and use of voices and instruments to define sections, though a small number tended to write too much information on nothing but the plot. There were definite favourite songs/musicals in evidence among diverse centres, though they were not always cited as examples of the same structure. “I dreamed a dream”, for instance, was described as an AABA structure, ternary (ABA) form and a verse-chorus structure. More than one song (e.g., Porter’s “Anything goes”, Rodger’s “Climb every mountain” and “Oh, what a beautiful morning”, and Schonberg’s “I dreamed a dream”) had what was described by candidates from various centres as an “unmemorable verse”. Occasionally, in an effort to address the question’s “use of voices and instruments to define sections”, candidates ignored the important final three words and wrote at length on the vocal/instrumental resources used, failing to mention structure. Some candidates, too, sometimes misunderstood the forms themselves – e.g., binary form was given as an ABA structure, while one candidate considered “Tin Pan Alley” to be a type of structure and wrote almost a page on its use by Cole Porter. There were some candidates, however, who, taking the question’s bullet points as their cue, wrote perceptively on the song structures themselves and, in particular, the use of voices/instruments to define them.

- Q.5**
- (a) Most candidates answered this correctly, though binary and verse-chorus were (very rarely) found.
 - (b) The slash chord caused similar problems here to those in the Musical Theatre option. A small number explained the slash as meaning that the D was in “root position” rather than “the bass note”. There were some careless errors, too. One candidate answered this first part of the question correctly (“D in the bass”), but, when writing out the notes of the chord included a D#. A very small number (as in Q3) identified two chords here – Bb and D major, going on to write out the three notes in each triad.
 - (c) The walking bass was heard by the vast majority.
 - (d) It seemed as though many candidates could not believe that the answer was as simple as a plain major scale, and, instead, opted for one of the more “exotic” chromatic or pentatonic varieties.
 - (e) Candidates were less successful here. Occasionally an answer was far too vague – e.g., “an expressed version of the printed sheet”.

- (f) A pleasing number of candidates identified the use of sequence here.
- (g) This was more disappointing, with a good many incorrect answers in evidence. (In all three options the questions on “vocal melody” were generally unsatisfactory.) Answers like scat singing, arpeggios, same rhythm and repetition were frequently given.
- (h) It is disappointing, too, when a question such as this, with a small number of potentially correct answers, elicits responses which have nothing to do with rhythm. Both syncopation and triplets were acceptable, but answers like “voices are syllabic”, “drum kit can be heard” and “repetition” were very far from the mark indeed.
- (i) As usual, this was very hit-and-miss.
- (j) Candidates were more successful here, with walking bass, piano comping or fills, brass sf chords, brushes on drums being given most often. One candidate, however, heard the “drums scattling”.
- (k) Many recognised Ella Fitzgerald. Other suitable singers were awarded marks. Unfortunately for one candidate, Fats Waller was not among them.

Q.6 As in the Musical Theatre option, many candidates fell into the trap of (to varying degrees) forgetting that structure was meant to be the focus of the of the answer and merely gave a basic description of the three main jazz styles contained within the Jazz option, often commenting in some detail on irrelevant matters linked to instrumentation, improvisation and harmony, sometimes to the almost total exclusion of structure. The best answers were those that contained at least one quite detailed description of the structure of a representative jazz composition. Also similar to the Musical Theatre option, several candidates used very similar (often identical) examples of other jazz compositions, the structure of which could change from candidate to candidate. The vast majority were aware of the importance of the AABA and 12-bar blues structures, but it was rare to see any mention of variations on these basic forms – such as AABC or an extended blues. Some of the information given was sometimes dubious – e.g., Glenn Miller often used ABA (Tertiary (sic)) form – no example of such a piece was given, however - or very vague – e.g., a description of “In the mood” merely mentioned that it “used many repeats”. Dubious, too, were some of the musical features that impacted a work’s structure, among them the statement that the 5/4 time signature of “Take Five” “heavily changed the structure within the piece”.

Q.7 The recording used for the examination was a historically informed one, resulting in the overall pitch being lower than that notated – i.e., in Ab major rather than A major. This could have affected some candidates’ answers to (a) and/or (d). Consequently, examiners were instructed to consider two sets of marks as being correct in these two questions.

- (a) A disappointing number appeared not to recognise that three sharps = A major (or even F# minor). A great variety of answers was in evidence, including such keys as Eb major. (Even those candidates with perfect pitch appeared to answer in terms of the written notation here. Their answers of F minor to (d) were still marked as correct.) No candidate was penalised in any way with regard to the problems in pitch.

Indeed, there was a small number of candidates whose answers to (b) and (c) strongly suggested that they did not possess perfect pitch and who appeared to omit the sharp in an intended F# minor answer to (d). However, because F minor was an acceptable answer here (for the reasons given above) they still got the mark.

- (b) Several candidates doubled the first four note values, ending up with a bar of 4/4. Only the most alert candidates heard the G natural in the next bar.
- (c) Answers here were generally disappointing, with only (iii) being recognised by the majority of candidates.
- (d) An array of different keys was in evidence here; and imperfect and interrupted were often given rather than perfect for the cadence.

Q.8 There was a mixed response from examiners with regard to this question (and Q10) this year – a 50/50 split. Some appeared to have had no problem in marking the two-column format adopted by the vast majority to answer this question, and, in general, favoured this bullet-point approach; and, as mentioned in this report's introductory remarks, as long as candidates use this format in the correct manner there can be no problem with this procedure. Other examiners reported that the answers by those candidates who had written in an "essay-type" style were more successful than those in a bullet-point format. Candidates should be reminded that this type of question does require a direct comparison rather than just a description of both extracts. Bullet-point answers can distract from this particular discipline, particularly when candidates begin to hedge their bets and write random musical features that could turn up in any extract.

In this question correct musical terminology is crucial, particularly with regard to texture, and, once again (and not only in this question), "monophonic", "unison" and "polyphonic" especially, were used incorrectly. The opening of the first extract proved problematic for a good number of candidates in this respect. Some, for instance, heard the opening of Extract 1 (from Haydn's "Lamentatione" Symphony) as monophonic rather than homophonic. One candidate considered the extract to be "in unison throughout". (Another found it "jovial and dance-like".) More than one candidate referred to it as being in "2-part harmony". Several referred to a solo violin here, perhaps because of the "thin" sonority of the period instruments. "Imitation" was sometimes heard erroneously here, too – though it is more than likely that the word was used as meaning "joins in with". "Melismatic" continues to be used occasionally in relation to instrumental melodies. Many failed to hear the 8ve/unison passages in this extract, considering it to be "homophonic throughout". Candidates should avoid writing simple "all-embracing" answers like "diatonic" (as in the 1st extract). Indeed, very few candidates remarked on (or noticed) the quite frequent chromaticism in this extract. Instruments were quite often misidentified – or even imagined. Extract 1 was heard as beginning with a woodwind solo, for instance, or even "heavily woodwind overall". Tubas and trombones were heard in Extract 2 (from Schubert's 5th Symphony), and many heard a full complement of woodwind here, too, though, unusually, this symphony uses only one flute, 2 oboes and 2 bassoons. Some candidates played safe and referred to only "woodwind and brass" without risking mentioning individual instruments. Disappointingly, this year (and the same was true to a large extent in the Religious Choral Music option) a good number of candidates had problems with the overall tonality of the extracts, stating, for instance, that Extract 1 began in a major key and moved to minor. (Similar claims were made for Extract 2).

Responses to Extract 2 was answered slightly better overall, though texture (or rather giving it its correct name) was again a problem. One candidate also considered the extract to be “polyrhythmic”.

- Q.9**
- (a)** Answers were mostly correct here.
 - (b)** Many correct answers here, too, but all were found.
 - (c)** Harmony was a real problem this year – doubtless affected by the time restrictions caused by Covid. Candidates should be made aware that naming an individual chord (unless there is something particularly interesting about it) is not sufficient for a mark. The main cause of loss of marks this year, however, was that the majority of candidates were not aware of the difference between harmony and tonality, with many answers such as “modulation to Eb major” being found. A small number of candidates, however, were able to identify the ii-V-I progression at the cadence in Eb. Matters were complicated this year by the 2-part (or unison) nature of some of the music – though there were marks available for candidates who could comment on this in matters that did relate to harmony. Accidentals led many candidates astray, too – unfortunately, a matter of “a little knowledge ...” The E natural and F# were seen as indications of tonicisations of F minor and G major – which would often be the case. However, in this instance, the notes in question were not chord notes but merely (melodic) chromatic decorations associated with F minor (iv) and G major (V) (or Eb major (III)) chords. (Some candidates identified the F# in bar 6 as a leading note of a dominant (root position) chord in G minor rather than as chromatic decoration of an Eb 6/3 chord.) A few candidates failed to get anywhere near anything relating to harmony – e.g., “staccato to create tutti feel”.
 - (d)** This question was the best answered. Key, dynamics and the fact that the melody was in the violin were the favourite answers for similarities, while the use of a solo violin and reduced accompaniment were most often mentioned as differences. (The presence of repeat marks in both passages does not constitute a similarity in the music.)
 - (e)** Few attained full marks here, but the question was fairly well answered on the whole. Spotting the diminished triad caused most problems. Unfortunately, several candidates wrote answers that were not within the bar numbers stipulated.)
 - (f)** A good number of definitions for “arco” were in evidence. A few did not attempt an answer here. Some gave “roll”, “trill” or “tremolo” for the second question, but more were aware of the fermata sign, though there were some occasional (sometimes ingenious) attempts at working it out, the best of which was “staccato slur”. A pleasing number of candidates scored full marks.
 - (h)** The main problem here was not addressing the question. Many seemed unaware of what was meant by “thematic material” and commented instead on the instruments employed, the dynamics and the texture. Most could correctly identify the theme – though not all centres had adopted the same nomenclature for it - but few mentioned such matters as the imitation in the viola or the later fragmentation of the opening motif.

Q.10 [Please read the initial comments on Q8 before reading this.] As in the Symphony option, the first extract elicited the most successful responses, the alternation of antiphonal, fanfare-like passages for WW and Brass and the use of the (double) chorus all being described in detail. Those with perfect pitch sometimes mentioned harmony and tonality, too. The only problem here was terminology, with the homophonic texture sometimes being described as monophonic, which many candidates seem to regard as meaning “everyone sings/plays at much the same time.” The later polyphonic passage (Osanna) was slightly more problematic, and not only texturally; many candidates seemed to have difficulty writing down what they actually heard.

The second extract proved slightly more problematic in its entirety, its occasional chromaticism leading some candidates to suggest it was in a minor key. The extract’s quasi-polyphonic later (quicker) section also sometimes confused candidates, both texturally and harmonically – and even the metre confounded a small number. There was a tendency for the less perceptive candidates to focus on a particular element in their answers – most often dynamics. More than one wrote 17 lines or more on the extracts’ use of dynamics, in the most extreme instances almost to the exclusion of anything else. The word “polyphony” appeared to be quite often misused as meaning “thick texture”. When extracts such as these include textural changes, it is crucial that candidates have a clear understanding of the different types of texture – and their precise meaning. Some puzzling answers were also found, such as (for Extract 1) “The orchestra consists of timpani and trumpets

- Q.11**
- (a) This was mostly well answered, but responses such as “tertiary form” were also found.
 - (b) Many could identify Handel, but both Bach and Scarlatti were also found, Palestrina far less often.
 - (c) There was a tendency for candidates to achieve either full marks or none at all, depending whether they knew what was meant by “word setting”. At both AS and A Level “word setting” and “vocal melody” are frequently confused, resulting in the loss of valuable marks.
 - (d) Since the question was on harmony very few scored full marks here. As in Q9 many mentioned tonality rather than harmony. At best random chords were given. A few (including some of the very able candidates) answered on bars outside those stipulated in the question.
 - (e) F major was often recognised but C minor was found less frequently. Again, examples of full marks were few and far between.
 - (f) This was better answered, but a small number did not attempt the question.
 - (g) Some candidates had no problems gaining the two marks, while others struggled to find relevant differences.
 - (h) Several candidates failed to address the word “discuss” in the question. In such cases it is not enough to merely list individual vocal/instrumental entries without some additional comments – e.g., “bass, bar 33” does not merit a mark. (This type of answer gives very little real musical information, and, when duplicated by three or more additional answers of the same ilk, could result in a candidate getting full marks with very little thought (or understanding.

Additionally, this question is not likely to be replicated easily in a question on the symphony, leading to an imbalance in the standard of difficulty between the two options.)

- (i) This was actually quite an easy question, since the Mark Scheme did allow for candidates to list vocal entries in the description of individual sections. It was pleasing to see that most candidates, however, answered in the form of an outline of the overall structure of the movement. Sadly, some lost marks for not locating (all) the sections given, which, of course, is crucial in this type of answer.

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 answers to questions that were outside the bar numbers stipulated in the examination question.
- A thorough knowledge of musical elements is essential, and musical terms must be used correctly. Carelessly answering a straightforward question on rhythm with information on metre or tempo, for instance, or a question on harmony with answers on tonality, 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. Use the helpful bullet points provided by the examiner when answering the question. Read these carefully; for instance, the instruction this year to refer to the use of voices and instruments in each of the questions was followed by the important words **to define sections** – which makes a huge difference to the answer provided.
- 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 they have 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 visually and 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.

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General Certificate of Education (New)
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Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced
UNIT 5 COMPOSING

General Comments

[Most of the information in this section is common to both AS and A Level. Please refer also to the report on Unit 2.]

Administration

Procedures were correctly adhered to in most centres. Any issues were dealt with efficiently for the most part, and best practice was considered to be in centres where the guidelines had been correctly adhered to – i.e. three files, correctly labelled and checked. Please note: Sibelius files as they stand are not acceptable, and some other files were not compatible with Word.

Candidate Logs

As with Unit 2, the standard of logs was extremely variable, ranging from the truly excellent to very basic. While many candidates stated their chosen brief clearly, the requirement of 'free composition' was left as just that for many; one complete centre stated 'free composition' as a brief with no further details of the intended outcomes. Other candidates wrote '...this is free and not for a specific brief'...missing the point that a 'free composition' simply means that candidates have the freedom to choose their own brief. Some of the briefs were not appropriate or particularly thoughtful, ranging from vague and even non-existent intentions to incredibly complex descriptions, which were impossible to reflect in musical terms. Maybe the candidates were trying to impress with some totally bizarre briefs – but this was not particularly impressive.

Some candidates persist in describing the content of their work analytically in the log. At the risk of repeating previous guidance, please be advised that there is no need for this detail when a score is presented with the music; others also state the 'what' but fail to explain 'how' the outcome has been achieved.

Candidates must avoid getting too dragged down with portraying events / story or the like in film music. Very few achieve the intricacies of a detailed plot through their composition, and the most successful pick a general theme or context, remembering that their aim is always how to plan and achieve ideas which best fulfil the requirements of the assessment criteria.

Some candidates fail to acknowledge the academic requirement of the log (e.g. '...I sat with my Mum and started playing my ideas and I was off....'). Some candidates fail to provide sufficient specific explanation (e.g. '...my teacher supported me with chord sequences'; '...to be fair I wrote most of it myself'; '...my teacher helped me write all the transition passages'; '...we then worked on the best ideas for the drum track' etc). This is not clear, vague and possibly misleading, making it difficult for the examiner to appreciate exactly what has been written by the candidate. For clarity – anything not written by the candidate must be explained fully, with the exact musical details. If a candidate chooses to include other people's ideas, they must be reminded that credit will not be given for this.

Some candidates gave clear information about composers and pieces they were influenced by, though other influences were more difficult to appreciate (e.g. ‘...I took a lot of my inspiration from a fashion designer’). Usually some explanation is given, but in such cases, the intention is not convincing or advisable (e.g. ‘...I chose to write for string quartet because it’s not something I usually write for’).

Most candidates providing live tracks without scores explained how parts had been learnt, but in some cases, this was very unclear. In one case, there was no score, but the whole song, including harmonies, layering and embellishments had been performed by someone other than the candidate with just the explanation ‘I played them the midi track’. Other examples included guitar/drum parts/keyboard parts not played by candidates, with no score or clear lead sheet – it is not clear or convincing as to how such parts were taught. Please be advised that this is unsatisfactory; examiners must only give credit to work that is clearly the candidate’s own. WJEC provide guidelines as to how work like this should be presented. Ideally, tracks should be all recorded by the candidate using digital means if necessary – there is no advantage to a live recording in this situation. If a candidate insists on others performing the material then a score/ melodic notation, or a guide track performed by the candidate must be left clearly audible on the track.

Scores and Recordings

As with both GCSE and AS level, screenshots are of little help if there is no annotation. There were some examples of this, although most were clearly and suitably annotated. There were some excellent lead sheets with a great deal of information, in the place of scores from some candidates, and some examiners felt that the standard of lead sheets was, perhaps, better than ever. Most traditional scores were taken from computer software and many were of excellent quality. As ‘expressive’ and ‘technical’ control is part of the assessment, scores and lead sheets should include all performance directions, dynamics, tempo markings and so on. Credit for this consideration is given in column 3 of the assessment criteria.

Please encourage candidates to make their scores particularly ‘user-friendly’. For example, in one case there was one bar per page, making it almost impossible to follow the score. Resizing or changing margins would have easily solved this.

Comments on individual questions/sections

For 2022, the requirements for Unit 5 were amended:

Option A: one free composition (3-6 minutes)

Option B: two compositions. One composition in a Western Classical Tradition style, and a second free composition (5 – 9 minutes).

As with AS this year, optional briefs had been given but all compositions were marked under the ‘free’ criteria. Although very few candidates again chose from the suggested briefs, of those that had, the most popular was definitely Brief 4, i.e. ‘Write a solo piece with accompaniment, or a solo piano piece intended for performance in a local music college’.

It was pleasing to see centres submitting a range of styles and genres, especially where the candidates had been encouraged to embark on an individual composition rather than a whole class approach. This contributed to candidates drawing on their musical strengths and many stated in their log how much they had enjoyed the composition process when it was a style they were passionate about. This approach is to be applauded - compositions should be inspired by candidates’ strengths and personal interests, supported and enhanced with focussed research.

Most candidates chose Option A, presenting their free compositions in a huge range of styles across the range. The structures were sometimes WCT, including rondo, ternary and sonata forms, and one or two theme and variations. Influences included the usual Baroque and Classical composers, a plethora of jazz, rock and pop artistes, video games and YouTube cartoons, film music and so on. A few candidates used contemporary sound samples within their compositions (e.g. Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough speeches). There were many instrumental and vocal combinations used, but nothing out of the ordinary this year.

Overall, the standards were, as expected, extremely variable. The strongest compositions which reached the upper band of marks included imaginative writing with sophisticated and substantial material, presented and organised carefully before embarking on thoughtful development of ideas and skilful control of the musical elements. There were some very well-balanced and coherent compositions, with excellent instrumental variety and interesting thematic content. Harmonic language was mostly appropriate – and sometimes impressive with candidates using suspensions, modulations, complex and advanced progressions confidently in their work. The more successful candidates used a wide range of compositional devices to develop and extend the thematic material.

The majority in the mid-range marks were not as adept at treating musical ideas well, and tended to neglect harmonic fluency, as well as providing appropriate or adequate ideas which at times lost focus and conviction.

Pieces in the lower bands of marks did not successfully progress after the appearance of the initial idea and lacked organisation and fluency. Some of these were very predictable in their outcomes and were simplistic and only partially coherent, lacking in phrase structure and melodic conviction. These compositions tended to be overly repetitive, and lacking in harmonic and textural variety, and effective technical control of the elements generally. In this range, examiners commented on the lack of meaningful development. There was often evidence of successful layering, but the work was overly repetitive and lacked thematic and harmonic manipulation and extension. Some pieces were very short – only 30 odd bars. Others were too long, and the results lacked direction, structure and conviction. Choral works, particularly SATB unaccompanied pieces, tended to be quite short and insubstantial. Word setting was often – but not always - well handled, and such pieces were mainly written by singers who understood how to write for voices, though there was little in the way of development. Some of these pieces (possibly composed by candidates that were not vocalists) were not as successful.

Much of the instrumental writing was appropriate, if not always idiomatic, though some candidates were overly ambitious in writing for full orchestra, finding the medium too much of a challenge. Instrumental writing was not always totally understood (e.g., a flute on low C and D below the staff playing a melody over a full orchestra just cannot be heard). Texture was not always well controlled when using large forces and lacked clarity. However - there was some excellent film music in this category, although some effects would have been more impactful if used sparingly.

Some Jazz pieces were through-composed and contained very little real development, just a stream of new ideas and improvisations. Other jazz compositions were of a higher calibre - well structured, used the instruments with understanding, and capturing stylistic features successfully, making excellent use of texture to create variety.

Pop songs were usually coherent with good understanding of style, but ‘backing tracks’ were often (though not always) quite basic and triadic, with little development and an overuse of repeated chord patterns. Some candidates relied on primary chords and four-chord patterns - insufficient to impress and achieve higher credit at this level.

There was some fantastic, improvisatory guitar playing from candidates in a rock/metal style. At times these really helped to 'elevate' the musical outcome.

Several candidates chose to compose in the style of Einaudi, but this particular style does not necessarily lend itself well to A-level composing, as it does not display a great deal of contrast, development and rhythmic variety, and by its nature is very repetitive. One piece, in an Impressionist style, was based on two chords and although it was very musically written and fully coherent, it was hampered by the lack of harmonic and thematic variety.

Fewer candidates selected Option B. It sometimes appeared that candidates had spent more time on one piece than the other, as one was more substantial/successful, and the second piece tended to score lower.

The majority remained in the mediocre category – not so much effective and sophisticated, but more inconsistent and bordering on the partially coherent. Some pieces were extremely insubstantial.

Summary of key points

In common with Unit 2:

- Please label all required uploads according to WJEC guidelines.
- Ensure that the chosen brief for a free composition piece is achievable and clearly stated in the log, remembering that part of the assessment is directly related to 'the response to the chosen brief'
- Check all files before submission, including the audio files for clarity and balance.
- Best practice in completing candidate logs was noted when all sections were completed correctly and the information provided supported the musical outcome as heard. There is no need to include a detailed analysis of the piece if a score has been included.
- Refine the initial musical content to ensure musicality, conviction, general theoretical and stylistic understanding, and coherency.
- Remember that no marks are awarded for existing musical ideas or an interpretation of an idea by a performer that is not the candidate. Guide tracks must be included when there is no score for performers other than the composer. Credit can only be given for ideas (including expression and interpretation) that is the work of the candidate.
- Avoid using repeat marks for the sole purpose of extending ideas.
- Keep the requirements of the assessment criteria at the forefront of all thinking.

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UNIT 6 APPRAISING

General Comments

It must be said first that both teachers and candidates deserve praise and congratulation for their efforts over the last 2-3 years to maintain the overall standard set previously in this exam. The trials and tribulations associated with Covid-19 were not apparent in the paper, which speaks volumes for all those involved, especially when one considers that the 2022 A Level cohort had had no previous experience of sitting an external GCSE or AS Level examination. “Exam technique” is extremely important factor in the exam process, but can only be acquired by actually sitting an exam under strict conditions. The 2022 candidates did not have the opportunity to acquire this skill in the usual manner. The usual faults (which will be outlined in this report) were in evidence, of course, but not significantly so overall. If there was one area where lack of knowledge/experience was rather more pronounced, it was in candidates’ understanding of harmony – more specifically in the WCT set works, where there did appear to be a slight fall in standards this year. Not even the most capable candidates seemed able to answer satisfactorily questions on “harmonic content”, whether in the Brahms Symphony or the Verdi Requiem. Perhaps this situation can be redressed in the near future.

2019’s trend in an increase in the take-up of Musical Theatre in Strands 3, 4 and 5 was in evidence again this year. 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. “Phrase structure” continues to be a mystery for all but the very best of candidates. As in 2019, too, 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.) caused even greater problems for the majority of candidates this year, with marks being lost to candidates of all abilities. The lack of regular practice caused by the pandemic would appear to be a leading cause of this.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** The overall standard in this question was good, with a number of excellent marks in evidence. Many candidates had obviously studied the WJEC notes assiduously. Had it not been for answers that carelessly did not address the question or for some habitual misuse of terminology, marks could have been even higher.
- (a)** Some candidates failed to address the question, considering that “writing for the piano” meant anything that happened in bars 1-14. Consequently, some mentioned changes in clef in the LH, others changes in dynamics, the presence of a pedal or the use of motifs – which, in this case, resulted in a very small number of candidates writing an identical answer to (a) and (b).

- (b) This, too, was done well on the whole, with, for the most part, the WJEC notes' x, y and A nomenclature being used for the motivic use. Very occasionally, motifs were not named or described in any way, however.
- (c) The increased chromaticism (or harmonic interest) and the development of motifs were the most popular answers here. The changes of texture and/or articulation were found less frequently. Some lack of understanding of basic elements was illustrated by answers such as "tempo becomes slower and softer".
- (d) Most managed at least one correct answer, but there was a satisfying number of candidates who scored full marks here – and for a question on harmony this was unexpected. A small number of candidates unfortunately did not restrict their answers to the extract, as the question demanded.
- (e) Again, the main problem here was not addressing the question – or not understanding the word "function", with some candidates answering in pictorial or programmatic terms – e.g., "to depict the ripples of water"; others considered that the bars were "designed to show off the talent of the performer". A small number merely mentioned other musical features, such as "quasi-cadenza", "ascending minor 3rds" etc. The majority of candidates, however, had no difficulty whatever here.
- (f) Some candidates seemed uncertain as to what constituted "texture". Answers included details on "conjunct and disjunct patterns", key signatures etc., while descriptions of texture as "large", "small". "softer" or "harmonic" were sometimes found. There were some extraordinary claims made, too – e.g., one candidate mentioned an "alto vocal line" in "Reflets", while another stated that the "Prélude" "began with a piano solo". More than one candidate included (unnecessary) information on "Colloque sentimental". A worrying number of candidates (including some very able ones) described the opening of "Reflets" as monophonic. One candidate unnecessarily listed the complete instrumentation of the "Prélude". In this work, too, some candidates seemed to have confused texture with timbre. Octatonicism and chromaticism were also sometimes endowed with textural properties. Despite these faults, there were some excellent answers in evidence, some of which left examiners staggered at how the candidate had managed to write so copiously in the given time.

Q.2 As in the Debussy set work, there were some excellent responses from a handful of candidates who had obviously devoted much time and effort in getting to know both works.

- (a) Piazzolla and Ligeti were mentioned most frequently. Bach could not be accepted because of the rhythmic focus of the question. Some did not attempt the question, while others invented suitable names.
- (b) The serial features were mentioned by many, though fewer responded in relation to the alternating moments of disjunct and conjunct motion. A small number answered on matters of rhythm, despite having been asked not to.

- (c) As elsewhere on the paper, tonality and harmony were frequently regarded as synonymous. Questions on harmony are not always difficult, however, and do not always call for information on chords/harmonic progressions; a simple answer such as “static” would have been sufficient for a mark here, for instance. Some answers did not relate to harmony in any way – e.g., “played on off-beat”.
 - (d) “Phrase structure” is another term that seems to alarm a good many candidates. Answers to this can include virtually anything, including syncopation and rests. There were some very perceptive answers, however.
 - (e) There were some very good answers here, too, resulting in several additions to the original mark scheme. Occasionally, candidates answered in terms of time signatures, which was proscribed by the question. Those who mentioned rhythmic changes gained marks, however.
 - (f) As in the Debussy set work, some seemed unaware of the term “function”, instead merely describing musical features within the passage in question. “Interlude” was sufficient for a mark, but some were able to give an even more detailed answer.
 - (g) Occasionally, candidates tended to get preoccupied with bar-by-bar minutiae rather than standing back rather more and taking a more panoramic viewpoint. More than one candidate referred to an “antiphonal texture” in “Ariel” – a common error, and one encountered in past examinations. It is such a shame when valuable marks are lost in answers such as these purely because a candidate is unsure of the meaning of a particular term describing texture. As in the Debussy, too, some candidates unnecessarily answered on all three set works.
- Q.3**
- (a) Several heard the synth note, with a few attempting a description of the filter sweep, with one candidate being aware of the exact term. Suitable alternative descriptions were accepted and the later guitar chord was also recognised. A few, however, heard the synth as a (distorted) guitar.
 - (b)
 - (i) “Phrase structure” caused the usual problems, with a variety of (inaccurate) answers suggested – e.g., “elongation of vowels”, “melismatic” and “sung on beat”. Time signatures were also occasionally given as answers.
 - (ii) Since the answer to (ii) was linked to that to (i), only those who had correct answers to (i) gained marks here. A small number attempted to answer in terms of lyrics and punctuation.
 - (c)
 - (i) Harmony again proved problematic, with terms such as “solo harmony” or “very empty” being found. Both sections of the question were occasionally left blank, even by able candidates.
 - (ii) Again, candidates found this difficult. It was very rare to find any comment on the unusual chromatic chord progression at the start of the verse (“I was lost”), which almost certainly has a programmatic intention. That the same progression did not occur in lines 3-4 also seemed to go unnoticed.

- (d) A fair number recognised the “unsettling” augmented 4th.
- (e) Some commented on the lower pitch in lines 1-2, the melisma on “road/toad” and the occasional long note in lines 5-11. Generally, however, this question was disappointingly answered, with many responses not confined to solo vocal melody, such as those relating to backing vocals.
- (f) Despite the question referring to “use of instruments”, answers to other features (such as, again backing vocals) were given.

Q.4 The slightly unusual structure of the extract rather confused (or completely eluded) a good many candidates. Some picked up on the rather atypical musical design, but either seemed to lack the nerve to say so or, not having the courage of their convictions, attempted to skirt around it as though this could not possibly be the case, usually ending up going down the more traditional verse - pre-chorus – chorus route. (Such candidates were rewarded for their expression of doubt, however). A number of candidates heard Verse 2 (lines 5-10) as a pre-chorus, in spite of its being harmonically identical and melodically very similar to lines 1-4. One candidate recognised an element of sonata form within this “pre-chorus” section. Some had no problem with the form whatever and cited other MSP songs with a similar (if not identical) construction. Even among these candidates, however, there were some who failed to hear that the music to lines 9 and 10 is essentially the same as lines 3 and 4. (One particularly perceptive candidate was able to comment on the overlap between Verse 2 and the “Chorus”.) All candidates managed to mention at least one other song by the MSP and relate it to typical musical features of the band. Often, however, as in the past, this was no more than the briefest passing reference, which does not entirely satisfy the demands of the question.

- Q.5**
- (a)
 - (i) Once again, harmony and tonality were confused, a number of answers merely stating “in a major key” or “major harmony”. Rather surprisingly, the pedal was seldom mentioned. (A very small number did not confine their answers to lines 1-2.
 - (ii) Comments were not always confined to melody, with some answers mentioning the type of voice singing or the piano part. Occasionally, tessitura was mentioned, but, again, this is not a feature of the melody itself, rather it is linked to the register of the voice that sings it.
 - (b) The second box (tone higher) was most frequently ticked. Only a small minority heard the correct fall of a semitone.
 - (c) Not all answers focused on melody. They tended instead to refer to voices or vocal delivery. Similarly, answers such as “syllabic” do not describe the melody itself, rather its vocal setting. Many mentioned the change from male to female vocalist.
 - (d) Candidates often went out of their way to make things difficult for themselves here. The easier, more obvious answers (such as ostinato, oom-pah accompaniment, dissonance, repeated notes in the melody) were often not mentioned. On the whole the question was not answered successfully.
 - (e) Some commented on the plot of “Sweeney” here rather than the musical content. Occasionally, terminology was employed that was not sufficiently “technical” – e.g., “choppy orchestration” (which was then likened to the “chopping of people”).

- (f) There was a similar problem here. Candidates should be reminded to use the correct terminology in their answers. Using descriptions such as “a very displeasing sound” for “dissonant” is not advisable. Those who described the chorus as singing in unison – and there were many – did not get a mark. Candidates also need to ensure that they answer on the correct portion of the lyrics. Here, lines 1-4 and 12-15 were given, but at least one candidate answered on lines 5-11.

Q.6 Providing answers that supplied the correct balance between the extract and the “other song/chorus” was sometimes a problem here. Candidates should aim to write sufficiently on both. More often, however, candidates wrote at length on the extract (very often very perceptibly) but very sparsely on the other piece, often in the form of a curt “This also happens in “Defying gravity””. Occasionally, candidates wrote very little on the extract but copiously on the other song (usually a prepared analysis, which gave information not relevant to the question). A good balance (which need not be 50-50) results in the highest marks. Many candidates did not recognise the recorder near the start of the extract, instead, identifying it as some type of ethnic wind instrument. This triggered links with other Schwartz musicals, more specifically “The Prince of Egypt”, and led them to imagine a similar ethnic setting for the extract. Only the most perceptive of candidates picked up on the link between Eve’s childlike innocence and the recorder’s customary use as a starter instrument in schools; a small number even spotted its simple pentatonicism and the “taunting” ditty that it quoted. The jazz idiom was recognised by all, but it was rare to find a recognition of the contrast between Eve’s rudimentary music-making and the snake’s sophisticated jazz style. There were some excellent responses in evidence that showed genuine insights into the song’s musical features, and, on the whole, the question was well answered. Unfortunately, there was a small number of candidates who failed to mention any other Schwartz songs.

- Q.7**
- (a) Some picked up on the swing rhythms used in bars 1-8, though sometimes making matters more difficult for themselves by not always describing them in this manner. A small number misunderstood the question and tried to answer on instruments like the double bass.
- (b) The majority recognised the homophonic (or homorhythmic) nature of bars 17-32. Some, too, heard the elements of counterpoint in bars 30-31(32). As there were slight changes in texture in the given bars, bar numbers were essential to gain marks (as indicated in the question itself). Unfortunately, not all candidates provided these.
- (c) Several candidates failed to notice the brief walking bass in bars 26-29, choosing instead to answer on the bass where it was played on beats 1 and 3 only. Some heard sequences. As in (b), some candidates did not supply the required bar numbers and lost the mark.
- (d) There were very few correct answers here.
- (e) The majority of candidates seemed to assume this would follow a standard AABA formula, not noticing that the second phrase was not a repetition of the first. Consequently, there were very few correct answers here, which was disappointing considering that the entire melody was given to candidates.
- (f) Answers were rather hit-and miss here, though there was a pleasing number of correct answers.

- (g) Remarking on the overlapping, scalic figures was enough to give some candidates both marks. The instruments alighting on a single note was also mentioned by several. One candidate even mentioned the rather dodgy intonation here.
- Q.8** The majority of answers here seemed to be “middle of the road”, with few poor or outstanding answers. As in the other options, achieving a good balance between the extract and another piece was a challenge. Another weakness (not so much in evidence in the other options) was a tendency with some candidates to abandon their descriptions of the use of instruments very early on in the extract, so missing out on some important details later in the piece. Some were unnecessarily side-tracked into writing at some length on the individual members of Ellington’s orchestra/band, along with his treatment of them – an interesting and unique feature of Ellington in general, but not one that was relevant to the question. As in the other options, too, a good many candidates wrote extremely briefly on the other piece(s) – most often “The A-Train” – and frequently in the form of a mere allusion (“..like in The A-Train”...), rather than going into a little more detail, whether on the use of instruments or on typical features of Ellington’s style. Very rarely, a candidate commented on a piece by another jazz musician – e.g., Glenn Miller’s “In the mood”. There were, however, some very perceptive and knowledgeable accounts of both the extract and another piece – “Koko” was found fairly often – that managed to achieve the desired balance between the two pieces.
- Q.9** (a) In spite of being told there were two errors, some candidates only attempted one. (No marks deducted for candidates who guess.) Candidates often went for more difficult errors than those present – i.e., adding or removing accidentals, while the two errors were actually very straightforward. There was a disappointing number of perfect answers here.
- (b) Only a small number could identify the V(7)-I progression (perfect cadence). The vast majority (once again) confined their answers to tonality rather than harmony (“major key”) or to puzzling statements like “disjunct harmony” or “staccato notes”. Both plagal and imperfect cadences were found, and even “octatonic”.
- (c) A small number did not attempt this question, or else gave up half way through. The quite fast tempo made this a more difficult task. Some candidates wisely decided to abandon the attempt to annotate the correct pitch, choosing instead to concentrate on the rhythm, which was more straightforward. These candidates tended to write out bar 16 on a single pitch. The correct rhythm and a couple of chance melody notes that fitted with the selected pitch resulted in a very acceptable mark for this question. (Getting full marks did not depend on getting everything correct here.)
- Q.10** (a) The majority of candidates recognised the Neapolitan 6th chord, though diminished 7th was found quite often. The other two 6th-type chords were found only rarely.
- (b) This was usually answered satisfactorily, though occasionally, candidates failed to **compare** the passages, instead merely stating what happened in one of them. Many noted the same melodic material, the syncopated violas, the oboe and violin melody, the louder dynamics and the added horn. A small number of puzzling answers was encountered, however, including “descending arpeggio scale”.

- (c) (i) Mostly correct, but though the question asked for the “section” some named the melodic idea – “subject 1”.
- (ii) Some candidates had no problem achieving the four marks on offer here, but there was some occasional confusion in evidence – for instance, the 1st subject (identified correctly) was described in the next line as the “Alphorn theme”. Other comments were often rather vague – e.g., “extended use of chords seen throughout”. Other answers could not really be considered to be examples of analysis, with some merely stating which instruments were playing at any time – i.e., visual descriptions rather than genuine musical analysis. Examples of such answers were common in the earlier years of this exam, but, satisfyingly, they are now found more infrequently. A number of candidates incorrectly referred to the VC/DB/timpani parts in bars 186-194 as “tonic and dominant pedal notes”.
- (d) (i) The word “function” caused problems again. There were many correct answers but some did not explain the function of the passage.
- (ii) As in (c)(ii), some answers could not be considered as “compositional features” – e.g., “use of semiquavers”. Terminology was a problem for some, the WW chords sometimes being described as being played “in unison”. In some instances, the use of the word “see” (as in “we can see the use of crescendo and diminuendo signs”) was again an indication of a purely visual approach to analysis, and one that teachers should try to discourage. Occasionally, matters such as improvements to the bow of string instruments were mentioned here.

Q.11 It sometimes appeared that the word “structure” was not entirely understood by some candidates. For example, the fact that the finale of Mendelssohn’s “Italian” Symphony in A major is in the tonic minor key (which is worthy of a mention) was regarded as an “interesting structural choice” because “structurally, last movements of symphonies would end in a major key”. Tchaikovsky’s “Pathétique” Symphony was on more than one occasion cited as having five movements, with one candidate describing the last movement as “unconventional”, though not explaining the reason for this. Similarly, the same work’s “dance movement” was also said to be in an unusual structure. Presumably, the candidate was alluding to the unusual 5/4 time signature, since the structure of the movement is entirely conventional. Another candidate stated that the WW “generally played a much more prominent role in Romantic symphonies, leading to structural changes”. No explanation as to how this was possible was given. Others attempted to link the use of (solo) instruments directly to structure, again without any explanation of how this might work. “Vltava” was frequently cited (by one candidate as a composition by Schubert), though it was sometimes called a symphony in six movements. (It was also occasionally confused with “Ma Vlast”.) It was rare, however, for a candidate to have any pertinent information on the work with regard to structure. One (otherwise excellent) candidate’s confusion over composers’ time-line in the period led to some unfortunate statements and discussion of at least one symphony that post-dated the years given in the specification. Occasionally, non-symphonic works were mentioned, including concertos, ballet music and operas – e.g., “Symphonies also took the form of ballets such as Tchaikovsky’s “Swan Lake” and Prokofiev’s “Romeo and Juliet”. Berlioz’s Requiem was also briefly mentioned by one candidate. Symphonies by Beethoven, Schubert and even Mozart found their way into several candidates’ essays (and not merely in passing; Schubert was the main focus of one essay), though all three composers were dead by 1830.

In general, a wide range of suitable composers and works was cited, which covered the entire range of the specification, and one examiner described some essays as “a pleasure and joy to read, such mature and musical efforts”. More negatively, however, examiners reported reading almost identical essays from all candidates in a number of centres.

Q.12 Questions (a) and (c) were quite significantly easier than those set in the Brahms option, since, for example, in (a), *p(p)*, *legato*, *cantabile* and *espressivo* were all acceptable answers, accounting for four of the five marks available. All three “analysis-type” questions were also on a single section of movement, while those in the Brahms option were on three different/contrasting passages of music. The essay question, however, was a little more demanding, since it focused on only one vocal genre.

(a) Many candidates were not afraid to use the Italian terms mentioned above as the basis for their answers, though a number of them mentioned the *lo stesso tempo* marking as an indication of the “calmer mood compared with the previous section”, stating that it meant “slower”, not knowing that its actual meaning is “at the same speed”. More than one candidate linked their answers to the previous section – i.e. in the form of a contrast – which was perfectly acceptable.

(b) Descriptions of the vocal parts singing in “unison” here were incorrect – another example of the misunderstanding of that dreaded word, responsible for so many lost marks. Such answers, however, also had nothing to do with the required “harmonic content”. Again, so many candidates only mentioned the key of F major, which, along with responses such as “predominantly homophonic”, included no information on harmony. The nearest the vast majority of candidates got to a genuine answer on harmonic content was in naming (a) random, individual chord(s) – which is not sufficient to gain a mark in such questions.

(c) “Tremolo” and “animando” were examples of easy answers here – and there were many takers. A small number of candidates, however, ignored the “creates more drama” portion of the question and merely described what the instruments played in terms that did not address the question. A small number answered in very general terms, again ignoring the creation of drama.

(d) As usual, there were very much hit-and-miss answers, though the impression was that the majority were correct.

Q.13 Essays did not always centre on oratorios; indeed, a good many did not mention oratorios at all. Rather, candidates focused on the requiem or mass; usually, both were included in the same essays. Whether this was an oversight on the candidates’ behalf or whether they simply had not studied oratorios in as much detail as the other genres is not clear, though the number of candidates who took this “approach” suggests it was the latter. This led to discussions of requiems by Cherubini and Fauré or masses by Beethoven and Schubert. Brahms’ Requiem was also mentioned; this is a “special case” (and not a bona fide requiem), which is often considered as a type of oratorio. Those candidates who cited this work were rewarded for it, as long as the information given was pertinent and correct. A very small number referred to instances of Latin text here, for example, while others referred to musical features that were not found in the work. There were, however, some exceptionally well-written and intelligent essays, though it has to be said that the detail included was not always related to the music itself.

There was, too, at times a tendency to stray from the subject of the essay question; 19th century choral traditions were not always addressed, with candidates instead focusing on subjects such as text setting and type of audience, with the result that the works themselves were often neglected. “Elijah” and “L’enfance du Christ” and “The Crucifixion” were the favourite genuine oratorios mentioned, though there was a small number whose comments on the Berlioz oratorio seemed to be more appropriate to his Requiem. One candidate considered an oratorio to be a piece for piano.

Summary of key points

Candidates should become as familiar as possible with their set works – particularly those in Area of Study F (Strands 1 and 2), 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. Though some of the works set are “secondary”, this does not mean that they should not be regarded as less important and studied in less detail.

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 become familiar 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. A variety of different types of works should be studied in each option – e.g., examples of both symphonies and symphonic poems or of the different sorts of the Religious Choral works (including requiems, oratorios, masses etc.)

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.

Once again this year there was a small number of candidates whose handwriting caused problems for examiners, sometimes because of its microscopic proportions or else (and 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.



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