



# **Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback**

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE Music (2008)  
Unit 2: Composing (6MU02)

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Publications Code 6MU02\_01\_1706\_ER

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## **Examiners' Report 2017**

### **6MU02 01**

The standard of compositions has remained largely stable (94% achieving better than half marks compared with 95% last year and 92% in 2015).

This year, unlike previous years, there has not been a further rise in the standard of sleeve notes (78% achieved better than half marks compared with 88% last year and 78% in 2015).

47% achieved better than 16/20 compared with 55% last year and 46% in 2015.

Marks continue to be bunched in the 21-30 mark bands although only 28% gained marks in the higher mark bands of 30+ compared with 39% last year.

Brief 1 (composing expressively) was again the most popular being taken by 45% of the candidates. However, Variation Structures was more popular than last year at 28%.

## **COMPOSITIONS**

*Brief 1 – A walk through the haunted castle – 45%*

A fall in last year's take-up which was 66%. There was a wide spread of marks with 30% achieving marks at excellent and above. The stronger submissions had a sense of narrative and a seamless, well-paced structure. The weaker ones consisted of a succession of disconnected scenes. There was quite a heavy reliance on tubular bells and chromatic scales to create atmosphere although some imaginative candidates devised elaborate scenarios that included ghosts coming to life in a Viennese-type ballroom. This is a popular option to which most candidates respond well.

*Brief 2 – Compose a theme and variations that exploits the characteristics of an instrument - 28%*

This option proved more popular than last year, probably because it was a more accessible brief. Examiners commented that briefs involving variations often result in 'workmanlike rather than imaginative' pieces although they fit the mark scheme easily and can lead to high marks. The requirement to address instrumentation was an addition this year and presented a challenge to less able instrumentalists. Equally, those who wrote confidently for their own instrument often did so at the expense of musical content and development.

*Brief 3 – A song on the theme of friendship – 12%*

A small fall in numbers since last year although the standard was much the same and produced a wide spread of marks.

Potential candidates for this brief may have opted instead for Brief 4, which saw a rise in numbers.

Brief 4 – vocal piece to remember the victims of war – 15%

A significant rise over last year's take-up of 3%. This was the first year that the brief focused on a more secular theme and obviously proved attractive. Flanders Field was a popular choice of text and some 30% of the marks were in the excellent band and above.

## **SLEEVE NOTE**

The questions remain the same each year and in this year although previous pattern of a year-on-year rise halted.

78% gained better than half marks (compared with 88% in 2016).

47% gained better than 16/20 (compared with 55% in 2016).

As with last year, most candidates managed to achieve full marks for question 1 and also attract credit for making multiple points in question 2. Candidates achieving a low mark for the sleeve note tended to be those who failed to answer question 3 adequately although a significant number of sleeve notes included a question 3 answer that ran to several pages.

Common year-on-year problems are a failure to provide examples of features such as specific chords and devices like suspensions and instrumental effects – a comment such as 'the piece includes a dominant seventh' requires a little more detail in terms of location and/or function in order to attract credit. Moreover a point needs to be of interest to attract credit. Stating that the piece is in a major key is not especially significant unless some explanation is provided (for example, explaining that a piece based on the Composing Expressively brief is in a minor key because it is a 'sad' tonality).

A significant number of candidates continue to equate the 12 marks for this question with 12 points that have to be made – a point that has been made in previous years' reports. In fact, the mark scheme operates a sliding scale such that 17 points are required for full marks.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

One point that arose both this year and last in the examiners' individual reports was the size of scores. Some were submitted on A3 pages (or larger), or had been carefully bound in wallets and portfolios. A simple set of A4 pages is all that is required. Moreover, this size is much easier to pack when the examiner returns the marked work to Edexcel.