



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE
Music Technology (8MT0)
Paper 3

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Summer 2025

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GCE AS Level Music Technology
8MT0/03 2025
Principal Examiner's Report to Centres

This report should be read in conjunction with the published mark scheme.

In general, candidates were well prepared for this examination.

Examiners marked responses that scored across the full range of marks, so the exam differentiated well across the expected ability range, reliably measuring the candidate's ability level.

As in previous years, it is important for candidates to take note of the command words used in the questions as well as the mark tariffs so they ensure they can access the highest marks available for each question.

There were very few blank responses, indicating good time management and exam technique.

Candidates are reminded to listen closely to the audio stimulus material and draw out relevant production details from each track, rather than describing a general capture and mixing approach for the particular era, genre or featured instrument. As in other music technology papers, it was common to see candidates referring back to rote learning rather than applying their learning to the specific stimulus and question in the exam. In general, this is unlikely to score them much credit.

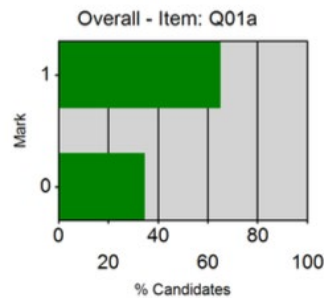
It is always better if candidates keep their responses within the space provided; there should be sufficient space provided underneath each question for a response worth full marks, accommodating even the largest handwriting. As such, for those with smaller handwriting, there will probably be more space provided than is necessary. In this case, candidates should not continue writing after they feel they have fully answered the question as this can often lead to contradiction and repetition.

When candidates wish to alter their responses, they must clearly indicate that they have rejected (part of) a response by crossing it out and replacing it with new written text.

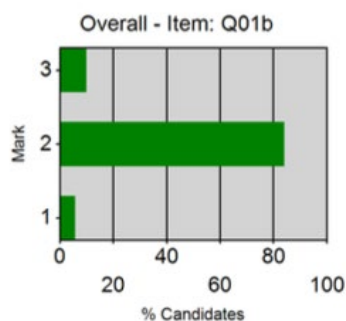
As always, the paper included a diverse range of music from different styles and music technology eras. The specification gives further detail as to music technology eras and the styles that candidates should build their knowledge of during study on the course.

Question 1 – The Weeknd: *Save Your Tears* (2020)

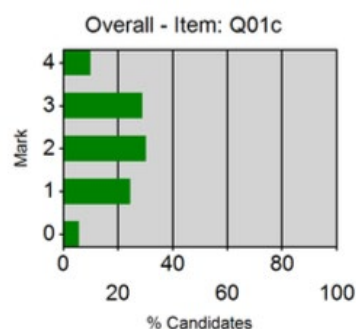
Q1(a) Whilst many candidates correctly identified 1/8 as the quantise resolution, there were numerous incorrect answers – most commonly 1/16.



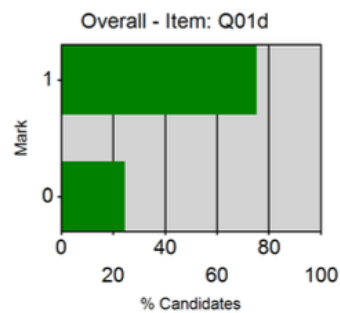
Q1(b) Whilst the kick and the snare were normally successfully identified, very few candidates were specific about the closed hi hat; this was intended to differentiate those candidates aiming for high grades. Because 'closed' is underlined in the mark scheme, candidates need to say this word to score credit.



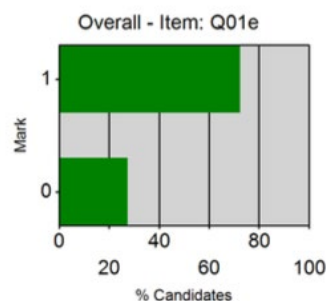
Q1(c) This question quoted New York Times music critic Jon Caramanica who stated that the track 'exhibits a shimmery mid-1980s luxuriance', and asked candidates to identify 1980s production features they could hear. The most common correct answers here were using synthesisers, drum machines, the fact the track was sequenced and that a wet / long reverb was present. Sometimes, candidates made valid observations about the track that were not features of 1980s production – these did not score any credit. As this question asked for four 1980s production features, and as in Q1(b), the intention was to stretch those candidates hoping to achieve high grades, whilst ensuring the question was still accessible to all.



Q1(d) The wide majority of candidates correctly identified the pitch correction on the vocal. A few candidates gave an example of other modern digital processing to gain credit, as stated in the mark scheme. Some candidates stated general music technology effects or processors e.g. compression, which are not solely examples of modern digital processing, and would have been available in the 1980s.

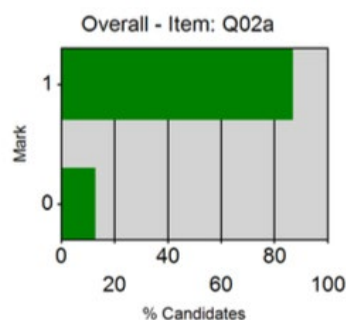


Q1(e) This question asked candidates to describe how the wet / dry mix of the lead vocal reverb during 2:44-2:47 differed to the next phrase. Some candidates were precise in their answers here, identifying that the dry signal was reduced from 2:44-2:47. Credit was also given for stating that the mix was wetter.

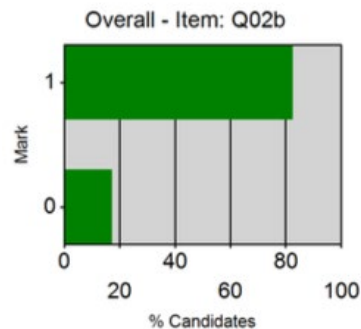


Question 2 – Napalm Death: *Sacrificed* (1987)

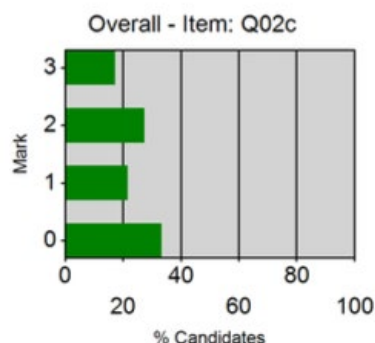
Q2(a) Most candidates gave one of a variety of different metal styles as an answer for this question; these scored credit. Incorrect answers included rock and punk.



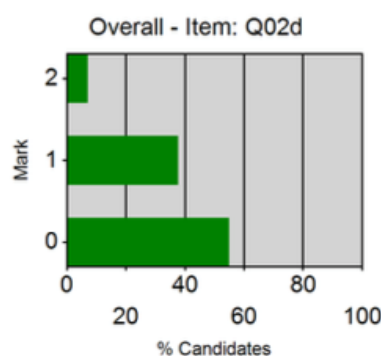
Q2(b) The wide majority of candidates correctly identified distortion, fuzz or overdrive as the effect. A few candidates suggested that BitCrusher was the form of distortion added, which was incorrect.



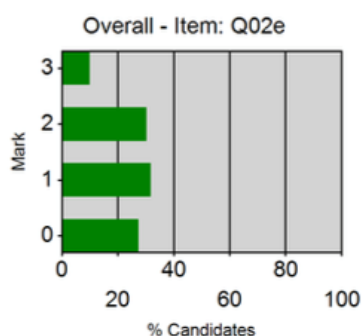
Q2(c) The majority of candidates identified the feedback on the track. In part (ii) most candidates had the right idea but discussed the process of feedback occurring from a microphone rather than a guitar. To gain credit, candidates needed to identify any two of (a) the high gain on the guitar (b) the pickups of the guitar being close to the amp and (c) the infinite loop formed by the guitar pickups and the amp speaker.



Q2(d) Fewer candidates identified the hiss, and thus often did not score the second mark. Those candidates who did identify the hiss often went on to state a quick fade out here for part (ii)– this is not true of what happens in the track. There is an audible long fade out; this could also have been created with a noise gate set to a long release.

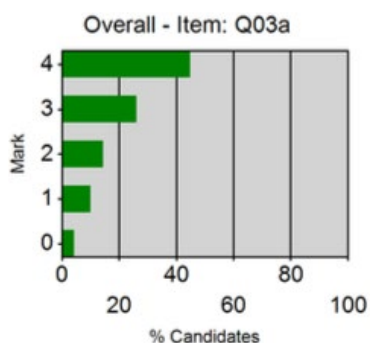


Q2(e) Surprisingly few candidates gained 3 marks for this question about electric guitar micing, perhaps indicating that they had not yet developed these skills as part of their Component 1 recording work. It was common for candidates to score credit for stating that the amp would have been close mic'ed. Some candidates gained credit for discussing on-axis / off-axis capture, or by stating a dynamic microphone would be used – but rarely all 3. Very few candidates referred to overdubbing or the fact the guitar amp might have been picked up on room mics.



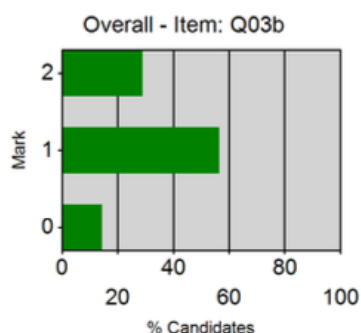
Question 3 – Sheb Wooley: *The Purple People Eater* (1958)

Q3(a) In general, this question was very well answered. Credit was often given for the drums being quiet in the mix, but the snare being loud, the drums being distant / ambient, the use of fewer microphones and the fact that the instruments would likely have been captured at the same time.

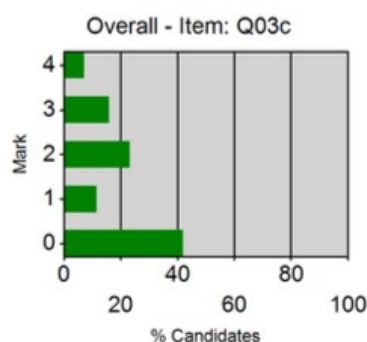


Q3(b) Many candidates scored two marks for an effective discussion of reverb; the most common marks credited were for identifying a potential type of reverb (e.g. chamber / plate / natural / hall), and for identifying a long reverb time. If candidates gave a range of values for their reverb time, the mid-point of the range was calculated and the examiner checked whether the candidate's mid-point fell into the range in the mark scheme (in this

case 2-4 seconds). Sometimes, candidates contradicted themselves, for example stating '*a long reverb time of 1 second*', so could not gain credit. This is called SONC (split option, no credit).

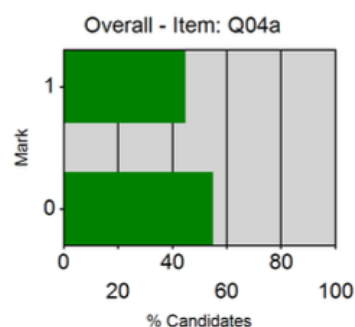


Q3(c) It was rare for candidates to score full marks on this question, and many candidates scored no credit. The most common marks awarded were for 'vocals are sped up' and 'tape'. A sizable number of candidates did not know how the effect had been produced, so incorrectly stated that someone with a higher voice e.g. a child could sing it, or that the performer could inhale helium before singing.

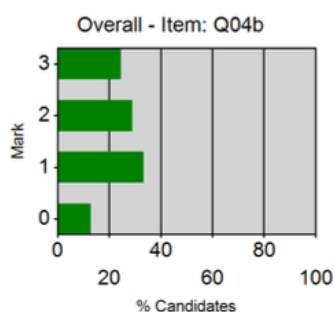


Question 4 – Anne-Marie & Aitch: *Psycho* (2022)

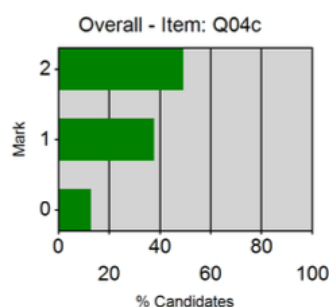
Q4(a) Two ranges were given here to take into account how candidates had interpreted the tempo. A sizable majority of candidates referred to a tempo of 120bpm, which was incorrect, likely because this is often the DAW default setting.



Q4(b) This question was well answered in general, with candidates often referring to the sequenced nature of the track with drum machine timbres, the loop based / repetitive nature and the heavy compression or LF heavy kick for credit.



Q4(c) The majority of candidates identified the low pass filter with an appropriate cutoff frequency between 0.4 and 1.6kHz. Some candidates misidentified the filter. Some candidates confusingly gave a filter answer which was between two of the three options.



Q4(d) The vocal production between 1:18 and 1:49 is intricate so candidates had lots to analyse in this question. It was generally well answered, with valid points made about both the male / lead and female / backing vocal parts.

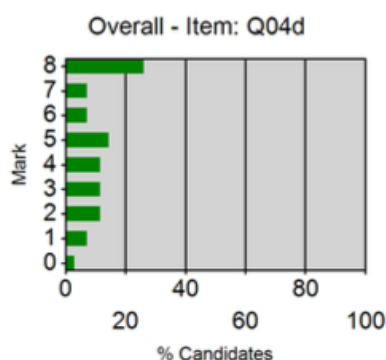
Credit was most commonly given for:

- Analysing the reverb on each vocal part (and the fact the male vocal was dry)
- Identifying instances of delay / stuttering on each vocal part and associated parameters
- Identifying that the backing vocals were overdubbed / doubletracked to give harmony
- Discussing the bright nature of the vocal parts and how this would have been achieved using a high frequency boost to bring vocals forward in the mix
- Identifying the tape stop at 1:38 and that this creates a slow down effect.

Candidates sometimes got mixed up with pitch correction, and stated that the pitch correction on the lead made it sound electronic sounding with a fast response time; this is really only true of the female vocal.

In previous years, feedback to centres has highlighted the importance of going beyond stating names of instruments - identifying specific aspects of music technology production. The command word 'analyse' means that having isolated the technological aspect (AO3), candidates must then give some analysis of what this does in the context of the mix or what effect it achieves on the perception of the listener (AO4). Sometimes, candidates missed opportunities to expand their answers, and did not do this.

In general, candidates seemed to do this well this year, giving parameters for the delay effects and, for example, stating that the '*heavy compression*' (AO3) '*reduced the dynamic range*' (AO4) and / or '*to fit [the vocal] with the narrow dynamic range of sequenced tracks*' (AO4).



Question 5 – Eurythmics and Marilyn Manson: *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)* (1983/1995)

This question is assessed via levels-based mark scheme, so it is the overall quality of a candidate's response that matters rather than counting the individual points. The command word 'evaluate' reminds candidates that they must consider AO3 and AO4 – observations about the music and evaluation points about the impact / effect of these observations in context. The two versions of 'Sweet Dreams' gave candidates lots to discuss and this question gave a range of responses, differentiating across all of the grades.

Many candidates wrote an acronym at the top of their responses to remind them to write about 'capture', 'instrumentation' and 'effects' etc... Whilst this gave the candidates' responses some focus, they would be much better advised to use the given production aspect bullet points as subheadings in their responses, which were:

- Capture, production approach and music style
- Synthesis
- EQ and filtering
- Dynamic processing
- Effects
- Pan and stereo field.

Responses that used a table / bullet points were far more concise than those written in continuous prose. Candidates should be encouraged to take this approach if they prefer. There is no need to create a plan or write an introduction / conclusion to their response for this question – candidates instead should spend their time on evaluating the two tracks.

The best answers discussed the differences between approaches in each version; for Eurythmics, noting the synth ostinato split between the left and right channels, the detuned oscillators and the use of saw / square waves. For Marilyn Manson, the best responses often identified specific guitar effects e.g. the use of feedback, wah, lightly distorted bass and heavy distortion on the guitars – and giving the connected impact / effect e.g. giving power / grit / grunge. In general, there were plenty of contrasting production decisions for candidates to evaluate, for example the contrasting styles, the different approach to drums and the differing perceived loudness.

Centres are advised to study the levels-based mark scheme for this question. For a band 4 answer, candidates must write about parameters that are applied to specific instruments or vocals, or refer to time references. Many responses were judged to be within band 3 where the points about the technology were applied to the song(s), but parameters were referred to more generally. A significant proportion of answers sat in band 2; these tended to make general points about the technology used in each song that could be applied to any song. They often relied on making general points about eras that would have been true of any song from the same time period without further qualification. It was very rare to see answers in band 1 – these tended to consist of very little content.

