

Performance assessment grid 1: Technical control – Technique

These marks are awarded for the interpretation of musical ideas with technical control. In this grid, this is defined as control of the instrument, for example:

- coordination between the hands, or of the bow/fingers
- breath control
- diction
- pedalling
- registration
- intonation
- tone quality
- use of filters and effects
- control of musical sources.

This will include making use of musical elements as appropriate to the requirements of the instrument(s) and piece performed. For ensemble performances, this grid assesses only the student's individual control of their instrument.

Level	Mark	Technical control – technique (AO1)
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1 Poor technique	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance demonstrates poor technical control, as heard in poor coordination, breath control, diction and/or pedalling. • The demands of the music are beyond the current ability of the performer. • The handling of sonority is poor, as heard in dull, thin, coarse tone quality across the whole range and/or poor intonation throughout and/or poor use of filters and effects throughout.
Level 2 Limited technique	3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance demonstrates limited technical control, as heard in limited coordination, breath control, diction and/or pedalling. • There are several places where the demands of the music are beyond the current ability of the performer. • The handling of sonority is limited as heard in several passages where tone is less than acceptable (dull, coarse, thin, uneven) and/or several passages of poor intonation and/or limited use of filters and effects throughout.
Level 3 Basic technique	6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance demonstrates basic technical control of the instrument, as heard in basic coordination, breath control, diction and/or pedalling. • There are a few places where the demands of the music are beyond the current ability of the performer. • The handling of sonority is basic as heard in tone quality that is generally acceptable and/or several individual notes out of tune and/or basic use of filters and effects throughout.

Level	Mark	Technical control – technique (AO1)
Level 4 Convincing technique	9–11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance demonstrates convincing technical control of the instrument, as heard in convincing coordination, breath control, diction and/or pedalling. • There are only one or two places where the demands of the music are beyond the current ability of the performer. • The handling of sonority is convincing as heard in consistently good tone quality and awareness of tonal contrast, except at the extremities of the pitch range or at moments of technical difficulty, and/or generally good intonation with no more than a few out of tune notes and/or convincing use of filters and effects throughout.
Level 5 Assured technique	12–14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance demonstrates assured technical control of the instrument, as heard in assured coordination, breath control, diction and/or pedalling. • The demands of the music are within the current ability of the performer. • The handling of sonority is assured as heard in very good tone quality across the pitch range (satisfying, interesting and even as the music demands) and/or generally convincing intonation and/or assured use of filters and effects throughout. The performance will sensitively exploit tonal contrast in places, where appropriate.
Level 6 Outstanding technique	15–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance will demonstrate complete control of the instrument. • The handling of sonority is outstanding as heard in excellent tone quality across the pitch range (exciting, vibrant, rich, resonant, sensitive and colourful, as the music demands) and/or entirely secure intonation (within only one or two out of tune notes at the lower end of the band) and/or excellent use of filters and effects throughout. The performance will sensitively exploit tonal contrast.

Performance assessment grid 2: Technical control (Accuracy) and Expressive control (Fluency)

In this grid, marks are awarded for the interpretation of musical ideas with technical control (accuracy), and the expression (fluency) of the performance, as appropriate to the chosen instrument(s) and pieces, including making use of musical elements as appropriate. The accuracy and fluency of sequenced performances will be assessed against the reference recording and any other materials provided as a score. The text in italics is to be applied to improvised and/or ensemble performances.

Level	Mark	Technical control (Accuracy) and Expressive control (Fluency) (AO1)
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1 Poor accuracy and fluency	1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtrusive errors of pitch and/or rhythm impact on many passages. • Performances at the lower end of the band are largely inaccurate, with many noticeable/obtrusive errors of pitch and/or rhythm. • Fluency is frequently compromised by breakdowns and/or omissions. • <i>Improvised performances will demonstrate little accuracy when performing the stimulus and little development of this material. The improvisation will lack coherence and contrast.</i> • <i>In ensemble performances there is little awareness of balance throughout.</i>
Level 2 Limited accuracy and fluency	3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performances in this band will have several noticeable/obtrusive errors in pitch and/or rhythm which impact on the success of the performance overall. • Fluency is compromised in several places and coherence is often lost. • <i>Improvised performances will demonstrate some accuracy when performing the stimulus, and will go on to show limited development of this stimulus. The overall improvisation will sound repetitive, predictable and/or formulaic.</i> • <i>In ensemble performances there is little awareness of balance for the majority of the piece.</i>

Level	Mark	Technical control (Accuracy) and Expressive control (Fluency) (AO1)
Level 3 Basic accuracy and fluency	6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performances in this band will have more than two noticeable/obtrusive errors or omissions, or several errors that have little or no impact on the success of the performance overall, or several errors in just one (difficult) passage. There will be moments where coherence is lost but the performance will still be reasonably fluent for the majority of piece. <i>Improvised performances will demonstrate a mostly accurate performance of the stimulus, and will go on to show some development of this stimulus. The overall improvisation will show some attempt at creating variety but may rely heavily on repetition and will be repetitive, predictable and/or formulaic in places.</i> <i>In ensemble performances there is some awareness of balance.</i>
Level 4 Convincing accuracy and fluency	9–11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be no more than one or two noticeable/obtrusive errors or omissions in pitch and/or rhythm, or a few errors that have little or no impact on the success of the performance overall. The performance will be mostly fluent despite the occasional hesitation and/or omission. <i>Improvised performances will demonstrate a mostly accurate performance of the stimulus, and will go on to show some development of this stimulus. The overall improvisation will sound mostly coherent, well balanced and effective, if not always imaginative.</i> <i>In ensemble performances there is a good awareness of balance, with only the odd minor misjudgement.</i>

Level	Mark	Technical control (Accuracy) and Expressive control (Fluency) (AO1)
Level 5 Assured accuracy and fluency	12–14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The performance will have a few minor errors in pitch and/or rhythm, but these errors will have no impact on the success of the performance overall. Performances will be fluent despite the occasional very slight hesitation and/or omission. <i>Improvised performances will demonstrate an accurate performance of the stimulus, and will go on to produce an interesting realisation of this stimulus. The overall improvisation will sound coherent, well balanced and effective, if not fully exploiting all possibilities.</i> <i>In ensemble performances there is a good awareness of balance throughout.</i>
Level 6 Outstanding accuracy and fluency	15–16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The performance will demonstrate entirely accurate pitch and rhythm, with only one or two insignificant errors at the lower end of the band. The performance should be fluent and entirely free from hesitation or omission. <i>Improvised performances will demonstrate an accurate performance of the stimulus, and will go on to produce an ambitious and creative realisation of this stimulus. The overall improvisation will sound coherent, well balanced and imaginative.</i> <i>In ensemble performances there is an excellent awareness of balance throughout.</i>

Performance assessment grid 3: Expressive control, style and context

In this grid, marks are awarded for communicating through the use of musical elements as appropriate to the piece performed, and interpreting ideas with expressive control and an understanding of style and context as appropriate to each piece. If using pre-recorded or sequenced backing tracks, the assessment of tempo reflects how well the performer matches and responds to it. The text in italics is to be applied to improvised and/or ensemble performances as appropriate.

Level	Mark	Expressive control, style and context (AO1)
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1 Poor interpretation	1–2	Very few interpretative skills evident through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an inconsistent tempo throughout, <i>and in ensemble performances there is evidence of difficulty in reacting and adjusting to other parts throughout.</i> (Expressive control) little or no appropriate dynamic contrast, and little or no attention given to phrasing and articulation. (Style and context)
Level 2 Limited interpretation	3–5	An insecure interpretation through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an inconsistent tempo for the majority of the piece, <i>and in ensemble performances there is evidence of difficulty in reacting and adjusting to the other parts for the majority of the piece.</i> (Expressive control) limited use of dynamics, phrasing and articulation to shape the performance (Style and context) a performance that struggles to communicate and may sound mechanical. (Style and context)
Level 3 Basic interpretation	6–8	A secure interpretation through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> several inconsistencies of tempo (perhaps around difficult passages), <i>and in ensemble performance there is occasional difficulty in reacting and adjusting to other parts.</i> (Expressive control) some use of dynamics, phrasing and articulation to shape the performance, but several opportunities, notated or otherwise, are missed (Style and context) some involvement with the music, but character and style are evident only intermittently. (Style and context)

Level	Mark	Expressive control, style and context (AO1)
Level 4 Convincing interpretation	9–11	A confident and engaging interpretation achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> only a few minor inconsistencies of tempo, <i>and in ensemble performances there is generally good reaction and, where appropriate, adjustment to other parts, with only minor misjudgements.</i> (Expressive control) some use of dynamics, phrasing and articulation to shape the performance, but a few opportunities, notated or otherwise, are missed (Style and context) fairly successful communication, with one or two less-successful moments lower in the band. (Style and context)
Level 5 Assured interpretation	12–14	An exciting and communicative interpretation achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the tempo being consistent with only one or two minor inconsistencies, <i>and in ensemble performances there is a good reaction and, where appropriate, adjustment to other parts throughout.</i> (Expressive control) the frequent use of dynamics, phrasing and articulation to shape the performance (Style and context) characterful communication that is mostly idiomatic, and musically shaped. (Style and context)
Level 6 Outstanding interpretation	15–16	A mature, individual and imaginative interpretation achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of tempo that is always consistent, <i>and in ensemble performances a consistently responsive reaction and, where appropriate, adjustment to other parts is evident throughout.</i> (Expressive control) effective communication that is idiomatic, and musically shaped, with consistent use of dynamics, phrasing and articulation to shape the performance. (Style and context)

Difficulty levels

Depending on how difficult the piece of music performed is, the marks for its difficulty should be applied using this grid. The difficulty level of selected pieces of music can be found in the *Pearson Edexcel GCSE, AS and A level Music Difficulty Levels Booklet*, on the Pearson website. These can be used as indicators of the demand of pieces of music and should inform the teacher's judgement in assessing how difficult the pieces performed by the students are.

Examiners will assess the difficulty level of each piece performed, as guided by the *Pearson Edexcel GCSE, AS and A level Music Difficulty Levels Booklet*, and apply a difficulty level to the whole performance based on an average, although taking into consideration the relative length of pieces where these lengths are unbalanced.

Once the level of difficulty of the piece(s) performed is decided, the raw mark (the total from grids 1, 2 and 3) out of 48 will then be applied to the corresponding difficulty level column. This gives the total mark for the recital, out of a maximum of 60 marks.

For this A Level Music qualification, pieces identified as level 7 are identified as 'standard'; above this (level 8 and above) pieces are 'more difficult' and below this (levels 1-6) they are 'less difficult'. For students selecting pieces of music that are levels 1–6, they should be advised that to do so may be self-penalising as they may restrict their opportunity to access the higher levels and marks in the assessment grids for their performances.

Where instruments other than those listed in the *Pearson Edexcel GCSE, AS and A level Music Difficulty Levels Booklet* are presented, the difficulty level will be assessed at a comparable level of demand, including performances where there is no tradition of graded examinations for the instrument presented. For example:

Beatboxing: To achieve Standard level the music must be fast, include much syncopation, make consistent use of effects such as echo or reverb, and include a wide range of imaginative sounds, including mimicry of standard instruments and scratching effects. Submissions not matching this description are assessed as Less Difficult. More Difficult submissions will add the impression of contrapuntal or melody/accompaniment effects, a variety of styles and textures and some singing and/or humming along with the beats.

Rapping: To achieve Standard level the music will be consistently fast paced, requiring control of articulation, make much use of syncopation and have a sung hook. Submissions not matching this description are assessed as Less Difficult. More Difficult submissions will incorporate elements of vocal percussion and beatboxing, and will demand complex breathing and articulation techniques.

Ensemble performance: In all cases the Difficulty Level for ensemble performance must be decided by directly comparing the student's part with the examples for solo performance provided and looking for an equivalent level.

When performing a live solo line over a pre-recorded/sequenced backing track, the level of difficulty is assessed on the live part performed only.

Raw mark	Less Difficult	Standard	More Difficult
1	1	1	2
2	2	3	3
3	3	4	5
4	4	5	6
5	5	6	8
6	6	8	9
7	7	9	11
8	8	10	12
9	9	11	14
10	10	13	15
11	11	14	17
12	12	15	18
13	13	16	20
14	14	18	21
15	15	19	23
16	16	20	24
17	17	21	26
18	18	23	27
19	19	24	29
20	20	25	30
21	21	26	32
22	22	28	33
23	23	29	35
24	24	30	36
25	25	31	38
26	26	33	39
27	27	34	41

Raw mark	Less Difficult	Standard	More Difficult
28	28	35	42
29	29	36	44
30	30	38	45
31	31	39	47
32	32	40	48
33	33	41	50
34	34	43	51
35	35	44	53
36	36	45	54
37	37	46	56
38	38	48	57
39	39	49	59
40	40	50	60
41	41	51	60
42	42	53	60
43	43	54	60
44	44	55	60
45	45	56	60
46	46	58	60
47	47	59	60
48	48	60	60