



Pearson

Moderator's Report Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2019

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

Component 1 (Performing)

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Introduction

In the second assessment year of the 1MU0 specification, Ofqual published [revised rules](#) in January regarding submissions that do not meet minimum time requirement and for alternative forms of reference material where a written score is unavailable.

Performances that did not meet the minimum time requirement of four minutes were marked against the assessment criteria. The total performance mark was reduced proportionally according to how many seconds the combined performance time was less than four minutes. The proportional reduction was applied during the moderation process and reduction tables can be found in Appendix 9 of the revised specification.

Ofqual confirmed that centres provide Pearson with a score or lead sheet, so that the moderator can assess accuracy. It clarified that where a written score or lead sheet is unavailable – because it does not exist – other means of referencing the performance intentions can be permitted. Further details of score requirements can be found on page 15 of the revised specification.

The vast majority of centres engaged well with Ofqual revisions and prepared submissions accordingly. Moderators commented that presentation of submissions improved compared to last year, with excellent organisation and good quality recordings.

Performance of Candidates

As in 2018, the full range of marks were achieved by students. There was an increase in the percentage of students achieving marks in the upper grades. However, overall performance of students was broadly similar to 2018. Students rarely achieved full marks before scaling.

Moderators noted many outstanding musical, expressive and accurate performances. There were some very accomplished pianists, mature vocalists as well as carefully prepared performances throughout the instrumental range, including a fantastic tuba duet arrangement of The Entertainer. There were more harpists this year and also a bagpipe submission. A wider range of non-western instruments were presented including bongos, darabuka, djembe, dilruba, dizi, pipa, santoor, steelpan and tabla.

The most common instruments sampled by moderators continued to be piano and female voice. The number of guitar submissions declined again this year. However, brass submissions increased by the most, followed by drum kit and woodwind. The number of students performing raps also increased, several performances of The Real Slim Shady were particularly successful.

Other notable performances include: Back in Black on ukulele, excellent guitar playing in an ensemble performance of Muse's Hysteria, a Tamil violin performance and vocal performances of I have Nothing, Don't Cry For Me Argentina and Burn (from the musical Hamilton).

Most pieces selected were at more difficult level, with a significant number at standard. There were relatively few submissions at less difficult level (usually piano, keyboard or voice). Many pieces were selected carefully and were of suitable challenge. This enabled students to achieve marks consistent with ability. Some pieces at more difficult level were felt to be self-penalising because they were over ambitious.

Some students opted to perform long pieces. These tend to be self-penalising, the specification suggests a guided maximum time for combined performance of six minutes.

Moderators felt some students continued to be disadvantaged through selection of and preparation of ensemble submissions. There were five factors identified:

- Difficulty level was lower than the solo
- Performance was on a second instrument to the solo, to fit the ensemble
- Piece selected did not contain enough ensemble material to meet specification requirements
- The same ensemble piece was performed by all students
- Performance was less well prepared than the solo

A significant number of students submitted theatre-style duets, for example For Good. These often do not meet requirements because they contain short passages of genuine ensemble playing, the majority tends to be solo and/or doubling of parts.

There were still instances of students submitting a solo piece for ensemble performance. A solo with accompaniment is not acceptable as an ensemble unless the student being assessed is the accompanist.

Centres should be mindful when adding a made-up part to a solo with accompaniment to fulfil ensemble requirements. This practice often limited capacity to demonstrate potential in balance, reaction and adjustment.

There was an increase in the number of students submitting 'improvisations' because performances differ slightly from the score. Centres should note that improvisation criteria in assessment grid 3 refer to development of the stimulus. Often there was little development of material. It was felt that where a performance differed from the score, annotations to the score should have been made or a written commentary provided.

Assessment

Teacher assessors applied the assessment grids with increased accuracy. Assessments were often realistic with comments that matched marks awarded. There were some instances where teacher assessor comments did not reflect the performance, or the comments did not match the marks awarded. This usually brought about lenient marking. Assessments continued to be less accurate where teacher assessors did not refer to the wording of the grids or make no comments.

Teacher assessors are encouraged to adopt best practice. Rather than copy wording of the assessment grids, marking should be evidenced. For example, 'two noticeable rhythmic slips in bar 12 and 47 have minimal impact on success'.

Assessment grid 1: Technical control - Technique

There were few performances that gained full marks again this year. Worryingly, some teacher assessors still applied assessment of intonation to the mark for assessment grid 3. Conversely, some assessments were applied to the '(technical) ability of the performer' strand because of errors in rhythm or pitch. Very few teacher assessors overlooked restriction of marks for performances below difficulty level 3.

Assessment grid 2: Expression and interpretation

Students are reminded to follow performance markings in detail, and to check tempo of their performance is appropriate. It was rare for shaping of dynamics and articulation to be maintained in more complex pieces despite successful communication throughout.

This assessment grid was generally well assessed. However, pieces performed at an unsuitable and/or inconsistent tempo were often credited generously. Where shaping was limited marking could sometimes be lenient.

Teacher assessor comments explaining ensemble balance were particularly useful. These helped inform moderator decisions where other performers created imbalance, the microphone was incorrectly placed, or the recording was of poor quality.

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

Moderators continued to notice leniency, particularly where performances contained noticeable errors in pitch and/or rhythm. The cumulative effect of frequent errors and/or hesitations was often under estimated. Occasionally, obvious errors were missed. Surprisingly, some teacher assessors were reluctant to award full marks where performances were accurate and coherent throughout.

Difficulty Levels

It was felt that teacher assessors had taken more time to research difficulty levels. More reference was made to the Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in Music Difficulty Levels Booklet / Spreadsheet than last year as well as graded exam syllabuses. Teacher assessors who indicated the board and year of graded exam syllabuses significantly aided the moderation process. Submissions that contained a copy of the syllabus page were rare but appreciated.

Very few centres made use of the [Difficulty levels: Further Guidance for Ensemble Performances](#) document when justifying difficulty levels. This document is useful because it can be applied to those pieces not listed in the Difficulty Levels Booklet/Spreadsheet or graded exam syllabuses for both solo and ensemble. Whilst criteria are for guidance, other performance elements may be considered, they indicate the likely difficulty level.

Difficulty levels awarded tended to be over estimated where no reference was made to published documentation.

Administration

The vast majority of performance authentication sheets were presented with great care. Sheets printed onto single A4 sheets, scaled up to A3 size, stapled or placed into plastic wallets were difficult to manage.

Performance length was not always correctly measured. It is measured from the start of the first note to the end of the last. Where two or more pieces form a performance, pauses between pieces do not count towards length. Accurate measurement of length was particularly important for submissions close to the minimum time requirement of four minutes. Centres should check lengths of pieces carefully when selecting repertoire with students.

The number of students who did not meet the minimum time requirement of four minutes increased threefold compared to last year. Moderated marks were reduced proportionally according to how many seconds the combined performances were less than four minutes, for further details see Appendix 9 of the revised specification.

Centres should ensure that scores contain all necessary information to assess accuracy of both pitch and rhythm. A significant number of submissions contained inappropriate scores. These included:

- Lyric sheet with chord symbols
- Lead sheet where the part assessed was missing
- A score where deviations agreed by the teacher assessor were not annotated
- A different version / arrangement to the score was performed

The number of USB stick submissions increased, moderators continued to express a preference for these. Labelling did not always follow instruction, this slowed the moderation process. Some centres submitted encrypted media. Centres are encouraged to encrypt using software that enables decryption by both Windows and macOS.

The quality of recordings was good but there was significant variance. Moderation of sonority was more challenging by:

- Recording level set too high, created distortion
- Low bit rate / sample rate, reduced clarity

Moderation of assessment grid 2 was made more challenging by:

- Recording level set too low
- Recording level changed within the performance
- Microphone placed on top of the accompanying piano
- Microphone placement favoured the assessed student over others in ensemble performance
- Multi-tracked recording (and hard panned), preventing moderation of balance
- Automatic levelling enabled, created unmusical dynamic processing

Centres are reminded that recordings should be ambient and not studio based / multi-tracked. Effects, such as reverb and delay, should not be added to the recording. Centres are encouraged to use an external (condenser) microphone or a device primarily designed to record audio.

Moving forward centres should:

- Refer to the 2020 Administrative Support Guide
- Adhere to revised specification requirements for score submission, submit a score where one is available. Where a piece is learnt aurally, a professional reference recording may be submitted **in addition**
- Award difficulty levels in this order:
 - Difficulty Levels Booklet / Spreadsheet, indicate page / row number on the PAS
 - Graded exam syllabuses (ABRSM, Trinity, LCM and Rockschoo) 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
- Use revised 2020 Performance Authentication Sheet (PAS). Photocopy as a booklet onto a single A3 sheet which is folded. Scores for each candidate should be placed inside (A4 folders, poly-pockets and display books are unnecessary)
- Ensure recordings are ambient and unedited (including addition of reverb)
- Ensure time for each performance and total time are accurately recorded on the PAS (announcements, tuning up, pauses between pieces, lead-in and lead-out time do **not** count towards performance length)
- Check the work of the **highest** and **lowest** scoring candidate is included within the requested sample. If they are not, add these to the submission
- Include a track list for CD submissions and note track numbers on the PAS. Files on USB sticks should be labelled as indicated in the Administrative Support Guide
- Ensure password for encrypted media is sent to the correct email address

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>

