



Pearson
Edexcel

Moderator's Report
Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2
GCSE (9-1) in Music (1MU0)
Component 2 (Composing)

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Introduction

In 2023, external moderation continued and to resume with the full specification, candidates for Component 2 (Composing) were expected to submit one 'Free' composition and respond to one Set Brief with a portfolio of a minimum length of 3 minutes. To accompany the compositions, a CAS, a Pupil Declaration Form, two scores or commentaries and two recordings of the music needed to be uploaded to the LWA for each candidate.

Centres were given advance warning of the 2306 component requirements and guidance was available to download from the GCSE (9-1) Music (1MU0) page on the Pearson/Edexcel website to further support Teacher Assessors and Examinations Officers.

Teacher Assessors and Examinations Officers should be commended for the time and effort given to the preparation of materials to ensure that the moderation process was as smooth as possible.

Performance of Candidates

Based on moderator feedback, as with 1MU0-01, a similar percentage of students as 2022 achieved high/full marks possibly because:

- 1) The specification requirements are now embedded with Teacher Assessors and candidates.
- 2) More candidates are composing based on their own musical interests and experiences rather than having 'one size fits all' tasks being prescribed.
- 3) Many candidates are displaying outstanding skills when using music technology.

Again, there were very small numbers of low-scoring candidates in 2023. The number of under-length compositions was fairly static probably because they were able to create two short compositions which in total met the 3-minute requirement.

In 2023 moderators reported that they are seeing a wider range of styles of compositions. Despite annual comments in the Principal Moderator's Report, some Teacher Assessors overlooked the specification requirement for candidates to compose using their musical interests and experiences. This is less than in previous years but is still notable that they set very specific tasks and the outcome was that all candidates had to adhere to some quite limiting briefs. These included:

Theme and Variations **Ternary/Rondo Form**

Within these examples, it was felt that opportunities to develop ideas in the returning sections were lost and exact repetition was used.

There were fewer centres than in previous years submitting whole cohorts of minimalist, blues and jazz and 32 bar song structures.

Once again, the number of submissions of compositions from the electronic dance genres continued to increase mainly due to the availability and accessibility of music sequencing packages. Candidates were able to display a wide range of compositional skills in creating and manipulating their music with highly original and successful outcomes.

Many candidates using these sequencing programmes, took on board comments made in previous years and submitted detailed commentaries giving sufficient musical information to meet the specification requirement for others to be able to replicate their compositions. Many sequencing programmes can convert MIDI into notated scores. The best submissions included a mix of notation, annotated screenshots and detailed commentary to explain their musical intentions. Candidates who submitted just lead sheets must also include indications for the vocal line and strumming patterns for accompanying instruments as chord progression under a set of lyrics does not provide sufficient musical detail. It is pleasing to note that fewer candidates than in previous years submitted unannotated screengrabs with little or no other musical evidence to explain their compositional processes.

Many moderators reported that it was a pleasure to listen to some outstanding recordings -both 'live' and technology-based. Teacher Assessors should be commended for the time taken to produce well-balanced, high-quality recordings.

Assessment

Moderators felt Teacher Assessor's understanding of the national standard and the application of the Assessment Criteria is now becoming embedded. The marking was mostly accurate but there were cases where it was deemed to be very generous. The centres demonstrating the best practise gave detailed comments along with musical references to highlight the key features of their candidates' compositions. As in previous years, some centres continued to copy and paste statements from the assessment grids into the comment boxes without explanation. Where marks and comments did not match the equivalent level statements in the Assessment Grids,

the marking was judged to be less accurate. Sadly, there were still some cases where Teacher Assessors failed to include comments to justify the marks they awarded their candidates.

Assessment grid 1: Developing musical ideas.

Teacher assessors should note the following:

- To achieve higher levels, musical ideas must demonstrate at least effective development *and* extension. Often layers were added with the main melodic material copied showing some development rather than considering the development of the whole ensemble.
- Once again, most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the characteristics of the style of music they were composing for. The most successful compositions ensured that they were handled convincingly throughout the whole piece.
- When responding to the Set Brief, some candidates only considered part of the requirements.
- For Set Brief 1 (Instrumental Music 1700-1820), the most successful candidates composed a discrete solo part with an effective accompaniment. They considered the occasion (a banquet) and ensured that the structure of the music was in Binary or Rounded Binary form. Where parts of the set brief were overlooked, the music could only 'meet the brief in some respects' and so the overall mark for Assessment Grid 1 was slightly impacted.
- Many candidates who submitted a Set Brief 2 (Vocal Music) composition embraced the required through-composed structure. Unfortunately, significant numbers overlooked this part of the set brief and submitted 32 bar-structured songs which were suitable for a concert in a small venue.
- Set Brief 3 (Music for stage and screen) was by far the most popular choice. Candidates produced some imaginative compositions where the Enchanted Forest and the fairy tale characters' journeys were clearly conveyed in the music.

Moderators reported that they were able to enjoy listening to a wide variety of approaches to the task from full orchestral scores to compositions using music technology effectively.

- Set Brief 4 (Fusions), as in previous years, this task attracted the least submissions. There were some outstanding compositions where both cultures were given full consideration when creating an album track. In some cases, candidates submitted compositions where only one of the two genres was included in the music.

Assessment grid 2: Demonstrating technical control

Teacher Assessors should note the following:

- The most successful candidates showed a clear understanding of harmony, rhythm dynamics and melody to show secure control of the musical elements. In a significant number of cases, melodic writing relied heavily on conjunct and scalar patterns. Latin, blues and jazz compositions often displayed interesting rhythmic ideas whilst more traditional styles were less ambitious. Many compositions contained harmonic lapses whilst there were some excellent examples of dissonance, extended chords, modulations and suspensions. Dynamics were given less attention in many compositions.
- It is important that all chosen musical forces within the compositions are exploited idiomatically. There were instances where candidates had selected the instrument but demonstrated that they did not really understand the capabilities of the timbre they were writing for. Successful compositions demonstrated parts which were playable and in the correct range. There were instances where forces were added to create musical contrast but the parts themselves had very little development. Where pre-recorded samples are included in compositions, it is important that the commentary clearly outlines the candidates' musical input, especially if loops form a significant part of the piece.
- The most successful compositions varied the texture to create contrast in the music rather than relying too heavily on melody-dominated homophony.

Assessment grid 3: Composing with musical coherence.

Teacher assessors should note the following:

- It is important to consider the composition as a whole, rather than individual sections to achieve a sense of balance.
- In many compositions, candidates needed to ensure that their music was both fluent and contrasting. For example, moderators reported that there were instances where transitions between sections were slightly abrupt and by copying and pasting whole phrases the opportunity to create contrast was missed.
- Many compositions demonstrated a sense of direction and wholeness. Most submissions showed a clear understanding of structural devices especially in songs. Once again, a significant number of compositions ended rather abruptly rather than coming to a pleasing conclusion.

Administration

The variety of formats of CAS made moderation challenging in 2023. For 1MU0-02, centres seemed to prefer the PDF versions of the CAS rather than the spreadsheet version.

Many centres completed the CAS to a high standard, but once again some Composition Outline boxes on page 2 did not include an audience or occasion for the composition.

In 2023, the requirement for centres to include two compositions led to errors in the calculation of the total length of the candidate's compositions on the CAS. The most common error was to just include the track time without accounting for any lead-in or lead-out time. Some tracks were over five minutes long whereas the composition itself was less than 2 minutes.

A few centres did not include the highest and lowest scoring candidates within their submission even if they were not part of the requested sample.

Some centres submitted materials in the incorrect format or files were not labelled as requested in the Administrative Support Guide (ASG).

Several candidates submitted compositions where a stimulus was used. It is important that this information is included in the score/commentary or on the CAS as there were more occurrences of suspected plagiarism than in previous years.

When submitting rap-style compositions, it is important that candidates acknowledge the formality of the GCSE process. Whilst, certain terms and phrases may be common in this genre, moderators reported numerous occasions where unacceptable levels of swearing and inappropriate language were included in the candidates' compositions.

Some centres had out-of-date contact information listed on the Pearson website which hindered moderators when they requested additional or missing materials.

Scores and recordings

Many candidates produced very impressive, notated scores to accompany their compositions. In some instances, the parts were unlabelled making it more difficult for the moderator to understand the candidates' intentions for the music.

Some of the most successful candidates submitting film scores for either their Free or Set Brief 3 Compositions included annotations on the scores to explain the action being conveyed in the music.

- As previously mentioned, those candidates who submit commentaries, lead sheets or screenshots need to provide enough musical detail to meet the specification requirement to provide enough musical detail for others to be able to replicate their compositions. A guide is available in the Teaching and Learning section of the Pearson website to support candidates who wish to submit this type of score.

The time taken to produce clear, well-balanced and high-quality recordings was greatly appreciated. There were fewer instances in 2023 where obtrusive background noises interfered intentions of the final submission.

Moving forward centres should:

- Prepare students for both a free composition and a Set Brief composition for 2024.

- The 1MU0-02 Set Briefs for submission in May 2024 are published on the Pearson website from 1st September 2023.
- Refer to the 2024 Administrative Support Guide to ensure that work is submitted in the correct format and files are uploaded to the LWT with centre and candidate numbers (not student names).
- Submit 2024 CAS forms including an audience or occasion for each composition in the Composition Outline boxes.
- Ensure length for each composition and their total length are accurately recorded on the CAS.
- Submit a score or detailed commentary for each composition, including enough musical information to replicate it by other performers.
- Ensure recordings are ambient, balanced, at a good level and unedited.
- Check the work of the **highest** and **lowest** scoring candidate is included within the requested sample. If they are not, add these to the submission.

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>