Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel International GCE

Music Technology (8MT0) Paper 2

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

AS Music Technology Component 2: 8MT0/02

Technology-based Composition: Examiner's report, 2022

Submissions for the first year of assessment since 2019 produced a range of technologically musical responses.

The marks ranged from 10-58 with most candidates appearing between the 19-41 region.

There appeared to be a trend this year, possibly because centres have become more familiar with the mark scheme due to the centre-assessed-grades process of 2021: There was a larger shift towards incorporating lots of different synthesis, sampling, and creative FX techniques; however, these were often not used for wholly musical purposes, and therefore produced un-musical results. An example of this tended to be using lots of different synthesis timbres, such as: arpeggiators; bass lines with glide on; LFO moving cut-offs; LFO moving pitches; and these would all sound at the same time rather than being placed at the right point in the structure of the piece to create a sense of momentum, drive, and style. The same was true of sampling and creative FX use in many cases, and centres are reminded to guide students to use these techniques in a musical way.

Ofqual's reduction of the timing for this year's assessment from 2:30 to 1:30 saw some success but most candidates struggled to create a musically satisfying piece of music within this timeframe. Candidates tended to either: have a natural end to their piece before the 1:30 point and then, to meet the requirements of the brief, created a new, often highly contrasting section that was very repetitive because it failed to have enough time to develop; or, candidates wrote a piece of music that naturally ended beyond the 1:30 time-restriction, and suddenly cut-off the ending of their piece in a clumsy, and often abrupt manner.

The provision of the samples as part of the task ensured excellent scaffolding for the composing process. Sample 1 provided candidates with a range of pitches and note durations from which to manipulate and incorporate within their piece. Sample 2 provided candidates with a breakbeat that is popular in all electronic styles from the Southside Movement song 'Save The World'. The breakbeat provided candidates with a range of individual kick, snare, tambourine, and hi-hat 'one shot' samples, as well as snare drags and ghost-notes, from which to manipulate, explore, and incorporate into their work.

Administration

Uploads: Thank you to centres who were patient with and persevered with the new uploading procedures this year. As with previous years, there were some centres who had incorrectly labelled their files with either the wrong candidate number and/or component code or had uploaded another candidate's work for someone else. Teacher's cooperation with these matters is always stunningly professional and prompt, so thank you for that; it makes the whole process smoother for everyone.

Logbook uploads: Thank you to teachers who did not encourage their students to submit additional screenshots, written accounts and/or diaries with the logbooks. The space in the logbook is more than enough to provide examiners with the information that they need in order to mark the work. Higher-end candidates had submitted accurate information about the synthesis creation, sampling techniques, and creative FX applied to the main parts in their work. Lower-end candidates tended to either write very little or wrote a lot without providing any relevant information.

Assessment Grid 1: Synthesis

At the lower end of the cohort, candidates used minimal synthesis timbres in their work. When they were included, they tended to be pre-set timbres with minimal/no editing. They also appeared as sporadic, fragmented token gestures, rather than being features of the work. Higher-end candidates had used a good range of synthesis techniques and created most of the timbres themselves using subtractive soft-synths. Common techniques used were: Oscillators octaves apart and blended, sometimes with some subtle de-tuning. Filtering using a LPF with some cut-off movement. Attention to long/short attack and decay/sustain settings were used. Envelope Generators on Filters were popular at the higher end as were creative uses of LFO's. Stylistically appropriate synthesis techniques in styles such as EDM and Drum 'n' Bass, were clearly researched in some work, which not only showed a clear demonstration of synthesis knowledge, but also demonstrated stylistic awareness and application. Candidates who tried to fit in as many synthesis techniques as possible without employing them in a musical fashion only scored a maximum of 4 marks in this area due to the misjudgement of their musical use.

Assessment Grid 2: Sampling

Candidates were assessed on their sampling techniques here, not only on the provided samples, but also on any other samples that they have included themselves. Examiners were assessing techniques commonly found on both traditional hardware samplers and software samplers. Lower-end candidates had explored minimal sampling techniques. Typically, sample 1 was cut-up and re-triggered, perhaps with some small tokens of pitch mapping. Sample 2 tended to simply be looped with the odd kick and snare cut out and re-triggered. Higher-end candidates explored a variety of sampling techniques, mostly

from the supplied samples, and included some or all of the following: Cutting up, re-triggering, stuttering, pitch mapping, filtering (commonly LPF) sometimes with variable resonance and automated, stretching, reversing, pitch bending.

As with synthesis, candidates who tried to fit in as many sampling techniques as possible without employing them in a musical fashion only scored a maximum of 4 marks in this area due to the misjudgement of their musical use.

Candidates scored particularly high when they transformed the samples beyond their original musical state. For example, using melodyne or pitch-mapping to manipulate the pitches and rhythms of the supplied vocal sample to create a new melodic/harmonic idea. Some candidates used their own samples from 'crate-digging' but tended to simply loop large sections of other's work, rather than manipulate it. There is no credit for selecting a sample from somebody else's work and simply repeating it and adding a new 'beat' to it.

Assessment Grid 3: Creative FX

Any processes applied to the samples that cannot be found on a sampler were assessed here. Lower end candidates used very few creative FX and tended to limit themselves to reverb, delay and a little bit of distortion. Higher end candidates explored the plethora of creative FX a modern DAW can offer which could have included creative and musical use of reverbs and delays, flange, phase, distortions, tremolo, and chorus. Side-chaining dynamic processors was also popular, however, it yielded mixed musical results.

Candidates who chose to use as many FX as they could, tended to yield poor musical results. There was often little care for the mix clarity of the FX being used, and more importantly, on the musical purpose that the effect produced within the piece.

Assessment Grid 4: Editing of mix

A well-balanced mix with all parts clear and evenly spread across the stereo field was required, as well as care and attention to EQ, compression, and reverb use for mix purposes. A suitably strong signal to noise ratio was expected without the need for extreme loudness from 'mastering' processes. Lower end candidates tended to have a confused and inconsistent balance, often with muddy synths and uncontrolled dynamics in most parts. Higher end candidates produced carefully crafted mixes that had clearly been mixed on monitors with suitable EQ and compression decisions taken. They also contained a musical spread across the stereo field which enhanced the structure and texture of the work as and when necessary. Candidates were often cutting short reverb/delay tails this year, as well as simply cutting off the music abruptly at 1:30 to keep within the time frame, and this was not pleasing to hear, and more care should be taken when such decisions are being made.

Assessment Grid 5: Response to brief

Students were assessed on two factors here: How well they had kept to the 1:30 time of the brief and how well they had incorporated the given samples into their work. Lower end candidates tended to either sound the samples sporadically throughout the piece in an unmusical fashion or looped them, often throughout the whole piece. Higher end candidates transformed the given samples creating new musical ideas from them. Very high-attaining candidates did this several times throughout the piece. However, it is important to note that whilst some candidates did attempt to transform the samples into new musical ideas, some did not do so in a convincingly musical fashion. Some candidates tended to focus on creating new musical ideas out of just one of the samples, normally the vocal and tended to disregard the drum loop and sounding it in loop form in a small section of the song.

Some candidates this year had some success composing new vocal lines that incorporated the provided vocal sample, and this often produced musical results.

Teachers are reminded that the samples are there to assess the students' knowledge of technological techniques and how they employ these in a musical setting, as well as providing a scaffold and a starting point from which to begin their composition. They are a central part of the task.

Assessment Grid 6: Style and coherence

Examples of styles successfully worked in this year included: Drum 'n' Bass, EDM, Rock, Jazz, Chill-out, House; and fusions of all the previously mentioned. However, overall, there was a lack of emphasis on composing within a certain style, with some candidates simply composing without a clear direction of style. Lower end candidates tended to have a confused style without any real sense of drive and an over-reliance on copy and paste with no musical developments of copy-and-pasted material. Higher end candidates were composing in a variety of different pastiche styles with varying moods/atmospheres created within each composition. Pieces written in naturally repetitive styles, such as Grime and Drum 'n' Bass, contained constant evolution of the textures used in order to maintain interest. Higher end work also had a constant sense of drive, interest, and momentum throughout, with the one-and-a-half-minute time limit feeling very short.

Teachers are reminded that composing within a style's features provides a framework for the candidates to work within so that they can then go and develop their voice.

Assessment Grids 7-11: Musical elements

Melody, Harmony, Rhythm, Texture and Structure are all assessed for each candidate, with the highest three marks being carried forward to the composition mark total. This facilitates work in different styles to be rewarded equally. Lower-end compositions

tended to be simplistic and functional in nature. There was often an over-reliance on copy-and-paste in most parts and no real attempt to sculpt contrasting textures to create a guided structure to the piece. Higher-end candidates tended to score highly in all elements and utilised a lot of different musical techniques, devices, textures, and structures to craft the composition. It is important to note that high end candidates all had a carefully crafted structure that neatly took in to account the 1:30 time limit of the task.