



GCSE Examiners' Report

Music
GCSE
Summer 2024

Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner WJEC

Contents	Page
Executive summary	5
Unit 1: Performing	7.
Unit 2 Composing	13.
Unit 3 Appraising	23
Overview of Unit 1	31
Supporting you – useful contacts and links	37

Executive Summary

Unit 1 Performing

This year saw an improvement in the standard of work submitted, with a diverse range of performing styles and disciplines. Most centres completed administration correctly, aiding the moderation process. Recordings were generally of excellent quality, and many centres submitted clear scores and lead sheets, which supported accurate marking.

However, many centres faced problems with administration, including missing work and errors in uploading candidates' work and mark sheets. There was a significant increase in clerical errors, causing unnecessary extra work. Some recordings had issues such as candidates being overpowered by accompanists or excessive echo. Scores were sometimes missing performance directions or annotations, making it difficult to award high marks for accuracy. Incorrect assessment of difficulty levels and inappropriate repertoire choices were also common problems. Additionally, some centres did not meet the minimum timing requirements for performances, leading to penalties. Overall, while there were improvements, several areas still require attention to ensure a smoother assessment process.

Unit 2 Composing

Unit 2 saw many centres correctly uploading work with detailed scores and recordings, which were often of excellent quality. Candidates used a variety of software and technology, and some centres provided opportunities for candidates to work with local composers, enhancing their compositions. Many candidate logs were detailed and articulate, providing valuable insights into the creative process.

However, some centres faced administrative problems, including missing files and clerical errors. Recordings sometimes had poor quality due to background noise or imbalance. There were also inconsistencies in the assessment, with some centres being overly generous or harsh in their marking. Additionally, some candidates failed to provide sufficient detail in their logs, affecting the assessment of their work. Overall, while there were improvements, several areas still require attention to ensure a smoother assessment process.

Unit 3 Appraising

This year, candidates demonstrated a wide range of standards. Positive aspects included the correct identification of musical elements and contexts, with many candidates accurately recognizing instruments, tonalities, and rhythms. The use of appropriate musical terminology was also noted, and some candidates excelled in describing performance techniques and articulations.

However, several issues were identified. Many candidates struggled with the correct use of musical terminology and the identification of musical elements, leading to incorrect answers. There were difficulties in completing pitch and rhythm sections, with fewer candidates achieving high marks. The extended response question revealed a need for better planning and preparation, as many candidates included unnecessary elements. Specific questions highlighted common errors, such as confusion between instruments, incorrect identification of cadences, and misunderstanding of musical contexts. Overall, while there were improvements in some areas, significant gaps in knowledge, content, and skills remain, requiring further attention and teaching focus.

Areas for improvement	Classroom resources	Brief description of resource
Performances should achieve the minimum required time, and assessment standards should be checked.	Amplification of the criteria found on the website GCSE Music FAQ - Performing found on the website NEA walk through found on the resources website	Guidance for teachers and students
Compositions should follow the stated brief, and assessment standards should be checked	Amplification of the criteria found on the website GCSE Music FAQ – Composing found on the website NEA walk through found on the resources website	Guidance for teachers and students
Candidates should focus on the elements of music and exam technique	Exam walk through found on the resources website	Guidance for teachers and students

MUSIC

GCSE

Summer 2024

UNIT 1 PERFORMING

Overview of the Unit

This year a diverse mixture of performing styles and disciplines were presented for assessment and moderators reported that the standard of work submitted was an improvement on last year's submissions.

Solo and ensemble performances covered the full range of marks and marking was mostly in line with the standard. More details on the assessment are covered in the relevant section below.

This year many moderators reported several issues with centre administration. There is a guide to the process on the website which is updated every autumn.

Centres must read their centre reports and the WJEC GCSE Music website information, especially the "Unit 1 Performing Amplification and further support in applying the criteria." Centres are also advised to read the "Guidance for Teaching", also available to download from the website.

Tasks

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

ADMINISTRATION:

Many centres completed the administration correctly with clearly labelled files, meeting the exam board deadline. It must be emphasised, that if centres are unable to upload work by the given deadline date, they must inform the WJEC Subject Officer.

More centres this year submitted the required "Unit 1 Performing Timing Sheet" with the first candidate (in alphabetical order). These centres submitted clear, completed mark sheets with candidate and teacher signatures, correct timings, appropriate difficulty levels, correct calculations and explanation of the candidate's role.

Centres that had uploaded PDF files, as opposed to Word documents, also helped to make the moderation process smoother and enabled moderators to minimise candidate data information.

However, several centres had to be contacted due to missing work or errors in uploading candidates' work and mark sheets. Most centres responded to moderator queries promptly and addressed the issues.

Moderators reported a large increase in clerical errors resulting in entire cohorts being called in, thus causing unnecessary extra work for centres and moderators alike.

Submissions should include:

- Completed mark sheets with candidate and teacher signatures (both may be typed). Without signatures, the submissions cannot be assessed
- The completed "Unit 1 Performing Timing Sheet" to include all candidates in the cohort and uploaded with the first candidate alphabetically
- Correct timings of recordings from the start of the candidate's singing or playing
- Difficulty Levels for each piece (SL, ESL, MD or exam grade)
- Clear explanation of the candidate's role in ensemble performances
- Correct additions, scaling for levels of difficulty and submission of marks to lamis
- Clearly labelled recordings and scores/lead sheets e.g., "John Smith 12345 Solo 2"
- The compulsory ensemble is "Performance 1".
- Links to the relevant Area of Study

TIMINGS:

Most candidates achieved the minimum timing requirement and almost all candidates where the requirement was not met were penalised accurately.

The "Unit 1 Performing Timing Sheet" aided the moderators in identifying those candidates who did not achieve the 4-minute minimum timing for their performances.

Sometimes penalties were undeclared, which necessitated the moderation of whole cohorts. Also, some centres noted incorrect timings, especially if they were close to the 4 minutes.

The main errors were due to:

- The duration of the recording was noted as the performance time
- Introductions and links were included in the timings
- The inclusion of sections where the candidate did not perform for several bars.

Centres must note that the compulsory ensemble performance should be one performance of at least one-minute duration ("Summary of Assessment" on page 1 of the specification) and not two shorter ensembles to make up the one-minute duration.

Centres should also be made aware that if the total timing of a folio (including the compulsory ensemble) exceeds six minutes, do not add one or more pieces to the candidate's submission.

Some moderators reported that a few candidate folios were under-time and, had possible "musical" repeats been added to a piece, could have enabled that candidate to avoid a timing penalty. However, centres should avoid submitting short 2 or 4-bar patterns or chords, played repeatedly for several minutes. Such performances are not in the spirit of the NEA and do not offer evidence to award marks in the upper bands for Technical Control or Expression and Interpretation. Some moderators also reported "unmusical" repeats, where sections or pieces were repeated with long gaps of silence before the repeat was performed; this is not acceptable practice.

RECORDINGS:

Most recordings were of excellent quality with the assessed candidate clearly audible in all performances. This is essential for the accuracy of the moderation process and centres should check all recordings before uploading to ensure that complete, balanced and unedited performances are submitted. Some centres gave verbal announcements at the start, which are not required.

However, there were several centres where the candidate was overpowered by the accompanist or other performers on the recording making moderation difficult and even, in some cases, where the candidate's performance was inaudible.

Some other performances were recorded in a large space, resulting in a considerable amount of echo. This was especially true of some rock-based ensembles. Moderators also reported distortion on some recordings.

SCORES:

Many centres submitted clear scores and lead sheets which included all the necessary information to support marks for Accuracy. Performance directions were included, and annotations, repeats and cuts were clearly marked on the scores. Ensemble scores were marked/highlighted with the candidate's role. This practice helped the moderation process proceed smoothly.

Some pieces were missing performance directions on the score when these could easily have been provided to support the awarding of marks for Accuracy.

The main issue reported this year was the submission of scores with no annotation where the candidate had chosen to perform a variation from the printed score. This was especially evident in vocal performances.

If no score or lead sheet is supplied, there is insufficient evidence to award high marks for accuracy. A lead sheet must contain full details of pitch and rhythm.

Many centres had to be contacted to upload new scores due to the following issues:

- No scores uploaded with the performances
- Incorrect scores to those indicated on the candidate mark sheet
- Scores that bore no resemblance to the performance
- Ensemble scores with no indication of the candidate's role
- Tab with no rhythm or performance directions
- Lyric sheets or vocal lines with chord symbols for keyboard and guitar players
- Lyric sheets for vocalists with no melodic/rhythmic notation
- Lyric sheets only with no rhythmic patterns for rappers
- YouTube links or reference recordings (these are inadmissible)
- YouTube screenshots of tab which were impossible to follow
- Inadequate scans – blurry or poor ones submitted with musical lines missing (however, many less than in previous years)

LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY:

There was an improvement in how levels of difficulty were indicated on the mark sheets with most centres correctly stating ESL, SL or MD. Some used this box to indicate an exam board grading instead of or in addition to back up their grading of repertoire. This is helpful. There were several performances this year where difficulty levels were incorrectly assessed by the centre, which necessitated calling in whole cohorts to check all difficulty levels. Incorrect difficulty levels were reported as Clerical Errors by moderators on lamis. Some centres uploaded sheet music with the grade printed but still stated a different difficulty level on the mark sheet.

A few centres had included exam board gradings of pieces or if the score had been checked by the exam board already which was helpful to moderators. I urge centres to carefully consider the level of difficulty criteria in the specification and, if in doubt, contact the WJEC Subject Officer to receive confirmation of levels of difficulty.

There was also a large increase in instances where the level of difficulty scaling was not correctly applied. Some centres applied +/-3 marks for the level of difficulty as a blanket adjustment for easier or harder repertoire. Centres must reference the table provided in the specification.

REPERTOIRE:

Most centres chose repertoire to reflect the ability of their candidates and it was clear from the variety in some centres that much care had gone into choosing music where the candidates were able to showcase their talent. Most candidates submitted two pieces while a few offered three or four performances to reach the minimum time of four minutes. This year a wider range of instruments was offered, although mostly heavily in favour of rock and pop – electric guitar, bass guitar and drums. It is pleasurable to report that most orchestral instruments were offered, with some very highly marked performances. Vocal and piano performances in various styles – classical, musical theatre and pop were very popular and nearly all moderators commented on the centre practice of appropriate repertoire having been chosen to suit the ability of the candidate.

There were many examples of strong differentiation for higher and lower-ability candidates and once again ABRSM, Rockschool and Trinity graded pieces tended to support candidates in accessing appropriate marks as well as providing clear scores. Particularly popular songs were “Smells like Teen Spirit” (guitar/drum-kit), “Come Together” (drum kit), the mash-up of “How Far I’ll Go/The Climb” and numbers from “Hamilton”.

There were submissions of sequencing and DJ-ing with detailed lead sheets and comments on the mark sheet explaining the marking which were useful for the moderation process. It is important to note, however, that if submitting a sequenced performance, the candidate is still required to perform a “live” part.

Some centres submitted solo and ensemble performances which were easier than “Easier than Standard Level”. These performances were mostly 1 hand keyboard pieces, very simple tuned percussion pieces (e.g. “Lazy Latin”) or very simple chordal patterns (on keyboard) or rhythms (on untuned percussion) repeated many times. Very simple pieces, as described above, do not offer evidence to support a mark in the upper bands.

There were a few performances (mostly rap) which included inappropriate language. This practice is unacceptable and such performances are reported to the exam board.

The choice of repertoire for ensemble performances was much stronger this year.

A few moderators experienced centres using the same ensemble repertoire, particularly for lower-ability candidates. Whilst this certainly helped many candidates and no doubt allowed for whole class/large group teaching of a piece, there were examples where this was not always suitable for candidates. This was mainly due to higher-ability candidates not being challenged.

Again, this year, there were many ensemble pieces in which the repertoire chosen did not meet the requirements outlined in the specification. Centres are advised to consult the “Ensemble Flowchart” for guidance on repertoire:

These included:

- Accompanied solos, e.g. graded instrumental solos with an added drum accompaniment or a candidate singing a solo with piano accompaniment
- Vocal duets with mostly unison singing or alternating sung sections demonstrating little or no empathy with the other performer
- Solo performances with backing tracks (1 performer only)

There is much advice to be found in the “WJEC Ensemble Performance Guidance” section on the WJEC Music Home page:

Centres should assess whether every ensemble provides “sufficient opportunity to display empathy and rapport to justify the awarding of marks in the higher bands”

Pieces such as the examples mentioned above, do not offer sufficient evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the highest band for Technical Control and Expression and Interpretation.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Assessment:

Most centres used the assessment criteria carefully and fairly, awarding accurate marks within the correct band.

Some candidates could potentially have accessed more marks with easier pieces.

Sadly, some centres awarded zero marks for performances which demonstrated some accuracy, albeit deserving of marks in Band 1.

If the compulsory ensemble is below 1 minute in length it cannot be awarded a mark in the top band, in any column, as there is insufficient evidence to support this.

Middle-scoring candidates were the group most accurately marked.

There was a general trend to be slightly harsh towards the lower end of samples; it was felt at times that candidates were being penalised for performing easier pieces when there was often much to credit in their submissions.

Accuracy – Marks for Accuracy were generally well aligned with the standard, although some moderators reported that a few candidates who performed a piece mostly accurately throughout were marked in the lower bands for accuracy, ignoring the sense of fluency and appropriate tempo which should be considered alongside whether the notes are correct or not.

Accuracy marks were generous for some candidates where either an appropriate score had not been submitted or the candidate's performance did not match the score.

Also, there were occasions when candidates made occasional slips and should have been awarded marks in Band 3 rather than Band 4.

Technical Control - Marks for Technical Control were generally correct. However, there were times when marks were generous in the top band where consistent technical control had not been demonstrated.

Some moderators reported that where centres were often severe with lower-scoring candidates, they would tend to double penalise the candidates across Accuracy and Technical Control when there were intonation issues rather than inaccuracies.

Marks for very simple pieces do not provide evidence to award marks in the upper bands in this column. Marks for poor choice ensembles do not provide evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the upper bands.

Expression and Interpretation - Marks for Expression and Interpretation were mostly in line with the expected standard, the only issue being that centres did not award full marks in this column when completely justified. As for Technical Control, very simple pieces do not provide evidence to award marks in the upper bands. Ensembles which do not demonstrate empathy and interaction between the performers do not provide evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the upper bands.

Programme Notes:

Several candidates did not submit a Programme Note this year. There were many in-depth and logically written accounts of the music, as well as detailed evaluations of the technical demands deserving the highest marks. The weaker efforts rarely mentioned musical elements or the technical demands, concentrating instead on interesting facts about the composer/performer, or adding too much biographical or historical information.

Several centres' marking of the programme note tended to be generous with some candidates still evaluating their own performances or describing how they rehearsed the piece with very little mention of the musical elements. Some centres awarded full marks to candidates who did not evaluate the technical demands of their chosen performance, thus not deserving of marks in Band 4.

Again, there is detailed information regarding awarding top band marks for Programme Notes in the "Unit 1 Performing Amplification and further support in applying the criteria".

MUSIC
GCSE
Summer 2024
UNIT 2 COMPOSING

Overview of the Unit

Unit 2: Composing – AO2 (Compose and develop musical ideas with technical control and coherence)

Candidates are required to compose two compositions, one in response to a brief set by the WJEC, and a free composition. In total, Unit 2 is worth 84 marks: each composition is marked out of 36, and an evaluation of the piece composed in response to the set brief is worth 12 marks.

The assessment objectives are:

- AO2.1a – Creativity and development of musical ideas
- AO2.1b – Technical control of musical elements and resources
- AO2.1c – Structure and stylistic coherence

Administration

Many centres correctly uploaded the work, labelled as according to WJEC guidelines, with audio files which had been checked and marksheets and candidate logs completed fully as required, with the authentication signatures from the candidate and teacher assessor, and where marks had been correctly transferred to IAMIS. Where they occurred, errors in administration included missing signatures, missing files, clerical errors, incorrect scores/lead sheets, incorrect forms/logs/names, and a missing breakdown of marks on the marksheets.

Most centres responded swiftly to requests for replacement or additional work. The moderation process was hampered in some cases by delays when waiting for the correct/missing pieces of work and /or signatures. In some instances, the performance mark sheet (and work) was uploaded instead of the composing folios and information.

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

- Candidate Log (with both authentication signatures)
- Composition 1 (set brief) audio
- Composition 1 score / lead sheet
- Composition 2 (free brief) audio
- Composition 2 scores / lead sheet
- Evaluation (on composition 1).

Please check the online guidance for any further information, including what should be presented in each document (i.e., some candidates presented lead sheets and evaluation content within the log, which is not what is required). It would be beneficial if centres checked all files before submitting the work.

Scores and Recordings

Many candidates submit detailed scores and recordings or detailed lead sheets and recordings. Most scores were very useful and a true reflection of the audio files, though many lacked basic musical details, such as dynamics, tempo and articulation. Other submissions included general lead sheets, and lyrics with chord symbols. Few candidates presented standard lead sheets with a melody line, lyrics and chords when a song was presented.

Candidates who created music using software such as GarageBand, submitted screenshots of their compositions, many of which had no annotations; please advise future candidates that a screenshot without specific musical detail is of little use to the moderator. The annotations offered by candidates varied in quality, from the odd comment reiterating what was already on the screenshot and describing instrumentation and little else, to incredibly detailed comments about what pitch was used, where the rhythmic influences came from, why the instrument selections were made, the structural details, choices of harmony, devices and key. In most cases the various types of DAW will automatically provide a more 'zoomed in version' when you double click on the part/ idea, and a screen shot of that would work very well.

Overall, recordings were of excellent quality, as they were taken often directly from software. In several cases there seemed to be DAW software (Sibelius and MuseScore) that had been recorded through speakers of the piece playing rather than exported as an mp3. The quality of such recordings was not always the best. Some live performances with chord sheets (singer-songwriters) were unfortunately described by moderators as being of poor quality with background noises which made assessment difficult; these included sounds from the TV, phones, other pupils chatting - obviously all of which are best avoided.

In some recordings taken from DAW software the balance wasn't always right, which meant that certain parts were not clear or audible - these parts were therefore difficult to appreciate and assess. Some tracks at times seem to have been muted (for obvious reasons); please be advised that the audio should match the score or lead sheet.

Some centres obviously benefit from, or arrange, superb recording facilities which enabled the results to be very professional. This obviously enhanced the outcome, though it must be stressed that it is the actual musical content which is assessed. Several centres in West Wales had used the opportunity for candidates to enter their second compositions into a local Young Composers competition. Reading the accompanying paperwork for these compositions, opportunity had been provided for centres to work with local composers to improve their ideas and in some cases, some pieces were performed by members of the Welsh National Orchestra. Please ensure that any work with outside tutors or musicians is monitored so that additional help can be noted on the log. When marking, only credit the candidate's original ideas.

Centres continue to use and exploit a range of software and technology to encourage pupils to explore and exploit a wide range of musical elements, sounds and samples. Candidates are often using Garage Band and similar sequencers, and Sibelius composition tools were referenced this year. Any reliance on technology to produce results **must** be described fully in the candidate log. Drum loops in DAW/Notation software are infrequently acknowledged as work that did not belong to the candidate. Teachers must support candidates with this in the log.

Candidate Logs

While these are not assessed, they contain crucial and necessary information for the moderator.

Almost all logs were word-processed which made them easy to read and allowed candidates to write as much information as required. Many candidates were given clear guidance about how to write informative logs which included details of influences on the work, and some candidate logs were very impressive – detailed, articulate and thoughtful. However, it was a concern for many moderators this year that some candidates had given little thought to the requirements necessary and this, in some cases, affected outcomes. There were examples where candidates had not completed (or even attempted) logs, and simply signed the documentation. Hopefully the following points will assist teachers and future candidates.

- Please be advised that current forms, including the declaration and GDPR consent are available on the website (some centres used out-of-date forms).
- The marks cannot be processed without the necessary authentication signatures – check carefully that these have been included in the appropriate space in the log. The moderation process is slower when such information must be requested from the centre.

The briefs

Composition 1: All candidates must state clearly the brief they have chosen from the list which is released in the first week of September in the academic year in which the assessment is to be taken. They must write the brief exactly as it appears in the instructions, and not merely state the Area of Study, or omit the details completely.

Composition 2: This is called a ‘free composition’ – but candidates must not write that in the space for the brief: it simply means that they can choose their own brief – i.e., by providing the details of the audience or occasion, plus a musical context (for example, a style, form, or device that is featured in the music). By not giving this information, the assessment is affected in AO2.1c where the effectiveness of the music in response to their selected brief is considered.

The majority of candidates understood the briefs that needed to be chosen for the first compositions. Good practice was noted when a free choice was given to the candidates, producing a variety of pieces, selected and completed usually to the candidates’ strengths and personal musical skills. Some centres encourage the same set brief for all candidates, and in the best cases, there are very different and successful outcomes; however, the resulting compositions in many such cases are usually similar. Please be advised that the use of a ‘class task’ is not recommended as it may disadvantage some candidates who would have been more successful in writing a more individual response (and some candidates recognise this in their log). It can be more difficult to credit the candidate’s input if the task is overly prescriptive.

As already indicated, the free briefs were often vague and lacked the necessary intention, and as such did not provide sufficient direction as to the genre and elements of music needed to portray specific moods and colour tones. The better pieces were invariably the ones where candidates composed to a clear and specific brief.

Some candidates stipulated a 'song' when they meant 'piece', as there were no vocals/lyrics in their actual composition.

- Candidates must complete **all** sections of the log. This is how the moderator knows exactly what has been submitted.
- **Giving an account of the composing and refining process**
Some candidates fill this with an analysis or description of the music – even when a score has been submitted. This is not necessary. All musical details of the composition must be included on the score, or lead sheet/commentary/explanation, with a screen shot if they so wish. What is required here is clearly outlined on the form i.e., details of pieces which influenced them, the software used, any help or feedback given, and an explanation of how the musical choices made are linked to the brief. Such information could be kept as progress is made and transferred to the official documentation and checked prior to upload. Musical choices are not always fully apparent in the recordings. Moderators reported compositions where the material presented simply did not reflect the process as outlined in the composition log. On several occasions candidates wrote 'my teacher helped me within WJEC guidelines'. This does not provide sufficient information about the support received, and the opportunity to "speak" directly to the moderator has been missed as the content did not provide an insight to the creative process. Some candidates pasted screenshots into their logs, with no explanation of how the work was developed, thus lacking the specific explanation that is required.
- **Giving details of any musical ideas which are not original**
This is not given sufficient attention. All loops, intros and outros, Sibelius ideas/composition tools, accompaniment features, autoplay, arpeggiations and the like, must be declared – and used only in the knowledge that they will not be credited. This is where candidates must detail how they have used the technology.

If candidates have created their pieces/chord patterns in this way, very little actual 'composing' has taken place, and this must be considered when assessing the outcome. If any candidate uses an 'autoplay' feature – it must be declared in their log (it is considered to be the same as if a candidate uses a loop); if this is omitted by the candidate, the information must be detailed by the teacher in the optional comments section at the end of the candidate log.

Too many candidates provided scant information, with very little detail in such cases.

- **How was the recording produced?**
Some candidates fail to declare when they have recorded their own ideas. This is essential.
When some parts – or all parts – have been performed by others reading from a conventional score, this is perfectly acceptable, but the score **MUST** be included.

- When some parts were performed by others without a conventional score**
 This is extremely problematic for moderators. The candidate log states quite clearly “It is not sufficient to say ‘I told them what to do’” – and yet that is what seems to be the case on far too many occasions. There have been so many examples of others playing and singing compositions, with no indication of how this material was conveyed. Please be advised that moderators and teachers can only credit what the candidates have produced – this cannot be ‘interpreted’ by others. It is understandable that a candidate may want someone who they consider to be a more proficient performer to perform their ideas, but they must upload a recording where they play/sing their ideas themselves. This can be included clearly in the examination audio, or uploaded as a separate file, even presenting ideas separately and not as a fluent whole, if that is more manageable.

There were a number of candidates who stated that their teacher played the chords and others that they asked a friend to play. There were also examples when the teacher sang and accompanied the song with no further supporting explanation or a guide track. Again, this made it impossible for the moderator to realise what had been composed by the candidate and what the performer had interpreted themselves.

When it is not clear what the exact contribution of the candidate has been to a live recording – or how the parts have been taught, the content cannot be assessed fairly (this also applies to such ideas as layered harmonies if they have not been performed by the candidate themselves).

Please remind all future candidates it is not acceptable to state in the log ‘I showed them what to play / sing’ in the case of live recordings. Someone else must only perform the music or parts when a score has been submitted, or when a guide track written/performed by the candidate has been included for clarification. A candidate stating in the log that ‘I gave the content to the teacher and they developed it for me’ is not appropriate.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Forms and Devices: Compose a Minuet and Trio for any combination of instruments, to be performed at a local festival.**
 There were some excellent compositions in Minuet and Trio form. Some candidates chose a more ‘pastiche’ approach (often mentioning Bach, Handel and Haydn as influences) whereas others used the standard form but wrote in a more contemporary style. The responses to this brief and coherence of the pieces tended to be very successful when candidates adhered to the “rules” of this style of work. Most candidates displayed understanding of the conventions, although some created minimal material and repeated it (exactly) many times, with much use of inappropriate repeat marks. Consequently, these pieces often showed little development of the initial ideas. Marking was considered generous in several folios where candidates had repeated sections (through repeat marks), rather than developing opening material.
- Music for Ensemble: Compose a piece for ensemble to be performed in the Gower Arts Festival.**
 There were some extremely varied interpretations of this brief which allowed candidates to follow their own interests, so there were lots of different ensembles, from instrumental duos and trios, string quartets and brass ensembles to jazz, hip-hop and rock group instrumentals. The most successful tended to be ones that used a conventional structure (including Ternary Form, Rondo and ‘verse-chorus’ structure), paying attention to the development and stylistic presentation of their ideas.

3. **Film Music:** Compose theme music for a new cartoon about a young superhero. This was by far the most popular option. Lots of candidates mentioned John Williams as an influence (Star Wars/Superman) and the music from the Marvel films. Some candidates had given this real thought, and had included typical 'superhero' music, such as brass fanfares and the rising fifths used so much by John Williams. The best compositions were ambitious, having been written for large ensembles, and the results were mature and of an excellent standard. Some candidates had given it less thought and the link to the brief was difficult to discern (e.g. solo piano pieces that did not successfully capture the character or context). There was a significant proportion of candidates who clearly set out to write film music style pieces, but not necessarily film music that suited a superhero; there were lots of rather odd stylistic responses, and some 'generic' slow film music - in these cases it sounded as if candidate had, perhaps, tried to fit existing pieces into the brief, as their logs/evaluations didn't even mention superheroes. Many candidates failed to capture the 'cartoon' element or the 'excitement' of a young superhero. This affected the credit given and marks were thought to be generous for those candidates who did not make appropriate instrumental choices in the musical responses, and where the themes lacked sufficient boldness, conviction and character.
4. **Popular Music:** Write a song (with lyrics) to be performed in the 'We Have a Voice' children's charity concert. These pieces varied greatly in standard. Very few were sung live, but when they were, the word setting was often more successful. Many compositions were short, often a verse and chorus which was repeated (therefore lacking in ongoing development). There were also several songs which 'worked' as songs but considering that the Area of Study was Popular Music, they were in more of a classical style. Some 'songs' did not include lyrics. Several pop songs used a limited harmonic vocabulary which affected the assessment in AO2.1b; in general, such compositions should be encouraged to explore a wider range of chords to satisfy assessment criteria more convincingly.

There were many examples in this brief of where someone other than the candidate had played or sung, and where there was no score, or a lead sheet with lyrics/chords provided. As stated above, despite the actual form stating not to, many candidates still said, 'I told my teacher what to play', 'we did this...' and 'we did that'; this is disconcerting when we are looking to assess the individual's creativity. There were examples of rapping and droning and some candidates used a 'synth voice' to represent the voice. All such styles are acceptable in this area of study – the main thing to consider is how well the assessment criteria are fulfilled.

Free Composition

Some exceptional compositions were reported by moderators, when candidates were able to express their intentions with a considerable amount of musical skill and advanced understanding. There were excellent examples of popular songs where candidates were adept at setting words effectively, managing to ensure that the stresses of the words matched the metre and rhythms. There were also some impressive examples of classical style pieces where candidates managed harmony in a mature and advanced way. Candidates who wrote for their own instruments, to reflect their own interests, or for ensemble types that they engage with regularly tended to be more successful. A high percentage of stated briefs for the free composition lacked context. Candidates would state for example 'a piece for piano' or 'free brief' or 'film' without reference to the mood, background, context or target audience as exemplified in WJEC's set briefs. This made it difficult to assess the work against the third column in the marking grid.

Assessment

Moderators often agreed with much of the judgement suggested by centres, but there were many occasions where the assessment was felt to be overly generous – sometimes particularly so – or even inconsistent. This tended to occur when centres had not misjudged by one or two marks in their assessment, but identified pieces as being in the wrong band of assessment completely.

Compositions that fell within the top marking band (Band 4) were stylistic, drew upon a wide variety of elements and demonstrated excellent understanding of the style and character in response to the chosen brief. Some students demonstrated impressive orchestration skills and made excellent use of technology to record multi-tracked and polyphonic ideas. It was clear that such candidates had clear guidance about how to write effective harmonic and melodic ideas and their logs reflected a thorough musical understanding.

Some weaknesses were highlighted when the initial ideas were excellent, but the work remained underdeveloped, with lack of variation in the musical elements (particularly texture), and with a reliance on a basic repetition of ideas. In such instances, insufficient consideration had been given to contrasts, textural variation, manipulation of the opening ideas through melodic extension, imitation, harmonic exploration, instrumentation and the like.

There were many occasions where compositions placed in the top band by the centre should have been in Band 3 – or even Band 2. At other times, candidates who had written musically shaped melodies and used a clear structure appear to have been marked more harshly than candidates who had used a DAW and lots of loops (i.e., it sounded impressive - but there was far less actual original content).

Compositions that fell within the second marking band (Band 3) displayed a generally effective degree of musical style and candidates drew upon a fairly wide range of elements and resources to create catchy ideas. Ideas were well-organised and the outcome was generally effective. Further work by candidates in this category to write more distinctive opening themes and explore a wider range of resources and elements within clearly organised and balanced structures would have been beneficial. Lots of pieces in this category were also overly reliant on repetition, melodically and harmonically, and were lacking in refinement, with some weaknesses evident. These tended to be overmarked, having been placed in Band 3 rather than Band 2. Conversely, there was a tendency for centres with lots of very high ability candidates to be slightly harsh with their marks for candidates in the mid-range, presumably as their ‘full mark’ candidates are so much better than the expectation for GCSE, which skews the expectation somewhat.

So many candidates submitted compositions which ended abruptly without a definite conclusion (the coda seemed to be a ‘forgotten section’). Candidates must consider how they finish a piece, and put as much thought and planning into the ending as into the opening.

Compositions that fell within the third mark bracket (Band 2) were often quite short, *simple* and lacked musical direction. *Some* choices of elements and resources were effective, but unsuitable harmonic progressions and cadential points made outcomes sound *inconsistent*, only displaying *some* sense of coherence and not convincingly responding to the chosen brief. These candidates are advised to write more substantial initial melodic material, consider appropriate harmonies and create a simple outline of their piece, planning how ideas are going to be explored and developed from the outset. An important consideration for such candidates would be to refine their work more thoroughly to iron out potential weaknesses.

The lowest mark band (Band 1), applied to work that demonstrated only *limited* musical understanding, where ideas lacked conviction and refinement and were repeated (or not). Work in this category needs to include clearer ideas which display musical understanding, before planning how to extend, vary and contrast the content to an improved degree.

Some considerations for future candidates

AO2.1a: Creativity and development of musical ideas

- The quality of the opening thematic material is crucial, so make sure that the musical ideas are distinctive, meaningful, melodic and well-shaped and balanced
- Refine and check all starting ideas and omit (or improve) any weaker passages
- Remember that one of the main criteria for assessment in this column is to produce a contrast in tone colour and mood – so plan how best to achieve this
- Make sure that all contrasting sections are purposeful and relevant
- When repeating a section of the music, develop ideas and avoid a direct ‘copy and paste’
- Plan how to develop ideas, using devices and musical features to achieve extension and contrasts. Here are some suggestions:
 - vary the texture (use layering, imitation or add a countermelody)
 - extend and develop the melody (or melodies)
 - vary the chords and perhaps change key when appropriate
 - use inversion (for melodies and chords)
 - use devices such as sequence, pedal points, rhythmic augmentation and diminution, by taking an initial rhythmic motif and expanding it a step at a time to give both continuity and development to a section.
- include sudden and gradual changes in dynamics as appropriate to the style

Avoid: triadic ideas that never progress or develop, disjunct or dissonant content presented without conviction or reasoning, overly short ideas that lack scope and potential for development, and too many ideas which will be confusing and lack conviction.

It was in this column that marks tended to be generous. Appropriate initial material, ready for contrast and development, is what is required here – simple and effective, not overly short and simplistic. The best pieces will present musical content that is substantial and reflective of the GCSE musical content as outlined in Appendix C of the specification. Precious time dedicated to the development of such knowledge will pay dividends for candidates.

AO2.1b Technical control of musical elements

- Plan what musical elements and resources are appropriate to respond to the brief
- Show musical understanding and control of a variety of musical elements
- Melody – be inventive, show direction and balance, use phrase structures
- Harmony - plan chord progressions, think about inversions and changing key, plot cadences carefully
- IMPORTANT – make sure that the chords support the melody with no awkward clashes; or amend parts of the melody to fit in with the chords - for example, if there is an awkward 'clash' of notes (remember that some 'clashes' can be very effective!)
- Rhythm – vary and extend the patterns to achieve some variety and development beyond very basic ideas
- Think carefully about correct instrumental use (i.e. not writing chords for single line instruments, consider the ranges and capabilities of instruments, and write idiomatically for piano)
- Texture – show control by displaying variety, correctly worked and presented, showing some interplay between parts
- Show understanding of how a performance would be controlled through tempo and tempo changes, dynamics and dynamic changes, and performance details and articulation (e.g. accents, legato and staccato)
- If a candidate has written a song, and lacks the technical control and security to sing themselves, performing the melody on piano or 'synth' voice is best (if the score is not available)

Avoid: melodic ideas not supported by the appropriate harmony; unexplained or awkward dissonances; a lack of coherence between sections; being too ambitious by attempting to write for too many instruments (and then not involving most of them in the composition).

Structure and stylistic coherence

- Make sure the selected brief is clear and manageable, and written as according to guidelines
- Plan the overall structure as the musical ideas need to be well organised (working within a set structure such as Ternary, standard song form, or Rondo may help – a planned sequence of events in a storyline also works well in film music)
- Remember to plan how the piece begins and ends, as 'codas' are as important (if not more so) than 'introductions'
- Plan the musical choices thoughtfully so that they are relevant to the brief - think about how the musical ideas will be best presented so that they can be considered 'effective', in terms of the musical style and character of the music

Avoid: forgetting to state the brief; not having a clear structure; repeating ideas without any kind of direction or focus; using random repeat marks; writing a piece that is simply too long with ideas that are repeated too many times, or that includes extended, random passages; letting the music 'fade-out' rather than finishing convincingly, as this weakens the overall structure; writing too many contrasting sections, so the finished piece may not feel 'coherent', as this affects marks.

Evaluations

There were some brilliant submissions here which reflected effective evaluative skills, were clearly structured and used appropriate musical language and terminology. Overall, moderators reported that centre marks for the evaluations seemed more consistent with the mark scheme than marks for the assessment of the composing, though there were still instances where the marks as awarded by the centre were overly generous. Many offerings remained descriptive rather than evaluative, leaving a single evaluative comment until the end - the content was a description of the actual piece, rather than the creative process. The better evaluations detailed why decisions were made and whether they were successful (or not) e.g., 'I used a dotted rhythm and some syncopation in my second section, because I wanted to create a sense of panic and the rhythms help me do this effectively'.

Many candidates did not discuss how musical elements had been used in their compositions and how compositions fulfilled the brief; weaker evaluations lacked critical perceptive judgements and musical details were presented as a list often with a lack of relevant specialist terminology. Such work did not hit top band criteria as outlined in the marking scheme. Some candidates still failed to comment on the final audio outcome of their work - a simple statement regarding the output would suffice, stating whether they felt it was reflective of their intentions. Evaluations do not need to include detailed research into the compositional styles. The work must be an evaluation of the musical outcome.

Some evaluations were below the requirement of 500 -1000 words. A few candidates did not submit an evaluation and so scored 0, losing valuable marks.

Make sure that: the brief in the evaluation is the same as that stated in the candidate log; the information in the evaluation matches the set brief composition; the content is evaluating, not just describing; the evaluation is between 500 – 1000 words; there is a comment on the quality of the final recording.

Summary of key points

- Take note of advice in previous Principal Moderator reports.
- Refer to WJEC guidance as to essential requirements, completion of candidate logs and exemplar materials.
- Upload and label all files as according to WJEC guidelines.
- Check all recordings for balance/missing parts/interference/background noise.
- When other performers have been involved in recording a candidate's composition, either the notation or a guide track performed by the candidate should be included. No credit can be awarded for the relevant ideas otherwise.
- All loops/autoplay/auto-accompaniments/auto chord patterns/arpeggiations etc., must be clearly credited by the candidate in the relevant section in the candidate log.
- The requirements of the GCSE Music assessment criteria (for composing and evaluation) must be kept at the forefront of all musical decisions made and guidance given. Assess to the assessment criteria in the specification, not to the standards of the centre cohort.

Jan Richards 2024

MUSIC

GCSE

Summer 2024

UNIT 3 APPRAISING

Overview of the Unit

Unit 3 assesses AO3 and AO4 criteria. This unit is assessed via a listening examination worth 72 marks which consists of eight questions in total, two on each of the four areas of study:

- Area of study 1: Musical Forms and Devices
- Area of study 2: Music for Ensemble
- Area of study 3: Film Music
- Area of study 4: Popular Music

Six questions are on unprepared musical extracts and the other two are on extracts set by WJEC which relate to two areas of study. The set extracts are:

- Q.1: 'Anitra's Dance' from Peer Gynt Suite (Op.46) by Edvard Grieg
- Q.2: 'Everything Must Go' by Manic Street Preachers

Learners are encouraged to study the scores of the set extracts in preparation for the examination. However, scores must not be taken into the examination; sections of the scores will be printed on the examination paper when required for the question. The unprepared extracts played in the examination will be from genres, styles or periods specified in each area of study and will include examples of music by Welsh composers and/or performers.

In the examination candidates will:

- identify musical elements, musical contexts and musical language, and apply this knowledge to familiar and unfamiliar music.
- make evaluative and critical judgements about musical elements, musical contexts and musical language, using appropriate musical terminology
- complete the rhythm or pitch of a short section of music (questions will use mainly conjunct movement, though may include leaps within the major scale).

The standards achieved by candidates this year covered the whole range. It was felt by examiners that there were still many areas for development regarding the identification of musical elements and in many cases wrong terminology was used for certain elements. Many struggled to complete the pitch effectively and there were fewer candidates gaining above half marks for this section. As in previous years, the extended SPAG question needs more planning and preparation as there are still candidates writing about all elements of music even though many were not required in the question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question 1

Prepared Extract – ‘Anitra’s Dance’ (Peer Gynt Suite - Op.46) by Grieg

- Q.1**
- (a)** Many candidates positively identified Section B heard at the start of the extract but a large number thought it was one of the A sections. The material heard was from bar 24 which followed the initial A section.
 - (b)** Though several candidates correctly noted the use of performance techniques, some had them the wrong way around. The second violins played arco in this section. Some responses included terminology under different musical element headings.
 - (c)** Few responded with the correct melodic device, in this case inversion. It could be heard clearly in the extract and also observed in the section of score at the start of the question.
 - (d)** Most candidates recognised the descending pattern but fewer achieved both marks overall. There were some positive answers stating anacrusis and imitation but repetition would have been accepted also which most candidates should have identified. Many candidates noted that movement was conjunct and disjunct but most pieces have a variety of these melodic characteristics so location and specific detail was needed for full credit.
 - (e)** A number of candidates noticed the music modulated to the major key but failed to state which key. A popular incorrect answer was A minor which is the key at the start and end of the movement.
 - (f)** There were a range of answers for this question and it is possible that more time is needed for centres to focus on teaching the duration of notes especially for candidates who may use different methods of reading music.
 - (g)** Responses were varied here and it appears that many centres did not pay attention to the basic musical context of the work – as stated in the set work notes, the music was first performed in Norway (at the Mollergaden Theatre in Oslo).

Question 2

Variations on a Theme (Corelli) by Kreisler

This question assessed the accuracy of specialist terminology and the quality of written communication, in addition to musical content. Candidates needed to describe melody, performance techniques, articulation, tempo and texture. It was pleasing to note that fewer candidates wrote about other elements of music not requested in the question this year but still there was evidence of this from some centres. Candidates responded in various ways under musical element headings or theme and variation headings. Some wrote about the elements in a chronological manner but it was clear that candidates who were most successful had a preplanned layout to assist them in shaping their answers. All elements were required to access the higher mark bands and it was vital to locate answers as set out in the initial question (e.g. the music was slightly faster at the start of the variation), especially when the elements changed within the theme or variation. Paragraphs, lists and bullet points were accepted as in previous years. It is important to remember that rough notes in the blank space are not marked, though there were no candidates who put themselves in this situation.

Candidates have improved at this question over the years and are more alert when answering this question but there were still few responses achieving full marks. When discussing melody, it was important to note that the theme was mainly conjunct in comparison to the variation which was mainly disjunct. A few candidates identified the anacrusis in the theme, plus sequences and even the anticipation note which must be applauded. Detail was needed in the performance techniques and articulation as to which techniques were pertinent to the theme or variation and exactly where in those sections. The majority of candidates noticed the correct start tempo but fewer identified when it became slower and in addition the variation was slightly faster which was difficult to clarify for some candidates. Texture was answered quite well, with the exception of some stating monophonic, which was not the case. If candidates contradicted themselves, they were likely to have achieved a mark of 4 or 5 (i.e. an inconsistent answer with some description of some musical elements). It is interesting to note that there was an example of a candidate achieving full marks with a short succinct paragraph where the content, location and SPAG were excellent. There were common spelling errors in responses to this question including: piece, conjunct, disjunct, pause, polyphonic and accompaniment.

Question 3

Men of Harlech – Traditional. (arr. G. Wood)

Y Darlun by D. Davies/T. R. Hughes (arr. J. Howard)

- Q.3**
- (a) The majority of candidates positively identified two percussion instruments.
 - (b) Very few struggled with brass as the family of instruments heard.
 - (c) The vast majority of candidates recognised the major tonality.
 - (d) More focus is needed on different types of metre (i.e. simple, compound, duple, triple, quadruple). Time signatures are usually identified effectively.

- (e) As mentioned above, not many responses achieved more than 2 marks out of four for the completion of pitch (treble clef) in 'Y Darlun'. Candidates must use a pencil to try to make the note heads clearer. Examiners did not credit unclear noteheads hanging too far over lines/spaces. Candidates must align notes underneath the rhythm as set out above the pitches. Some candidates did not add stems to notes but this did not affect the overall mark as pitches were being assessed. The melody was mainly conjunct apart from the penultimate note which descended by a perfect 4th. Relative pitch, as always, was not accepted – pitches were marked correct or incorrect.

Question 4

Good Morning Baltimore (Hairspray) by M. Shaiman/ S. Wittman

- Q.4**
- (a) (i) Some candidates identified the saxophone fill but many got this confused with the next question which asked for the instrument performing a glissando. A very popular answer was drum kit – the drum kit would have not played a melodic fill.
- (ii) Again, there was confusion here with the previous question but some identified that the glissando was performed on a piano.
- (b) A large number of candidates thought the cadence was imperfect, maybe because it was not at the end of a prominent section. Remember that if the harmonic progression goes from chord V to chord I, it will always be a perfect cadence.
- (c) The vast majority identified that the time signature had 4 crotchet beats per bar.
- (d) Many identified the triplet rhythms sang to the words 'I hear that beat' (three notes played in the time of two).
- (e) A large number of candidates identified the mixed vocals (male plus female voices were accepted) and that they were singing in harmony and unison. Fewer candidates recognised the repeating of words, singing of the melody and the intervals within the harmony (i.e. 3rds/6ths).
- (f) Candidates needed to state all three sections to gain full marks here. The extract started with an introduction then a verse plus chorus were heard. A large number did not recognise the introduction and hence only achieved 1 out of the 2 marks.

Question 5

Yr Ymadawiad by J. H. Smith

Progress (Bright Beginnings) by J. H. Smith

- Q.5**
- (a)** Very few identified the harmony as dissonant or chromatic at the start of the extract. Popular incorrect answers were diatonic harmony or major tonality and in addition, many responses described the mood of the extract (e.g. calm, spooky, uncertain).
 - (b)** Some candidates identified the crescendo in the extract. There were a number of inaccurate responses here due to issues with musical understanding of the terminology making up the multiple-choice options.
 - (c)** Many responses identified the correct type of voices.
 - (d)** Some candidates answered this question well, but more understanding is needed of the terms unison and harmony.
 - (e)** Many candidates noticed that the melodic interval between the notes was a 2nd (the smallest distance between notes).
 - (f)** The vast majority heard the glockenspiel in the extract.
 - (g)** Few responded with correct answers here (sustained) and popular incorrect answers included pedal, drone and legato which did not feature in the extract of music.
 - (h)** This question-part was answered poorly and only a handful identified minimalism. A significant percentage of candidates did not attempt this question.

Question 6

He's the King (Django Unchained) by L. Bacalov

- Q.6**
- (a) Almost all candidates identified the first chord in bar 5 as D minor but very few identified the change to G major in bar 6. Most responded with C major (the same as bar 2 and 4) but were incorrect.
 - (b) Many candidates only placed one tick in the box when two were required. The popular answer here was syncopation and many struggled to identify the ornamentation in the decorated whistle.
 - (c) The bassoon was identified by a large number of candidates which was so pleasing. In examinations to date, many have failed to recognise this instrument of the woodwind family.
 - (d) Nearly all candidates noticed the change to a faster tempo. If candidates implied it got faster by stating an Italian term at the start and after the change then that was accepted but there needed to be a comparative link in the answer.
 - (e) Some recognised the trumpet fill and fanfare-like material in the extract but fewer identified the pentatonic shape, triplet rhythms and high-pitched responses.
 - (f) Nearly all candidates successfully recognised the film genre as a result of positive teaching of different contexts in film music.

Question 7

Prepared Extract – Everything Must Go by Manic Street Preachers

- Q.7**
- (a) Most candidates recognised the descending pattern but fewer achieved both marks overall. There were some positive answers stating syncopation and a loud dynamic marking but very few responded with pentatonic, unison or even the length of two bars long.
 - (b) Considering this is a set work, a large number of candidates responded incorrectly with the section name. This was the vocal and instrumental interlude but the word interlude was accepted on its own.
 - (c) Unfortunately, not many identified that the strings played the melody in this section. Popular incorrect answers included performance techniques or articulation.
 - (d) Many identified the viola was the instrument which used the alto clef.
 - (e) Nearly all candidates correctly underlined the vocal belt performed by the singer.
 - (f) Some candidates recognised the key signature of the home key (i.e. 4 sharps).
 - (g) Some candidates identified that the key was E major.

- (h) There were a range of answers underlined for the date when the band were formed. 1986 was correct and many incorrectly underlined 1996 which was the date when the song 'Everything Must Go' was first released as a single.

Question 8

Higher Ground by Red Hot Chilli Peppers

Break My Heart by Dua Lipa

- Q.8**
- (a) This question was answered positively and a number of candidates successfully identified the bar numbers when the drum kit and electric guitar were heard for the first time.
 - (b) A number of candidates correctly identified slap bass as the technique. Popular incorrect answers were picking and strumming.
 - (c) Generally, this question regarding technology was answered effectively with a range of answers including echo, reverb, autotune, amplification and from the higher ability candidates were terms such as compression, EQ and delay.
 - (d) Many identified an anacrusis as the correct name on merit or via process of elimination.
 - (e) Tonality was minor and most responses incorrectly stated it was major. Sometimes when there is a lively tempo, candidates automatically think that tonality is major but it is so important to sing/hum the notes in the chord/triad (i.e. the minor 3rd interval).
 - (f) Finally, two marks were awarded for candidates noticing that there were changes during the piece. Many noticed that the texture was monophonic at the end and some higher ability candidates noticed the countermelody in the middle of the extract. A reminder that location was needed to gain the appropriate marks.

Summary of Key Points and Guidance for Centres

- Candidates must be encouraged to attempt all questions. It was felt by examiners this year that more questions were not attempted especially for question 5h.
- Candidates are reminded to read the question carefully. In the extended SPAG question, you should only focus on the elements of music requested in the question. When asked to tick two answers (e.g. question 6b) a number of candidates only ticked one answer. Also, location is requested in some questions and it is essential to clarify where elements of music occurred especially when they change during the extract.
- Always use a pencil when completing pitch and rhythm so you can easily erase errors ensuring it is clear to the examiner. It is important to state that if notes are unclear and hang over spaces and lines, they will not be awarded a mark.
- It was felt that more teaching focus was required on harmony, melody and rhythm in this examination by rehearsing key words linked to each musical element followed by listening examples to improve identification strategies.
- The majority of the listening examination focuses on the musical elements so that should be the main focus for lesson starters. Constant revision and retrieval practice is paramount to learners succeeding with terminology even before they listen to extracts of music. For example, if the question is about texture, candidates should know that the main words would be monophonic, homophonic, melody plus accompaniment and polyphonic. It gives candidates a head start to what the possible answers could be. For the more able and talented learners this could then extend to more specific terminology such as unison, imitation, countermelody, canon and Alberti bass.
- It is advised the teachers deliver the specification through musical elements, musical context and musical language rather than focus too rigidly on the areas of study. An element of music can be one focus for a lesson initially, but different genres of music could be used for listening examples (e.g. Baroque, musical theatre and jazz).
- Finally, candidates should be at an advantage with set works as they know that both will definitely be in the examination. More time should be designated to the context, language and use of musical elements in these set works. Interestingly, sometimes each year, it is an unprepared extract that gains the highest average marks of all questions which is difficult to comprehend when candidates have studied the works in greater detail than any of the other pieces of music.

UNIT 1: PERFORMING

Overview of the Unit

This year a diverse mixture of performing styles and disciplines were presented for assessment and moderators reported that the standard of work submitted was an improvement on last year's submissions.

Solo and ensemble performances covered the full range of marks and marking was mostly in line with the standard. More details on the assessment are covered in the relevant section below.

This year many moderators reported several issues with centre administration. Centres must read their centre reports and the WJEC GCSE Music website information, especially the "Unit 1 Performing Amplification and further support in applying the criteria":

wjec.co.uk/umbraco/surface/blobstorage/download?nodeId=50432

Centres are also advised to read the "Guidance for Teaching", also available to download from the website:

wjec.co.uk/umbraco/surface/blobstorage/download?nodeId=7820

Comments on tasks/questions relating to candidate performance/meeting assessment criteria

ADMINISTRATION:

Many centres completed the administration correctly with clearly labelled files, meeting the exam board deadline. It must be emphasised, that if centres are unable to upload work by the given deadline date, they must inform the WJEC Subject Officer. More centres this year submitted the required "Unit 1 Performing Timing Sheet" with the first candidate (in alphabetical order). These centres submitted clear, completed mark sheets with candidate and teacher signatures, correct timings, appropriate difficulty levels, correct calculations and explanation of the candidate's role. Centres that had uploaded PDF files, as opposed to Word documents, also helped to make the moderation process smoother and enabled moderators to minimise candidate data information.

However, several centres had to be contacted due to missing work or errors in uploading candidates' work and mark sheets. Most centres responded to moderator queries promptly and addressed the issues.

Moderators reported a large increase in clerical errors resulting in entire cohorts being called in, thus causing unnecessary extra work for centres and moderators alike.

Submissions should include:

- Completed mark sheets with candidate and teacher signatures (both may be typed). Without signatures, the submissions cannot be assessed
- The completed “Unit 1 Performing Timing Sheet” to include all candidates in the cohort and uploaded with the first candidate alphabetically
- Correct timings of recordings from the start of the candidate’s singing or playing
- Difficulty Levels for each piece (SL, ESL, MD or exam grade)
- Clear explanation of the candidate’s role in ensemble performances
- Correct additions, scaling for levels of difficulty and submission of marks to lamis
- Clearly labelled recordings and scores/lead sheets e.g., “John Smith, 12345, Solo 2”
- The compulsory ensemble is “Performance 1”.
- Links to the relevant Area of Study

TIMINGS:

Most candidates achieved the minimum timing requirement and almost all candidates where the requirement was not met were penalised accurately.

The “Unit 1 Performing Timing Sheet” aided the moderators in identifying those candidates who did not achieve the 4-minute minimum timing for their performances.

Sometimes penalties were undeclared, which necessitated the moderation of whole cohorts. Also, some centres noted incorrect timings, especially if they were close to the 4 minutes. The main errors came from inaccurate recording lengths due to:

- The duration of the recording was noted as the performance time
- Introductions and links were included in the timings
- The inclusion of sections where the candidate did not perform for several bars.

Centres must note that the compulsory ensemble performance should be one performance of at least one-minute duration (“Summary of Assessment” on page 1 of the specification) and not two shorter ensembles to make up the one-minute duration.

Centres should also be made aware that if the total timing of a folio (including the compulsory ensemble) exceeds six minutes, do not add one or more pieces to the candidate’s submission.

Some moderators reported that a few candidate folios were under-time and, had possible “musical” repeats been added to a piece, could have enabled that candidate to avoid a timing penalty. However, centres should avoid submitting short 2 or 4-bar patterns or chords, played repeatedly for several minutes. Such performances are not in the spirit of the NEA and do not offer evidence to award marks in the upper bands for Technical Control or Expression and Interpretation. Some moderators also reported “unmusical” repeats, where sections or pieces were repeated with long gaps of silence before the repeat was performed; this is not acceptable practice.

RECORDINGS:

Most recordings were of excellent quality with the assessed candidate clearly audible in all performances. This is essential for the accuracy of the moderation process and centres should check all recordings before uploading to ensure that complete, balanced and unedited performances are submitted. Some centres gave verbal announcements at the start, which are not required.

However, there were several centres where the candidate was overpowered by the accompanist or other performers on the recording making moderation difficult and even, in some cases, where the candidate's performance was inaudible.

Some other performances were recorded in a large space, resulting in a considerable amount of echo. This was especially true of some rock-based ensembles. Moderators also reported distortion on some recordings.

SCORES:

Many centres submitted clear scores and lead sheets which included all the necessary information to support marks for Accuracy. Performance directions were included, and annotations, repeats and cuts were clearly marked on the scores. Ensemble scores were marked/highlighted with the candidate's role. This practice helped the moderation process proceed smoothly.

Some pieces were missing performance directions on the score when these could easily have been provided to support the awarding of marks for Accuracy.

The main issue reported this year was the submission of scores with no annotation where the candidate had chosen to perform a variation from the printed score. This was especially evident in vocal performances.

If no score or lead sheet is supplied, there is insufficient evidence to award high marks for accuracy. A lead sheet must contain full details of pitch and rhythm. Many centres had to be contacted to upload new scores due to the following issues:

- No scores uploaded with the performances
- Incorrect scores to those indicated on the candidate mark sheet
- Scores that bore no resemblance to the performance
- Ensemble scores with no indication of the candidate's role
- Tab with no rhythm or performance directions
- Lyric sheets or vocal lines with chord symbols for keyboard and guitar players
- Lyric sheets for vocalists with no melodic/rhythmic notation
- Lyric sheets only with no rhythmic patterns for rappers
- YouTube links or reference recordings (these are inadmissible)
- YouTube screenshots of tab which were impossible to follow
- Inadequate scans – blurry or poor ones submitted with musical lines missing (however, many less than in previous years)

LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY:

There was an improvement in how levels of difficulty were indicated on the mark sheets with most centres correctly stating ESL, SL or MD. Some used this box to indicate an exam board grading instead of or in addition to back up their grading of repertoire.

There were several performances this year where difficulty levels were incorrectly assessed by the centre, which necessitated calling in whole cohorts to check all difficulty levels.

Incorrect difficulty levels were reported as Clerical Errors by moderators on lamis. Some centres uploaded sheet music with the grade printed but still stated a different difficulty level on the mark sheet.

A few centres had included exam board gradings of pieces or if the score had been checked by the exam board already which was helpful to moderators. I urge centres to carefully consider the level of difficulty criteria in the specification and, if in doubt, contact the WJEC Subject Officer to receive confirmation of levels of difficulty.

There was also a large increase in instances where the level of difficulty scaling was not correctly applied. Some centres applied +/-3 marks for the level of difficulty as a blanket adjustment for easier or harder repertoire. Centres must reference the table provided in the specification.

REPERTOIRE:

Most centres chose repertoire to reflect the ability of their candidates and it was clear from the variety in some centres that much care had gone into choosing music where the candidates were able to showcase their talent. Most candidates submitted two pieces while a few offered three or four performances to reach the minimum time of four minutes.

This year a wider range of instruments was offered, although mostly heavily in favour of rock and pop – electric guitar, bass guitar and drums. It is pleasurable to report that most orchestral instruments were offered, with some very highly marked performances. Vocal and piano performances in various styles – classical, musical theatre and pop were very popular and nearly all moderators commented on the centre practice of appropriate repertoire having been chosen to suit the ability of the candidate.

There were many examples of strong differentiation for higher and lower-ability candidates and once again ABRSM, Rockschoool and Trinity graded pieces tended to support candidates in accessing appropriate marks as well as providing clear scores. Particularly popular songs were “Smells like Teen Spirit” (guitar/drum-kit), “Come Together” (drum kit), the mash-up of “How Far I’ll Go/The Climb” and numbers from “Hamilton”.

There were submissions of sequencing and DJ-ing with detailed lead sheets and comments on the mark sheet explaining the marking which were useful for the moderation process. It is important to note, however, that if submitting a sequenced performance, the candidate is still required to perform a “live” part.

Some centres submitted solo and ensemble performances which were easier than “Easier than Standard Level”. These performances were mostly 1 hand keyboard pieces, very simple tuned percussion pieces (e.g. “Lazy Latin”) or very simple chordal patterns (on keyboard) or rhythms (on untuned percussion) repeated many times. Very simple pieces, as described above, do not offer evidence to support a mark in the upper bands.

There were a few performances (mostly rap) which included inappropriate language. This practice is unacceptable and such performances are reported to the exam board.

The choice of repertoire for ensemble performances was much stronger this year. A few moderators experienced centres using the same ensemble repertoire, particularly for lower-ability candidates. Whilst this certainly helped many candidates and no doubt allowed for whole class/large group teaching of a piece, there were examples where this was not always suitable for candidates. This was mainly due to higher-ability candidates not being challenged.

Again, this year, there were many ensemble pieces in which the repertoire chosen did not meet the requirements outlined in the specification. Centres are advised to consult the “Ensemble Flowchart” for guidance on repertoire:

wjec.co.uk/umbraco/surface/blobstorage/download?nodeId=50346.

These included:

- Accompanied solos, e.g. graded instrumental solos with an added drum accompaniment or a candidate singing a solo with piano accompaniment
- Vocal duets with mostly unison singing or alternating sung sections demonstrating little or no empathy with the other performer
- Solo performances with backing tracks (1 performer only)

There is much advice to be found in the “WJEC Ensemble Performance Guidance” section on the WJEC Music Home page:

wjec.co.uk/umbraco/surface/blobstorage/download?nodeId=50429.

Centres should assess whether every ensemble provides “sufficient opportunity to display empathy and rapport to justify the awarding of marks in the higher bands”

Pieces such as the examples mentioned above, do not offer sufficient evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the highest band for Technical Control and Expression and Interpretation.

Task marking

Comments on approaches to internal marking

Assessment:

Most centres used the assessment criteria carefully and fairly, awarding accurate marks within the correct band.

Some candidates could potentially have accessed more marks with easier pieces.

Sadly, some centres awarded zero marks for performances which demonstrated some accuracy, albeit deserving of marks in Band 1.

If the compulsory ensemble is below 1 minute in length it cannot be awarded a mark in the top band, in any column, as there is insufficient evidence to support this.

Middle-scoring candidates were the group most accurately marked.

There was a general trend to be slightly harsh towards the lower end of samples; it was felt at times that candidates were being penalised for performing easier pieces when there was often much to credit in their submissions.

Accuracy - Marks for Accuracy were generally well aligned with the standard, although some moderators reported that a few candidates who performed a piece mostly accurately throughout were marked in the lower bands for accuracy, ignoring the sense of fluency and appropriate tempo which should be considered alongside whether the notes are correct or not.

Accuracy marks were generous for some candidates where either an appropriate score had not been submitted or the candidate's performance did not match the score. Also, there were occasions when candidates made occasional slips and should have been awarded marks in Band 3 rather than Band 4.

Technical Control - Marks for Technical Control were generally correct. However, there were times when marks were generous in the top band where consistent technical control had not been demonstrated.

Some moderators reported that where centres were often severe with lower-scoring candidates, they would tend to double penalise the candidates across Accuracy and Technical Control when there were intonation issues rather than inaccuracies. Marks for very simple pieces do not provide evidence to award marks in the upper bands in this column. Marks for poor choice ensembles do not provide evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the upper bands.

Expression and Interpretation - Marks for Expression and Interpretation were mostly in line with the expected standard, the only issue being that centres did not award full marks in this column when completely justified. As for Technical Control, very simple pieces do not provide evidence to award marks in the upper bands. Ensembles which do not demonstrate empathy and interaction between the performers do not provide evidence in the context of an ensemble to award marks in the upper bands.

Programme Notes:

Several candidates did not submit a Programme Note this year. There were many in-depth and logically written accounts of the music, as well as detailed evaluations of the technical demands deserving the highest marks. The weaker efforts rarely mentioned musical elements or the technical demands, concentrating instead on interesting facts about the composer/performer, or adding too much biographical or historical information.

Several centres' marking of the programme note tended to be generous with some candidates still evaluating their own performances or describing how they rehearsed the piece with very little mention of the musical elements. Some centres awarded full marks to candidates who did not evaluate the technical demands of their chosen performance, thus not deserving of marks in Band 4.

Again, there is detailed information regarding awarding top band marks for Programme Notes in the "Unit 1 Performing Amplification and further support in applying the criteria".

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 029 2240 4300

Email: music@wjec.co.uk

Qualification webpage: https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/music-gcse/?sub_nav_level=digital-resources#tab_resources

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | WJEC](#)

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

WJEC Qualifications

As Wales' largest awarding body, WJEC supports its education community by providing trusted bilingual qualifications, specialist support, and reliable assessment to schools and colleges across the country. This allows our learners to reach their full potential.

With more than 70 years' experience, we are also amongst the leading providers in both England and Northern Ireland.



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk