

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE

GCE Music (8MU01)

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Preface

Congratulations to candidates who were successful in the first examination of the new GCE AS Music examination, and thanks to teachers for their hard work, not least in marking Unit 1, and providing all the necessary paperwork and recordings for this unit and for Unit 2. The overall standard was broadly similar to that for the legacy AS examination in 2008.

The most significant points are probably the following. First, the introduction of composition briefs and controlled conditions apparently did not affect overall compositional outcomes. Second, candidates did less well than expected with the listening questions in Unit 3, but better in the written questions on set works (despite lack of access to anthologies in the examination). Third, many candidates coped well with the compulsory harmonic questions in Unit 3, thus providing a useful basis for future work both on analysis and techniques.

Please continue to consult the Edexcel website regularly (www.edexcel.com) for details of the specification at <http://www.edexcel.com/gce2008/music/music/8MU01/Pages/as.aspx> .

You will find there not only the specification itself, but sample question papers and other vital support materials, including, in due course, the *Instructions for Conduct of Examinations and Coursework in 2010*.

The main part of this report includes detailed remarks on each of the three AS units, but before this, there is advice on recording candidates' work, plus a section on musical terminology.

Recordings

Good recordings help candidates by presenting their work in the best possible light. The following remarks have been compiled particularly for the benefit of those with limited expertise in the area of recording.

Condenser microphones are excellent for recording live ensembles. If they are too expensive to buy it may be possible to borrow a couple for the final recordings, possibly from a local radio or theatre. A good stereo microphone connected to a minidisk recorder is often perfectly adequate.

In most concert halls a pair of microphones (a 'crossed pair'), or a single stereo one, will be positioned above the front stalls. If possible, a corresponding arrangement should be sought in the classroom. Classrooms are not ideal recording spaces because there tend to be many acoustic reflections but these can be eliminated with a little ingenuity (hung blankets or display boards). It is important to get a feel for the acoustics of the music room - but not at the last minute when staff and candidates are under pressure to record coursework. In some centres trials and tests could be packaged as a lesson in acoustics and recording earlier in the year for a Key Stage 3 class.

Use the level meters to ensure that the signal is neither too soft nor too loud, both at the stage of recording the performance and if it is subsequently transferred to tape. The meter indicator should hover around the 0dB Mark, with a little 'red' showing.

Always check that the recording has been successful and that both left and right channels are audible. One of the commonest problems with recordings of computer-based compositions is a flat, uniform mix. It takes only a few seconds to open the mixer displays and add some subtlety, thus ensuring a good balance in which the important parts (or tracks) emerge clearly.

Please note that cassette tapes must not be used in the submission of candidates' work.

Some musical terms useful especially in connection with Unit 3

Forces (or Resources): the instruments and/or voices used.

Timbre: the characteristic sound quality of an instrument or voice. An oboe sounds different from a flute when both play the same pitch.

Harmony: the sounding together of different pitches, most commonly to produce recognisable chords. In a discussion of harmony, important terms may include diatonic, chromatic and functional. (Harmony is not a synonym for accompanying instruments and textures.)

Tonality: often broadly synonymous with key. Important vocabulary will include functional/non-functional/modal; modulation. It is important to be able to identify keys and comment on their use, including the relationship between one key and another. (Tonality is not a synonym for sound quality/timbre.)

Melody: a discussion of melody may well deal with the ranges of voices or instruments, phrase-lengths, repetitions of phrases, melodic shapes (eg arch-shaped), conjunct and/or disjunct movement, sequence, continuity or fragmentation. Word-painting as such is irrelevant.

Rhythm: a discussion of rhythm may well focus on the use of recurring patterns, dotted rhythms, equal note-lengths, syncopation, hemiola and metrical organisation.

Structure (or Form): commonly-used structures are binary, ternary, rondo, sonata, 12-bar blues, verse and refrain, ground bass, strophic, variation, fugue, etc.

Texture: texture refers to the relationship between the various lines or strands in a composition, or sometimes more simply to the number of parts in use. Important terms are monophonic, two-part, three-part or four-part; contrapuntal (free or imitative, fugal or canonic); heterophony; antiphony; homophony; melody-dominated homophony. An organum-like use of parallelism (as in some works by Debussy) could also be referred to under texture. Candidates will be credited for distinguishing different types of texture, the number of voices/parts involved, whether melody lines transfer from one part to another etc. Expressions such as *thick* and *thin* are too vague to receive credit.

6MU01 Performing Music

The requirements for Unit 1 were broadly similar to those for the legacy Paper 11, important differences being the new mark scheme, the new scaling system, and the admission of ensemble performance as an alternative to solo performance.

Very many candidates produced excellent work for this unit, and the level of performance displayed was very encouraging, across a range of instruments. Where marks were lost it was usually when candidates performed music beyond their current technical ability. This generally compromised accuracy, but, even in cases where this was not the case, it also compromised the ability to bring sufficient interpretative detail to the performance.

Unfortunately there were significant problems with a number of submissions, bordering on specification infringements. These related to the submission of scores that were inadequate for making a fair assessment of accuracy and to the submission of edited recordings, which is not allowed. These problems will be dealt with in detail below.

Performances were submitted across a wide range of instruments: electric guitar, piano and voice being the most popular. Most submissions were solo performances from a score, with few improvisations and very few ensembles. Centres are reminded that pieces designed to be accompanied must be accompanied in the recording, otherwise the quality of outcome (criterion 1) will be significantly compromised.

Teacher examiners usually applied the new mark scheme very well, but moderators reported that marks were generally inflated, and this inflation was particularly noticeable when candidates had been awarded raw marks of 31 or above. It should be noted by teacher examiners that marks of 36 or more should reflect truly outstanding, personal, imaginative work, demonstrating remarkable interpretative qualities and almost total accuracy in every respect.

In the marking process teacher examiners should start with an holistic mark. It is acceptable for this mark to be entered on the MAS1 form as a range (eg 26-30) rather than as a particular mark. The five detailed criteria are then applied. The resulting raw mark must be reconciled with the holistic mark. Not all teacher examiners always did this.

Most difficulty levels selected by teacher examiners were agreed by moderators; several were increased. Centres are encouraged to use the *Difficulty Level Booklet* available online, to reference any music offered in this unit. Time penalties for short submissions were rare and were also usually agreed by moderators, although centres were informed when they had not applied them, or had used them excessively. It should be noted that candidates are expected to perform 5-6 minutes of music, so if the recording includes tuning-up and gaps it is likely to last significantly longer than six minutes. Extras such as tuning-up are not counted in the timing.

Edited performances: The specification requires that candidates' performances are recorded on one occasion without gaps. (The single occasion can occur several times during the course, if required, but only one recording of the whole programme is submitted). The stamina required to present this programme is an essential preparation for the performance in Unit 4. It was evident from recordings submitted

that some centres had edited recordings taken on different occasions. This is unacceptable, and centres are advised to ensure that only unedited recordings are submitted in future, in the interest of fairness to all candidates.

A majority of centres had problems with the arithmetic required for this paper, with marks incorrectly added up or wrongly scaled. Almost invariably, this gave candidates a lower mark than they deserved. When this came to light in the moderation process, centres were informed and asked to alter their marks. Centres are urged to check the arithmetic thoroughly in future years, to ensure that their candidates are correctly credited.

The quality of recordings submitted was generally excellent (almost all on CD). All were clearly labelled but a few lacked the required announcements.

As the administration of this paper raised several problems in its first year, it is worth stating that submissions require the following for each sampled candidate's work:

1. A CD/Minidisk labelled with centre and candidate details, with the candidate's performance preceded by an announcement of these details.
2. An MAS1 form with authentication signatures from the candidate and teacher examiner. This form should be completed in full by the teacher examiner, including the titles, composers and difficulty levels of pieces, the instrument to be assessed, and the teacher examiner's marks. It is helpful if this form is photocopied on double-sided A3 paper, as requested.
3. The middle copy of the OPTEMS form, signed by the teacher examiner, containing all the centre's marks.
4. A score for each piece that was performed from a score, and/or a stimulus for each piece that was improvised. A score **must** be sufficient to ensure that the mark scheme can be accurately applied. For a candidate who plays clarinet with piano accompaniment, for example, the clarinet part only needs to be provided. If for popular styles of music a tab score or lead sheet is submitted, it must include enough indications of pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and articulation for a fair assessment to be made. Too many scores this year were rather poor: a print-out from the internet of guitar tab is rarely likely to be adequate. If a moderator requests a more substantial score than has been provided, the centre must provide it in order that a fair moderation of the teacher examiner's assessment can be made.

6MU02 Composing

The main differences between Unit 2 of the new specification and the corresponding papers of the previous (legacy) specification may be summarised as follows.

Unit 6MU02 replaces the AS composition paper 22. The compositional techniques paper 21 no longer forms part of this unit because a written harmony component is now incorporated into Unit 3. Although the requirement for a three-minute composition remains the same, candidates now have to respond to a brief set by Edexcel. The briefs - a choice of four - are published on the website in September. Presentation no longer forms part of the assessment.

In addition candidates are required to complete a CD sleeve note, commenting on aspects of their composition. This accounts for one third of the total marks for the unit. Quality of Written Communication (QWC) is taken into account.

Overview

The standards set by the previous specification were maintained, with a similar spread of marks. The mean mark for 6MU02 was 36.7 (out of 60), the mean in 2008 for Paper 22 having been 37.5. There was thus no evidence that the additional written demands of the CD sleeve note made any difference to candidate performance in the unit as a whole; nor did the requirement to work to a brief have an inhibiting effect. Achievement was high, with just over 20% gaining an A for the unit.

Compositions

Topic 1, based on the brief *The Night Before the Battle*, was the second most popular, chosen by 40% of the candidates. It showed the widest spread of marks. Although most candidates were bunched in the 21-25 range, it was for this brief that the greatest number achieved outstanding marks of 36+.

The challenge of this brief was to create a range of contrasting moods and bring them to a controlled conclusion. Predictably, there were a great many snare drum patterns and military-style bugle calls, marches and fanfares. Many compositions were ambitiously scored for orchestra and many were conceived for film with imaginative structures or rondo-like forms adapted to suit the implied story line. Some chose to depict a historical battle: the American civil war and medieval knights proved good sources of inspiration. However, surprisingly few candidates referred in their sleeve notes to the two following useful sources: Walton's music for *Henry V*, and the CD compilation of battle music available on the Naxos label.

At the lower end of the range, some candidates submitted pieces that bore little relationship to the brief or lacked the element of musical contrast necessary to bring the composition to life. Such work typically showed many of the year-on-year weaknesses of AS composition: basic repetitive forms, unidiomatic writing for instruments and unvaried textures, uncontrolled harmony and angular melodic writing.

Generally presentation was good - a rather curious outcome given that it is no longer assessed and had previously been a major cause of lost marks.

Topic 3, the love song, was the most popular, chosen by 45% of the candidates. This had a spread of marks that was bunched slightly lower than for Topic 1, with more in the 16-20 range and fewer very high marks. Many songs were popular in style, covering a range from chart songs to heavy metal and rap, but there were also excellent examples based on German *lied* and the English song-writing tradition of Vaughan Williams and John Ireland. The songs from the set works for Unit 3, particularly Schubert's *Der Doppelgänger* and Desmond Dekker's *You can get it*, significantly influenced many candidates, who were able to adapt the structures of these songs creatively.

Instrumentation was generally handled well. Candidates were able to play to their strengths and write for their own voices and/or their own band. The examiners commented on the number of enterprising ensembles, including voice and string quartet and combinations of orchestral and amplified instruments.

Topic 2 (Variations) was neither popular (at 10%) nor well done and as a topic had the greatest number of candidates with a mark below 15. For many, the brief does not appear to have been inspiring. The main problem was an over-literal approach to the task, so that the piece consisted of a series of rather contrived hidden messages or arid re-workings of motivic material. The best work came when the candidate took an imaginative leap - for example, taking an unpromising melodic idea and producing a lyrical rhapsody based on re-harmonisations.

Topic 4, the piece for unaccompanied vocals, was chosen by only 5% of the candidates but was generally successfully done - particularly by centres with a strong choir - and had a spread of marks in the higher ranges. As with the song option, work was offered in a variety of styles including 16th-century counterpoint and barber-shop. Many of the compositions were worked using Sibelius and a computerised vocal timbre. This did not always lead to good vocal writing: the software voices gave little idea of vocal colour and ranges and the keyboard input led to some angular lines.

The CD sleeve note

Marks for the CD sleeve note were spread widely. Overall, 45% achieved better than half marks. Approximately 15% of the candidates achieved more than 16/20 but, equally at the weaker end of the scale, 15% achieved less than 5.

It had been anticipated that this task might depress the composition mark; whilst this does not seem to have been the case across the unit as a whole, the weaker candidates did clearly perform very badly. However, most centres prepared their candidates well and there were some very substantial answers involving several additional inserted pages.

In answer to **Question 1** most candidates described the structure of their composition accurately and thus gained at least half marks. The amount of detail in their description of repetition and contrast was variable, however.

The following response was typically lacking in detail, and somewhat unclear:

.....in the first section the texture is developed from a monophonic section to the full homophonic section in part B.

Here terminology has been used rather indiscriminately: the opening texture of the composition being referred to was not strictly monophonic so some additional clarification was required. It is also unclear exactly how the texture was developed.

Question 2 required candidates to address four features of interest and to refer to two musical elements. Most fulfilled this requirement and the best answers included exact locations, for example:

There is some rhythmic interest - there is syncopation in bars 22 and 27 - also interestingly there is a cross-rhythm between the outer parts in bar 83 and also triplets in bar 215.

Question 3 was the most demanding. Many candidates made reference to the set works but sometimes this felt a little contrived:

I was influenced by Weelkes' Sing We At Pleasure which, like my composition, is in five parts.

Others made reference to obscure songs or artists. Credit was given here if the comment could be substantiated in the composition itself but often the reference was very generalised and the only evidence of an influence was perhaps that both songs had an intro or a guitar solo.

Marks were not usually awarded simply for citing an influence, or for listing influences, unless specific features were identified. However, the following is detailed, with bar references and correct terminology, and earned four marks:

In a lot of his lied writing Schubert would prefer to modulate to the mediant than the dominant [1 for the observation] as it allowed him to compose more interesting pieces [more interesting is too vague for another mark, but a reference to the way this might provide contrast in the structure would have earned one]. In bar 46-47 my piece has a tertiary modulation [1] to the mediant minor [1] via a dominant minor 9th [1].

Administration

Few problems were reported. Not all centres submitted work with each candidate on a separate CD. This is now a requirement. There was a small trend towards submitting Sibelius files rather than an audio CD (the CD must be audio and playable on a domestic CD player, and not a CD-RW).

6MU03 Developing Musical Understanding

This new unit encompasses the diverse but related skills of listening, writing analytically about music and completing some four-part harmony, all of which were found in the legacy Edexcel AS Specification Papers 21, 31 and 32.

The aural questions on Instrumental and Vocal Music in the new 6MU03 unit (Questions 1 and 2) have parallels in the legacy Paper 31: Listening. Questions 3 (a) and (b) in 6MU03 have close kinship and similar demand to some type of questions on prescribed works from Paper 32: Musical Understanding. The four-part harmony in the new 6MU03 paper (Question 5) is fundamentally similar to that previously required in the completion of the Bach Chorale question from Paper 21: Compositional Techniques.

Many candidates approached this new paper with confidence and it was pleasing to find some very high marks. The paper tests the diverse musical skills of listening, writing about music studied as prescribed works, harmonic analysis, and completion of a four part harmony *incipit*. It was found that many candidates scored well on both parts of Question 3, provided that the works had been learnt in detail. Harmony skills were also good, with many candidates scoring high marks in both Questions 4 and 5.

The most testing tasks proved to be the listening extracts set as Questions 1 and 2. Here was found the greatest diversity in candidates' performance. On a basic level, factual responses provided several safe marks, after which a sure knowledge of musical devices and techniques was needed to score really well. These higher skills continue to require work in the future: even candidates with marks of 70 plus out of 80 lost marks in both Questions 1 and 2.

Part A: Listening. Questions 1 and 2 - Instrumental Music and Vocal Music

Q1(a) This question was straightforward, although a minority of candidates thought that the Pavane was in triple time (confusing it with the Galliard).

Q1 (b) Most candidates were able to say that the musical texture was contrapuntal or imitative or polyphonic, but only a few were able to identify the fact that there were five independent parts for the full two marks.

Q1(c) Many candidates identified the suspensions that were clearly heard in the music.

Q1(d) This question was less successful than Q1(c), and very many devices were mentioned, in place of the required answer of *false relation*.

Q1(e) The completion of the key and cadence was answered well in the main, although many failed to give the correct key of A major (or dominant).

Q1(f) This four-mark question on the similarities and differences in the melody at the start and at bars 17-18 elicited a wide range of responses. Only the best candidates managed 3 or 4 marks here. Too many talked about harmonic rather than melodic features. It is vital to read the question carefully.

Q1(g) The question typically scored 1 out of 2 marks. There were many options for credit in the mark scheme. Again, references to the harmony or parts other than the top part scored no marks.

Q1(h) The descriptive question about *the image of melancholy* was quite well answered. References to the key (D major) scored no marks. However, many candidates mentioned the slow tempo, use of dissonances, false relations, etc. to score full marks.

Q2(a) Despite study of this song, some candidates could not identify the voice as tenor/baritone, which was surprising.

Q2(b) Many of the correct answers identified bare fifths or no third in the chord for the answer relating to the ambiguous sense of key.

Q2(c) There were good answers here, too, identifying the ostinato and pedal in the piano part.

Q2(d) *Precisely identify* means just that. Too many candidates gave incomplete answers of chord V instead of V7c. Very few achieved the full two marks.

Q2(e) Many candidates correctly named the note and its dominant relation to the prevailing key of the music.

Q2(f) The most common answer here was *through-composed* (for one mark). For the second mark, candidates needed to mention the variation in each verse setting, or the piano links between verses two and three.

Q2(g) Only the best candidates could find three features of the vocal writing. Many achieved 1 or 2 marks.

Q2(h) The programmatic-style question about the *stillness of the night* and *the loneliness of the singer* was well-answered in the main (as was true with 1(h) above).

Q2(i) This was a straightforward question about the texture of the song and caused few problems, although some candidates thought it was monophonic as there was only one singer, having forgotten about the piano part in the musical texture.

Part B: Investigating Musical Styles.

Question 3 (a) (i) and (ii): Instrumental Music and (b) (i) and (ii) Vocal Music

Both part (i) questions (about stylistic features which placed the music in a context, genre or period) were well answered.

Many candidates scored full marks, even without the crediting of score-based examples. The examiners gave credit for both bar numbers as well as general location indications, eg *at bar 16 there is a diminished 7th chord* or *at the start of the second section there is a tonic pedal* etc. Up to three 'credit marks' for examples were available in part (i) answers.

The quality of written communication tended to be quite good. The best results tended to be written in prose, with selected bullet points to highlight features or examples. Charts or simple bullet-pointed responses could score high marks, but were less impressive to read and lacked the flow and pertinent discussion of musical points.

Similar comments apply to the part (ii) answers. The main problem here was candidates failing to answer the question posed. If asked about harmony and melodic writing, then any comments or points relating to tonality, texture, structure etc. might well be correct *per se*, but were irrelevant. It was clear too, that at times, candidates simply wrote down all that they had learnt and memorised about the pieces, with little or only scant regard for the tenor and direction of the question.

How the candidates actually structured their answers to the comparison type question varied considerably. Some simply discussed, for example in Question 3(a)(ii), the harmony and tonality of the Brahms first, then simply made points about the Debussy in the second half of their answer. The best responses, however, tended to be those in which each musical element was discussed in turn - ie a comparison of the use of harmony in the Brahms compared to the Debussy, and then a consideration of the use of tonality in each work. The most impressive answers contained a summative paragraph too. As in part (i), prose responses tended to flow well, and often resulted in a detailed and coherent response to the question. Many candidates were disciplined in the art of making a point and then backing this up with a reference to the score for an extra credit mark. Up to six credit marks were available in part (ii) answers: these often allowed candidates to secure full or almost full marks.

Answers to Question 3 (b) (ii) were more variable in quality than those to 3 (a) (ii), with fewer candidates achieving full marks.

Part C: Understanding Chords and Lines.

Question 4 (Harmonic Analysis)

Many candidates produced good answers to Question 4. Even those who did less well on the rest of the paper, tended to make up marks in this question and Question 5.

4(a) The given table for completion of chords from the skeleton score was done well with very many candidates scoring full marks. A few candidates failed to use Roman numerals as requested in the question rubric.

4(b) The recognition of chord Vb caused few problems.

4(c) The key of B major caused some problems, but was clearly identifiable in the score, and should have been straightforward.

4(d) *Devices* always seem to cause problems and confusion, and there was evidence of some guesswork here. The long sustained note in the score clearly indicated a pedal point.

4(e) There was some guesswork here too, but most candidates had learnt these musical terms and could easily see that the correct answer was A: an anticipation.

Question 5 (Completion of five chords for SATB)

There was a range of responses here, but most were of a reasonable standard and many were excellent. It was interesting to note that sometimes candidates who struggled with Parts A and B performed particularly well on this question, which helped to lift their overall paper mark.

The question itself did not demand a Bachian realisation, although many had harmonised the chords in this fashion, perhaps in preparation for next year's A2 Bach Chorale technical study.

Many candidates found the exercise straightforward, and achieved 10-12 marks out of 12. The most sensible approach was to work with simple chords such as I, II, IV, V and VI, using them in root position or first inversion.

Even without passing notes, a mark of 10/12 was easily achieved in this manner. The two remaining marks were available for passing notes and other 'special features' such as use of ii7b on the first beat of the final bar (if properly prepared in the previous chord on the last beat of the bar).

Common errors were:

- Consecutive fifths and octaves
- Exposed fifths and octaves
- Unrecognisable chords
- Poor part writing - especially low tenor parts
- Over-fussy chromatic chords (often inappropriate)

Candidates should always check work through at the end for consecutives and other problems, and should endeavour to write fairly high tenor parts.

Grade Boundaries

6MU01

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	40	33	29	25	22	19
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

6MU02

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	60	44	39	34	30	26
Uniform boundary mark	90	72	63	54	45	36

6MU03

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	80	61	53	46	39	32
Uniform boundary mark	120	96	84	72	60	48

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