



# Examiners' Report

## Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel

Level 1 / Level 2

GCSE Music (1MU0)

Component 2 (Composing)

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## **Introduction**

In 2022, external moderation resumed and to comply with the reduced specification, candidates for Component 2 (Composing) were expected to submit one 'Free' composition with a minimum length of 2 minutes. To accompany the composition, a CAS, a Pupil Declaration Form, a score or commentary and a recording of the music needed to be uploaded to the LWT for each pupil.

In the previous examination series, candidates were expected to also respond to a brief set by Pearson which was released in the September of the year of accreditation. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was felt that it would be fairer to candidates and teachers to remove this additional task, but candidates were welcome to respond to a previous brief set by Pearson in lieu of a Free Composition if they felt that it was appropriate.

Centres were given advance warning of the adaptations to the component requirements and guidance was available to download from the GCSE (9-1) Music (1MU0) page on the Pearson/Edexcel website to further support Teacher Assessors and Examinations Officers.

Teacher Assessors and Examinations Officers should be commended for the time and effort given to the preparation of materials to that ensured that the transition to digital submission was as smooth as possible given the challenging conditions of the 2022 examination series.

## Performance of Candidates

Based on moderator feedback, as with 1MU0-01, a greater percentage of students achieved high/full marks possibly because:

- 1) Candidates were able to focus their energies on one composition of their own choice.
- 2) Candidates are becoming more proficient with the use of Music Technology and were able to work independently and remotely using free music software provided by schools.
- 3) Teachers had more time to prepare for this examination series.

There did not appear to be significantly fewer/more low-scoring candidates than in other years. There was an increasing number of under-length compositions, although there were very large numbers of compositions only just hitting the minimum time requirements (which, in other years, would have been too short, based on revised time requirements for this year). Clearly the ability to focus on just the one piece enabled them to meet the guidance.

It is pleasing to note that the types of compositions submitted in 2022 appeared to be more varied for many centres than in previous years. Unfortunately, there were still a significant number of centres where the Teacher Assessors (TAs) had overlooked the specification requirement for candidates to compose using their musical interests and experiences. Instead, they set very specific tasks and the outcome was that all candidates were had to adhere to some quite limiting briefs. These included:

**Minimalism** - mostly using repeated motifs where the musical ideas lacked development and extension and were reliant on layering to create contrast rather than exploring the many of the other features of the style.

**Blues/Jazz** - very prescriptive sections often within a 12-bar blues chord progression often highlighting a lack of harmonic and rhythmic understanding.

**"20th Century"** which became an umbrella term for lack of tonal understanding.

**Theme and Variations** - especially on 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'

**Ternary/Rondo Form** – where the opportunity to develop and extend ideas creatively was missed when the A section returned.

It was noted there were increasing numbers of submissions of compositions from the electronic and drill genres. There were some exceptional creative and exciting examples submitted but a significant minority relied heavily on layering of parts and cut and pasted ideas rather than development and extension of themes and ideas.

Electronic Dance Music (EDM) is a diverse and popular genre. Where sequencing packages such as Garageband, Logic and Pro-Tools were used, it was sometimes unclear from the candidate's commentaries how much of the music was a ready-made sample and how much input the candidate had in creating or modifying these loops. To assist the moderation process in future years, it would be helpful if the candidate's clarified how they had manipulated these samples and the digital editing processes they applied to create the final composition. Screen grabs can be very useful to demonstrate this provided there is an explanation or commentary to accompany the images.

For those candidates who chose to submit a song, there were some lovely recordings where the vocal line had been sung by a live singer, (even if over the electronic backing for other parts) which made the assessment of word setting and melody line much easier. Those candidates who submitted songs with synthesized vocal lines had more difficulties setting lyrics effectively.

Candidates should be commended for their excellent use of music production and application of digital effects techniques in the more popular/electronic submissions.

## **Assessment**

Moderators felt teacher assessor marking continued to improve. Whilst generally accurate, marking was optimistic in many cases. The centres demonstrating the best practise gave detailed comments with musical references to highlight the key features of their candidates' compositions. Some centres continued to copy and paste statements from the assessment grids into the comment boxes without explanation. Unfortunately, some centres marks and comments did not match the equivalent level statements in the Assessment Grids. In these instances, the marking felt to be less accurate.

### **Assessment grid 1: Developing musical ideas.**

Teacher assessors should note the following:

To achieve the higher levels, musical ideas must demonstrate at least effective development *and* extension. Often layers were added with the main melodic material copied showing some development rather than considering the development of the whole ensemble.

Pleasingly, most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the characteristics of the style of music they were composing for. The most successful compositions ensured that they were handled convincingly throughout the whole piece.

### **Assessment grid 2: Demonstrating technical control**

Teacher assessors should note the following:

The candidates who achieved the higher levels demonstrated a clear understanding of harmony, rhythm and melody to demonstrate secure control of the musical elements.

It is important that all chosen musical forces are considered and are playable (not just the melody lines).

Texture needs to be varied appropriately rather than relying on melody-dominated homophony throughout the composition.

### **Assessment grid 3: Composing with musical coherence.**

Teacher assessors should note the following:

Contrast and fluency need to be evident in the composition. For example, some candidates overlooked opportunities to effectively consider phrasing, develop repeated themes and sometimes ended their music abruptly rather than bring the music to a pleasing conclusion.

Many compositions demonstrated a sense of direction and wholeness. Most submissions showed a clear understanding of structural devices especially those candidates who composed in Ternary and Rondo Forms or submitted songs.

#### **Administration**

The variety of formats of CAS made moderation challenging. For 1MU0-02, centres seemed to prefer submitting the PDF versions of the CAS rather than the spreadsheet version.

Many centres completed the CAS to a high standard, but there were more instances than in previous years where the Composition Outline box on page 2 did not include an audience or occasion for the composition.

Some centres did not accurately record the correct length of the candidate's compositions on the CAS. The most common error was to just include the track time without accounting for any lead-in or lead-out time. This was significant for those candidates where their compositions were close to the two-minute time requirement.

Some centres did not include the highest and lowest scoring candidates within their submission even if they were not part of the requested sample.

## **Scores**

It is a specification requirement that the score or commentary supplied by the candidate for their composition should provide enough musical information so that other performers could replicate the intentions of the composer. Some candidates provided excellent examples. It would assist the moderation process if candidates submitting a screenshot-type score include enough detail regarding chord progressions, melody/vocal lines and timbral selections. A minority of those submitting traditional scores failed to indicate the instruments being composed for even in the opening staves.

The quality of recordings of compositions were generally better than in previous years.



### **Moving forward centres should:**

- Prepare students for both a free composition and a Set Brief composition for 2023.
- The 1MU0-02 Set Briefs for submission in May 2023 are published on the Pearson website from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022.
- Refer to the 2023 Administrative Support Guide.
- Submit 2023 CAS forms including an audience or occasion for each composition in the Composition Outline boxes.
- Submit a score or detailed commentary for each composition including enough musical information for it to be replicated by other performers.
- Label files with centre and candidate numbers (not student names).
- Ensure recordings are ambient, balanced, at a good level and are unedited.
- Ensure length for each composition and their total length are accurately recorded on the CAS.
- 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.

## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

