

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE in Music
(6MU01) Paper 1

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Principal Moderator's Report

The overall standard of submissions for this unit in 2015 was much as last year. There were, as ever, a number of outstanding performances. Very few performances were inadequate but some submissions were penalised for being under-length. Centres are reminded that five to six minutes of music is required for this unit, not including tuning and gaps between pieces. Centres are also reminded that the performance must be continuous and unedited.

Performance from score / Improvisation

Even more performances than in previous years were from score. There were, however, some excellent examples of improvisation and ensemble performances this year.

There were a few performances this year that were neither from score or an improvisation: for example, a piece learnt aurally which did not match a printed score. These were often submitted as improvisations, which they are not. They should be assessed against the accuracy of the printed score.

Scores

There were a significant number of inadequate scores this year. A detailed score must always be provided for assessment and moderation of performance from a score. Centres are reminded that scores submitted must have sufficient detail for a fair assessment to be made, particularly regarding accuracy of pitch and rhythm.

When inadequate scores were submitted, centres were contacted to provide a suitable replacement.

Reference recordings cannot be submitted in lieu of a score for this unit.

Instruments

The most popular instruments this year were, once again, piano, voice, and guitar. Many moderators commented once again on significant general improvement in the standard of many electric guitar submissions and also on the weaker standard of many vocal performances, often limited by technique and intonation (these weaknesses often not reflected in centre marks).

A few candidates indicated on the MAS1 form that they wished to be assessed on two instruments simultaneously (i.e. voice and piano, when they are accompanying themselves). There is no means of doing this on this specification and they must choose which instrument is to be assessed (i.e. voice or piano).

Difficulty Levels

Most performances were above the Standard Level (Grade 5), with More Difficult (Grade 6) being the most common difficulty level. Performances below Standard Level were uncommon. Centres are reminded that the Edexcel Difficulty Level Booklet is available on the website.

Difficulty Levels for Improvisations should take into account the whole performance, not just the difficulty of the stimulus.

Assessment criteria

The application of the assessment criteria by teacher examiners was generally sound. Whilst the vast majority of teacher examiner marks were fair, a number over rewarded their candidates' work, and a few under rewarded candidates. Most discrepancies with marks were associated with criteria 1, 4 and 5. Many confident performances were over-rewarded as excellent.

It is wise for centres to remember that moderation is based on the recording alone, not a live performance. Bearing this in mind it is advisable that centres assess the recording of each candidate, rather than the live performance.

A number of candidates performing music in a contemporary popular style used a very limited dynamic range, denying access to the highest marks in criterion five. Similarly some centres seem to think that a performance with a backing track immediately gets 8/8 for fluency – this would only be the case if the performance exactly matched the timing of the backing track.

Holistic v. Raw marks

Teachers are encouraged to select a holistic mark band first and then to embark on marking with the five detailed assessment criteria. It is hoped that the final mark will then fit in the selected holistic band, if this is not the case the teacher must either adjust the holistic band or the detailed marks. Whatever the outcome, the holistic mark band and the final raw mark on the MAS1 form should be the same.

Presentation

Most centres took great care over the presentation of candidates' work. Most recordings were of very good quality, well balanced, and usually submitted on CD. The following points, however, should be addressed by some centres:

- The work of each candidate should be made available on a separate CD
- The CD should be properly formatted to play on audio equipment, not just a computer
- The MAS1 form should be photocopied as a 4 page A3 booklet, and not stapled or loose A4 sheets

This will make the process of moderation considerably smoother.

Accompaniments

A small number of performances were seriously compromised, as in previous years, by poor accompaniments that did not support the work of the candidate. Where a backing track is used as an accompaniment centres should endeavour, where possible, to ensure that there are no audible metronome clicks once the performance has begun.

Contact with centres

When moderators had to contact centres because of a problem, such as a missing score, for example, the response was almost always swift and helpful, which greatly aided the moderation process.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

