

Version 2 – January 2026

AS AND A LEVEL MUSIC HANDBOOK

WJEC

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Unit 1/4 Performing – Visiting Examiner

Requirements for every candidate:

AS Unit 1: A minimum of **two** pieces (solo and/or ensemble) with total duration of **6-8 minutes**. Standard level of difficulty is equivalent to **Grade 5**.

A Level Unit 4 Option A: A minimum of **three** pieces including at least one solo, with total duration of **10-12 minutes**. Standard level of difficulty is equivalent to **Grade 6**.

A Level Unit 4 Option B: A minimum of **two** pieces (solo and/or ensemble) with total duration of **6-8 minutes**. Standard level of difficulty is equivalent to **Grade 6**.

This component is examined by a **visiting examiner**.

- Every candidate **MUST** provide a photocopy of the score of EVERY piece they intend to perform.
- A **marksheet MUST** be provided for EVERY candidate. The centre and candidate details, and titles and composers and levels of difficulties should be completed, but the examiner will complete the assessment and timing details.

Things to remember:

- In September a circular will be released to the **secure website** with a link to an **online form** to complete with the data on your expected number of candidates. Please complete this promptly to allow us to plan the visiting examiner.
- You will be asked to supply any impossible dates when the examiner visit could not be accommodated.
- Your examiner will be in touch early in the spring term to arrange the visit.
- This is an external examination and **MUST** be prioritised in school. You may not request a specific date as the examiner is planning a financially and practically viable route.
- Please plan a suitable timetable for the day including an opportunity for the examiner to meet the candidates beforehand, and any necessary “comfort breaks.” Your examiner will advise.
- You **MUST** supply a score/ lead sheet for every performance. Scores should be annotated if the candidate plans to deviate from what is printed.
- Please make arrangements for a suitable accompanist if required.
- Backing tracks are permitted but they **MUST NOT** contain the candidate part. Please complete a sound check before the examination.
- Audible click tracks are **NOT** permitted. This is a performing exam.
- If an ensemble is performed there can be no more than 8 musicians involved.
- There is **no** requirement to perform an ensemble at AS or A Level.
- Timing begins from the start of the first note performed by the candidate and stops at the end of the final note performed by the candidate in each piece. Sections when the candidate is not performing are not included in the timing.
- Candidates whose performances fall short of the minimum time requirements will face a penalty.
- There are tables in Appendix A of the specification which detail how levels of difficulty and timing penalties can impact marks.
- You are permitted to invite an audience, if the candidate is happy with this, but they **MUST NOT** overlook or attempt to influence the examiner.
- The examiner will make an audio recording. **NOBODY ELSE IS PERMITTED TO RECORD OR LIVE STREAM THE EXAMINATION.**

Unit 2/5 Composing – Externally assessed.

Requirements for every candidate:

AS Unit 2:

- 1 composition based on a **brief** released on 1st September in the year of entry.
- 1 free composition

A Level Unit 5 Option A:

- 1 composition based on a **brief** released on 1st September in the year of entry.
- 1 free composition

A level Unit 5 Option B:

- 1 composition based on a **brief** released on 1st September in the year of entry.
- 1 free composition based on another Area of Study
- 1 free composition

Compositions based on the published briefs MUST demonstrate an understanding of the Western Classical Tradition.

Submit mp3 recording and score/lead sheet for each composition and a non-assessed **log for each candidate.**

Things to remember:

- Briefs are released to the **Portal** on 1st September every year.
- The brief composition **MUST** be completed in the year of assessment.
- A brief composition which makes no attempt to show an understanding of the Western Classical Tradition will not score highly.
- For the free composition(s), the candidate must write their own brief.
- The teacher **MUST** monitor each composition on at least 3 occasions and must be confident to sign to authenticate them as the candidate's own work.
- You **MUST** supply a score/ lead sheet for every composition. Annotated screenshots are an acceptable alternative, but the annotations must explain the musical content.
- The teacher does not have to mark compositions. These are externally assessed.
- Work will be submitted online, so keep all documents and recordings in a digital format.
- All declarations **MUST** be signed by the teacher and the candidate. Typed signatures are acceptable.
- There are no timing penalties in composing.
- Any non-original material in the compositions **MUST** be identified on the log. This includes loops.
- If there is anything unusual or unclear in the work, please use the comments box on the marking sheet to identify this.

NB: Candidates must be entered for the same Option (A or B) for Performing AND Composing.

Unit 3/6 Appraising – Listening exam.

Before the exam:

- Refer to the **specification** for details of set works and Areas of Study.
- In the exam, candidates should have an unannotated copy of every set work for the Areas of Study they have covered.

The audio:

- If you have candidates entitled to extra time, please email the music team for instructions.
- The exam audio is available as mp3 files on **Portal**, one working day before the exam.
- There will be a version with 25% extra time built in available from **Portal**.
- Music teachers are **NOT** permitted to listen to or check the mp3 files before the examination.
- You should check the audio equipment before the exam using a non-confidential CD or mp3 file.

How to run the exam:

- All the usual rules of examination venues apply. Examination conduct posters should be displayed.
- The Music exam can not be held in the same room as any other exam.
- The mp3 audio must be played **out loud** in the room unless there is an agreed reasonable adjustment in place for specific candidates, e.g., a candidate with hearing problems.
- Use the best quality audio equipment you have.
- Consider the acoustic of the room. A large hall or gym may add extra echo to the audio which could make details unclear and disadvantage candidates.
- Select the appropriate audio files for the Areas of Study you have taught and play these one after another.
- The duration of all Music exams is listed as “approximately” because the extracts of music are selected based on the questions which can be asked, rather than the length of the audio.
- You should **NOT** attempt to time the music exam. Use the audio files to provide the timing.
- At the end of the **A Level** exam audio the invigilator will need to time an additional 1 hour.
- The candidates must **NOT** have any access to the audio controls.
- The invigilator should **NOT** pause or replay any part of the audio files.
- The Music teacher should **NOT** be in the examination room.

Special Considerations, Reasonable Adjustments and What to do if...:

- If you have a candidate who you believe should receive special considerations, please ask your exams officer to make an application online.
- If you have a candidate who requires reasonable adjustments to be made, please email the music team with the details.
- If something goes wrong in the exam, please ask one invigilator to make a note of exactly what happened and what was done. Contact WJEC for advice as soon as possible.
- If you think there is an error in the exam paper, please check to see if an erratum notice has been released. If any error has disadvantaged your candidates, please email the music team with the full details as soon as possible.

Timeline for WJEC GCE Music NEA

Composing briefs are available to download from the secure website from September 1st. Check all of the details on the front of the document very carefully to ensure you have the correct one.

Between September and the end of April	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head of Music/Exams Officer completes “Impossible dates” form for Performing. (Link in September circular)• Select and practice pieces for performing. Record these for internal feedback purposes and as backup in case of any disasters.• Candidates prepare for Performing exam.• Performing Examiner will make contact in the Spring term to book their visit.• Candidates complete all Composing work.• Candidates complete Composing log.• Teacher ensures that the Composing work for all candidates is ready to submit.• Performance examiner visits and assesses all candidates during March/April.
At the start of May	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher / Exams Officer accesses key codes on Surpass for every candidate.• Teacher / Exams officer checks that all signatures have been completed.• Teacher / Exams officer uploads work for every candidate by 15th May.
After work has been submitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exams officer monitors emails for any requests for additional items or information.• All candidate work is kept securely until the end of the appeals window in the autumn term.

Please see separate **guidance** on uploading Composing NEA.