



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

Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel GCE Music (2008)  
Unit 5: Composition and Technical Study  
(6MU05)

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## **Examiners' Report 2017**

### **6MU05-01**

#### **Key points;**

There was a fall in the standard of the compositions; 82% gained over half marks compared with 94% last year. Only 17% were placed in the Excellent band and above, compared with 43% last year.

The gap between the marks for compositions and technical studies again changed this year and, for the first time, the technical studies overtook the composition marks by a small margin. 84% of the technical studies gained better than half marks compared with 82% of compositions.

However, there were fewer examples of excellent work in the technical studies. 10% were placed in the higher mark bands, compared with 17% of the compositions.

There was a fall in the take-up of the chorale option - 35%, compared with 41% in previous years. Take-up of the other technical studies was similar to that of previous years.

This year we again monitored the different musical styles. As in previous years those choosing the more 'classical' briefs, 1 and 2, tended to do rather better. Popular music styles tended to be more common and more successful in the film music and dance briefs, and were more likely to be placed in the excellent band.

The most common submission was again a composition coupled with a chorale.

#### **THE BRIEFS**

**Brief 1 - Compose a piece in which the opening idea is developed - 20%**

This was the most popular composition brief and a significant rise from last year's 7%. This brief produced some excellent work (30% of the marks were excellent or above) although there was a wide spread of marks with just as many earning less than half marks. Weaker candidates seemed to struggle with the lack of a defined structure in the brief, or of finding ways to sustain the development of the material.

**Brief 2 - compose a piece for two instruments with the title dialogue- 14%**

As in previous years this was generally done well, the most successful pieces being by students writing confidently for instruments with whose characteristics they were familiar.

**Brief 3 - Compose a piece of music for title titles of a film about time travel - 13%**

A rise in last year's small take-up of 4% with a wide spread of marks. Some candidates seemed to have difficulty devising a suitable narrative. A common strategy was to travel through musical history depicting medieval scenes through to Viennese waltzes and jazz although the level of stylistic accuracy in the examples of pastiche was variable and often created little more than a suite of dances.

**Brief 4 - compose a piece of music for a ballet featuring chess pieces - 6%**

As in previous years there were many attempts to tell a story, rather than address the demands of writing music for dance. Many submissions consisted of little more than a succession of episodes, each depicting one of the chess pieces, and many degenerated into a battle between the pawns. As with the film music option, the spread of marks was very wide.

## **TECHNICAL STUDIES**

Technical study 1 - baroque counterpoint - 6%

Take-up and standards were similar to previous years although there was a wide spread of marks suggesting that weaker candidates are increasingly opting for this task. The most common weakness occurred in passages where the candidate added their own figuring and had to demonstrate an understanding of the harmonic implications.

Technical study 2 - Bach chorale - 35%

Numbers were fewer than last year, although numbers in the excellent bands were similar (10% this year compared with 9% last year). Generally, the planning of cadences was creative although many candidates, even the excellent ones, harmonised bar 4 incorrectly and created parallels. Many students do not correctly replicate Bach's use of the second inversion chord. There are only two instances; a cadential 6/4 (Ic-Va-Ia) and a passing 6/4 of which the only allowable progression is IVb-Ic-ii7b.

Technical study - popular song - 7%

Again a similar take-up to last year and consistent with a small year-on-year downward trend. Doubtless centres have realised over the life of this specification that this option is not as easy as first appears and have sought alternatives.

As in previous years, most candidates achieved well for identifying the chords correctly even though they may not have been handled convincingly nor led to a convincing melodic line.

The greatest challenge in this option, as in the other two options, is being able to deduce a structure from the given material and to create convincing joins with their added material.

One general point is that candidates who choose to work their technical study at the computer must ensure that they enter the material from the question paper accurately.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

There were few problems this year although some centres fail to pack the CDs properly with the result that they break in the post.