

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

June 2011

GCE Music
6MU01 Performing Music

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Principal Moderator's Report

6MU01

The overall standard of submissions for this unit in 2011 was consistent with that heard in recent years, and included a number of outstanding performances at this level. Very few performances were inadequate but some submissions were penalised for being under-length. **Centres are reminded that five to six minutes of music is required for this unit, not including tuning and gaps between pieces.** Centres are also reminded that the performance must be continuous and unedited.

Performance from score / Improvisation

Even more performances than in previous years were from score, with the number of improvisations and, to a greater extent ensembles, declining. A few performances that had been assessed as improvisations were deemed to be overly free performances from score rather than genuine improvisations from a stimulus and it is hoped that centres will avoid this in future years. Centres are also reminded that the difficulty level for improvisations is judged by the difficulty of the stimulus and not the improvisation as a whole.

Instruments

The most popular instruments this year were, once again, piano, voice, and guitar: these accounting for almost 50% of submissions. There were slightly fewer percussionists this year.

Difficulty Levels

Most performances were above the Standard Level (Grade 5), with More Difficult (Grade 6) being the most common difficulty level. Performances below Standard Level were very uncommon. Centres are reminded that the Edexcel Difficulty Level Booklet is available on the website as a reference document. Moderators reported more concerns about difficulty levels this year than previously, often with pieces that were already listed in this booklet.

Assessment criteria

The application of the assessment criteria by teacher examiners was generally sound, if often a little generous, particularly in placing performances in the top two holistic bands that did not merit such high marks. Whilst the vast majority of teacher examiner marks were fair, a significant number had over rewarded their candidates' work. This was most often the case with assessment criteria 1, 3, and/or 4.

Common problems

Many candidates are submitting performances of music that is beyond their current technical ability. Struggling to cope with technical problems usually means that they are unable to shape the music satisfactorily, whereas they could probably have produced a truly musical performance of a slightly easier piece. Moderators noted the following general trends when instrumental performances had been over rewarded:

- an otherwise fluent performance is marred by a significant hesitation or omission
- poor intonation (usually sharp)
- for pianists, over-pedalling

This year it was particularly noted that many vocal performances had been assessed without reference to intonation, breathing, support, and/or tone. Whilst appreciating that most candidates have young voices it is important that these basic technical requirements are in place if the highest marks are to be achieved.

Presentation

Most centres took great care over the presentation of candidates' work.

Most recordings were of good quality, well balanced, and usually submitted on CD.

Accompaniments

A small number of performances were compromised, as in previous years, by poor accompaniments that did not support the work of the candidate.

Where a backing track is used as an accompaniment centres should endeavour, where possible, to ensure that there are no audible metronome clicks once the performance has begun.

Contact with centres

When moderators had to contact centres because of a problem, such as a missing score, for example, the response was almost always swift and helpful, which greatly aided the moderation process this year.

Scores

Centres are reminded that scores submitted should have sufficient detail for a fair assessment to be made, particularly regarding accuracy of pitch and rhythm. When inadequate scores were submitted, centres were contacted to provide a suitable replacement. Reference recordings cannot be submitted in lieu of a score for this unit.

Grade Boundaries

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