



Pearson
Edexcel

GCSE (9-1) Music

Further Composition Exemplars



Overview of further composition exemplars

This is a set of five new composition exemplars to support teachers delivering and assessing 1MU02. This resource focuses on making different musical styles and technologies more accessible to promote a broad range of outcomes, supporting students from different musical backgrounds and experiences.

This pack should be used in conjunction with assessment information in the [GCSE \(9-1\) Music specification](#). Composition Assessment Grids 1-3 can be located on pages 37 to 41 in this document. The pack includes the following resources and materials:

- 5 compositions across a range of styles and briefs, representing different compositional approaches. The marks of these compositions are deemed to be aspirational.
- The intention is to show different ways of working across musical styles, and how candidates working in any style can write successful pieces that meet the requirements of the assessment criteria.
- Two compositions are a response to Set Brief 4 (Fusion) from 2023, showing idiomatic writing in both styles of the musical fusion as a traditional notated score and a screenshot score with commentary.
- One composition focuses on Set Brief 3 (Music for Stage and Screen) from 2023, exemplifying how to present materials, suggestions for structuring responses, and ensuring a clear response to the brief.
- One composition will focus on a rap style where technology plays an important part in the development of musical ideas.
- The final composition focuses on electronic dance music and uses a sample as part of the composition.



Composition 1a: 'Mere Dost Nacho'

This is a composition in response to Set Brief 4 (Fusions) from the 2023 examination series. The set brief stated:

'Combine the stylistic features of Indian classical music with Western popular music to create a track for a fusion album.'

- You may write for one or more instrument(s).
- The instruments may be acoustic and/or amplified and/or synthesised.'

Points to note in this exemplar composition:

- The candidate provides a short programme note referencing their instrumental choices, structure, texture, melody and harmony.

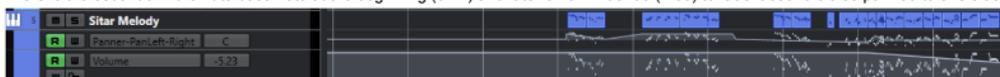
Programme note

The opening includes tablas and pop drums, giving it a catchy indian pop feel, and as the texture builds up, the sitar's main melody (0:18) is introduced (Section A) accompanied by the keyboard and bass (0:25). At 0:40 the sitar's melody changes and the bass plays in octaves, giving a fuller texture. In Section B (1:05), panning is used, as the sitars imitate each other at different octaves and the keyboard plays a slow alberti bass. The repeated Section A (1:40) modulates as the flute plays the arpeggios and all the instruments join in to create a final climax of my piece and fade out at the end.

- There are several clear screenshots showing dynamic changes and panning.



There is a crescendo in the flute bass note at the beginning (0:22) and later on diminuendo (1:06) to fade it out. It is also panned to one side, to create a sense of 3D space.



At 0:42- 1:22, one Sitar is panned to the right and the other to the left and the volume also fades out at the end

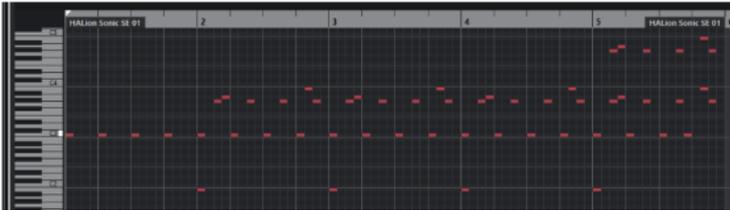


At 1:42 and 2:12, there is quick left and right panning whilst the keyboard plays the broken chord triplets.



- Rhythm is explained by enlarging the track to include bar lines.

A catchy tabla drum pattern opens my piece, introducing the lively tempo and syncopated rhythm whilst playing grace notes. There is also a pop drum pattern that accompanies the tablas and starts to thicken the texture.



- Melodic parts are also explained using the piano roll display e.g. bass and keyboard.

Both the bass (left photo) and the keyboard (right) play ostinato, with pedal notes on the tonic B (B minor key) that gradually build up the texture.



Composition feedback

NB. The 3rd bullet point in AG1 must also be considered when judging a Set Brief Composition.

- **Assessment Grid 1:** The musical ideas are developed and extended successfully. The musical conventions of both musical styles are appropriately selected and maintained throughout the composition. This is an imaginative response to the set brief and the occasion has been given consideration. (Level 5, 9 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 2:** Control of the musical elements is secure. The musical forces are selected effectively to create contrast. The texture of the composition is varied and clear throughout. (Level 5, 9 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 3:** The music demonstrates a sense of wholeness and balance. The music is fluent and contrasting. There is a good sense of direction overall. (Level 4, 8 marks)
- **Total Mark:** 26/30



Composition 1b: 'Sunset Fusion'

This is also a composition in response to Set Brief 4 (Fusions) from the 2023 examination series. In this instance, the candidate chose to provide a notated score to accompany the recording.

The musical score is for 'Sunset Fusion' and consists of seven staves. The instruments are Sitar, Synth, Bass Guitar, Bells Synth, Piano, Indian Percussion, and Drums. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats. The Sitar part starts with a melodic line in the first measure, marked with a first ending bracket and a measure number '5'. The Synth part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Bass Guitar part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Bells Synth part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Piano part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Indian Percussion part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Drums part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The score includes a first ending bracket over the first five measures of the Sitar part, with a measure number '5' above the fifth measure. The score is marked with a '1' at the beginning and a '5' above the fifth measure.

Points to note in this exemplar composition:

- In this case, the candidate only labelled the parts on the first section of staves rather than the whole piece.
- There are some dynamic markings but not consistently throughout the music.

Composition feedback

- **Assessment Grid 1:** The piece is stylistic in terms of the Indian and Western characteristics and is an imaginative response to the set brief. The interplay between parts and genres shows significant development and extension of musical ideas. (Level 5, 9 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 2:** Musical elements are well controlled and the instruments, such as the basslines, tabla pattern and the sitar melody are handled imaginatively and idiomatically at this level. Textures are varied throughout. (Level 5, 9 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 3:** There is a convincing sense of direction in this piece with a smooth transition between sections at bar 34. The piece is fluent and coherent throughout and a sense of wholeness is achieved. (Level 5, 9 marks)
- **Total Mark:** 27/30

Composition 2: 'Into the Darkness'

This composition is a response to Set Brief 3 from the 2023 examination series. This set brief stated:

'Compose a musical soundtrack for a scene in an enchanted forest.

- The music will reflect the contrasting characters in the fairy tale as they explore the enchanted forest.
- You may use one or more instrument(s).
- The instruments may be acoustic and/or amplified and/or synthesised.
- The music may be in any style.'

Points to note in this exemplar composition:

- The candidate chose to submit a very detailed programme note and annotated notated score to accompany the recording of this composition. Part of this is shown below.

I designed my composition to accompany a climactic moment in a fantasy film. The film itself is set in an alternative timeline and would mingle fantasy and gothic conventions drawing on elements of the fairy-tale of 'the little red riding hood'. The characters, semiotic of the ones in the fable themselves include Scar(lett), the Wolf and other creatures in the forest which Scarlett ventures into, namely fairies.

I tried to create an immersive sound world by utilising three contrasting leitmotifs each of which represented the main characters. For example, in bars 1-5 Scar's leitmotif can be heard unaccompanied in the piano part, to represent her isolation, due to the lack of instruments at that moment, and also highlights her dedication for revenge as the gradually building texture portrays her quest into the forest, which is eventually clouded by the magic represented in more dissonant parts entering. In contrast, the Wolf's chromatic and disturbing leitmotif is heard in the low register of the cello and piano in bars 29-36, which again contrasts to the fairies lighter fluttering notes heard in the flute, accompanied by upwards arpeggiated chords to represent their flight in bars 22-26.

I drew a lot of inspiration from Hans Zimmer and his largely chromatic and innovative sounds and tried to encapsulate some of his fantastic descending and arpeggiated sequences from the movie inception, and also some of his more adventurous leitmotifs in his 'Pirates of the Caribbean' main theme, to accentuate my adventure and fairy-tale plot. In this, I recognised his use of fast paced and often syncopated rhythms and tutti textures to highlight dramatic moments. I also looked at his contrasting poignant and harsher, eerier sounds in Dune, of which I took inspiration by using col legno to create and a creepier, more percussive sound. However, I also re-watched and listened to the 'Forbidden Forest' theme in 'Harry Potter' for inspiration for my wolf theme as the chromatic and eerie minims and semibreves created a foreboding atmosphere. I also looked at Joe Hisaishi's Studio Ghibli film compositions such as 'Spirited Away', 'My Neighbour Totoro' and 'Howl's Moving Castle', trying to encompass the lively and magical tones of his sustained extended chords and the piano playing heard in Scar's theme at the start.



- The annotation on the notated score effectively shows the story being displayed on the screen as the music progresses.

The camera focuses in on the back of a girl's head as she comes into view. She is wearing a dark red hood. (She is the protagonist (Scarlett))

She pulls on the sides of her hood, revealing that she seems worried or is trying to conceal something

The camera pans round and we can see she is holding a basket with some cookies in it. She takes a cookie

Flute

Harp

Piano

Violin I

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

Scarlett's leitmotif

pizz

p *mp* *mf* *f* *subito p* *f* *mf* *ff* *f*

p *mf* *f* *mf* *ff* *f* *divisi.*

mf

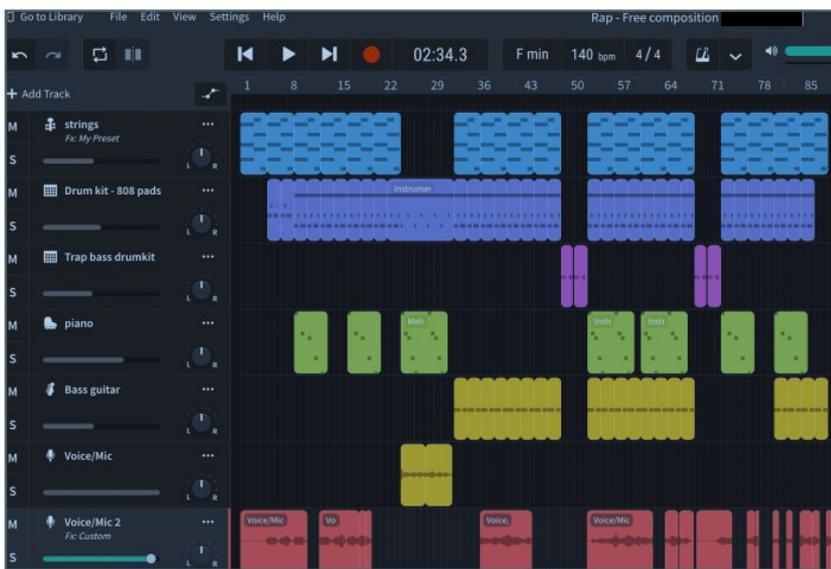
Composition feedback

- **Assessment Grid 1:** Musical ideas are developed and extended successfully and with assurance, meeting the intended purpose and audience appropriately. Stylistic characteristics and conventions of the chosen style have been selected and handled convincingly throughout. This is an imaginative response to the brief with a very well-developed sense of audience and occasion. The story is conveyed in the music. (Level 5, 10 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 2:** The control of musical elements is secure throughout. The instrumental forces are handled idiomatically and exploited imaginatively throughout. A wide range of (often complex) musical textures are explored to successfully match the on-screen events. (Level 5, 10 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 3:** A sense of wholeness and coherence is achieved throughout. There is a consistent sense of fluency and contrast for the most part; transitions are mostly effective. There is a convincing sense of direction overall. (Level 5, 10 marks)
- **Total Mark:** 30/30

Composition 3: Rap

This is an example of a Free Composition submitted for the 2023 examination series. The outline of the composition stated on the Composition Authentication Sheet (CAS) was: 'A rap for young people'.

My free composition is a Rap.
 The strings play the chords F minor, Dim 7th and Eb major
 My drum kit rhythm is a drill style.
 My piano melody is a descending one in F minor
 My bass doesn't come in for quite a while and is on F and C (not Bb) to give a more minor feel.
 The texture is varied throughout and the structure is divided into sections



separated by the rhythm.

Points to note in this exemplar composition:

- A live recording of the rap greatly enhanced this composition.
- The candidate submitted the screenshot score above. In this instance, there was not enough musical information provided to meet specification requirements. **The candidate was not penalised for this score.**
- It would be helpful if the lyrics were included to accompany the commentary.
- More candidates are choosing to submit this type of composition in recent years.
- The candidate needed to include an audience or occasion in their composition outline.
- Candidates need to be mindful of their lyric choices and subject matter when creating a rap, as this is a formal assessment.

Composition feedback.

NB: Only the first two bullet points are considered for AG1 when judging a Free Composition.

- **Assessment Grid 1:** Ideas are developed effectively with relevance to the intended purpose but need further exploitation and more sophistication. Conventions are appropriate and convincingly maintained throughout the rap. (Level 4, 8 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 2:** The control of musical elements is secure throughout. The instrumental forces, including technology, are handled idiomatically but could be further exploited. Textures are varied and clear but not complex. (Level 4, 8 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 3:** A sense of wholeness and coherence is achieved throughout. The music is fluent, but more could be made of contrast especially when ideas are repeated. There is a good sense of direction overall. (Level 4, 8 marks)
- **Total Mark:** 24/30

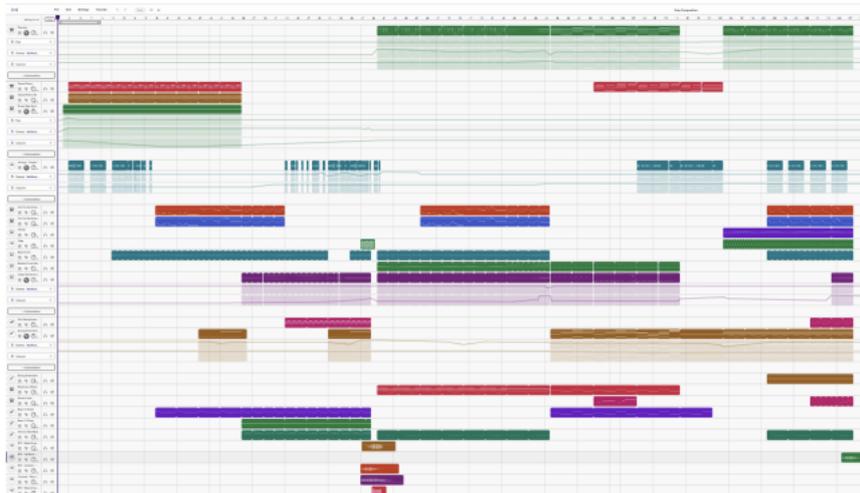
Composition 4: 'Make It Right'

This is another example of a Free Composition submitted for the 2022 examination series. The outline of the composition was: 'An EDM verse-chorus structure to be played at DJ venues like nightclubs'.

Points to note in this exemplar composition:

- This composition uses a vocal sample successfully although it is not clear from the commentary whether this were created by the candidate themselves. It is important that any materials (melodic or otherwise) are acknowledged in the commentary or on the CAS.
- The candidate gives clear information about musical elements but again, it would be useful if they included lyrics and information on how to recreate the vocal part.
- They have included a screenshot of the full score with automation to illustrate the use of music technology within the music.

Full Score with automation:



Composition feedback.

- **Assessment Grid 1:** Ideas are developed with assurance to the intended purpose. EDM conventions are selected appropriately and handled convincingly to create a successful outcome. (Level 5, 9 marks)
- **Assessment Grid 2:** The control of musical elements is secure throughout. The instrumental forces, including technology, are handled idiomatically and imaginatively in places. The vocal sample gives the music authenticity. Textures are varied and clear and complex in keeping with this style of music. (Level 5, 9 marks)



- **Assessment Grid 3:** A sense of wholeness and coherence is achieved throughout. The music is fluent and contrast is considered throughout as ideas return throughout. A convincing sense of direction. The music is brought to a pleasing conclusion appropriate to the genre. (Level 5, 9 marks)
- **Total Mark:** 27/30