



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE
Music Technology (8MT0)
Paper 04

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8MT04 Examiner Report

Component 4 - Producing and Analysing

The paper is designed to assess students' understanding and ability with music production, through a mixture of written questions and practical tasks completed with a digital audio workstation (DAW).

Students are supplied with four tracks; three are audio and will require several editing and processing tasks, and one is a MIDI sequenced part that requires timbre selection, and editing. The tracks are always drums, bass, harmony instrument(s) and vocal.

There are 6 questions.

Questions 1 to 4 have a mix of multiple choice, short response and longer written responses, plus production tasks to complete on three of the supplied tracks including the MIDI timbre selection and refinement.

These four questions are worth 50 marks in total.

Question 5 is a mix task, with further audio processing required to produce a final stereo mix.

Question 5 is out of 18 marks.

Question 6 is has a maximum of 16 marks. In this final essay question, the marks are split between AO3 and AO4. A maximum of 4 marks of the 16 are awarded for AO3 answers, and the rest are for AO4 answers.

The paper total is 84 marks, and candidates have 1 hour 45 minutes to complete it.

Candidates are advised to listen back to their bounces in their entirety using media player software like QuickTime to ensure they play back as expected. Incorrect bounces included:

- Incomplete bounces, i.e. bars missing. For example, quite commonly in question 3, bar 1 was mostly missing so examiners could not assess whether all of the noise/glitches had been successfully removed.
- The part was not soloed or the metronome was left on, limiting what could be heard and therefore what could be credited.

Other than for question 5, candidates are advised to bounce the whole track from bar 1 to the end, which ensures that they have included all of the work they need to.

Most candidates excelled in some areas more than others; they did not necessarily perform uniformly across the whole paper.

There were many instances of handwriting that was difficult to read. Credit cannot be given for answers that are illegible. Examiners are marking low resolution scans of exam papers onscreen, so small or scruffy writing is problematic. If teachers have any doubt at all about

legibility of a candidates handwriting, the candidate should type their answers. Typed answers were much easier for examiners to read and credit.

Individual question analysis

1ai	Identify the synth sound used. Multiple choice, marked automatically by computer.
1aii	Complete the sentence by selecting the two most appropriate terms. The vast majority of candidates were able to correctly complete the sentences.
1b	State three advantages of using MIDI bass. Over a quarter of candidates failed to score on this question, with roughly half being able to score 1 or 2 marks. Common errors were: • Providing answers that were vague or not specific enough (e.g. “easy to edit”). • Giving answers that could also apply to recorded parts. • Repeating an answer that is assigned to the same mark in the mark scheme (e.g. “no need for mic, no need for DI box”)
1ci	State the editing technique used to give the note positions shown. Roughly half of candidates managed to correctly identify that quantisation was used.
1cii	Explain why the velocity values have been chosen. Half of candidates scored both marks, whereas a third of candidates failed to score. Errors included: • Comments on timing. • Comments about changes of velocity that were too vague, not referring to beats/accents (e.g. “to give a sense of rhythm”, “more authentic”).
2a	PRACTICAL Assign the correct drums to the MIDI notes for the whole song. The majority of candidates were able to successfully assign the sounds correctly. For those that didn’t, errors included: • Misassignment of sounds. • Small errors, e.g. a few hits missing here and there – the whole pattern for each component of the kit needs to be correct to score the mark for that component. • Drums sound as piano timbre – this scored no credit (very rare). • Using a repeating drum loop – this scored no credit (very rare). • Non- acoustic kit used (very rare).

2b	Give 4 reasons why producers often assign each drum sound to a separate audio channel in the mixer. This was generally well answered, with more than half of candidates giving 3 or 4 valid answers.
3ai	State one reason for the noise at the beginning. This question was not very well answered, with only 25% of candidates successfully identifying the problem. Common erroneous answers given were: • Feedback. • Guitar being hit/played/touched. • Plugging the guitar in. • Amp buzzing (not specific enough).
3aii	PRACTICAL Remove the noise using suitable editing tools. There were a lot of instances where it was not possible to assess whether the noise had been removed because the bounce did not include the bars in question. Other common errors were: • Some hiss remained. • The strum at the start faded in or was chopped off.
3aiii	PRACTICAL Create a smooth fade on the last note so noise is reduced. Most candidates created some sort of fade, though many didn't fade quickly enough or fully enough to remove the noise at the end of the file. Common errors were: • The fade was not complete soon enough to remove the chord and glitch at the end of the file. • The fade started too early. • The Fade was too quick to be musical.
3bi	Give one benefit of using a mic instead of DI. About half of candidates were able to give a response worthy of credit. Common errors: • Giving answers that could also apply to DI (e.g. "live feel", "could change the sound") • Answers that were not specific enough (e.g. "adds character", "fuller sound")
3bii	State why a dynamic mic is most suitable for a guitar amplifier. Only about half of candidates were able to give a valid answer. Common errors: • Incorrect or irrelevant statements (e.g. "doesn't cause interference")

	• Quite a few responses referred to capturing a wide or high frequency response, which is not a valid answer.
3biii	State which direction a cardioid mic picks up sound from. The majority of candidates answered this correctly.
3biv	State 2 methods that could have been used to create the slight overdrive sound on the guitar. Less than half of candidates were able to gain full credit in this question. Common errors: • Stating ways of getting the effect within the software (the question was about the capture and therefore how to create the required effect at the recording stage). • Answers that were not specific enough (e.g. “additional gain”, “distortion”, “changing the amp settings”, “effects pedal”) • Answers that were wrong (e.g. reverb, chorus, wah wah)
4ai	Identify the note length that is closest to the delay time on the vocals in bars 5-20. Multiple choice, marked automatically by computer.
4aii	State the delay time in milliseconds. Only about a quarter of candidates were able to work out the correct delay time. There seemed to be a lot of guessing going on.
4bi	Describe what a gate does. Nearly half of candidates failed to score any marks in this question. The commonest reasons for this were: • Stating applications of gating rather than explaining what a gate actually does. • Not explaining what a gate does with sufficient accuracy or clarity.
4bii	State why the headphone spill is intermittent. Most candidates were not able to successfully answer this question. Common errors were: • Suggestions were made that would not have resulted in intermittent spill (e.g. “headphones/backing track are too loud”, “headphones are not closed back”). • Wrong answers (e.g. “The spill wouldn’t be heard when the singer is singing”, “vocals are too loud”).
4biii	PRACTICAL Remove the unwanted spill from the vocal. In general, candidates did quite well in this question, with the majority scoring 3 or 4 marks.

	Common errors were: • Attempting the task using automation or trimming audio files, resulting in some bars being overlooked and not fixed. • Vocals not soloed, so it wasn't possible to hear whether the spill had been removed. • Vocals chopped or slight spill remaining due to incorrect setting of the gate threshold. • Trimming the audio file to remove the spill before the vocal starts, the spill remaining after that. • Attempting the task using EQ rather than gating.
4ci	State the recording technique used (for stacked vocals). The majority of candidates were able to recall one of the correct terms for this process.
4cii	Describe how monitoring would be best set up for a singer when recording stacked vocals. This question was poorly answered, with the majority of candidates not understanding what was being asked and describing the set up for recording vocals rather than commenting on how monitoring would be set up when recording overdubs. The commonest mark scored was for mentioning headphones.
4di	Draw 4 crosses where you would position the four vocalists. Only 15% of candidates failed to score any marks. To gain full credit, the crosses needed to be equidistant from the microphone on an arc within a specific angle, so carelessness in drawing the crosses could result in credit being lost. Marks were often lost for having the crosses: • Too close to the mic. • Not equidistant from the mic and arranged in an arc. • At a wider angle relative to the pickup area of a cardioid polar pattern. • Too far away from the mic. • Behind the mic.
4dii	Describe what adjustments you would make if one of the vocalists was much taller than the others. This question was generally not well answered, with only 5% of candidates scoring full marks. Commonest answers to score marks were: • Give shorter singers something to stand on. • Point the mic between the shorter and taller singers. Marks were occasionally lost for descriptions that weren't quite specific enough to gain credit. Common wrong answers:

	• Make the taller singer crouch/sit down. • Put the taller singer at the back.
5a	PRACTICAL - Automate vocal panning. Most candidates were able to automate the panning accurately enough to score full marks. The commonest errors were: • Not hard panned (i.e. not panned fully to the right and left). • Panning applied slightly early or late. • Having the vocal panned left in the bars before where the panning should start (rare). • Panning the opposite way to directed (headphones on wrong way round?) (rare). • Panning drifts rather than moving decisively to the positions (rare).
5b	PRACTICAL - Apply a flanger to the guitar. The vast majority of candidates were able to successfully apply the flanger as directed. For those who didn't achieve full marks, the most common errors were: • Applying a mono effect. • Flanging being present throughout the song.
5c	PRACTICAL - Add a delay to the vocals. There was a very even spread across the marks for this question. Responses varied from no delay being applied for zero marks, to the delay being copied perfectly for full marks. Commonest errors were : • Wrong delay speed (in this case, often the slapback delay had been copied, rather than the longer delay applied in bar 23 that was specified in the question). • Repeats too quiet or not enough repeats (the repeats should still be just audible under the vocal when it enters again). • The delay starting too soon or too late and catching words it shouldn't have or chopping words. • Stereo delay applied (not mono as directed in the question).
5d	PRACTICAL - Apply a filter to the bass. Most candidates were able to successfully apply a filter that matched the example. The most common errors were: • The filter stopped a bar too early. • The filter cutoff was set too high making the sound too bright. • There was a change in level when the filter started/stopped.
5e	PRACTICAL - Balance the mix. Most candidates were able to produce a reasonable balance for the mix, though there were sometimes misjudgements resulting in one of the parts becoming masked by the others.
5f	PRACTICAL - Produce a final stereo mix. There were some mixes that scored full marks, but it was quite common for marks to be lost with one or more of the following errors: • Lead in/lead out longer than 1 second. • Tail cut (flanger).

	• High output level causing distortion. • Effects added (usually reverb). • Parts out of sync (relatively rare). • Parts panned (rare).
6	Essay - Evaluate a given scenario for vocal recording (Freddie Mercury), including the studio environment. There was a mixed response to this question, some candidates doing well and others poorly. Roughly 40% of candidates scored at least half marks. In general, candidates were able to identify things seen in the image (AO3) but were less good at explaining the consequences of these observations (AO4). Because AO3 is capped at four marks, this means that evaluation of the observations is essential to achieve higher marks, as the bulk of the marks come from AO4 explanations. This is no doubt the reason that the majority of candidates scored less than half marks. All of the areas in the mark scheme (e.g. dynamic mic, cardioid pattern, off axis, pop shield, etc) were commented on with equal frequency, there being no obvious topics that were preferred or avoided by candidates. It was relatively common for candidates to mention H&S issues (e.g. trip hazards, liquid spill) which didn't score any credit in the mark scheme. Sometimes items were mis-identified (e.g. mic type, walls identified as being reflective, etc), leading to no credit in the AO4 explanations as they were based on an erroneous assumption. Occasionally candidates would comment on the capture of the piano, which was not asked for in the question and therefore gained no credit.