



General Certificate of Education

MUSIC 1271

MUSC3

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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MUSC3

The level of achievement in MUSC3 in the second year of the AS Specification was again very high, and candidates' performances covered the whole range of the six options available. As in 2009, the most popular combinations were solo performance with ensemble performance or two different solo performances; however, it was encouraging to see a slight increase in the number of technology-based performances as well as combinations of solo acoustic performances and technology-based options. The high standard of performance has made the moderation process a very pleasurable one.

In many cases teachers' marking of the candidates' work was consistent with the assessment criteria and was accompanied by detailed and helpful comments. Teachers are reminded that comments to justify the marks awarded are essential, and can provide information which would not otherwise be available to the moderator. Where candidates are taught in a consortium, it is important that the assessment criteria are applied consistently to the performances of all the candidates from all the schools involved, as the marking will be moderated on the basis of a sample from across the consortium.

Acoustic performances

In most cases, the repertoire chosen was appropriate and the *Level of Demand* was correctly judged by the majority of teachers. However, it is worth repeating the advice given last year. Candidates are well-advised to choose pieces which they can perform with control and confidence and in some cases it would be to their advantage to offer a less demanding piece: any marks sacrificed for *Level of Demand* would be more than compensated for by gains in marks for *Accuracy and Interpretation*. However, in the case of pop songs, care is needed to ensure that the music is sufficiently demanding to enable candidates to demonstrate a range of techniques.

There were still some examples of performances that were short of the 5 – 8 minute requirement for acoustic performances and centres are reminded that the full range of marks is unlikely to be available where this happens. Sometimes a performance included a long piano introduction before the soloist entered, or a lengthy instrumental section or coda where the soloist did not play. Consideration should be given to ensuring that there is enough substance in the music that is actually played by the candidate. A similar issue arises with repeats, which should not be used purely as a means of making the piece last for 5 minutes. A better solution would sometimes be to perform another short piece.

The specification requires that scores are provided and the majority of candidates supplied them. Where only the lyrics and chord symbols were provided, the moderation process was much more difficult as the candidate's intentions were not always clear to the moderator. Every effort should be made to provide copies of the music performed by the soloist. Similarly, where a candidate performs his/her own composition a score or detailed written account is required.

The teacher's assessment of *communication* must be supported by comments to justify the marks awarded since it is the teacher who is best placed to judge the impact of the live performance. Moderators are guided by the *communication* marks awarded by the centre, so long as these are justified by comments and are borne out in the recording.

Solo performances

The moderators have greatly enjoyed listening to many excellent performances involving a wide range of instruments and styles. Many programmes were chosen well and enabled candidates to display their talents and experience across a variety of styles and techniques. As in 2009, there was a spread of classical and popular music, and it was encouraging to hear some candidates performing their own compositions as well as some very good examples of improvisation.

Some candidates submitted self-accompanied vocal performances. These are marked holistically, but care should be taken to make sure that this is in the candidate's best interests: the mark could be prejudiced if the candidate performs more strongly on one part than on the other.

Similar considerations apply to candidates who choose to offer pieces on two different instruments (for example clarinets or recorders) within a single solo option. A candidate who is more proficient on one instrument than on the other would be likely to achieve higher marks by concentrating on the instrument he/she can play best.

Solo performance on a second instrument

Centres are reminded that candidates choosing this option must demonstrate different techniques and different types of repertoire from those shown in the solo performances submitted as their first option. If in doubt, teachers should check which combinations are acceptable (for example piano and keyboard, saxophone and clarinet), by referring to the Frequently Asked Questions in the Teacher Resource Bank on the AQA website and/or to last year's Report on the Examination, or by consulting their coursework adviser. Fortunately there were fewer examples this year of unsuitable combinations.

Ensemble performances

The ensemble option was a popular choice and there were some excellent performances in many styles. The Specification states that an ensemble performance should normally involve *three or more players*. However, some duet combinations do involve true ensemble playing and these are acceptable.

Band performances were quite common and these can present some problems. In particular the candidate's role in the ensemble must be explained and it must be sufficiently substantial for assessment to be possible. The candidate's part should not be doubled, as doubling by another instrument or part obscures the candidate's contribution. Even with helpful comments from the assessing teacher, this may mean that the moderator cannot establish whether or not the marking is consistent with the assessment criteria. Often it would be preferable for the candidate to perform in a smaller ensemble for their AS submission.

Centres are reminded of the following points:

- Repertoire from Musicals does not always offer much opportunity for ensemble singing, as the singers often only sing together for the last part of the song or double each other through much of the piece.
- Backing tracks are acceptable so long as there are also enough live performers, but caution should be exercised. The *Sense of Ensemble* mark must reflect the fact that some parts are fixed.

- The Candidate Record Form must indicate which part the candidate is playing, and this should also be marked on the score. Please check that the candidate's part is clearly audible on the CD but be aware that the placing of microphones in a way that distorts the balance of the ensemble will not help with the assessment.

Technology-based performances

A minority of candidates submitted work for the technology options and some was of an excellent standard. It was good to see candidates combining technology-based and acoustic performances. The technology options, like the acoustic options, are concerned with *Interpreting Musical Ideas*; it follows that the work submitted should be a performance and not just a technical exercise, and should display clearly the candidate's ability to listen and make musical judgements as well as the ability to manipulate the technology.

It is worth re-iterating the following details:

- Although the minimum length for both the technology-based options is 32 bars, the performance should have a sense of wholeness and a conclusion. Moderators will be looking for the qualities described in the assessment criteria - for example, for option 1, attention to performing and expressive detail.
- A written commentary is essential so that the moderator has as much information as possible about the process, the equipment used and the decisions made.
- For Option 1, candidates must provide a score (as detailed as possible) or an original recording as a guide.
- For Option 2, candidates must include their initial capture as well as their final mix.
- In Option 1, there needs to be a live performance but not necessarily by the candidate. Candidates are assessed on their ability to use the technology efficiently and effectively and on the judgements which they exercise in the use of the live performance.
- In Option 2, the candidate **may** be one of the performers but this is not a requirement.

Administration

Most work was presented well, with recordings of good quality and accurate track details, and administration was usually good. However, there were some cases of details being overlooked and centres are reminded that the following material must be sent to the moderator by the coursework deadline of 15 May:

- A signed Candidate Record Form for each candidate, correctly and fully completed with details of the options chosen, the music performed and the teacher's marks and comments*
- A recording of each candidate's performances – either on individual CDs or on a composite CD; please make sure that the tracks are clearly identified on the CRF as well on the CD, that the CD is labelled and that the CD will play on a standard CD player *
- A photocopy of all the music being played by each candidate. The candidate's part should be clearly marked, especially in ensembles*

- Both yellow and pink copies of the Centre Mark Sheet (CMS)
- A Centre Declaration Sheet*.

*Where centres are entering more than 20 candidates, this material should be ready to send to the moderator once the sample has been requested.

More detailed information is provided in the Notes for Guidance and FAQs which are available in the Teacher Resource Bank on the AQA website. Coursework Advisers are also happy to provide advice on this unit.

IN CONCLUSION

It is very rewarding to hear such a range of performances at a very high standard, reflecting the hard work of candidates and teachers in preparation for this unit. The range of options and combinations continues to allow candidates to display their strengths and in many cases to excel.

Mark Range and Award of Grades

Grade Boundaries and Cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA website.