

Moderator's Report Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel Level 1 / 2
GCSE (9-1) MUSIC (1MU0)

Component 1 (Performing)

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Introduction

Performing is a non-examined assessment that is internally marked by the teacher and externally moderated by Pearson.

Candidates completed two live, unedited, uninterrupted performances:

- 1) A solo comprising one or more pieces, with a minimum duration of one minute
- 2) An ensemble comprising one or more pieces, with a minimum duration of one minute.

Candidates performed for a minimum of four minutes, solo and ensemble combined.

Candidates were assessed on their skills demonstrated by performing pieces in any style through the following approaches:

- From a score
- Improvisation
- Realising music using music technology
- Rap
- Beatbox
- Oral tradition
- Their own composition.

We would like to thank teachers for preparing materials such as PAS forms, recordings, scores, and for their support in preparing candidates for assessment. We also thank centres for uploading work to the LWT portal.

We congratulate all candidates, and we hope that they will continue to enjoy performing music throughout their lives.

Performance of Candidates

Moderators commented on the wide variety of repertoire performed; many submissions were at a high standard. Candidates continued to achieve across the full mark range. There was a very slight increase in students achieving high marks. For performances awarded 20–24 raw marks, the difficulty level scaling for More Difficult increases marks to 30 out of 30. Consequently, a significant number of candidates achieve high or full marks for this component.

There were some very enjoyable, outstanding, engaging, and mature performances, including Liszt's Sonetto 123 del Petrarca, a piano duet of Mozart's A Musical Joke, Vivaldi's Concerto in G minor for two cellos, an oboe performance of Mozart's Quartett in F, and a flawless vocal performance of Miranda's Burn.

Piano (28.1%), female voice (17.7%), electric guitar (8.7%), drum kit (8.2%), and violin (6.3%) were the most popular choices again this year. Electric guitar, drum kit, and violin saw increases in popularity, while piano and female voice submissions both declined. Notable increases were also seen in the number of alto and tenor saxophone, tuba, French horn, oboe, double bass, and bass guitar performances. The overall trend of increasing popularity in playing orchestral instruments, woodwind, strings, and brass, seen over recent years, continues.

The majority of candidates realised their potential by preparing pieces within their technical ability; their performances demonstrated secure control of both accuracy and interpretation. However, where candidates attempted tasks beyond their technical ability, to varying degrees, accuracy and interpretation were less successful.

The vast majority of ensemble repertoire selection was appropriate and made with care. However, centres should be mindful that many theatre-style duets do meet the required one-minute threshold for undoubled, independent and simultaneously sounding parts. For various reasons, candidates opted for ensemble repertoire at a lower difficulty level compared to the solo and therefore usually achieved less well.

A number of submissions fell short of the four-minute combined duration requirement. In these cases, the mark penalty table was applied to the final mark at the end of the moderation process.

Assessment

Many teacher assessors demonstrated accuracy and confidence when applying the levels-based mark scheme. For each grid, the statements were applied rigorously and were equally weighted.

When it came to justification of marks awarded, the more accurate teacher assessors showed careful attention to detail, especially when pointing out reasons for not awarding full marks, often using the language of the statements and by referring to specific sections or bars in the music.

Where marking was less accurate, comments were less precise, or the assessment grid wording was copied directly. Although less common, moderators still saw submissions where the wording used did not correlate to the marks awarded, there were very few comments or no comments.

Assessment Grid 1

Grid 1 assesses technique. Statements provide guidance for different types of instruments, for example, hand coordination and pedalling for pianists, or breath control and diction for singers. The statements assess control, ability to perform the piece(s), and handling of sonority and intonation.

One area that centres need to be mindful of is where to mark for specific elements of this grid. For example, intonation was often mentioned in grid 3 and the mark was reduced, sometimes with double penalisation in both grid 1 and grid 3. Moderators noticed that teacher assessors sometimes omitted ability to perform statements from their justifications.

Assessment Grid 2

Grid 2 assesses expression and interpretation. The statements are wide-ranging and assess tempo, dynamic contrast, phrasing, articulation, and the level of communication. For ensemble performance, awareness of balance is also assessed.

Moderators noted that teacher assessors often overlooked under-tempo performances or where gradation of tempo was unsuccessful. In other cases, performances that demonstrated a distinct lack of shaping of dynamics and phrasing, with articulation marks not observed, level 4 marks were still awarded.

Teacher assessor comments for awareness of balance in ensemble performance were important in the moderation process, particularly where the recording did not accurately reflect the performance. For instance, where the candidate part was masked by another instrument due to microphone placement, the teacher assessor view was always considered.

Assessment Grid 3

Grid 3 assesses accuracy and fluency. The statements assess accuracy of pitch and rhythm, coherence and fluency of expression and interpretation, and development of the stimulus for improvised performances. Reaction and adjustment to the other parts is assessed for ensemble performance.

There was variation in the marking of grid 3. Much of the teacher assessor marking was accurate but some teachers did not listen to performances in enough detail, awarding high marks where there were errors, omissions, hesitations, or moments where coherence was lost. It was noticed that marking tended to be lenient where the performance was marked against a professional reference recording rather than the published score.

Difficulty Levels

The May 2024 updated Difficulty Levels Booklet was used this year. It includes revised lists of repertoire from grade-awarding exam boards. Some pieces, depending on the difficulty of the edition, are listed at different levels.

For instruments and pieces not listed in the Difficulty Levels Booklet, graded exam syllabuses may be consulted. There has been an increase in the range of syllabuses being used by teacher assessors to award difficulty levels. Only those syllabuses accredited by Ofqual will be accepted by Pearson.

More teacher assessors made use of the Difficulty Levels Booklet in the first instance, and graded exam syllabuses were referred to more often. Occasionally, moderators amended difficulty levels awarded by teacher assessors because:

- the edition performed was easier or harder than the Difficulty Levels Booklet listing
- the whole piece was not performed

- all movements were not performed
- the edition performed is listed in the Difficulty Levels Booklet but not referenced.

Where a piece is not listed in the Booklet or a graded exam syllabus, it is recommended that teacher assessors use the Difficulty Levels: Further Guidance for Ensemble Performances document as an aid to inform the level.

Administration

The vast majority of submissions adhered to specification requirements and followed correct procedures for the conduct of Component 1 provided in the Administrative Support Guide.

Unfortunately, there were still instances where moderators were unable to complete moderation in the first place. Moderators found:

- missing files
- work of the wrong candidates
- recordings of other performances
- scores for other performances
- missing scores, where they exist
- missing pages within scores
- the role of the candidate in the ensemble was not specified or was missing from the PAS.

Moderators reported moderation was made more challenging where centres submitted incorrect file types, incorrectly labelled files, poorly recorded audio and video files, scores with pages in an incorrect order, scores incorrectly orientated, blurred, grainy or crookedly scanned scores, and photographed scores with each page a separate file.

Performance Length

Performance length is measured from the start of the first note of the piece, to the end of the last. The number of submissions that fell short of the four-minute threshold was consistent with previous years.

A significant number of teacher assessors measured performance length inaccurately. Often track length was stated as performance length. Another common error was discounting rest bars or sections of music where the candidate did not play.

As a result, moderators found that some submissions, despite being presented as meeting the four-minute threshold, were actually under the threshold when measured accurately. In contrast, a smaller number of submissions that were deemed under-length were found to meet the four-minute threshold by the moderator. In addition, the reduction penalty percentage applied to the final mark at the end of moderation was amended for some submissions.

Performance Authentication Sheet (PAS)

More teacher assessors made use of spreadsheet PAS this year. The spreadsheet was preferred by moderators as it was quick to use, provided an overview of the work of the cohort, and submissions were free from clerical errors.

The spreadsheet PAS automatically calculates marks, and addition of performance length. It is the recommend form for future submissions.

Scores

Many scores were submitted in PDF format. One file for each performance, with the pages in the correct order and in the correct orientation. Where more than one piece was performed, for either solo or ensemble, some teacher assessors provided a single file containing all the scores in the correct order.

Moderation was straightforward where teacher assessors marked on scores:

- the candidate role in ensemble performance where it was not clear
- sections of music omitted by the candidate
- deviations from the printed music agreed by the teacher assessor.

Moderation was made more challenging where the score submitted did not provide all of the detail required to assess the performance. In these instances, appropriate scores were requested by the moderator.

Recordings

There was noticeable variety in the quality of recordings submitted this year. Many were excellent but others were poor. The most common issue is imbalance caused by microphone placement, either the candidate part is too prominent or too quiet. Recordings were also problematic issues when the record level had been set too high, causing distortion; too low, making the recording too quiet; or the level was automatically adjusted throughout the recording.

A significant proportion of recordings were made in data compressed formats, such as MP3 and M4A, with a low bit rate. The bit rate affects sound quality, the lower the bit rate the greater the loss in sound. Data compressed recordings were often found to be dull and lacking in dynamic range, potentially disadvantaging some candidates. This made assessment of sonority (assessment grid 1) and shaping of the music (assessment grid 2) more challenging.

It is recommended recordings are made and submitted in an uncompressed format, such as WAV 16-bit/44.1kHz, to ensure more accurate capture. Devices designed to capture spoken voice, such as a phone or tablet, should not be used.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>