



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Music

42703

(Specification 4270)

Unit 3: Performing Music

Report on the Examination

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Performing Music

This was the first full year of entries for Unit 3 Performing (42703) of the new GCSE Music Specification. There was a wide variety of instrumental performances this year within both the Individual and Group Performances. There were few Technology-based Performances and even fewer examples of DJ'ing. In many cases a very good standard of performance was achieved in both the Individual and Group Performances, and centres and their candidates are to be congratulated on this. The small number of Technology-based Performances also included some very good and imaginative performances.

Individual Performance

There were some outstanding performances from some musically mature candidates and these were a delight to listen to. There were, though, an increasing number of unaccompanied instrumental submissions where an accompaniment was intended and where it was difficult for candidates to convey the style and the intentions of the composer without the support of the accompaniment. This really affects the musicality of the performance, and the counting (or not) of the rests does not improve the situation, especially regarding accuracy. There are unaccompanied studies which work really well and would have been a more successful choice. Working with backing tracks is another solution, and there is now much more opportunity for the candidates using them to demonstrate good communicative/ interpretative skills. It may also be possible to arrange for an instrumental teacher to accompany a candidate where the music teacher is unable to do so. All the music needs to be within the capabilities of the candidates to enable them to demonstrate their skills to best advantage.

Group Performance

There was a variety of group performances ranging from duets to parts within larger ensembles. Many of these were of a very high standard and demonstrated very good ensemble skills. Playing in a large ensemble with many performers does present problems and there can be difficulties in assessment, especially if more than one person is playing a particular part. Should the candidate choose to perform as part of a larger ensemble, their part must be clearly identifiable aurally to both the teacher and the moderator (as stated in the Specification). There were occasions where the candidate was performing the same part as others (in a choir or band) and the candidate's part could not be distinguished from the other performers. In such a case even if the teacher has been able to identify and assess a particular candidate's part it is of little use if the moderator is subsequently unable to do so. In some cases the moderator was unable to verify (or otherwise) the marks awarded by the centre and this caused serious problems in the moderation process.

Where a candidate's part is doubled, perhaps in a larger ensemble, it is very important that the part can be clearly heard on the recording sent to the Moderator. Miking up individual candidates is not a satisfactory solution, as the balance within the group cannot be accurately assessed. Consideration should also be given to how well the piece chosen allows the candidate to demonstrate their ensemble skills. There were many cases where this was rather limited, for example pieces which are really for solo voice/instrument and piano/guitar accompaniment. Where a group performance consists of a singer/instrumentalist with accompanist there must be sufficient opportunity for the singer/instrumentalist to show evidence of true rapport and real responsiveness between the performers in terms of adjustments to pitch/intonation, rhythm, tempo, dynamics and balance. This should be reflected in the mark awarded for Sense of Ensemble.

Where a candidate's part is doubled on, say, a keyboard within the same group and the candidate is obviously relying on this doubling to support his/her performance, this must be taken into consideration in the marking.

There are some concerns that need to be given serious consideration, and these are described below.

- *Performing a piece of music which is too difficult for the candidate to deliver to a high standard.* This might well attract a slightly higher demand mark but marks for accuracy, communication and interpretation often suffered. The more elaborate the piece of music, the more demanding are the stylistic issues, and the descriptors in the assessment criteria home in on this. Candidates are better advised to choose repertoire that they can perform well and musically.
- *Candidates performing the same piece for both their Individual and Group Performance.* The Specification clearly states that "each candidate should perform **two** different pieces"; performing a different part within the same piece does not constitute a different piece.
- *A candidate performing a composition of their own that had also been submitted for one of Units 2 or 4;* the Specification clearly states that this is not allowed.
- *Use of backing tracks.* Whilst backing tracks are allowed in Group Performances there should be two or more "live" performers including the candidate. The candidate alone with a backing track does not therefore conform to this requirement and hence is an unacceptable combination.
- *Candidates playing or singing along with full original CD tracks for their Individual Performance.* They were therefore doubling another part (which is acceptable) but this often limited their ability to communicate or impose their own interpretation on the performance. In addition, it sometimes caused problems for the Moderator in distinguishing the candidate's part.
- *Recordings of performances that have been mixed and enhanced by editing,* including the addition of reverb and fades. This does not enable the Moderator to hear exactly what happened in the live performance and makes the balance particularly difficult to assess in Group Performances. The Moderator needs to hear what the original assessor in the centre heard when marking the performance; enhancement and editing does not allow for this and should not happen.
- *Limiting candidates to a single specific performance occasion,* so that a candidate who does not manage to perform well on that occasion has no other opportunity. It is envisaged that the candidates will be able to perform at any time during the course and that the final submitted performances will be the best that they can offer.

Assessment Criteria

Some centres wrote excellent comments on the Candidate Record Forms to support the mark they were awarding in each category and this is really helpful in the moderation process. The key words of the assessment criteria need to be considered and used in the comments section when awarding marks for a performance, and the mark awarded for a particular category should correspond to them. There were some submissions, however, where the teachers either wrote very limited or no comments on the CRF to justify their marks. The comments are invaluable for the moderator to know how decisions have been reached.

Level of Demand: the descriptors are listed in the Specification. There seemed to be reluctance by some centres to use the zero mark, although the descriptor for this is quite clearly stated. If a performance is equated to a particular grade by a music examination board then it would be useful for this information to be included, with details of the examining board and the syllabus year, in the comments box. Where a candidate performs only part of a piece then this should be taken into consideration in the mark awarded. If there is uncertainty about any of these aspects, the Controlled Assessment Adviser allocated to your centre is available to help. If you do not know who this is, please contact the Music Department at the Guildford Office.

Accuracy: marks were sometimes awarded in the top band of this section despite melodic, rhythmic and intonation errors that affected the fluency of the performance. In such cases a performance cannot be described as being “secure.” Some centres seemed to focus on the “not affecting the fluency” aspect of the 9-7 band of marks and poor intonation was not sufficiently taken into account in the awarding of marks in this category.

Communication: here, the candidate’s ability to play/sing the music with confidence and commitment, ensuring a well projected performance is assessed. This is an area where the wisdom of choosing a piece which can be played without worrying whether technique will impair the performance will be demonstrated. There were cases where candidates were not given marks in the top band when they performed a piece that had attracted 0-2 for Level of Demand as centres had focussed on the phrase “The music is likely to be complex and demanding”. The important words in this phrase are “likely to be” and should not be interpreted as being “must be”.

Interpretation: all music is written within a particular style and genre and there are various conventions which will apply. Here, the candidate needs to demonstrate understanding of these conventions and their application in a mature manner within the performance. There is a concern that some performances demonstrated limited dynamic contrasts, even when they were clearly called for in the score, and yet a mark in the top 9-7 band was awarded. The comment above for Communication about “likely to be complex and demanding” is equally relevant for Interpretation.

Sense of ensemble: this has already been mentioned in this report. All the key words here refer to the responsiveness of the candidate to the other members of the group. Merely keeping together throughout the performance is not enough to warrant a top band mark. The marking criteria state that to be awarded a top band mark there must be “complete unity of purpose in all aspects of ensemble playing, including balance, timing, intonation and responsiveness to others”. There should be the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate these skills in the Group Performance and if this is limited it should be taken into consideration when deciding the mark to be awarded.

Administration

Many of the submissions were very well administered, but there were instances where a great deal of time had to be spent rectifying errors and omissions. In the interest of their candidates, centres are asked to observe the following:

- all forms must be signed by the candidate and the relevant teachers. This is mandatory and must be checked very carefully. Where signatures were missing, the moderator had to request the signed forms, in some cases even having to return the requested forms for a full set of signatures.
- please check the additions on the CRFs so that the candidate is awarded the correct mark. There were quite a few instances where this was not the case and also where the correct mark had been incorrectly transferred to the Centre Mark Sheet (CMS).
- the CRF should be fully completed including details of the pieces being performed. There should also be details of the part the candidate is performing in a Group Performance and it is not sufficient to merely write “Piano” or “Flute” for example in a piano or flute duet; it needs to be “Piano Primo” or “Flute 2” so as to be quite specific as to the part the candidate is performing. In many cases this can be supported by a score where the candidate’s part has been marked/highlighted. Please remember that the teacher has the benefit of actually being present when the candidate has performed – the Moderator has not. In keyboard performances for example, it should be clearly stated what the candidate has actually done, including whether they have used single/fingered chords and used any automated features on the instrument.
- with each submission there must be the relevant scores/annotations or exemplar CDs. A significant number of centres failed to provide these and this resulted in them having to be contacted to obtain them, including some where the candidate was performing their own composition. It is not acceptable for a centre to send a list of “You Tube” references for the Moderator to access instead of supplying an exemplar CD. Where a candidate has performed with a backing track it would be useful for a copy of the backing track to be sent for reference also. Please ensure that this is observed in future so that with every submission the relevant material is provided for each candidate from the outset.
- work must be submitted by the deadline of 7 May unless the centre has been granted an extension by AQA because of extenuating circumstances. Also please send work that is subsequently requested as quickly as possible – there are increasingly occasions where up to two weeks can elapse before work is received by the Moderator.
- the submission should include the:
 - CRFs, with both signatures
 - scores/annotations/exemplar CD (including backing tracks)
 - Centre Mark Sheet (both pink **and** yellow copies)
 - Centre Declaration Sheet signed by **both** the music teacher and Head of Centre
 - CDs (or mini-discs) clearly labelled.
- where a centre has 20 or fewer candidates all the above must be submitted by 7 May. Where a centre has over 20 candidates, the two copies of the CMS and the CDS with all the signatures must be sent. Within a few days the moderator will return the yellow copy requesting the sample. Smaller centres will receive these yellow copies when the work is sent back after the moderating period, indicating which candidates were in the sample.

- centres can submit CDs or mini-discs. Composite discs are preferable to individual CDs/discs for each candidate but please provide a track list and write the track number on the CRF for the individual and group performance, checking that there are no duplications, omissions or incorrect track numbers. Track lists should be supplied on paper; if they are only written on the CD itself, the moderator cannot read them whilst the CD is in the player! Please ensure that each candidate's work is on the same CD: where centres submitted individual and separate group performance CDs, changing CDs was time-consuming for the moderator. CDs should be formatted correctly to play on standard equipment and not on a computer only. Mini-discs must not be submitted in the extended play version.
- please make certain that everything is correctly labelled (including the CD) and that copies of all materials sent for moderation have been kept at the centre.
- Please do not send materials in a form that requires them to be "signed for" as there can be no guarantee that there will be someone at the Moderator's address to receive them and a delay in the moderation process can result.

The above details are set out in the Notes for Guidance for this unit, which are in the Teacher Resource Bank on the AQA website

http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/art_dan_dra_mus/new/music_materials

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