PEARSON Edexcel

GQ Principal Examiner's Report

Summer 2022

Music Technology GCE 9MT0 04

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

9MT0 02 Report to Centres 2022

This is the second time the paper has been sat with external examination. The first was in 2019 and the previous two summers have had disruption due to Covid leading to altered assessment arrangements.

There were slight changes to support students due to disruption from Covid was a change in the total length required from 3 minutes to 2. Whether this made the task easier is debatable. However, it helped students who at this level sometimes struggle to maintain interest over three minutes.

Submissions continued to show that centres have embraced the need to use technology at the heart of music technology compositions. Most students are now exploring synthesis, sampling and creative effects use to create a palette of sounds and introduce musical, structural, and sonic elements into their work that would otherwise be impossible.

The Three Briefs

The three briefs followed the same format as the previous series. All three proved to be popular, though if anything the film and early digital samples were attempted by more candidates than the lyric based brief.

<u>Brief 1 – FITC Toronto 2019 (Edited) Directed by Beeple</u>

Students choosing this brief usually explored the opportunities for electronic sound suggested by the style of the animation and provided some fast paced and futuristic scenes which were ideal for exploring synthesis, electronic sound, sampling and effects and the best work was highly integrated with the images, scenes and moods and made good use of electronic sounds and production methods to produce pleasing outcomes.

Weaker work would fail to really reflect scene changes, action, hit points and moods.

Most managed to mark out the broad scene changes, creating a range of moods and sonic elements that reflected the action and pace. Fewer managed a great amount of detailed co-ordination with the film, to fully reflect all the scene and mood changes, or to time their music to sync to the action.

It was good to see sampling incorporated to reflect some scenes or hit points, commonly the keyboard typing or the mixing on decks.

Brief 2 – Air and Light and Time and Space

This poem gave students a chance to explore themes around creativity. The best work took these ideas and came up with excellent song writing, often incorporating new ideas, adapting and expanding on the lyrics.

It does present more of a challenge to write for vocals, though exploring sampled spoken words is an option, but a vocal part still needs a strong delivery whether sung or spoken, or rapped. Some very good songs were seen however, and students appeared to enjoy exploring the meaning of the text with the links to the idea of musical creativity.

Some failed to reflect the meaning of the lyrics, almost entirely ignoring the text of the poem. It is clearly stated in the brief that the meaning must be reflected, even when lyrics are adapted and developed.

Brief 3 – The Sound of Digital

The sound of digital brief was handled well in some cases; using 8 bit audio samples from old computer games, sampling and manipulating floppy drives and in some cases deriving entire electronic percussion sets from a range of early digital technology.

Some students did not fulfil the requirement to use at least six samples, and did not fully develop their palette to take a central role in the composition.

Summary of Approaches in the Assessment Component Grids (AGs)

AG1	Synthesis continues to be used by most candidates. Most are clearly developing their own sounds, but fewer incorporate real-time changes using filtering, envelopes, LFO and a range of sources of modulation. All software now has very capable instruments that can produce a range of synthesis styles, but it benefits a piece to focus on a few very well chosen and well-shaped patches.
AG2	Sampling seems to show a wide range of success. Some students can adopt arrange of approaches and use samples to make a significant statement in the work. It is often misjudged though and quality can suffer if techniques are not applied well. Using drum samples, even if detuned, is not really the detailed level of sampling needed. Drum or instrumental loops do not gain credit unless they are manipulated.
AG3	Creative effects is probably the least explored of the three technology areas. Basic mix effects are not the same as creative effects which should bring something unique and adventurous to the music. Feature delays, reverbs, or modulation effects that only appear for a short time to make a mark in the music are examples of this.
AG4	Common issues are balance issues, dynamics issues, EQ issues, untidy editing, and a lack of suitable effects or unsuitable levels.
AG5	The most successful work showed consideration for all aspects of the brief and explored the themes and stimulus with imagination and musical competency. The opening paragraphs about the brief give some detail of approaches seen.
AG6	Understanding of style was demonstrated clearly in the best work. Less successful work did not always have a clear style or mixed elements that did not complement each other.

AG7	Melody might not always play a lead role in compositions that rely heavily on sound design, but there is always opportunity to develop ideas even if simple material is used. Melody led pieces may be rare, but good examples of popular song writing were evident especially with brief 2.
AG8	This ranged from the simplistic to the adventurous. Often basic chord structures are sufficient for the styles of music used, and harmonic complexity can still be developed by using different voicings, supporting melodies with developing lines and exploring inversions and substitutions.
AG9	At this level it is encouraging to see that the better students can have a strong command of rhythm, providing layered, varied, developing ideas that work well together. At the lower end, rhythm can be simple and repetitive with limited interest.
AG10	Texture often has a very important role to play. Good work displays builds and breaks, sometimes sudden dramatic changes. Less successful work has little development and similar approaches throughout.
AG11	Structure was in one way restricted by the length, but better work was still able to create a sense of developing through sections of the piece and providing a satisfying whole.

Electronic Submissions

The first year of fully electronic submission presented some challenges for centres. Examiners have played no role in the development of the systems, and it is fair today that while they functioned, it is hoped that future developments willed to amore user friendly experience.

It is important centres review the administrative support guidance and present student work with the correct naming conventions and with all files requested.