

CCEA GCSE Music
(Summer Series) 2015

Chief Examiner's and Principal Moderator's Report

music

Foreword

This booklet outlines the performance of candidates in all aspects of CCEA's General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Music for this series.

CCEA hopes that the Chief Examiner's and/or Principal Moderator's report(s) will be viewed as a helpful and constructive medium to further support teachers and the learning process.

This booklet forms part of the suite of support materials for the specification. Further materials are available from the specification's microsite on our website at www.ccea.org.uk

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GCSE MUSIC

Principal Moderator's Report

Component 1: Composing and Appraising (Controlled Assessment)

Overview of the Component

The GCSE Music specification requires candidates in this component, to create two contrasting compositions, one of which is to be related to the core or an optional Area of Study and maintain a composition log for each. This component is a controlled assessment task governing the setting, taking and marking of the task. It comprises 30% of the total marks available for the subject.

It is encouraging to report once again, that the standard of this component has remained high this year, although there were considerably fewer exceptional portfolios submitted, as indeed there were considerably fewer very weak submissions. Significantly, there was a large 'bunching' of compositions in the Grade C/D boundary.

It is one of the stated aims of the GCSE Music examination, that it provides a suitable pre-requisite for progress to AS and A2 studies. The calibre of this component bodes well for such candidates.

Congratulations for the significant amount of time and effort taken by centre staff in encouraging their candidates to neatly present their folios and provide a, generally excellent, quality of scores and CDs.

Recordings and Scores

The use of notational software programs continues unabated with a high degree of dexterity. The vast majority of centres included recordings of their compositions and scores. It is not, however, a requirement to submit recordings but their provision is a definite aid during moderation. In the weakest examples, candidates chose 'software' instrumentation inappropriate to the acoustic range or timbral effects of acoustic instruments of the same name. Information in candidate logs in such cases, did not clarify the rationale in the choice of instrument. This is an element where a 'research' activity on instrumentation would be beneficial.

Success Criteria and Standard of Centre Assessments

Assessments made by the majority of centres continued to be accurate and rewarded candidates. A similar number of centres were reviewed this year at Post Moderation as per last year. Those which did require adjustment to marks highlighted major discrepancies in interpretation of agreed standards which, for those centres affected, should result in greater focus on the assessment criteria grids in the specification and attendance at Agreement Trial support events.

Criteria (iii) was least well assessed, where high marks were often awarded for little or no evidence of secondary chords, effective cadences or added colour to the harmonic language as outlined in the criteria.

Criteria (i) still causes some concern when applied to strophic songs which have multiple verses but little melodic or rhythmic differences.

The vast majority of folios presented were assessed by centres under success criteria A. A very small number of centres used success criteria B, although in many cases this did not benefit candidates as there was insufficient evidence under criteria (iv) to gain highest marks.

Overall, there was a slight increase in the number of centres who had marks adjusted. It is important to note that a lot of time is spent in ensuring the TAC6s issued to centres are as affirming and positive as possible, celebrating good, well assessed work. Any constructive comments noted by the moderator are designed to affect future centre planning and should be taken on board.

A further marked increase in the quality of recordings submitted suggests the frequent and knowledgeable use of in-house equipment, which is to be applauded. The moderation team must be sure that the candidate composition log **fully** explains the processes involved in these recordings. There was again, clear evidence from the Summer 2015 series of exams, that an unacceptable number of recordings gave an added sophistication to the candidates' work, which had not been fully explained in accompanying logs or on the reverse of the Candidate Record Sheets.

The overwhelming majority of centres and candidates are to be congratulated on the manner in which time constraints, authentication procedures and controlled assessment guidelines have been managed. **Any centres submitting non-authenticated work will have their submissions returned to ensure compliance.** Centres submitting controlled assessments as part of consortium arrangements are on the increase.

Authentication Procedures and Composition Logs

The Composition Log is an integral part of the composition process. Logs submitted used the CCEA template in the main (available on the CCEA Music microsite). For those centres who chose to provide their own templates and/or composition diaries, these were detailed, highly informative, well-documented and beautifully presented. There were some excellent examples of good classroom practice in the teaching of composition skills, effective self, peer and teacher evaluation and a refreshing transparency in the quality of teaching and learning in Music Departments throughout the province.

It is a clear requirement of this component that a Log is submitted for each composition, and that they are authenticated by teachers and candidates.

The specification states that teacher authentication should occur on three occasions during the life of each composition. While 'ticking' the far right box in the grid fulfils the letter of the law, the Moderation Team consider it 'best practice' to include a short qualifying comment with each authentication.

Areas of Study

Repeated Patterns again proved the most popular related area of study with *Vocal Music and Musical Traditions in Ireland* closely following behind.

Links to *Vocal Music* resulted in many well-structured, stylishly developed and balanced rock/pop/urban songs with well-established references to the features expected. It was most encouraging to note the attention to detail paid by candidates in writing or researching appropriate texts.

There was a marked reduction in the number of compositions in the *Incidental Music* option and it was here that greatest creative use was made of technology, especially in music to accompany film or computer games.

There was a less programmatic element in the work of candidates in the *Musical Traditions in Ireland* Area of Study, but those who did choose this option were particularly effective. Traditional suites of Slow Airs, jigs, reels etc., were popular and a large number brought new insight to the often formulaic nature of Traditional Irish/Ulster-Scottish dance forms, sub-planting new rhythmic intricacy and harmonic invention. The Moderation team would remind centres that larger instrumental participation should not be interpreted or marked as ‘developmental’ unless it increases the number of independent melodic/rhythmic lines or adds to the textural/timbral complexity of the composition.

Centres who use class-based compositional tasks as teaching tools clearly outlined individual outcomes showing differentiation between candidates and allowing creativity and freedom of choice. Larger numbers of candidates used the ‘Free Composition’ option. Centre staff are reminded that the specification does require two ‘contrasting’ compositions to be submitted.

Administration and Compliance with Specification

This year there were fewer arithmetical errors and fewer errors associated with transfer of marks from record sheets to the OMR sheets, the most common being failure to cross the ‘hundreds’ box. Centre staff are requested to pay particular attention to totalling across the criteria, transferring marks from Candidate Record Sheets to OMR and totalling down for the final folio mark.

Large numbers of unauthenticated work had to be returned to centres to ensure compliance in this respect.

Centres are also reminded that submissions to CCEA should include the work of the highest and lowest candidate, even if they have not been requested.

There is also a requirement to include the TAC2 form of Internal Standardisation, even in one-teacher centres.

Use of Technology

It is most encouraging to note the increase in the technical knowledge shown by candidates in handling a wide range of school and home based media.

There were fewer examples of work where candidates had not clearly indicated the use of the pre-programmed tracks/loops, downloaded files or material from media-sharing websites (e.g. YouTube). Teacher assessments accurately reflected the original work of candidates in the vast majority of centres.

A significant number of centres had submitted CDs which had not been correctly formatted for audio playback.

Conclusion

The high standard of this component has been maintained and centre staff are further encouraged to continue their good work and focus on the areas of concern noted in this year’s report. It is our hope that candidates will continue to benefit from the high quality guidance and direction of their Music staff.

Chief Examiner's Report

Component 2: Performing and Appraising (Controlled Assessment)

We have, as in previous years, been delighted by the high standards and the tremendous talents of the candidates who enter the examination. As a small country we should be proud to have so many young talented musicians growing up in our midst.

We extend our thanks once again to all the schools who participated in the examinations this year for their hospitality and efficient organisation of the examination. This approach in centres makes the work of the examiners so much more enjoyable and less stressful. Most schools provide us with a pre-prepared list of candidates which aids the progress of the examination process.

It is once again important to emphasise that examiners should not be examining more than 20 candidates in one day. Where an examiner has another school to visit on the same day, every effort needs to be made to ensure their timetable in their first school allows them enough time to complete their first session and then move on to the next one.

After the arrangements for a visit have been finalised with the school by the visiting examiner and CCEA, it cannot be altered.

It is important for schools to adhere to the starting time of examinations. Usually the approximate time of arrival given by the examiner is about 10 minutes before they expect the examination to begin. These 10 minutes give examiners time to meet the candidates, have a brief chat and get the necessary candidate forms completed.

It is not acceptable for an examiner to be kept waiting in the reception area or in a classroom while the candidates rehearse or the teacher is occupied in other business.

It should be noted that occasionally a candidate makes a false start to their performance and examiners are sympathetic to this and will allow a restart. However, once the performance has been completed no candidate may be permitted to replay their piece(s) as this would amount to a re-examination which is not allowed.

Teachers should note that the instruments of side drum or Lambeg drum are accepted as solo instruments in any part of the examination.

We noted again this year that some candidates choose to play pieces of a higher grade than the examination requires. This can often lead to mistakes being made in performance resulting in the loss of valuable marks. It may therefore be advisable to use a slightly easier piece and play it perfectly.

We need to emphasise once again that teachers may not remain within the classroom during any part of the examination unless they are taking part as an accompanist.

The Clavinova is not an appropriate instrument for candidates to use in the examination as it is so limited in scope and would disadvantage a candidate by not allowing them to fulfil all the criteria.

The Solo Performance

There were many outstanding performances again this year with a wide range of different instruments offered, both orchestral, traditional and DJing.

The number of singers continues to grow, many offering “songs from the shows” as their solo pieces. Care needs to be taken here as some of this material often contains many pitfalls for vocalists, especially in vocal range and tuning.

It was good to see most singers being able to sing without the aid of music, or behind a music stand and able to convey the “thoughts behind the words” of their songs.

Backing tracks continue to be used and are effective if used carefully.

Piano accompaniments should be sympathetic and supportive and not too loud so that the candidate's performance is not obscured.

We found again this year that too many candidates are presenting pieces which are too short. If the piece has not enough content it is difficult for an examiner to assess properly and therefore the range of marks can be reduced. Performances less than 1 minute 30 and those which last for more than 5 minutes are not acceptable.

Some candidates are still presenting more than one piece and this is fine provided the total length does not exceed 5 minutes. There is, however, a danger that one piece might be performed very well and the second one not quite as proficient, resulting in a lower mark than the candidate might have gained with one good piece.

We would ask that where teachers recommend a particular grade for a piece that they are sure it is accurate. There were occasions this year where pieces were graded more highly than they warranted.

The Ensemble Performance

As in the practical area of the examination, there were a wide range of fascinating ensembles offered. In many cases the standard was exceptionally high.

In most cases groups took time to set up the ensembles, although it should be noted that time to do this is not unlimited and if unchecked can prolong the examination session unduly.

Sound checks and balances are essential before performances begin and in general they are quickly and expertly done. However, it must be emphasised that there can be no manipulation of sound levels etc. during a performance except by the players themselves. It is *not* permitted for a sound engineer or teacher to do this in any way during a performance. Only the pupils who are performing should be in the room during the performance.

There are still too many ensembles which are a repeat of the solo performance i.e. soloist and accompanist. The ensemble element of the examination was introduced to encourage children to work together in a musical situation, all contributing to a whole performance. It was always hoped that pupils would be encouraged to set up these ensembles themselves and it is the pupil leading the ensemble who is assessed. We have said each year that we hoped the “duo” ensemble would soon be a thing of the past; unfortunately this is not the case. Occasionally another musician (often another teacher) is added into a “duo” to make it seem an ensemble but often their contribution is obviously a “filler” and the idea does not really work. Too often the “duo” is the candidate and the teacher accompanying and in these cases the teacher is often “leading” the ensemble so marking the candidate for this aspect is problematic.

It must be clear within an ensemble which pupil or pupils are being assessed and what instrument or vocal part they are playing. It is vital that this information is correctly entered on the candidates examination sheet (ExA4) in case a remark could be requested at a later date.

An ensemble group should be at least three or four players but not so big that it is impossible for the examiner to assess the candidate(s) involved. Using a full band or orchestra is not recommended for this reason.

Teachers must be careful that the part a candidate is taking within an ensemble is not being doubled by any other player. If this is discovered by the examiner the person doubling the candidate will be asked to leave the ensemble. If two or more candidates are being examined on the same instrument playing the same part then the ensemble will have to be repeated for each individual candidate to be examined.

It is recommended that backing tracks are not used in ensembles as this tends to take the “lead” element away from the candidate being examined.

It is important that a candidate performing in an ensemble should make a substantial contribution to it, not just a few bars of solo music, or a few bars in duet within a mostly unison piece.

The Discussion

At this stage of the specification teachers should now be aware of the series of questions which examiners will ask during the discussion.

The discussion takes place immediately after the piece has been performed. This will be selected by the candidate and must be connected with one of the areas of study which the candidate has been following in class.

The discussion should be as relaxed as possible and start with a series of questions on the piece which the candidate has just performed. If possible the music of the piece should be available to the examiner to assist in the questioning. They must be able to link the piece to one of the areas of study and then briefly outline which other areas they studied and name a piece that appealed particularly to them. No two discussions are ever exactly the same but the basic outline above is at its core and it is on the candidates’ responses, musical knowledge and technical detail that the assessments are made.

It is important that candidates know the correct titles of the Areas of Study: – Repeated patterns/Musical Traditions in Ireland/Incidental music and Vocal music.

Care should be taken in linking pieces to these areas, in particular to “Incidental Music”. This is *not* “Programme Music” or “Music which tells a story”. It is music written specifically for Stage, Screen or Television and not orchestral or vocal pieces from Musicals or from other sources used as background music in films.

We have emphasised this every year and continue to do so as there is still a misconception in schools as to the content of this area of study.

Examiners were full of praise for the high standards of music-making they saw in our schools. We congratulate schools on the preparation for the examination and on the great work being done to further the musical and social education of the children within our society.

Component 3: Listening and Appraising

General Overview

There was a very good mix of questions within the paper, reflecting the depth and breadth of the areas of study. The examiners agreed that the questions discriminated well and all were within the scope of the specification.

In both papers candidates need to study the rubrics of the questions carefully to ascertain what information is being expected of them.

A great deal of thought goes into the wording of the rubrics in each question. Therefore the candidates need to learn how to study these carefully and work out exactly what the question requires as an answer.

It is important that before the examinations begin that candidates write their school number and examination number clearly on their paper.

There were many instances where candidates demonstrated their ability to listen and analyse what they heard. However, there are still too many who rely on vague general comments such as *imitation, sequence, walking bass, harmony, word painting* etc., and continuing to use the phrase “*the use of...*” without indicating the part of the music they are referring to.

The identification of instruments seemed to be a real stumbling block this year. Candidates were unable to distinguish between and oboe and clarinet, a flute and a piccolo, and between the four main instruments of the brass family. It has been said often in these reports that the term “*drum*” is unacceptable; this *must* be qualified as to which type of drum is being mentioned. Within a drum kit there are several instruments, the collective title will not do, candidates must specify which piece of equipment they mean. The title *snare* is not acceptable as the name of a particular instrument.

In Paper 2 there are three “long answer” questions; numbers 3, 6 & 9. Part of the assessment of these questions is the ability of the candidate to write clearly, legibly and using correct spelling of musical terms and composer’s names. Occasionally scripts can be so illegible that it is difficult to work out what the candidate means and unfortunately it can lead to a loss of marks. Sometimes in these longer questions candidates opt for “bullet points” in a list; in these cases the points **must** be linked to a specific point in the music or text and be of sufficient length to make a sentence. A list of unconnected *buzz* words does not gain marks.

Readability

The papers presented no problems in this area and were accessible to candidates.

Mark Schemes

The mark schemes were extremely comprehensive and accessible, covering all possibilities with an appropriate range and allocation of marks.

The Papers

Paper 1: Repeated Patterns in Music

There were six questions this year, three on the set works and two on unfamiliar music, plus the last question on the Music Industry.

Q1 The opening question was not a particularly easy one but candidates should not expect there to be a “gentle” question at the start of a paper every year and as in this case it was based on one of the most popular of the Set Works. Those sitting the paper had the advantage of having to deal with what was hoped to be very familiar music.

- (a) (i) This identification of pitch produced, as expected, a wide range of answers, as was the intention.
- (ii) Most candidates managed to identify the correct key here.
- (b) (i) This was a good easier question for everyone to score highly on.
- (ii) This question stretched candidates a lot more and produced a huge variety of correct and incorrect responses.
- (iii) There was almost 100% correct answers here.

Q2 The first of the “unfamiliar music” questions; though maybe not “unfamiliar” to some.

- (a) (i) The layout of the Mark Scheme on the opposite page was not ideal but to have the print large enough to be accessible to all it could not be printed on one single line. However, a big number of candidates were able to select the correct Time Signature (though not all inserted it on the Mark Scheme) and also the missing bar lines at (ii).

All other questions were very well answered here and the only area where there were weakness in many candidates were in the naming of the instruments at (b) and (d)(i).

Q3 This question on a set work had a mixed response of answers.

- (a) Few candidates had correct answers in both parts of this question, either incorrectly naming the sections of the orchestra, the cadence or the Keys involved.
- (b) (i) It was surprising how many thought the piece was “in 4”. This was a very basic question on the set work.
- (ii) There were also candidates who did not know the names of the two brass instruments in the score.
- (c) This answer produced a wide range of correct and incorrect responses.
- (d) This was generally well answered and gave weaker candidates a chance to pick up marks.

Q4 The other “unfamiliar” piece was a song which a number of candidates would have heard or performed in the musical from which it was sourced.

- (a) (i) This was not quite as easy as it might have looked and did discriminate well.
- (ii) The brass instrument was well named.

- (b), Answers to both Parts (b) and (c) of this question were generally quite good,
 (c) & as were the answers at Part (d) where a majority scored full marks.
 (d)

Q5 The question on the Music Industry as mentioned before is one on which candidates regularly score highly. The opening statement was reasonably brief this year and apart from Part (b)(i), which only a few answered correctly, all the other questions produced many and varying correct answers.

Paper 2

This paper was once again in the same format as previous years, having the three Areas of Study from which candidates had to choose any two and answer all the questions within the options. The first two questions were based on set works which the candidates would have studied and the third and longer questions were on unfamiliar music and the candidates were expected to write at length. Candidates in longer questions were also assessed for the quality of the written communication. Twelve marks were given to the candidates answer and three to the quality of written communication, making a total of fifteen marks for each of the two questions they attempted. These questions produced problems for candidates in structuring their answers. Candidates need to refer to text and musical examples; an area where they need a lot of practice during their two years studying this course.

Option 1 Musical Traditions in Ireland

It was noted by examiners that there was a considerable drop in the number of candidates taking this option.

Q1 Extract A – Ballygowan Flute Band 0.00-0.48

All three questions were well answered, just occasionally the name of the band was incorrect and at (c) some candidates wrote “drum” without specifying which type of drum they meant.

Extract B – Ravara Pipe Band 0.00-0.53

The first three questions were invariably correct but the time signature at (iv) was less so.

Extract C – Miller’s Hill Accordion Band 0.00-0.36

This was very well answered with the majority of candidates giving correct answers.

Q2 Riverdance – Reel Around the Sun (bars 1-34) 0.00-3.10

- (a) (i) There were mostly correct answers here.
 (ii) This was not so well handled and candidates seem to have difficulty describing the music.
 (iii) Most candidates were able to recognise the modal quality of the piece here.
- (b) Most candidates managed to find about three or four reasons to link the piece to the area of study; very few managed the six required.
- (c) There were no problems with this question as it was invariably correct.

- Q3** There was a lot to write about here but it is still the case that candidates do not always link their comments to the text or the part of the piece to which they are referring. The more obvious things were mentioned but many points were missed and in many cases it was difficult to find exactly what parts of the piece candidates were describing. Instrument recognition was very weak.

Option 2 Incidental Music for Stage, Screen or Plays

Q4 Mendelssohn – A Midsummer Night’s Dream Overture (bars 1-78) 0.00-1.20

- (a) Answers were mostly correct, though a large number of candidates answered the second theme correctly but reversed the order of the other two.
- (b) (i)&(ii) This was well answered by most candidates, occasionally the oboe was mistaken for a clarinet and the horn for another brass instrument.
- (c) (i) This question was poorly answered, many candidates seemed unfamiliar with the score at this point.
(ii) This answer was invariably correct.
- (d) The majority of candidates answered correctly including the spelling of the composer’s name.

Q5 Grieg – Peer Gynt Suite – Morning Mood – (bars 1-48) 0.00-1.36

- (a) The majority of candidates had no problem with this question which in most cases was answered correctly.
- (b) (i) This was not well answered; being a key moment in the score where the strings develop the theme, ought to have produced better responses. Only three answers were asked for out of at least six possible outcomes, and yet the responses were most disappointing.
(ii)&(iii) Well answered, few incorrect responses here.
- (c) This was not as well answered as we had hoped. Too many failed to read the question correctly and omitted the word “Suite” from the first answer. The period and composer were usually correct (though occasionally the composer was thought to be Ibsen) and the country varied considerably though a good many did answer correctly.

Q6 Prokofiev – Lieutenant Kije Suite – Birth of Kije 0.00-1.33

This was the second of the longer questions and was an extract which consisted of a series of short musical “pictures”. The three main melodic themes were given and a good many candidates made use of them correctly in the order in which they appeared. Unfortunately, the horn fanfare like passages which are used as a link were confused quite often as theme 3. This theme when it was identified as an instrumental solo, was too often attributed to the clarinet and not the oboe. The second theme which featured the piccolo and the snare drum was far too often attributed to the tin whistle and a “drum” or a “snare”, with few commenting on the rhythmic ostinato.

The first theme, the solo trumpet, often became a horn and like the other themes candidates too often used the information on the three quoted themes as part of the answer – the key, the staccato, the time signature etc.

This was a listening exercise and it was disappointing. The inability to recognise the basic orchestral instruments stood out here, as it did in other parts of this paper and in Paper one. This is an area which teachers need to put more emphasis on for future papers in this subject.

Option 3 Vocal Music

Q7 Schubert – The Erlking – (bars 113-148) 3.04-4.15

This was the first full-length question on The Erlking and the responses were either very good, or very unsatisfactory.

- (a) (i) The *ff* or *sforzando* so “sudden” at the end of the line was missed by many candidates. Too many talked about a gradual crescendo or that it was getting louder or going to *f*.
- (ii) There were good answers here where the music modulates to the minor.
- (b) (i) The pedal was recognised by most candidates.
- (ii) The imitation of the galloping horse in the accompaniment was missed by many candidates who gave different inappropriate answers.
- (c) (i) A good many candidates recognised the chromatic rising octaves in the bass.
- (ii) Too often the option “minor” was incorrectly selected.
- (iv) It was surprising how many did not recognise this passage as a recitative. There were some who gave the correct Italian term and most knew it became slower and softer.
- (d) The composer and the type of song were usually correct; the period was too often quoted as classical. Many suggested Ibsen or Schubert himself as the poet.

Q8 Handel – Messiah – Recit: “And suddenly.....” 0.15-033

- (a) (i) This was very disappointing. The three wrong notes were chosen at key points where they could be fairly easily identified. These types of questions appear regularly and candidates need practice in doing this kind of exercise.
- (ii) The time signature was invariably correct.
- (b) (i) Too many chose “*allegretto*” here but from studying the piece candidates should have known to choose “*andante*” which was the correct answer. Many candidates did choose correctly.
- (ii) This was a mixed-bag of suggestions from candidates. A good many scored both points but too many only achieved one, or none at all.
- (c) (i) Most knew the singer was a soprano.
- (ii) Recit/recitative – not all candidates were sure of this.
- (iii) Too many wrote “Messiah” which did not fit the grammar of the sentence and was incorrect. The composer was usually correct, however, the period less so.

Q9 “Let the Earth Resound” – Sally K Abrecht 0.00-1.36

The last of the “long” unseen questions was a given text with a short extract of SATB choir and small instrumental accompaniment.

The best answers, of which there were many, followed the piece in sequence and managed to gain six marks for each of the two areas of Instrumental Accompaniment and Vocal Setting. There were some who did not quite manage to identify the instruments correctly and occasionally what the instruments played. Most managed to identify the voices and the way the voices echoed each other between lines 5 and 12. Of all the three “long” questions this probably received the most satisfactory answers and, as in the cases of questions 3 & 6, many scored full marks for the quality of written communication.

Contact details

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