



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Music

MUSC1

(Specification 2270)

Unit 1: Influences on Music

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

MUSC 1 Influences on Music

General

This is the fourth year of the AS specification and the format of the Unit 1 question paper is now well-established. The CD of music excerpts for Section A lasted just under half an hour, and candidates had the remaining one and a quarter hours of the examination to complete their essays on the set work (Section B) and the chosen Area of Study (Section C). This was the first examination in which the set work was Beethoven's Symphony no 1, movements 1 and 2.

Section A

As in previous years, the excerpts of music heard in this section were drawn from different periods of musical history and different genres. The basis for the knowledge and understanding assessed is set out on page 6 of the Specification; an understanding of the meaning of the terms used should guide candidates to appropriate responses.

Question 1

This question was divided between two excerpts. Most candidates found the questions on *O Fortuna* from Orff's *Carmina Burana* (questions 1(a) to (e)) to be straightforward, and achieved good marks here. However, some candidates lost marks in 1(a) by confusing "octaves" with "unison".

The second excerpt was from '*Ukulele Serenade*' by Copland; again, most candidates answered the questions successfully, although some were uncertain of the terms and techniques in 1(f) and 1(h).

Question 2

The excerpt for this question was taken from Borodin's *Polovtsian Dances*. Many candidates found the melodic dictation in 2(a) challenging. The more successful recognised that the first two notes simply moved up by step from the last given note, but they could not always go on to work out the interval to the C#. A common mistake was to start on the wrong note so that, although the melodic shape may have been correct, the pitch was consistently wrong. Some candidates managed to identify only the last note, perhaps because it was also the first note of the melody.

Many candidates were able to identify the rhythm in 2(b), but relatively few recognised the cor anglais as the instrument in question 2(c). In their comments for question 2 (e) some candidates merely stated the difference in dynamics, which was given on the question paper and could not therefore gain a mark. Often candidates commented on the texture in vague terms (such as 'more instruments' or 'thicker texture'), but a more specific and detailed response is needed to gain marks at this level.

Question 3

For this question the excerpt was taken from the first movement of Beethoven's Septet. Generally this question was answered quite well. However, candidates continue to experience difficulty in recognising instruments, with many being unable to identify the bassoon as one of the two woodwind instruments in question 3 (c). The description of the texture for question 3 (f) was problematic for some, as was recognition of cadences (3 (g)).

Question 4

This excerpt, for which a score was provided, was from the third movement of Schubert's Symphony No. 2.

Candidates found this to be one of the hardest of the four questions in Section A, perhaps because of difficulties in score reading and/or a lack of knowledge of music theory. Identification of keys and chords caused problems for many candidates. Nevertheless, some candidates are to be congratulated on achieving full or nearly full marks on this question. There were occasions where candidates described the chord in question 4(g) in relation to E_b major rather than C minor, and credit was given where this was done correctly.

Section B

There were some examples of detailed essays on the new set work, where candidates demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the music; however, most did not appear to have studied the movements in sufficient depth and detail to access the higher marks. References to the score were often general or unclear, with no bar numbers given: examples need to be clearly located and must support the point being made if examiners are to be able to give credit for them. Some candidates wasted valuable time by copying out musical extracts when bar numbers would have been sufficient, given that the score is to hand in the examination.

Many answers were contextual, or consisted of a general discussion of sonata form without detailed reference to the music. Candidates' answers were often descriptions of what could be seen in the score, without any discussion of the effect of the music, for example "This is then played by the flute and then the violins" or "The oboe starts playing in bar...". Answers of this kind do not demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the music. Some students seemed to be basing their essays on 'model answers' which they could remember in varying degrees, but which often demonstrated a lack of true understanding of the music.

Of the two questions in this section Question 5 was the more popular option but both questions elicited a broad range of marks.

Question 5

Among the widely varied responses to this question, there were essays which focused on thematic material but avoided discussion of harmony and tonality, or made comments that were vague and lacking in detail (such as "modulates through various keys"). Unfortunately a number of candidates made incorrect references to keys. Other candidates managed a better balance and showed evidence of an awareness of the sound of the music. There were good answers that commented on how the events in the score created the drama of the development section. Essays which commented on the use of tonality and harmony and the way in which instruments, dynamic features and different textures are used were more successful than those which just listed a sequence of events.

Question 6

Many candidates overlooked the fact that this question was about structure and tonality, and gave a purely descriptive account of the movement without accurate or precise references. A number of candidates described the first subject in some detail but only commented on the second subject in vague terms. On the other hand there were some good responses which demonstrated comprehensive knowledge and understanding in a mature style. In order to gain high marks it was necessary to write in depth. An answer which made detailed

reference to a few well-chosen sections of the movement could be more successful than a general description of the whole movement.

Section C

Candidates again offered a wide range of responses on their chosen Area of Study. The better answers provided the same depth of detail as their counterparts on the set work, including accurate and relevant musical quotations or references to support the points made, and displaying a clear understanding of and engagement with the music studied. However, examiners observed that many candidates had not studied the music in sufficient depth and detail to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding. In particular, references to musical examples were too often general and locations were unclear. Scores of the works studied for the chosen Area of Study may **not** be taken into the examination, and therefore credit will be given for relevant and accurate musical quotations. When writing about music which is set to a text, candidates could quote the words where a particular musical feature occurs as a reference point.

Some answers made no reference to the text being sung (except for a general title or number). On the other hand, some were so involved with the context that little musical detail was given. Candidates need to be encouraged to find the right balance so that they can gain credit for their musical knowledge and understanding.

Choral Music in the Baroque Period

Question 7

It was common for responses to refer to only one piece by each of the two chosen composers. While a few were able to gain high marks from a detailed and in-depth discussion of two pieces, in most cases a wider choice would have been advisable so that there was more material on which to comment. Often answers wrote briefly about only a few remembered facts. Better answers showed good knowledge and understanding of a range of musical examples which were discussed in detail and demonstrated a clear engagement with the music.

Question 8

As in Question 7, candidates who achieved high marks were able to discuss the musical features of an interesting variety of examples. The composers chosen most often were Bach, Handel, Purcell and Vivaldi. Good examples were selected from Bach's *Passions* or Handel's *Messiah* where there was scope to discuss the composer's use of a wide spectrum of musical features and techniques. Less successful answers consisted of a few factual points which were often based on context rather than detailed discussion of musical features.

Music Theatre: a study of the Musical from 1940 to 1980

This was the most popular of the three Areas of Study, with *West Side Story*, *Oklahoma*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Oliver*, *Chicago* and *Les Misérables* being the most common choices of music for study. There were some detailed answers, but it often appeared that candidates were seeking to demonstrate their knowledge of the music with little regard to the questions, perhaps because they had learned a few examples within a comparatively narrow context. Question 10 was chosen by a large majority of candidates who had studied this Area of Study, although the spread of marks was similar across both questions. In both, there was a temptation among candidates to tell the story at the expense of discussing the music or explaining how the music helps to illustrate or characterise the story.

Question 9

The question asked for detailed writing on two dance passages by different composers, with reference to particular musical features. Some candidates selected passages which were not particularly good examples of dance passages, providing little material on which to comment and resulting in essays which only partially answered the question. More successful choices were *America* and *Dance at the Gym* from *West Side Story* and *Dream Ballet* from *Oklahoma*, but responses were often hampered by too much context and too little detailed discussion of the music.

Question 10

A wider range of material might have enabled candidates to comment more effectively on different vocal techniques and combinations. Answers were often limited in scope and depth of discussion, with a great deal of repetition of material and too much reference to the narrative.

British Popular Music from 1960 to the present day

This Area of Study was again a frequent choice. Half of this group of candidates chose each question, but a larger proportion achieved upper band marks on question 12 than on question 11. The most successful answers came from candidates who demonstrated an in-depth knowledge and gave clear musical examples relating to the question, rather than those who just wrote about their favourite groups. In many cases candidates' answers were too general, lacking depth and focus.

Question 11

Some interesting musical examples were chosen for discussion. Some candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the music and its social context, with clear explanations of how the music reflected social comment and in depth references to musical detail. Many, however, focused almost entirely on the context without adequate or detailed discussion of the music. Reference to the music was often limited to fairly obvious details, such as the shouting of the vocal line in punk music. A number of candidates wrote about the lyrics with limited or no reference to the music; some seemed to be struggling to make their responses relevant to the question, as the songs chosen were not good examples of music which was intended to express social comment.

Question 12

This question gave scope for a detailed response with examples of songs which used instruments and technology in interesting ways. Some responses referred to songs which were not good examples. There were also cases where songs were wrongly attributed to either the 60s or the 80s, and where candidates wrote about foreign artists/groups which have not been an influential part of the British Popular Music scene. However, there were also some very good answers to this question, where candidates were clearly engaged with the music and wrote in detail about musical features and differences between the songs.

Conclusion

The Unit 1 examination has continued to elicit a wide range of responses, with candidates achieving a correspondingly varied range of marks. There are now several past question papers which provide the opportunity for future candidates to practise the skills required for the listening tests in Section A. In preparation for Sections B and C of the examination, students should be advised to read the questions carefully, and to concentrate in their

responses on musical features and details, with relevant references to the set work score or to the pieces studied from their Area of Study.

Teachers are again to be congratulated on preparing their students for this examination. Many candidates displayed a real engagement with the music studied and an understanding of the new set work, developing skills which they can take forward to meet the demands of study at A2.

Mark Range and Award of Grades

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

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion