



Pearson

Moderator's Report Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2
GCSE (9-1) in Music (1MU0)
Component 1

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Introduction

This was the first year of the 1MU0 specification in which there are substantial differences from the previous specification. For the first time, students were required to perform for a minimum of four minutes with solo and ensemble performances lasting at least one minute. Both performances were recorded and assessed this academic year.

The specification brought about alignment of difficulty levels to graded exam syllabuses via the Difficulty Levels Booklet. Standard difficulty level has been raised to level (Grade) 4. A new levels-based mark scheme with three assessment grids was introduced. The raw mark stays the same for less difficult up to a maximum of 24 and is increased for standard and more difficult to a maximum of 30. There is a restriction of marks for less difficult performances at difficulty level 2 and below in assessment grid 1.

It was pleasing to see the standard of assessment from the previous specification has been maintained with generally excellent presentation and good quality recordings.

Performance of Candidates

The full range of marks were achieved by students. Most moderators felt the standard of work was similar when compared to the previous specification. Some outstanding performances were a joy to moderate and many candidates achieved high marks after scaling.

Of the performances sampled by moderators, piano and female voice were most common. A significant increase in the number of vocal submissions compared to the previous specification was observed. Piano and keyboard performances also increased and there was a marginal rise in strings. Moderators have noticed a decline in guitar performances. The wide span of performances has been maintained from the previous specification. Interesting performances noted by moderators include veena, multi percussion, several harp submissions and an 8-part a cappella ensemble.

Many submissions contained well prepared performances where the difficulty of the pieces selected did not inhibit student ability to perform fluently and with expression. Often these were listed in the Difficulty Levels Booklet or graded exam syllabuses for solo performance. Some centres also selected pieces from Rock School, Trinity Rock & Pop, ABRSM Ensemble, ABRSM Music Medals, Trinity Certificate and LCM syllabuses for ensemble performance. Most performances were either at standard or more difficult level.

Occasionally, students performed long pieces, these tended to be self-penalising. It is to be noted that the specification suggests a guided maximum time for combined performance of six minutes.

Some students continue to be disadvantaged by choice of ensemble repertoire. The difficulty level was lower compared to the solo for some. Specification requirements were not met by others. Theatre-style duets often contain short passages of genuine ensemble playing, the majority tends to be solo and/or doubling of parts. Adding a made-up part to a solo with accompaniment to fulfil ensemble requirements did not always enable demonstration of potential in balance, reaction and adjustment. A solo with accompaniment is not acceptable as an ensemble unless the student being assessed is the accompanist.

Assessment

A pleasing number of teacher assessors made detailed comments supporting marks awarded. They were usually based on wording of the assessment grids. Some expanded by referencing bars or sections of the performance. For example, 'sonority is good except in the highest range during bars 56-57'. Assessment process was less successful where teacher assessors failed to make few or any comments. Unfortunately, a number of teacher assessors were lenient in application of the assessment grids.

Assessment grid 1: Technical control - Technique

There were few performances that merited full marks. This was usually due to slips in intonation, uneven tone or technical control. It was common for teacher assessors to apply assessment of intonation incorrectly to the mark for assessment grid 3. Sometimes teacher assessors overlooked restriction of marks for performances below difficulty level 3.

Assessment grid 2: Expression and interpretation

There were a minority of performances where nuances of phrasing and dynamics were fully embraced. Often opportunities to shape were missed or performances demonstrated some involvement. Pieces that were performed at an unsuitable tempo and/or inconsistent tempo were generally credited too generously. Most students demonstrated a good awareness of balance. Teacher assessor comments are informative for this strand, particularly where other performers create imbalance, or the microphone is incorrectly placed.

Assessment grid 3: Technical Control (accuracy) and expression and interpretation (fluency)

Moderators noticed leniency in assessment of accuracy, particularly where there were noticeable errors that had little or no impact on success. The level achieved for fluency was often higher than accuracy. Teacher assessors were reluctant to award full marks where accuracy and coherence were sustained throughout. Many ensemble performances were well rehearsed and demonstrated good to responsive reaction.

Difficulty Levels

The difficulty level of selected pieces of music can be found in the Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in Music Difficulty Levels Booklet, on the Pearson website. Page 1 of the booklet states: *For GCSE, teachers will need to use the book to determine the difficulty level(s) of piece(s) performed and apply these when marking performances.*

Not all centres referred to this booklet in the first instance, a surprising number made no reference. However, many did make use of graded exam syllabuses initially and for pieces not listed in the booklet. Moderators do appreciate submissions where the relevant page of the booklet is identified on the PAS or a relevant syllabus page is printed and placed inside the PAS.

For unpublished difficulty levels, few centres made use of criteria listed in Difficulty levels: Further Guidance for Ensemble Performances document, also on the Pearson website. However, many made use of support offered by Ask the Expert. Difficulty level confirmation by Ask the Expert should be printed and placed inside the PAS.

Were a difficulty level was amended, it was usually due to non-application of the booklet /graded exam syllabuses or leniency / severity when comparing to those in the booklet.

Difficulty level applies to the whole performance based on an average, taking into consideration the relative length of pieces.

Administration

Performance authentication sheets were usually presented with care and few centres were contacted for missing information. Generally, timings for performance were correctly measured, only the musical performance is measured.

A number of students submitted performances below minimum combined time requirement of 4 minutes. These students received 0 marks. Centres are reminded to check lengths of pieces when selecting repertoire with students.

The vast majority of scores were presented carefully. Lyric sheets are not appropriate forms of scores. Scores (including lead sheets, chord charts, TAB) should contain all necessary information to assess accuracy of both pitch and rhythm. Occasionally, students submitted a 'realisation' performance from the previous specification. Centres should note, an annotated score or reference recording with a detailed commentary highlighting deviations made will enable assessment.

Moderators have expressed a preference for USB sticks. Labelling, however, did not always follow instruction. General quality of recordings was good and enabled teacher assessors and moderators to make accurate assessments. Some recordings were noisy due distant microphone placement or noise in the room. Others lacked detail when recorded on a tablet for example or because of reduced sample rate/bit depth. Moderation of expression was more challenging when auto levelling had been enabled. Assessing balance was a challenge when microphone placement favoured one performer over others.

Moving forward centres should:

- Consult the 2019 Administrative Support Guide
- Award difficulty levels in this order:
 - Difficulty Levels Booklet, indicate page number on the PAS
 - Graded exam syllabuses, indicate board and year on the PAS
 - Difficulty levels: Further Guidance for Ensemble Performances document when comparing to other pieces, indicate criteria on the PAS met by the performance
- Assess one role if a student accompanies themselves. The difficulty level is awarded for the role assessed

- Print the PAS as a booklet onto a single A3 sheet which is then folded. Scores for each candidate should be placed inside (A4 folders, poly pockets and display books are unnecessary)
- Record and assess pieces together when more than 1 piece is performed as part of a solo or ensemble performance
- Ensure recordings are unedited (including addition of reverb)
- Ensure time for each performance and combined time are accurately recorded on the PAS (announcements, tuning up and gaps between pieces do **not** count towards performance time)
- Ensure CD's or USB sticks include both performances and any reference recordings in candidate number order (solo followed by ensemble)
- Ensure the work of the highest and lowest scoring candidate is included with the requested sample

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>