



Pearson  
Edexcel

Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCE  
Music Technology (9MT0)  
Paper 01

## **Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications**

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com) or [www.btec.co.uk](http://www.btec.co.uk). Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at [www.edexcel.com/contactus](http://www.edexcel.com/contactus).

## **Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere**

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: [www.pearson.com/uk](http://www.pearson.com/uk)

Summer 2024

Publications Code 9MT0\_01\_2406\_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2024





## Principal Examiner's Report

### A level Music Technology Component 1 – Recording

9MT0/01

June 2024

#### General Introduction

This year, the list of artists provided much scope for candidates to choose from a wide range of songs in a variety of different styles. The most popular artists were Fleetwood Mac and Red Hot Chili Peppers, although there was a pleasing range of responses across all the artists.

Many centres ensured that all candidates chose a different song, and this approach is strongly encouraged as it allows each candidate to take full control of their recording. However, candidates from some centres all recorded the same song, or a couple of songs between them. This is not encouraged as it can result in intentionally or unintentionally inappropriate working practices between candidates. All candidates must be independently in control of all aspects of their recording, and there were clear cases where, for example, a vocal had been recorded on loop and different takes then distributed to different candidates. Clearly, individuals could not have been independently in control of these recordings and this is regarded a malpractice. Group working is not permitted in this task.

Whilst some songs by the named artists may match the requirements of the task, the majority will need some form of rearrangement to ensure that candidates meet those requirements. Failure to do this often will result in candidates being awarded a lower mark than the recording might otherwise deserve as some parts are either missing, under length or impossible to assess.

As in previous years, many candidates presented work that was well managed and easy for an examiner to apply the mark scheme, but there were a number of commonly occurring issues that could mostly have been easily addressed.

- Quality of performance. Whilst this is not specifically assessed, poor substandard performances invariably made successful mixing and production far harder. It is noted that vast majority of candidates presented work that was well performed.
- Guitars.
  - Electric guitars were generally well managed. There were occasional examples of guitars over-dominating the mix in the more guitar-heavy tracks (RHCP/Evanescence mainly) making it hard to assess other parts, but mostly this was well handled. The only area where electric guitars were occasionally problematic were on the more 'poppy' tracks (e.g. Ariana Grande) where guitars are not always a feature of the original recording and they tended to be submerged by keyboard tracks.

- Acoustic guitars, as in previous years, were often far more problematic. In order to credit work on acoustic guitar, it should be clearly audible in the mix. Too often, candidates simply doubled the electric guitar part and pushed it so far back in the mix it was pretty much inaudible. This is easy to solve with a little creative production. Compulsory instruments need to play for at least 2 minutes. They do not necessarily need to play for the whole track. A section with contrasting texture would allow the acoustic guitar to be fully assessed. Candidates should also be dissuaded from running acoustic guitars through amp plugins so they sound like electric guitars.
- Keyboards.
  - For the purposes of this examination, it should be clarified that any instrument that is played using a keyboard is defined as a keyboard instrument. Acoustic pianos are **not** acoustic melody instruments and should not be submitted as such as they will not get credit in that category.
  - Like acoustic guitars, keyboard parts were sometimes completely submerged at the back of the mix and impossible for an examiner to credit. The same comments as for acoustic guitars apply.
  - It would be useful for candidates to name the patch/instrument in their logs. Too often examiners were left to listen to an unspecified keyboard part.
- Vocals
  - Lead vocals were generally well managed.
  - Backing vocals, however, were, as last year, one of the major issues that examiners faced. This is also the most common issues to come up on Ask The Expert. The original of many songs may not have 2 minutes of backing vocals, but the published task requires that the submission must have a minimum of 2 minutes of backing vocals in addition to the lead. This means that there needs to be some work on the arrangement to meet the requirements. Most songs quite happily harmonise verse and choruses in 3rds and 6ths even if not in the original, or some backing oohs and ahs (provided they do not get submerged by a pad keyboard!). Some centres attempted some creative ways to interpret this. Double tracked lead vocals are not submissible as a backing vocal (although there is nothing wrong with a double-tracked lead vocal as a **lead vocal** production technique). Solo ad libs at the start/end of a song are also not submissible as backing vocals. As with acoustic guitars, backing vocals were often sent so far back in the mix as to be almost inaudible and impossible for examiners to assess.

If there are any questions regarding interpretation of the task, these should be sent direct to the Subject Advisor or Ask The Expert who will respond appropriately. There will be teachers reading this report whose students will have been negatively impacted by having acted upon incorrect advice offered on social media.

## Administration

The online submission process worked well. Most centres followed the instructions in the Administration Support Guide and this was appreciated by examiners. However, a minority of centres did not and there were examples of:

- Centres submitting one ZIP file with all three elements – final mix, logbook and DAW file. **These should be submitted separately – the final mix as a .WAV, logbook, and a ZIP file of the DAW.**
- Submitting every single audio track used in the DAW as a separate file – occasionally meaning over 100 files were submitted.
- All individual .WAV files from the DAW recording should be in the audio folder in the DAW zip. However please ensure that all these files are accessible to examiners – sometimes these files refer back to centre's network location and are inaccessible.
- File naming was also mostly very accurate and adhered to the format requested. It is really useful for examiners when everything is named as required, so please ensure that all candidates name all files and folders precisely as set out in the ASG.
- There were a few examples of .MP3 files rather than the higher quality .WAV files being submitted.
- Once the logs had been e-signed by teacher and student and files uploaded, the examiner is bound to mark what has been submitted. There were examples of files that were quite probably incorrect – missing vocals, 30 second files, badly distorted masters etc. It cannot be stressed how vital it is for candidates to check their final submission by listening all the way through – an examiner will not return work because it sounds wrong. They are required to mark what has been submitted.

## Logbooks

Almost all logbooks are now completed on a computer. There were some outstanding examples that were well presented and provided excellent evidence to support the submitted final mix. Some were clearly very last-minute jobs and provided little useful information. Examiners will refer to the logbooks to see if the information supports what has been submitted on the final mix. Generally, the two complement each other, but there were some logs which contained inaccuracies. Examiners will always mark what they hear, not what they read, so embellishing the facts in the log does not achieve anything.

Some students printed a screen shot of the whole mix arrange window on the DAW as the track diagram and these, when tracks were properly named, were very useful and more accurate than the block diagram. For 2025 submissions, candidates will be asked to complete both the mix arrange window as well as attach a screenshot of the DAW arrangement.

Photographs must be taken at the time of the recording and show a complete set up. For example, a photograph of a set up for a lead vocal should include the singer (whilst singing), not just a picture of a microphone with a pop shield and no singer (which was not uncommon). A photo of a guitar set up with no guitarist in sight is not helpful to an examiner. Some candidates provided multiple photos of drum set ups - . Time and date stamps on the photos would be useful.

## **Marking criteria**

### **AG1: Capture**

Most candidates scored well in AG1. Where elements were inaudible, marks in that category were best fitted as will be stated on Examiner Mark Booklets. This will also be the case in AG 2-4.

### **AG2 Editing – processing EQ**

Most common issues with EQ were poor upper end frequency response on either individual tracks or the mix as a whole, poor lower end frequency response, and swamping around the lower mid frequencies.

### **AG3 – Processing – dynamic processing**

Problems with dynamic control were often caused by low gain control on the recording not allowing compression to even out dynamic variation. Poor microphone technique by singers also caused some issues. Occasional over compression (mainly of drums and electric guitars) was observed, but most candidates controlled the dynamics reasonably well.

### **AG4: Processing – use of effects**

This was the one aspect where the mix was often at variance to the log. Many candidates could have been a little bolder in their use of effects with some very dry brittle mixes. Bear in mind that an examiner needs something to assess, so a little more can go a long way – this is not a task to replicate a mix but present evidence to the examiner that candidates can apply effects to help create a balanced mix. There were a few examples of over reverberant mixes.

### **AG5: Production – Balance and blend**

Whilst there were many excellent examples of well-balanced mixes where all tracks could clearly be heard, there were also a significant number that suffered from masked and inaudible tracks.

### **AG6: Production – use of stereo**

Examiners were looking for tracks with a stereo field that provided good, but not extreme, separation. Most candidate presented a well-managed stereo field, often a little narrow with, for example, BVs and lead vocals fighting for the same space. There was occasionally some very inappropriately wide and over separated use of stereo.

### **AG7: Management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing**

Most candidates scored 4. Those that didn't mostly had low mastering levels, some unedited noise or a cut start/end – all errors that could easily have been rectified with a little more care and attention in the final bounce process.