

Notes

Suitability of the chosen ensemble

The purpose of this guidance on ensemble repertoire is to support teachers in selecting appropriate pieces which will allow candidates to access the full range of marks. There is often query and discussion amongst music teachers as to the suitability of an ensemble piece. Please note that the repertoire **must** allow the candidate to perform in a role where there is interaction between the parts. This is a very important indicator of the suitability of the piece chosen for a candidate's ensemble. The interaction in the ensemble piece will display musical communication, such as separate musical parts responding to each other and working together, or the dialogue and agreement between the separate musical lines.

Backing tracks are acceptable in ensemble performances but there must still be between 2 and 8 live performers.

The ensemble performance must be **at least** one minute in length. The timing should only include sections where the performers are playing or singing independent lines at the same time. Alternating solos or unison sections should not be included in the timing. The one-minute minimum requirement must be contained within **one** ensemble piece.

Merely adding a simple part to a solo piece is often less suitable as an ensemble as there will not be the opportunity to demonstrate the evidence to justify the award of a mark in the higher bands. As stated in the specification, learners will be expected to display empathy in ensemble performances.

The following scenarios demonstrate when particular repertoire could be **less suitable** as ensemble pieces as they may not provide sufficient opportunity to display empathy and rapport to justify the awarding of marks in the higher bands.

1. Graded solo pieces with piano accompaniment generally do not provide sufficient opportunity for the candidate to display sufficient empathy and rapport to access the higher mark bands. However, these would be suitable as ensemble pieces if the **accompanist** was the candidate, as accompanying is a challenging ensemble skill.

NB. Some more challenging pieces e.g., the Brahms Sonata for Cello and Piano, or Copland's Duo for Flute and Piano will show significant communication and interaction between the performers, so would therefore demonstrate the characteristics of an ensemble for both players.

2. Primo parts in some simple piano duets provide very little opportunity for rapport.

3. Sometimes it can be difficult for singers with band accompaniment to demonstrate full ensemble skills.

4. A solo piece with added drums may not provide sufficient opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate interaction and rapport.

Remember that less suitable pieces do not offer the opportunity to demonstrate the **evidence required** to access the marks in the upper bands.