



Pearson

AS and A level Music: An explanation of the assessment grids for Composition

AS Level Composition

At AS Level two compositions are submitted: one to a brief set by Pearson and another that is a free composition or to a different brief set by Pearson. Students who submit free compositions must clearly indicate the intended purpose or style of the piece and the audience or occasion for which it is intended.

At AS Level each composition is assessed using the three assessment grids published on pages 34 to 36 of the Specification. Each grid has five levels. Each grid is marked out of 10, giving a total mark of 30 for each composition.

Grid One: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence

This grid concerns the management of musical structures and ideas to create unity and variety. Whilst the individual bullet-points refer to it only at Level 5, assessment in this grid also includes the quality of the original ideas that are created, as indicated in the title of the grid.

Level 1 allows for work where ideas and their development are limited.

At Level 2 the work may have some obtrusive misjudgements that compromise the effectiveness of the piece, whilst at Level 3 any misjudgements, whilst obvious, will not compromise the overall result.

Compositions at Level 4 will demonstrate development and effective handling of structure so that the music is generally fluent and has a sense of wholeness, whilst Level 5 is available for those compositions that show imagination and assurance throughout.

Grid Two: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Expressive Control

This grid concerns the creation and pacing of moods and atmosphere within the composition and also reflects:

- the response to the brief set by Pearson OR
- (for a free composition) the extent to which the composition meets the student's intended purpose, style, audience or occasion.

Grid Three: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Technical Control

This grid concerns the control of the relevant musical elements within the composition:

- Organisation of pitch (melody and/or harmony)
- Tonality
- Sonority
- Texture
- Tempo, metre and rhythm
- Dynamics

(NB: Structure has been covered in Grid One so is not considered here).

When assessing compositions using this grid, examiners will consider the use of the musical elements, the handling of forces and textures, and the use of devices and conventions appropriate to the given style (for example, effective use of modulation in a classical tonal idiom, or an imaginative pre-chorus in a pop song).

The descriptors at Level 1 and 5 allow for work submitted at the extremes of the range. At Level 2 there will still be obvious misjudgements in the handling of elements and stylistic devices. Whilst there will still be misjudgements at Level 3 the music will have a sense of fluency suggested by the phrase “generally secure”. Any misjudgements at Level 4 will be minor.

A Level Composition to a Brief / Free Composition

At A Level one composition is submitted: either to a brief set by Pearson or a free composition. Students who submit free compositions must clearly indicate the intended purpose or style of the piece and the audience or occasion for which it is intended.

At A Level the composition is assessed using the three assessment grids published on pages 37 to 39 of the Specification. Each grid has 5 levels. At A Level grids 1 and 3 are marked out of 13 and grid 2 is marked out of 14, giving a total mark of 40.

The wording of the grids differs slightly from AS Level to A Level.

Grid One Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence

Levels 4 and 5 use the same descriptors as AS. Levels 1 and 2 roughly correspond with Levels 2 and 3 at AS, whilst Level 3 is new. At Level 1 there are obtrusive misjudgments, at Level 2 there are obvious misjudgments, at Level 3 there are misjudgments that do not detract from the effectiveness of the piece, whilst at Level 4 it is expected that there would be (almost) no misjudgments.

Grid Two: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Expressive Control

Levels 3 to 5 are the same as AS. Level 1 roughly corresponds with Level 2 at AS, whilst Level 2 is new. At Level 1 there will be a limited response to the brief with obtrusive misjudgements or inconsistency. At Level 2 there may be obvious misjudgements but these will not be obtrusive.

Grid Three: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Technical Control

Levels 4 and 5 use the same descriptors as AS. Level 1 corresponds with Level 2 at AS. Level 2 still allows for obvious misjudgements, whilst the term “generally secure” at Level 3 suggests a greater level of fluency here than at Level 2.

A Level Composition to a Brief assessing Technique

At A level one composition is submitted to one of four briefs assessing technique.

This composition is assessed using the four grids published on pages 43 to 51 of the Specification

Each grid has five levels and is marked out of 5, giving a total mark of 20.

In the interest of simplicity separate grids were not produced for each brief but this means that not all bullet points listed in each descriptor of the first three grids apply to each brief.

Grid One: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence

Each Level here has five bullet points.

In each case the first two bullet points refer to briefs 1 and 2, whilst the remaining three bullet points refer to briefs 3 and 4.

Grid Two: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Expressive Control

This grid assesses how successfully the given style is controlled and maintained. For Briefs 1 and 2 it corresponds to the style mark awarded on the current Edexcel 2008 specification, for Brief 3 it would assess how well the given style is maintained and developed, whilst for Brief 4 it would assess the use of conventions related to the musical style in the brief.

Grid Three: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Technical Control

This grid assesses how the musical elements are used within the composition. In Briefs 1 and 2 this corresponds to the mark awarded for part writing in the current Edexcel 2008 specification. In Brief 3 this grid assesses the handling of sonority and textures, whilst in Brief 4 this grid assesses the handling of sonority and technology appropriate to the style.

Grid Four: Response to the brief

There are individual grids here for each brief. For Briefs 1 and 2 this grid corresponds with the mark for sense of line in the current Edexcel 2008 specification. In Briefs 3 and 4 this grid assesses the effectiveness of the development of the given stimulus.

Definitions of obvious and obtrusive (wherever they appear in the grids for AS and A level):

Obvious – clearly noticeable but acceptable

Obtrusive – clearly noticeable and unacceptable.