

Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE in Music
(6MU04) Paper 1

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Publications Code US042218

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Principal's Report

The moderators wish to thank candidates and teachers for their efforts in preparing the performances, recordings and paperwork associated with this unit. The moderators also acknowledge the vital role played by instrumental and vocal teachers in preparing candidates for this examination. A significant number of outstanding performances were presented, showing an excellent technical command of the instrument/voice and a convincing sense of style. Only a small number of candidates achieved very low marks.

Marking

This paper was assessed by the centre and moderated by Edexcel. The assessment criteria were the same as those used for 6MU01 with the addition of a new criterion, Criterion 6, designed to assess the performance as a whole.

An extremely wide range of musical instruments and styles/genres was offered for assessment. In addition to work played on traditional instruments, moderators reported a large number of performances submitted in rock and pop idioms. A relatively small number of ensemble performances were submitted - these were usually in a rock/jazz idiom.

Some candidates chose to perform on **more than one instrument** as part of their extended performance. Moderators noted that the quality of such performances tended to deteriorate quite significantly as candidates grew tired towards the end of their submission.

In general teacher-examiners utilised the mark scheme successfully this year. However, centres continue to experience problems with the arithmetic required for this paper, with marks incorrectly added up or wrongly scaled. When mistakes were discovered in the moderation process, centres were informed and asked to alter their marks. Centres are urged to check their arithmetic and scaling thoroughly, to ensure that their candidates receive the marks they deserve.

Centres should ensure that holistic and arithmetical totals for each piece are reconciled. Where discrepancies were discovered, moderators accepted the **arithmetical total** of individual criterion marks as the intended mark, rather than the holistic mark.

From time to time substantial adjustments had to be made in the course of moderation. A wide range of marks was awarded in the moderation of the extended performance. Whilst there were many truly outstanding and impressive performances which fully justified the high marks awarded by centres, a certain number of centres awarded unjustifiably high marks to candidates whose work did not merit them.

Moderators reported that marks awarded by teacher-examiners for **Criterion 6** more accurately matched the standard of work presented this year, based on the evidence of the recording/programme submitted, so fewer adjustments were required. If the teacher-examiner mark for

Criterion 6 was one mark away from the recommended moderator mark, the teacher-examiner's mark was allowed to stand. However, if there was a significant discrepancy between the teacher-examiner's mark and the recommended moderator mark, an adjustment of one, two or at the most three marks was made.

Only a few candidates submitted work at 'standard'(S) level. The majority of candidates submitted work at the 'more difficult' (MD) or 'higher' (H) level. Pieces of Grade 7 standard qualified for the MD scaling, and pieces of Grade 8 standard qualified for the H scaling. The work of the few candidates who offered pieces at Grade 5 was assessed according to the mark scheme, but the top band of marks was not available. Many candidates overstretched themselves by playing pieces that were too demanding technically or musically, and this resulted in lower marks than might otherwise have been the case.

Centres are advised to calculate the difficulty level of improvised performances on the basis of the **standard of the improvisation as a whole**, not just the stimulus.

Some candidates chose to perform several movements from a single sonata. These were variously listed as either one piece e.g. Mozart Sonata No. 42, Movements 1, 2 and 4 with an average Difficulty level applied to all or listed as separate pieces with separate Difficulty levels e.g. Movement 1 (MD), Movement 2 (H). Centres are reminded that **each movement should be listed as a separate piece. Each movement should be awarded a Difficulty level that accurately reflects the technical and musical demands of the individual movement presented.** It should be noted that the difficulty level awarded to individual movements of sonatas will not necessarily match the difficulty levels ascribed to combinations of movements performed according to the requirements of other examination boards such as the ABRSM.

Candidates must perform for **12-15 minutes (NB this is playing time**, not running time as clearly indicated in the online Instructions document which is required reading). Two marks were deducted for each full half minute that a candidate fell short of the minimum playing time requirement. Pauses between pieces, announcements, Rock School count-ins and tuning were not included in the playing time. Where candidates offered two or more related movements from a larger work, moderators were instructed to allow the pauses between these movements.

A significant number of centres had not calculated the playing time correctly. Centres should time each **individual piece** in order to calculate the overall playing time, entering the timing of **each individual piece in the boxes provided** on the MA4, and the **overall playing time (the sum of these individual timings)** on the front of the MA4. If two or more related movements are submitted from a larger work, teacher-examiners are advised to include the pauses between these movements e.g. the performance should be timed from the start of the first related movement

to the end of the last related movement, so pauses between movements are included in the overall timing provided).

Centres are reminded that pieces designed to be accompanied must be accompanied in the recording, otherwise the quality of outcome (Criterion 1) will be significantly compromised.

A **score** was required for all performances. Usually this was in full notation, but lead sheets, chord charts and tab were accepted provided they gave enough details of pitch, rhythm and expression for a proper assessment to be made according to the assessment criteria. A notated stimulus was also required for improvised performances.

Centred are reminded that performances learnt by ear from recordings cannot be assessed as improvisations, nor can guidance recordings be accepted in lieu of a score. In such cases a score **must** be located and used to assess the performance.

Deviations from the score in jazz/rock and musical theatre numbers were generally accepted where deemed to be stylistically convincing. Some scores were annotated with helpful information regarding divergences between the printed music and the candidate's performance. However, some unacceptable scores were submitted - these were often handwritten, incomplete or downloaded from the net as an afterthought. In such cases moderators asked for replacement scores and most centres were able to provide these.

A small number of centres submitted work that did not conform to Specification requirements. Centres are advised to contact Edexcel if they are in any doubt as to the suitability of their candidates' submissions as soon as possible, and certainly no later than six months before the final submission deadline.

Centres are reminded that sequenced performances cannot be assessed unless the final track is 'performed live, at the correct speed and without further editing' (GCE Music Specification, p. 21). For GCE Music the sequencing software is used merely as a recording device.

Recordings

The recording quality of most submissions was good or excellent. Most centres provided recordings in CD format, although moderators reported that some recordings would only play on computers. Sometimes it was difficult to locate work as it had been recorded in a different order from that listed on the MA4, or track marks or announcements were missing. However, many centres made the moderator's task easy by labelling work clearly and announcing centre, candidate and paper names and numbers for each submission, as well as sometimes providing a detailed track list.

The specification requires that candidates' performances are recorded **on one occasion** without gaps. This single occasion can occur several times during the course, if required, but only one recording of the whole

programme is submitted. It was evident from recordings submitted that a number of centres had edited recordings taken on different occasions. This is unacceptable, and centres are advised to ensure that only unedited recordings are submitted in future, in the interest of fairness to all candidates.

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>

