

GCSE Music launch event FAQs

1. How is the length of performance made up?

Students perform for at least four minutes combined duration. They must perform at least one solo piece and at least one ensemble piece.

Solo performance: this must be of at least one minute in duration, and may comprise one or more pieces.

Ensemble performance: this must be of at least one minute in duration, and may comprise one or more pieces.

2. Why are performances to be recorded in year 11? How is this monitored?

Centres may decide when during year 11 they assess their students' performances. Performances must be recorded during the students' intended year of certification in order to allow them to have had sufficient opportunity to be taught the qualification content and to develop their performing skills. Centres are required to sign and submit authentication statements to confirm the performance was recorded in the students' year of intended certification when submitting performances.

3. Are marks averaged for assessing on the mark grids?

Each student's solo performance is marked using the assessment grids (out of 24 marks) and then that mark is translated into a mark out of 30 using the difficulty levels grid (to take account of the difficulty of their chosen solo piece(s)). The same process is then repeated for their ensemble piece(s). The two marks out of 30 are added together to give a mark out of 60 for the Performing component.

4. Why is grade 4 considered standard when Eduqas are taking grade 3?

Grade 4 is considered the standard level of difficulty for GCSE and this is based on the QCF grid which shows the standard between different qualifications.

5. Why can you not record students' performances in their first year?

Because the course is linear all assessments must take place in the students' intended year of certification (i.e. year 11).

6. How can 5 hours be split in composing?

Teacher support material will be published on our website once the qualification is accredited. This will include course planners and schemes of work to provide guidance on how teachers can plan their lessons for each component.

7. Can pieces composed be from the same area of study?

Yes. Students should liaise with their teacher over their choice of free composition.

8. Can compositions be a purely percussive piece?

The composition to a set brief must meet the specific requirements of the brief. The free composition may be in any style, with any instrument, but must include sufficient musical elements, contexts and language to successfully meet the assessment criteria. These assessment criteria are published in the specification so students can see what to work towards and teachers can track their progress.

9. What score/commentary is necessary?

A detailed notated score appropriate to the style of music must be submitted for each composition. This can be submitted on manuscript paper or as a printout. The score may be handwritten or printed. This must be produced by the student.

'Score' refers to any of the following: a full score in conventional staff notation; a lead sheet or chord chart; track sheets; written account, tables or diagrams.

The purpose of the score is to justify the intentions of the piece of music that has been composed, so that it may be easily replicated by another performer. It should include all necessary and appropriate musical vocabulary.

The score does not carry marks but is necessary for the assessment and moderation of the compositions.

10. Can composition start in Year 10?

The teaching for the Composing component may start at any time in the course; this is at the teacher's discretion. Students may also start planning and practicing their free composition at any point during the course.

11. Will there be a CD and Anthology?

A list of all audio and sheet music will be made available via the website, so teachers can source these pieces.

An anthology will be available to purchase and contain the sheet music for all eight set works, introductions to all the pieces and a glossary of key terms.

The anthology is a paid-for resource to support teachers and students in the qualification if they choose to purchase it. Pearson's paid-for resources, as well as other endorsed resources, are not a prerequisite for the delivery of our Pearson Edexcel qualifications.

12. Will there be notes on the set works?

There will be short guides to each of the set works published on our website following accreditation and ahead of first teaching.

13. Why is the Romantic era not covered?

The choice of musical eras and periods was decided in part by the Department for Education (DfE) and in part by Pearson. It was a requirement of the subject criteria (set by the DfE) that students study music from the Western Classical Tradition (1650-1910) and this is covered by Instrumental Music 1700-1820. We chose the remaining areas of study to provide students with examples of quality music from a range of genres and periods, enabling them to have a broad understanding of the different types of music available and study particular set works in depth.

14. When will it be accredited by Ofqual?

The qualification has been accredited by Ofqual.

15. Is there a marking grid for appraising?

There is sample assessment material (SAMs) available for the Appraising component which comprises a sample question paper and mark scheme. Additional specimen papers will be published on our website in early 2016.

16. Does the extended question have to be prose or bullet points?

The essay question (question 9 of the Appraising exam) assesses students' knowledge and understanding of musical elements, context and language in answer to the specific question. In it they must show an equal emphasis on demonstrating and applying musical knowledge (AO3) and using appraising skills to make evaluative and critical judgements (AO4). To achieve the highest marks students should demonstrate 'extensive and sophisticated use of musical vocabulary. (AO3)' and ensure their 'appraisal presents a cohesive critical argument of both pieces. (AO4)'. Therefore it is advised that students answer in prose.

17. Will there be samples of marked work?

Exemplar material of marked student work will be published on the website in early 2016.

18. Can you explain the capping statements in the performing assessment grid 1?

To ensure we can guarantee sufficient differentiation between performances of pieces of music of difficulty levels 1-3 we have inserted 'capping statements' to the levels in performance assessment grid 1 that limit the marks available for students' performances if they do not meet certain levels of difficulty. This is because it is considered inappropriate to reward students for their 'Technical control - technique' on performances which are not sufficiently demanding.

Music of difficulty level 3 and above (the standard level of difficulty at GCSE is 4) can access the full range of marks in this particular assessment grid. The other two assessment grids have no restrictions and the full range of marks is available to students regardless of the level of difficulty of the piece performed.

The difficulty levels grid is applied to the total marks of the three assessment grid and is used to provide marks for their performance as a whole

This specification is still being reviewed by Ofqual, so further changes may be made to the qualification.

19. Why are both performances and compositions that do not meet the minimum time requirement awarded zero marks?

It is an Ofqual requirement that performances not meeting the minimum time (set by Ofqual) be awarded zero marks. Ofqual did not rule on compositions however. There are minimum times for students' compositions. For the sake of consistency between the performing and composing components, Pearson has decided to apply the rule of zero

marks being awarded for compositions that do not meet the minimum times. This requirement is clearly outlined in our specifications.

20. Can students perform arrangements as their compositions?

Students are free to select any source material, from pre-existing music or their own music, to create their compositions; this therefore includes arrangements. In the specification, they are referred to only as 'compositions'; throughout for ease and readability.

The assessment criteria have been designed to apply equally to a composition using original material or arranged material. Students will be assessed on how they have taken their musical idea and developed it, demonstrating technical control and coherence.