



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Music 3271

Examiners' Report

2005 examination - June series

- 3271

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3271/CC Unit 1 Coursework Composing

As in previous years, where candidates have been allowed to follow their own compositional interests, often combined with their performing skills, a great deal of varied, interesting and successful composition has been produced. Overall, the moderating team reported an improvement in the quality and submission of the composing component with some outstanding work at the very top end, surpassing the standard expected at this level.

The use of ICT as both a compositional and realisation tool continues to increase. This is to be welcomed where the candidate has taken the time and care to ensure that the resulting score contains plenty of performance detail and is well formatted / quantized. Some candidates used ICT programmes which were capable of producing scores, but did not use this facility. They should be encouraged to consider doing so, especially where annotations lack the necessary information to amplify the candidate's intentions.

Problems in submission often came from centres where the teacher had given the same general and often limited brief to the whole group. In many instances, these proved restrictive for many of the candidates involved, especially where they did not have the necessary skills to complete the task satisfactorily. Once again, this was most evident in the *Special Events* composition, the most frequent example being funeral music. Whilst some of these were successful, moderators reported that many candidates seemed to be *going through the motions* and that there was often little real interest in the given brief. Once again, the best submissions often came from centres where candidates had been taught to use a variety of compositional techniques that could then be adapted to a variety of musical styles, *genres* and instrumental / vocal settings. This approach is a welcome one and advantageous to candidates of all abilities. Typical examples were:

- the use of pedals with changing chords above linked to a *crescendo* in order to build tension
- stock chord progressions and the use of inversions
- balanced phrases within melodic writing with a consideration of the functional harmonic implications
- the use of riffs and simple *ostinato* / ground bass patterns
- simple two part writing and the use of imitation, canon etc
- minimalist techniques such as the additive process and phasing
- the use of syncopation in percussion pieces
- tonality – major / minor / modal / pentatonic
- techniques specific to a musical period e.g. the *alberti* bass
- how to write idiomatically for piano / keyboard e.g. avoiding the use of block root position triads in the left hand
- creating textural variety within the harmonic structure of the music
- use of a variety of vocal techniques.

Composition 1: Music for Special Events:

Teachers are once again reminded that the composition should be assessed in the light of the brief. This was especially important in the *Special Events* piece where the music should be fit for purpose and entirely appropriate to the event.

Candidates were more successful at choosing an event that gave them the necessary scope to produce a piece appropriate to the brief. The important aspect of this is that the music should be suitable for the event chosen and specified by the candidate. There were examples where this was not the case. For example, funeral pieces that were too fast, music to open a rock concert which consisted of a basic chord pattern for rhythm guitar only and songs in celebration of a variety of events that did not contain a vocal

line. In these cases, the compositions, although well structured in terms of form, often lacked the sense of wholeness and completeness in relation to the brief to qualify for marks in the upper bands.

Moderators reported similar events choices to last year, the most popular being *Year 11 leavers parties, local festivals, Charity events, protest songs, weddings, funerals, Christmas Carols, Chinese new year celebrations, fanfares, rock festivals, Battle of the Bands competitions, and school concerts / assemblies.*

Some briefs tended to be less concerned with a specific event but instead geared towards a simple extra-musical idea. These were not really appropriate and candidates should be discouraged from proceeding in this direction. Inappropriate examples seen this year included *for the summer holiday* and *a shopping trip*.

At the other end of the spectrum, some candidates chose hugely ambitious events where the music was composed with the intention of a realisation at their chosen event. One candidate wrote a piece for the school choir and orchestra to perform as a welcome to a visiting school from another country.

In all cases, candidates should be encouraged to consider the appropriateness of their chosen event, with guidance from the teacher, prior to embarking on the project. As with previous years, some candidates had fabricated an event to fit a pre-composed piece and these submissions were rarely successful.

With the impending specification change from two compositions to one (*Special Events* only from 2007), it is important that centres and candidates ensure that the given / chosen event is appropriate. Moderators frequently reported that the second composition was often better than the *Special Events* piece, largely due to the additional freedom for expression often seen in the second piece. This freedom needs to be extended to the *Special Events* piece to ensure that candidates will not be disadvantaged.

Composition 2:

Many candidates and centres once again often referred to this as their *Free Choice* composition. Where this was clearly the case, **and the composition was linked to a brief**, there were some excellent, interesting and varied submissions. The best compositions were, by and large, done in response to a detailed, well-defined self-chosen brief. There were many successful compositions reflecting a variety of personal interests.

There was an increase in the number of submissions for instrumental ensembles this year with some excellent recordings of live instruments. Despite this, the trend does seem to be to use the computer generated realisation. Some candidates had taken the time and effort to ensure that these sounded as musical as possible, but sadly, many tended to be rather mechanical.

Popular choices for the second composition were:

Pieces for brass / wind ensembles, pop / rock songs, songs with piano accompaniment, songs with a Caribbean influence, pieces for steel pan ensemble, pieces for solo orchestral instrument with piano accompaniment, unaccompanied pieces for solo orchestral instrument (not always successful), string ensembles (most often with computer realisations) and solo guitar / drum-kit pieces.

A small number of group compositions once again caused problems in assessment.

Candidates should be discouraged from presenting group compositions unless their input to the whole is considerable and can be accurately assessed. Two good examples of where this should be avoided are:

- drummers contributing a basic, recognised groove to a pop / rock song with no other harmonic / melodic input;
- candidates writing text / lyrics for songs with no *musical* input.

Problems in submission:

Moderators reported an improvement from most centres in the quality of the submission from candidates. It is important to reiterate that from a small number of centres, the problems in submission often caused great problems during moderation and sometimes seriously disadvantaged some candidates. Most problems were due to the reluctance of some candidates to put anything at all on paper (including the *Candidate Record Form*). The specification states that:

Submissions will take the form of either a score, with recording, wherever possible, or a recording with detailed annotation.

Many candidates presented recordings of their compositions together with a score, most commonly produced using *Sibelius*, *Cubase* or *Logic*. Many of these were excellent and reflected very accurately the music on the tape / CD. However, many scores were virtually unplayable with wrong clefs, rhythms not formatted or quantized and little or no performance detail. These were most frequently *Cubase* scores and were often of little use other than for candidates to be able to say that they had submitted a score. It would be beneficial for all candidates presenting ICT produced scores to spend some time editing and refining their work prior to submission.

Centres are once again reminded that if a score is not presented, **a detailed annotation must be included as part of the submission**. Some candidates considered two or three lines on the *Candidate Record Form* as sufficient and whilst this might be accepted as the *bare minimum*, it is unlikely that candidates will be able to give sufficient insight into the compositional process to justify marks in the higher bands. Some candidates did not present any written information at all other than a signature. In a small number of cases, the teacher had filled in the form for them and this is not acceptable.

Some candidates do find writing annotations difficult but in many cases, teachers had been helpful and supportive by producing a template for the candidates to use, giving prompts about the kind of information to be included. Centres may wish to use the following information to produce a template for their own candidates:

- detailed information about the brief
- diagrams and charts to represent the structure of the music
- text in song writing (with chord symbols)
- staff or tab notated musical quotes of themes used
- details about the choice of instruments and vocal resources
- descriptions of key, tempo, metre, harmony, melody, chord patterns and dynamic contrasts
- details of software used including original and borrowed material
- details of the musicians used in the realisation.

There were hardly any submissions that were not recorded this year and that is to be welcomed. A very small number of candidates presented an annotation without a recording or score which was not acceptable. In some cases the candidates had claimed that the work had been lost due to problems with ICT but this cannot be considered in assessment. Teachers need to remind candidates that it is their responsibility to protect their data and ensure that it is saved in a variety of formats.

Once again there were many submissions that used sample based sequencer programmes, the most common of these being *Dance E-Jay*, *Magix Studio*, *Fruity Loops*, *Acid Pro* and *Storm*. These are often a good starting point for some candidates to be able to create a sound canvas on which to build their own ideas, perhaps importing the samples into a sequencer such as *Cubase* and then adding their own **composed** material. In cases where candidates have merely selected samples and pieced them together, this will demonstrate **rudimentary** or **basic** understanding and will therefore qualify for marks in the

lower two bands. In all cases, candidates and teachers need to make clear what is original and what is sampled.

Recordings of compositions were mostly of a high quality but it would be appreciated if centres could bear in mind the following points.

- If using a single CD, please announce the names of the candidates and include a detailed and accurate track list with candidate names, numbers and titles of compositions.
- Do check to ensure that CD recordings have been properly *finished* and will play. There were some examples this year that would not play on a variety of different machines and computers.
- If using tapes for individual candidates, **please put both compositions on the same side.**

Moderators reported that there were some instances of *Candidate Record Forms* where the teachers had not filled in any of the teacher comments sections. This created difficulties in moderation and such centres did not help moderators to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their candidates. Clear reference to the assessment criteria in these sections helps to amplify the reasoning behind the marks awarded.

Candidates and teachers should highlight examples of help given to candidates in their work. This was particularly important where centres were involved in composition workshops and where professional musicians had had considerable input in helping candidates shape their compositions. It is important to consider the **actual compositional input** from the candidates, ensuring that the correct criteria have been applied.

Once again, there were a few examples where candidates had used their *Integrated Assignment* as one of their two compositions (or one of their compositions for the *Integrated Assignment*). Centres are reminded that this is not permissible and must be avoided in future submissions.

A small number of candidates only submitted one composition and, as a result, seriously disadvantaged themselves by only being able to access half of the available marks.

Assessment:

When making assessments, centres are reminded that the six descriptors of achievement need to be considered with reference to the five musical aspects listed above them (pages 44 and 45 of the 2005 specification). This cross-reference makes assessment considerably easier and therefore is more likely to be accurate. It is important that **both pieces are assessed in the light of their respective brief.**

Moderators reported many examples where candidates had been awarded very high marks but where the music presented did not correspond with the brief. For example, frequently candidates stated that their brief was to write a song and then failed to include a vocal part, concentrating purely on the backing. In this example, whilst it could be argued that *the chosen brief will mostly be appropriately and successfully realised* (16 – 20 mark band), it is unlikely that the work will demonstrate the *wholeness and completeness* required for marks in the top two bands. Once again, it is important that candidates consider potential resources required in order to fulfil their brief prior to embarking on the composition.

Although some centres had marked the work of their candidates accurately and with clear reference to the assessment criteria, a number had marked with a considerable degree of leniency and these required adjustment. Some centres had given very high marks to sampled pieces and as previously stated, such marks are not possible without the addition of a considerable amount of original composed material.

Administration:

As in previous years, there were several problems in administration and submission, although moderators noted an improvement this year. It is hoped that the following list will serve to highlight these problems and enable centres to improve the efficiency of the moderation process next year.

- Recordings. Please submit on either cassette tape or CD. If using tapes, please use one for each candidate. If using a single CD, please ensure that compositions are announced, that both compositions from each candidate are next to each other and that there is an accurate and detailed index card.
- Please submit a separate folio for each candidate. Please ensure that it is easy to identify the work of each candidate.
- Remember that the submission must take the form of a **recording** accompanied by a **score** and/or **annotation**.
- Each composition **must** have a clearly defined and appropriate brief.
- *Candidate Record Forms* need to be completed fully and signed by **both the candidate and teacher**.
- A *Centre Declaration Form* needs to be completed and sent with the submission along with the *Centre Mark Sheet*.
- Please ensure that all marks are correctly transferred from the *CRF* to the *CMS*.
- Candidates must not use their *Integrated Assignment* composition in their folio of compositions.
- Please do remember that folios need to be assessed and ready for transmission to the moderator by 5 May.
- Centres with fewer than 20 candidates should send the work of all candidates directly to the moderator and not wait for a selected sample to be requested. Candidates with more than 20 should send the *CMS* or EDI printout and a sample will be requested. ***Please do not include the Integrated Assignment or Coursework Performing.***

Submission for 2006 / 7

Please remember that from 2006, only **one** composition is required for submission. As part of the transition, for 2006 this may be a *Special Events* Composition **OR** any other composition linked to a brief. For 2007, the submission should be **Special Events** only.

3271/CP Unit 2 Coursework Performing

As in previous years, a vast range of instruments was presented and the overall standard of performing seemed fairly constant. Overall there appeared to be fewer outstanding and certainly fewer weak performances. Gradually candidates are beginning to perform to their strengths rather than submitting difficult works which are beyond their technical or musical capabilities. Unfortunately there were still instances of this and where relevant, comments will have been made on the centre feedback forms. The whole emphasis of the GCSE, as stated many times before, is to show positively what has been achieved. This will occur only through competence and confidence in that which is being offered for the examination. A straightforward piece played well with stylistic awareness will obtain more marks than a difficult one where the pressure of the technical demands does not allow the candidate to focus on the interpretation and communication. Centres should ensure that this is taken into consideration in the choice of music.

The choice of instruments is tending to change and this year there were again more singers, rock guitarists and drummers and less of the traditional instruments. Some of the work submitted in the rock *genre* was excellent and the candidates were very aware of the style submitted. It was unfortunate that quite a few

of the singers chose difficult songs with long phrases and a wide pitch range. They attempted these but did not have the necessary technique to manage them successfully. The large increase in available backing tracks appeared to have encouraged many candidates to opt for a rather ambitious choice which was not to their benefit.

Across all the performances there was, as always, an excellent range of styles and often highly commendable renditions. Many candidates who had limited musical expertise gave very effective performances. The enjoyment could be sensed from the recordings and is to be encouraged. These were thoughtful choices, which allowed the candidates to perform within their capability and with confidence.

Solo Performance

Generally, the solos were chosen thoughtfully, bearing in mind the points mentioned above. As in previous years, there were instances of candidates choosing music which had an accompaniment but this was not played. The candidates were then unable to deliver the style or the interpretation adequately. Where backing tracks were used there was a marked improvement of the solo work with the exception of a number of singers, *op cit*. The availability of both the *Yamaha* and *Rock School* material has been a very encouraging source to help candidates perform with good stylistic awareness. Other types of backing tracks are also available and these are also beginning to figure more prominently. A number of candidates offered study pieces that imply complete independence and often these were performed very well. Some of the drummers managed to find music which allowed for a good solo break within an ensemble context and this also was very successful. Other drummers played their own composition which allowed them to demonstrate their technique and work at a level that was within their capability. It is very important that the music chosen does reflect the candidate's interest so that the communication level can be high. There were still occasions where the music chosen was somewhat outside the candidate's style and this obviously caused problems. As the choice of music is totally free of any constraints within the specification, great care should be taken. Where at all possible, it is worth trying to have the solo performed in Year 10 to alleviate the stresses that occur in Year 11. Many candidates can and do perform in a more relaxed and focused manner in the first year of the course even though they might not be so technically proficient. The lack of pressure caused by other situations often allows the interpretive and expressive marks to be fairly high. It is certainly worth considering the solo choice well in advance and finding some adequate schedule to prepare for it.

Ensemble Performance

This year, as previously, there was a very wide range of ensembles with some outstanding performances in a wide variety of genres. It was good to see that many of the choices reflected the candidate's strengths and therefore they could communicate well. Care and concern was also taken over many of the candidates who did not have high performance skills. Some of the ensembles allowed the candidates to play a very basic melody surrounded by exciting accompaniment parts both below and above them. They could concentrate on their more straightforward part and think about balance and blending within the ensemble. The pleasure that some of these candidates had was evident in the recordings. Where there are more gifted musicians it is also important to look for and choose music that suits their standard and capability. This can occasionally be difficult to manage but needs serious consideration and possibly some forward planning as was suggested in the solo section. The use of backing tracks can also be helpful in some cases provided that there are two or more people playing with it. There are also new backing tracks that have an ensemble focus and are set for several players to participate.

In choosing a suitable ensemble and considering the points above, this year proved to be amongst the worst for unsuitable choices. In the past, this report has mentioned the need for rapport and emphasized the key words of the ensemble criteria within the specification which clearly state that the players must relate to each other. The top mark band talks of *unity of purpose* through phrasing, balance and stylistic issues. The problem continues to occur because the requirement mentions two people and above. The

two are meant to be for two-part ensembles such as piano or instrumental duets which form part of a fairly standard repertoire. Many centres submitted ensembles of two people which did not conform to the norm of these two-part pieces and showed little or no rapport at all. Examples of this were two singers with separate solo parts and then the combined sections, such as they were, were in unison. Another common problem was the candidate who played a melody on a keyboard with one hand whilst somebody else played the other part. The candidate took no account of the other part at all. More diverse examples were pianists, keyboard players or guitarists who played effectively what was a solo piece and had somebody accompany them on the drums. This also showed no rapport and it was obvious that they were playing independently and taking no account of the additional person. There were many instances of this. In such cases, centres will have been notified on the feedback form as it represents a type of specification infringement. The other point to note with ensembles is that the part must not be doubled. Suffice it to say, there were several singers in trios which sang in unison throughout (three were chosen because of the ensemble numbers being necessary). It was often impossible to distinguish the contribution of the candidate. There were still singers in choirs often one of ten or more within a part which presented the same problem. There were less of the orchestral problems this year but still there were a few violinists, the candidate being one of about twenty players, woodwind or brass players with several within the section with the parts doubled – all of which caused great difficulty for moderation. The specification (page 12) states that the parts must not be doubled and this should be observed.

There are Coursework Advisors for every centre who are always willing to discuss the validity of ensembles. There were many more invalid ensembles this year and this obviously affected the candidate's marks and also the centre tolerance. It is crucial for the sake of the candidates that this situation does not occur. Coursework Adviser details are available from the Music Subject Office at Guildford.

Assessment Criteria

The application of the performing criteria was more successful this year but there were still occasional difficulties. The perspective of the assessment descriptors was mentioned last year and in Inset and Standardisation meetings. When considering accuracy the initial focal points should be on whether it is secure, reasonably secure or inhibited. Having an holistic feeling, this then is related to the band descriptors and placed accordingly. If a performance is felt to be secure overall but there are quite a few mistakes, the correct mark would be six at the bottom of the top band. The accuracy descriptor also encompasses intonation and if there is a series of intonation problems within a performance, it is not possible to be in this top mark band which states that the intonation must be secure. These are very important points to consider.

The interpretative criteria focus on all the points listed within the top band descriptor and need consideration in awarding a mark. These encompass such details as *tempo*, phrasing, dynamics, articulation, breathing etc and are linked to stylistic issues. Again the mark bands focus on the keywords of sound understanding, an awareness of the style or rudimentary understanding and the marks should be placed within the correct band and adjusted accordingly.

The expressive qualities are linked into communication statements and relate to the manner in which the candidate can convey most of the points listed in the interpretative section.

The accuracy stays the same for the ensemble and the interpretative and expressive are combined considering all the points above. The *sense of ensemble* has been discussed at some length above and it is imperative to take notice of the rapport comments within the criteria.

The final factor is the demand. The specification has a fairly detailed list of characteristics for most instruments and if a centre is uncertain, the Coursework Advisor can assist here also. Sometimes there is no music available and certain instruments have no written music in any case. Here the visual appearance

of the candidate in the performance and a general question at the end should give the teacher a very clear perspective on both the demand and the accuracy.

Having considered the application of the criteria, it is exceedingly important that teachers write comments on the *Candidate Record Form (CRF)*. Many *CRFs* are still submitted with the marks and no comments and it is very difficult at times to understand the reasons behind the marks given. The situation mentioned above is a very important case where the moderator needs to know about the candidate involvement to ascertain the correct level of demand and understand the level of accuracy. Another situation that might need comment is where the recording balance or quality does not reflect the original sound as represented in the live performance. Any discrepancies here also need to be mentioned. Where a demand mark is adjusted because of doubling (for example a vocalist where the accompaniment constantly incorporates the solo line), this should be noted on the *CRF*. Any additional features that influenced the teacher mark based on the live performance need to be stated clearly. It is very important in ensembles to identify the part that the candidate is playing.

Administration

Although this is the third year of the examination there were many administrative problems with very few centres actually submitting the correct materials at the time of the submission in early May. Notably the following points need to be remembered. All submissions should contain:

- the pink copy of the *Centre Mark Sheet*. It is most helpful if a tick is placed next to the highest and lowest candidate of the centre. This speeds up the moderation process considerably
- the *Centre Declaration Sheet* completed for this component
- the individual *CRFs* in numerical order complete with the relevant solo/ensemble music specifying what they are playing. Where the music is not available or applicable, a commentary should be submitted explaining the candidate's role. It is most helpful, if a CD is used, that the track number is listed on the *CRF*
- the recording of the candidate's work either on tape or CD. Mini-discs may not be used. When CDs are used, all the work of the centre can be on one or two CDs. It is not necessary to have both aspects of the candidates work next to each (although this is helpful) if the tracks are clearly listed. Please ensure that the CD is correctly formatted before submitting it. It is not expected that moderators should have to use a computer to play this back – it must work on normal stereo equipment. There were many such situations this year and several CDs had to be returned to centres to be formatted. When tapes are used the work of the candidate **must** be together, preferably on **one** side of the tape. If very short tapes are used, it is understandable that both sides may need to be used but if this is not the case, please put it on one, even if it is a short tape. When longer tapes are used all work **must** be on the **one** side of the tape. Please also try not to use C90 tapes but if this is a necessity, then ensure that there is either just one candidate on the single side of the tape or one on each side. Quite a few centres submitted composite tapes again this year. In some cases, performances were mixed up so that the solo and ensemble sections were in different places. Others had separate solo and ensemble tapes or put all the solos on one side in one order and the ensembles on the other in a different order. This is not acceptable and causes many moderation problems. In some cases, moderators did contact the centres this year over these problems and asked that the work was re-presented. All tapes must state the candidate's name, what they are playing and, in the case of the ensemble, the part they are playing. All the centre information is also required. Please ensure that both the case and the tape are clearly labelled with the information of the contents.

Work should be submitted by the deadline, 5 May, or for larger centres, as soon as possible after the sample has been requested. Several centres took some weeks to send the work.

Only performing work should be submitted to the performing moderator. There were quite a few cases where the tapes contained composition work as well. (Obviously if a candidate is performing one of their compositions, this will be on the recording.)

Lastly please ensure that when the performing sample is sent the *Centre Mark Sheet* and the *Centre Declaration Sheet* are enclosed. Large numbers of centres did not enclose them and it caused moderators and the centres some inconvenience to have to deal with this retrospectively.

3271/A Unit 3 Integrated Assignment

The third year of the new specification saw a further rise in confidence on the part of many centres and candidates as to exactly what is required by the three elements that make up the Integrated Assignment.

The basis of the component remains a choice of Briefs that outline composition tasks. Inextricably linked to these tasks is the need to be able to produce as accurate a realisation or performance of the finished composition as possible, supported by a detailed score and/or annotation. This vital link should inform candidates from the outset both as to their choices of Brief and of medium for realisation. At all stages of the composition and realisation, candidates are strongly advised to log their progress carefully as this will facilitate the organisation of responses for the Evaluation examination. The composition and its realisation are to be completed within a set time scale (currently by 5 May of the examination year). Candidates need to show their understanding of the chosen medium as well as the implications of the selected Brief. Careful initial choice is vital because of the time constraints, although this has been eased by the earlier receipt in centres of the booklet containing the Briefs. Candidates are advised to choose a Brief which will enable them to write music for an instrument, instrumental ensemble or computer program with which they are already familiar. In the Evaluation examination, they show the extent to which they have understood the various aspects of the Brief, and write about the problems encountered in trying to realise their music and the extent to which they were able to overcome them. Then they evaluate the success of their final realisation and account for any anomalies between the score/annotation and the final recorded version.

Further meetings were held with teachers after the examinations in 2004 to provide additional feedback. These meetings also gave teachers the opportunity to discuss further the intricacies of this component and clarify several matters.

As will be seen from comments in the section of this report dealing with the Evaluation, responses by candidates were better focussed again this year.

The standard of work presented ranged again from the basic to the outstanding. The variety of responses overall was impressive. There were excellent compositions and many realisations which had obviously been prepared painstakingly. Evaluations were also better this year. Candidates who sought to adapt a Brief to fit their composition obviously fared less well, with rewritten film scenarios and purely instrumental responses to Brief 4 being examples.

However, it is extremely important that candidates are encouraged to acknowledge in precise terms the specific help they receive in the execution of this component. It became very obvious again this year that some centres were quite proscriptive as to the Brief which candidates undertook and the way in which they all approached it. This sometimes took the form of a formulaic use of chords for every candidate (particularly for the Waltz), an imposed structure and/or choice of instrumentation or medium. While it is vital that candidates hear exemplar music and that the exemplar music be allowed to influence compositional approaches, this is very different from the imposition or over-guidance of candidates into a specific, ordered approach. Such practice may be easier to manage in the classroom and a degree of

guidance may well be needed for weaker candidates but a directed approach is completely against the spirit of this component. There were occasionally conflicting statements from teachers and pupils as to the level/extent of guidance given: a teacher, for example might state: *All the candidates have chosen to do Brief 4* or *All the candidates have opted to write a Waltz*. However, the candidates, whether on the *Candidate Record Form (CRF)* or within the *Evaluation*, might affirm: *We were told to write a Waltz* or *We had to write a song combining two cultures and had to use western rock plus one of the following* (a list of three or four other cultures would follow).

Overall, the Briefs seem to have been more accessible to candidates this year, with all options used.

Composition

Responses to the briefs were much more evenly spread although there was, if anything, a surge of popularity for the Waltz.

As was pointed out last year, the use of preset rhythmic accompaniments and keyboard-derived backings greatly reduce the amount of original input from a candidate. The use of *Dance EJay* is unlikely to enable a candidate to gain a mark above the lowest band as, in the majority of cases, candidates merely choose pre-recorded tracks rather than add any original material: only original input by a candidate will be deemed true composition.

Music for Film

This year's Brief outlined four clear sections and it was essential that these could be differentiated aurally. The wording in the introduction to this Brief was amended for this year to underline the fact that the timings contained in the Brief are **suggestions**: however, there were still several candidates who wrote in their *Evaluation* of having to amend their composition in one way or another to keep to the timings. The timings are to show how this type of Brief relates to the writing of an actual film score but are not intended to dictate either section length or to indicate the total required duration of the composition.

Candidates chose a wide range of performing media from piano or guitar through to a full orchestra via a computer program such as Sibelius. The opening section was often very well done with low drones or other *dark* sounds, *flashes* of colour for the *seeking cover*, regular movement to represent heartbeat and/or footsteps. The *music from the house* was conveyed through an imaginative variety of means, including a solid bass riff, gentle piano music, muted instrumental sounds, or a direct quotation from an existing composition. Many candidates had this music increasing in volume to denote the intruder's approach to the house. The *alarm* was invariably well done, as was the ensuing activity. The idea of the door bursting open and then the gunshots produced the expected pyrotechnics and there were some very effective endings. Many of the better candidates used motifs in a way which gave the entire piece a sense of structure in addition to that imposed by the adherence to the script. There was a sense of colour and wholeness to these compositions which vividly portrayed the various stages of the scene. Poorer candidates tended to rely on simple ideas repeated without variation. Parts of the sequence would be omitted or the order of events changed. Often, it would not be possible to follow the sections aurally.

Many candidates put the different sections of the Brief onto their scores, thus reinforcing the way they followed the outline both to themselves and to the examiner. Many gave their compositions titles and, overall, very few altered the script this year.

Music for Dance

Candidates were given the choice of composing a Waltz or a Polka. Each dance has its own clear characteristics and enough of these should have been incorporated into the composition to enable the style to be recognised.

Many of the candidates who attempted this showed a clear understanding of the dance-style chosen and an obvious engagement with its composition. There were few misunderstandings but, regrettably, only a tiny minority attempted to write a Polka. Often, entire centres submitted nothing but waltzes.

As observed last year, merely utilising the preset accompaniment on a keyboard and adding a melody does not show the necessary level of understanding or musicality to gain high marks. The keyboard provides most of the vital colour and rhythmic interest. Those candidates who used keyboards often also used preset facilities to effect the introduction and ending. Appropriate chord progressions, structures and melodic shapes are important, of course, and these will make a positive contribution to the overall result but the mark can never match those compositions where the candidates do everything themselves. There were many outstanding examples in responses to this Brief but there were many candidates who, despite having included typical rhythmic features in the accompaniments, failed to capture the melodic style of the dance.

At one extreme, there were many very short waltzes comprising two eight-bar sections played ABA. At the other, there were extended waltzes with varied accompaniment patterns, flowing lyrical melodies and a real exploration of the chosen resources in terms of dynamics, texture, colour, rhythm and tonality. There were waltzes with an unrelenting *um-cha-cha* accompaniment and no sense of regular phrasing right through to large-scale, imaginative pieces with sweeping melodic lines, sophisticated harmonies, well-considered use of the chosen instrument(s), judicious use of key change and a well-defined structure.

Teacher direction was most apparent in compositions for this Brief, and in the Fusion in *The Popular Song since 1960*, whether in the choice of instrumentation, form, basic rhythms, chord progressions used, use of modulation or even the answers in the Evaluation. As already stated, teacher guidance and the use of exemplar material are to be expected. When the result is a centre submission of seemingly cloned work, the results tend to be unimaginative, to have failed to enable the candidate to show originality, and are certainly contrary to the ethos of this component.

Orchestral Landmarks

This proved to be a very popular Brief this year, attracting its greatest percentage of candidates to date. Each of the five titles was well represented with some extremely imaginative work on many occasions. Responses again ranged from the use of a single instrument (guitar, piano) through multi-tracking to computer programs with anything up to a full orchestra.

Many candidates wrote out a more extended programme note to explain their approach to the composition and its structure. These tended to be the more successful submissions as it was evident that a lot of care and thought had gone into the original planning and the selection of both ideas and resources.

There were many examples of fine acoustic realisations this year alongside those realised via computer with some candidates writing in a very accomplished manner for the *live* ensemble available and others revelling in the freedom afforded by the computer software. It is reassuring that centres are now realising that this Brief does not require the medium of an **orchestra** but is open to the widest possible range of resources from one sound-source upwards, as long as the main bullet points of the Brief can be met. It was also accepted that the term *consistent use of tonality* could be interpreted as a *consistent use of atonality*.

There were many very good and a number of excellent responses to this Brief. These were characterised by the demonstration of a high level of understanding of how to write for the chosen medium and exploitation of their colour and expressive potential. Such candidates developed their ideas throughout the composition, building to a climax. Several examples were of such a high quality they far exceeded what was required to gain full marks.

The Popular Song since 1960

This year, this Brief seemed to attract fewer candidates but, conversely, more *instrumental-only* responses than ever before. In previous years, there have been only a few of instances of candidates writing a **song** without either lyrics or a melody line. However, this year it appeared to be rather more widespread. The Area of Study is specifically *The Popular **Song** since 1960* (my emphasis) and the Brief referred, as always, to the use of vocal resources. Obviously, omitting a vocal line meant that the candidate had failed to write a song and had failed to make appropriate use of vocal resources, thus failing to meet these vital parts of the Brief. Some centres still seem to regard this Area of Study as being *Popular **Music** since 1960*, thus missing the vital focus.

As was to be expected, many different styles were *fused* in a variety of ways. At the most elementary level, an instrument from one culture (for example, a sitar) would be added to the resources used in a rock-style piece. At the top level, the fusion was so complete that the two styles became inextricably linked within the one song. There were also excellent examples of songs which incorporated the two styles but tended to keep them as relatively discrete elements.

As always within this Brief, a number of candidates utilised preset backing tracks on keyboards. These obviously add much in the way of colour, rhythm, accompaniment patterns but, of course, the candidate cannot receive any credit for these. It is the candidate's original musical input which gains the marks.

Many other songs had a very clear structure, good melodies, supportive but independent writing for the accompanying instruments with varied patterns and so on. Many candidates had multi-tracked the accompaniments (either acoustically or from a computer) before adding the vocal line(s) themselves and then mixing the whole thing to achieve a good balance. Several candidates accompanied their own singing on guitar or piano to great effect.

Realisation

In this element of the Integrated Assignment, the composition that a candidate submits is now assessed for the accuracy of its realisation, i.e. performance. This is one of the reasons why, at the very outset of the assignment, the advice to candidates must be to choose to write for the medium which will ensure the most accurate recording possible. Whilst it is accepted that small flaws will enter a live performance, it is still vital that the best possible result is obtained and that the candidate submits a score or annotation, detailed enough to enable the examiner to assess accurately the extent to which the candidate's final and detailed intentions are present in the recording. Thus, to submit, for example, only the lyrics for a song will inevitably result in a mark in the lowest band as there is no way of measuring the accuracy of, for example, the realisation of chords, instrumental figuration, melody, dynamics, phrasing, and so on. Candidates who use a computer program with a track screen should not submit this as their score as, at best, it will show just division of materials into bars and a listing of instrumentation: totally insufficient as a measure of the accuracy of a realisation.

While there were many examples of more detailed annotations this year, there were still too many which gave hardly any information about the composition. Without precise musical detail, high marks are unobtainable.

Even where a score is submitted, candidates lose marks by failing to include even basic information about *tempo*, phrasing, articulation, breathing and other performance details. The mark scheme is very specific in the *Specimen Papers and Mark Schemes* booklet provided by AQA, to which reference should be made for further guidance. Scores derived from computer programs still need this level of input: in fact, it is often the case that, where the computer is also the means by which the realisation is obtained, an even greater level of performance detail is needed to obtain the correct balance between parts, the appropriate articulation, the gradation of dynamics, and so on. Therefore, candidates should not forget the basic

matters of an initial *tempo* marking plus dynamic markings for all instruments/voices, revised consistently as the piece progresses. Additionally, phrasing and, where appropriate, phrasing and pedalling should be included. Careful quantisation of scores is also vital if the music is to be followed.

When using a computer program to generate a score, please encourage candidates to edit the score carefully:

- to reduce the size of the font, for example, to avoid having only one or two bars to a page and thus ending up with scores well in excess of forty pages
- to hide empty staves
- to decide whether *Portrait* or *Landscape* is the better mode for presentation to make optimum use of the page.

It is not at all helpful for an examiner to be presented with merely separate parts rather than a full score. In some cases this year, songs were presented with separate pages for lyrics, for chords, for vocal melody, for piano accompaniment, for each guitar part, for drums, and so on. This also happened to a lesser extent within other Briefs.

The majority of computer programs currently used are sophisticated enough to handle changes in dynamics and *tempo*, even if these cannot easily be inserted into the score. In such cases, relevant additions should be made by hand to ensure that the recorded realisation matches the score as precisely as possible.

Where a recording has been achieved through multi-tracking, please ensure that the click track, if used, is not a part of the submitted realisation.

The vast majority of recordings this year were of good quality.

Where an annotation is provided, it must include sufficient detail to enable accurate assessment of the recording against the candidate's intentions. Thus, information as to structure is a vital starting point with aural clues given as to when the different sections start. The *tempo* should be stated clearly, lyrics given where relevant, melody lines should be notated (either traditionally or using letter names and rhythms), chord sequences defined with playing patterns (e.g. are guitars strummed or finger-picked? Which patterns are used on pianos – sustained LH chords? *Alberti*-style bass?) Chords should be keyed precisely into lyrics if responding to Brief 4, rhythms, including drum patterns, should be written out, bass riffs notated, and so on. Teachers can help with this aspect of the composition process if it is difficult for the candidate. Even if a keyboard is used as the basic means of composition, many of them now show the note being played so letter names can be written down to give a melodic outline which can then be supported by a rhythm. Where a preset backing track is utilised, the *tempo* will be shown: this can then be noted down. Where other sounds are used, please identify the voicing.

All of these aspects increase the ability of the examiner to measure a performance for its degree of accuracy. Centres are reminded that a candidate is most unlikely to be able to provide sufficient information to equate to the requirements of an annotation if the *CRF* only is used. If there is no annotation or score submitted the candidate can receive no marks for the realisation element.

It was evident that some centres have heeded feedback on this issue and there was, overall, more detail in many annotations with candidates producing a clear sequence of events linked to some notated ideas, *tempi*, time signature, key, chords, figuration, and so on.

No doubt because of the ubiquitous computer, there were very few hand-written scores, although there were still some, ranging from the vague and imprecisely notated to the clear and detailed.

Evaluation

This element has improved further overall as teachers realise that (i) questions (a), (b) and (c) relate directly to the various bullet points which make up the Brief and (ii) that candidates are able to prepare all answers in advance.

These first three questions were, in general, answered in a more focussed manner this year. However, many examiners reported that candidates penalised themselves in some questions by failing to respond where there were two parts to the question: for example, (a) in Brief 1 read: *Describe how you have portrayed the ideas of the main character crossing the darkened garden and of the music heard from the house.* In this instance, many candidates wrote at great length about the first topic but then omitted the second completely.

Additionally, in two of the Briefs, there was a bullet point requiring a *consistent use of tonality*: this term still seems to confuse many candidates. This was evidenced by comments, for example, about chords used: *I wrote my music in a major chord* or a statement such as *I used major and minor.* Yet other candidates confuse *tonality* and *tone*.

For Brief 1, there were four bullet points, though the first was really an instruction to follow the outline as contained within the Brief. The Evaluation focussed on the remaining three in turn. Many candidates penalised themselves in (a) by not responding to both elements within the question (see above).

Answers to (b) ranged from the very elementary to those where candidates wrote about the use of particular sounds, intervals and registers chosen to represent the alarm and the often intricate means employed to portray *increased activity*: these included *tempo* changes, increases in texture (often very polyphonic), changes from, for example, crotchet to quaver movement, from a melody of fairly limited range to one of much greater compass, and so on.

Question (c) moved on to the gunshots and the *sense of surprise at finding the study empty*: this prompted lots of detail as to the use of percussion, *staccato*/accented chords, detached chords, random rhythms, and so on, the better answers explaining their choice of rhythms and medium carefully. The *sense of surprise* comes right at the end of the scene's outline but many candidates referred to this as if it had happened at a much earlier stage in the events. A wide variety of approaches was taken to this part of the music and candidates in the main set out their reasons very succinctly.

In some centres, answers to (a) for Brief 2 were so uniform in their content and mode of expression that it often seemed to the examiner that the candidates had been given *prepared* answers in anticipation of this question rather than having done their own research into the chosen dance. As last year, some answers were less successful here, in that candidates wrote about the characteristics of the chosen dance in general, rather than confining themselves to those distinctive characteristics which **had been used in their composition**.

For Brief 2, (b) referred to the form or structure used. Many were defined in great detail, referring to changes of style, accompaniment patterns, melodic rhythm, changes of key, *tempo* and so on. Only a minority wrote about a dance form which, although typical of the chosen *genre*, was not the form of their own composition. Several had given the form outline as part of (a) and mere repetition without amplification within (b) could not gain additional credit. Many candidates lacked precision (even accuracy) when writing about their use of tonality. Some confused the key of their music whilst others wrote about modulations to other keys when in fact a different section merely started in that new key, without any form of modulation at all. Some others had been so preoccupied with the process of modulation that they had interrupted the flow of their compositions to insert two bars of the relevant dominant seventh to effect the modulation.

As last year, the key word in (c) for Brief 2 was *why?* Therefore, a mere list of instrumentation was valueless. Better answers linked choice to common usage within the tradition of the dance chosen; others justified their choice through familiarity with the characteristics of the instrument or combination of instruments. Yet others referred quite logically to the availability of the chosen resources within the centre. Again, mere repetition of information previously given in (a) gained no additional credit.

For Brief 3, question (a) asked candidates to describe how their music reflected/illustrated their chosen title. A simple outline of the composition without explanation of how the musical ideas, instruments, *tempo*, *timbre*, texture and mood contributed to this, was limited to varying degrees. It was not, for instance, sufficient to write that the flutes gave the impression of moonlight without reference to what it was about the flutes that made that impression: e.g. the tone quality, the musical ideas they played, the shape of a melody, the register, and so on. Simple answers would refer to a *Storm* starting quietly, getting louder and then fading away. Better answers would detail how these effects were obtained through precise reference to various features within the composition.

Question (b) asked about form or structure and how tonality was used. Candidates used a range of existing musical forms, including ternary, *rondo*, arch shapes and also much looser structures based on an outline of the music – a programme note submitted as part of the composition. Many forms of tonality were encountered including major, minor, modal and atonal, the last occurring mostly in *Storm* compositions.

For question (c), the key word was *why?* as in Brief 2. Better answers linked the choice of instruments to the effects they could produce and why these were needed within the composition, the ready availability of such instruments, particular experience of an instrument or combination of instruments or the way ICT opened up the range of possibilities for choice and usage of instruments.

Question (a) for Brief 4 asked specifically which musical influences from the two different cultures had been used in the song. It was insufficient to state that the song combined, for example, western rock and Indian influences/cultures: the thrust of this question was for the candidate to identify the *particular* influences from the chosen cultures which had been incorporated or fused in the song. Better answers, therefore, identified how specific instruments had been used, why particular combinations of instruments had been chosen, the relationship of specific rhythms to a culture, the use of instruments in particular ways within a culture, the inclusion of typical chord sequences, riff patterns, *tempi* and so on.

Question (b) referred to matters of structure and tonality. Many had written about song structure as a distinctive characteristic in (a) and merely repeated the same information in (b): it could not gain credit twice without amplification. Better candidates were able to give information on differing styles of accompaniment used within the different sections of, for example, verse, chorus and *Middle 8*. Many gave detailed information on each section of their song.

Unlike Briefs 2 and 3 where the keyword in (c) was *why?*, here the keyword was *how?* A mere list, therefore, could gain no marks. Answers needed to be pointed towards, for example, the differing role of the accompanying instruments. Such information might have been:

- *The piano played a simple Right Hand melody during the introduction, supported by sustained chords in the Left Hand. For the verses, the accompaniment pattern was based on flowing arpeggio figures, starting in the Left Hand and rising into the right.*
- *A solo voice was used during the verses but backing vocals were added to give more colour in the chorus.*
- *A sitar was introduced to provide contrasting tone in the instrumental section and then kept in to add a countermelody to the final chorus.*
- *A typical drum kit was used to provide a solid rock beat but this was augmented by traditional African drums adding more complex rhythmic patterns in the chorus and Middle 8.*

Candidates' answers to (d), one of two questions common to all Briefs, again tended to focus on problems encountered during the process of composition than with the realisation but not to the same extent as in previous years and it is hoped that a combination of feedback to centres and these reports has helped in this respect. Answers that referred to difficulties with writing melodies, creating atmosphere, choosing chords and so on are irrelevant here. The focus must be on those areas affecting the performance of the composition. There might have been problems with:

- achieving a good balance, whether using acoustic means or software
- having to adjust recording levels
- the unexpected unavailability of a performer and the inevitable substitution of another
- the enforced replacement of an instrument with a keyboard sound.

It should not merely:

- be the inability to have a composition ready in time to teach it to performers
- to point out that computer software doesn't *sing*.

Where problems have been identified, the candidate should then go on to describe the steps taken to overcome them but this was not always done. The wording of this section allows for those situations where solutions have been either partial or unsuccessful and the candidate should take encouragement from this. They are not expected to have been able to resolve everything. It is the ability to recognise a problem and take steps to try to surmount it. If no problems **were** encountered, do not invent them, say so. It is more than likely in this situation that the candidate will be able to pick up enough marks in the other sections to achieve a high, even the top, mark. This is the advantage of holistic marking for this component.

Candidates who realise their compositions via computer software must be encouraged not to rely on seeking to blame inadequacies in the software for problems and their inability to resolve them: for example, comments such as *Sibelius can't do dynamics so I left them out* or *I put pauses in but Sibelius doesn't recognise them* are unacceptable because the initial statements are untrue.

Last year's report repeated some of the areas which could and should be dealt with in (e). Candidates should, where it is justifiable to do so, point out that their composition fulfils the Brief. They should also write about the successful realisation of performing and expressive details within their compositions, good balance, clarity of parts including diction, synchronisation of parts, and so on. They can also go on to give examples of ways in which the realisation could have been improved in so far as these are shortcomings in the *realisation* rather than the *composition*.

It was heartening that some centres had obviously read last year's report and acted upon it because these matters were dealt with in great detail. Question (e) also provides the candidate with the opportunity to account for any anomalies between the score and/or annotation and the recorded realisation. Many took this opportunity to point out areas of poor balance, imprecise diction, poor tone, poor recording quality and so on.

As was noted last year, candidates who adopted a bullet-point approach to their answers tended to display better organisation of material and greater clarity of expression.

Where a candidate attempted all four evaluations, the wrong one or none at all, various procedures are followed. In the first case, examiners mark the appropriate response; in the second, where it was possible to give credit – i.e. where there was some overlap of information requested perhaps on structure and tonality and including (d) and (e) – credit could again be given. Obviously, nothing could be done with the last case.

Administration

Overall, the administration of the examination was much improved this year. Information was in centres earlier and virtually all materials were sent to the correct examiner although there were still exceptions. There were only isolated examples of materials for other components being included or recordings of other compositions being included on a candidate's tape. On occasion, this could be confusing.

However, there were still a few examples of:

- blank CDs
- CDs which had not been finalised and, therefore, would not play on conventional equipment
- many CDs from a large centre where none has any identification but is merely inserted either in a plastic sleeve or just in with the candidate's work
- missing scores or missing pages of scores
- mismatches between the version of the composition on the recording and that on the score
- poorly-quantized scores
- several composite CDs from larger centres where the running order did not match the candidate order and meant that examiners either had to disturb the order of scripts (which must subsequently be despatched to AQA in Attendance List order) or switch regularly from one CD to another)
- composite cassettes with no running order provided (these made an examiner's job extremely difficult and it would be greatly appreciated if these were simply not used by any centre).

Please ensure that all the work of each candidate is together. Several centres packaged all tapes together (securely sellotaped to avoid movement in transit), all composition scores/annotations together, all *CRFs* together and all Evaluation Examination papers together – and all in different orders. This meant a lot of time for the examiner spent sorting the submission before examining could begin. If individual tapes are used, putting each candidate's work into a single, clear protective pocket or a folder is best. Where a composite CD is used, simply placing the candidate's work in this order – *CRF*, score/annotation, Evaluation Examination Paper – will be sufficient. If individual CDs are used, the CD can be inserted within the candidate's submission. For the reasons already given, the Centre's submission should be arranged in candidate order as on the Attendance List.

Please ensure that all necessary parts of the component are included and that materials are packaged securely. There is a tick box section on the back of the *CRF* to help with this. Please ensure that this is completed accurately.

It is essential that the teacher signs the declaration on the back of the *CRF*. Please ensure that an up-to-date version of the *CRF* is used. There will be a revised version available for 2006 and all centres should use this one next year as it is much more precise in its instructions.

Please submit each candidate's work on a separate tape or CD. A composite CD is perfectly acceptable where full track listing is given. Composite cassette tapes are not, because it is often the case that an examiner's work will be overmonitored by sample by a Senior Examiner/Team Leader and also it may be desired to extract the work of one or more candidate(s) for use at *Award of Grades* meetings or for future *Teacher Support* meetings. Submitting the work of two candidates on separate sides of (usually) a C90 tape is very time-consuming in terms of fast-forwarding. As yet, submission on minidisk is not permitted.

Please ensure that recordings:

- are as clear as possible
- are not distorted by being recorded at too high a level

- are sufficiently loud
- match the score/annotation.

Always check that the whole of the Realisation has been transferred and that nothing has been lost. Where a pre-used tape is submitted, please ensure that there is a gap of sufficient length between the end of the Realisation and the beginning of any other music to enable the examiner to stop the tape: in some cases where such tapes have been used, the ensuing music has been exceptionally loud and given the examiner a significant shock.

Do remember to include the Attendance List, correctly completed: time can be wasted searching for the work of candidates incorrectly marked present.

Remember also that, as the component consists of three separate elements, limited marking is possible where one or more part is missing, though the overall total mark obtainable is reduced.

- A Composition can be marked without either Realisation or Evaluation
- A Composition and Realisation can be marked without an Evaluation.

However,

- A Realisation cannot be marked without a score or annotation.
- An Evaluation cannot be marked without a Composition or a Realisation.

Overall, the administration of the examination has improved in all areas this year. Teachers are to be congratulated for their hard and diligent work in preparing candidates for this component and candidates are to be congratulated for their imaginative responses to the Briefs. It is to be hoped that the many positive features of responses – the examples of sound understanding of the chosen Brief, the thorough preparation, the sense of commitment to the work demanded by the Brief, the enjoyment of so many aspects of the process involved, the careful realisation, the sense of justified satisfaction on its successful completion– will lead to ever better responses in future years. This component has again stimulated many fine submissions this year with candidates able to express their originality within the focus given by the original Brief.

Finally: centres are reminded that they have their Coursework Adviser to turn to for help and advice on the Composing and Realisation elements of this component. Centres are to be warmly congratulated on the encouragement given to candidates and the careful organisation of materials: further testimony to commitment and care from teachers and candidates alike.

3271/L Unit 4 Listening and Appraising

This year there was a very slight improvement in the overall marks. It was hoped that the release of the *Integrated Assignment* briefs to the centres in November would allow extra revision time in the spring term for the listening component. A structured approach to this unit is very necessary although it is acknowledged that time is limited for the subject overall.

The other concern, aside from timetabled time, is that of strategy. As stated in the past, the paper is set across the whole ability range and therefore the required answers must be fairly straightforward. Great effort is made to ensure that the question wording is precise, so that the candidate knows exactly what is expected in the response. This often implies logical responses but still the higher ability candidates appeared to feel that the answer was too obvious and responded in a different manner. Should any alternative response be correct, it was immediately subsumed into the mark scheme. These responses

tended to veer away from what was required and therefore credit was lost. In looking at scripts in the upper mark range, this was a frequent problem. It is most important to teach the candidates to remember that the straightforward approach is required.

The format of the paper largely has remained constant so that the candidates know what to expect. It is still most important to ensure that they focus on each question individually and then quickly move on to the next. For each question the *Area of Study* is announced and candidates need to think about what knowledge belongs in this area to assist them with their answers. As stated previously, in most cases a clear description was satisfactory if they could not remember the correct music terminology. The discussion of tactics is essential to raising the standard of responses within this paper and it is hoped that teachers will endeavour to find time to do this.

Question 1

Quite a few candidates scored full marks in this question this year which was most pleasing. Excerpt A was a rock piece and most heard the distortion and the drum fill. Excerpt B was a ballad and again many candidates identified the piano and the bass guitar scale figures. Excerpt C was more difficult although there were four possible answers. The folk influence was identified, as was the penny whistle, some noted the rock influence but distortion was often omitted and looping was chosen. Very few ticked more than the three boxes, which was an improvement over last year.

Question 2

In Excerpt A most candidates identified the major tonality correctly for (a) and also recognized the AABAA structure for (b). The *legato* playing of the melody generally was correctly answered but in some cases this was confused with *staccato*. The perfect cadence at (d) was usually answered accurately but the instrumental ensemble proved to be difficult. The mixture of instruments meant that the ensemble had to be a wind band, a concert band or a military band. It was hoped that the *waltz* would be a straightforward identification; however quite a few wrote *polka* instead. The triple timing and the *oom-cha-cha* accompaniment figured strongly in the reasons given. This excerpt was amongst the best answered within the paper. Excerpt B should have focused the candidates on to the technological knowledge that is required within the specification. Quite a number heard the *scratching* technique, *looping*, *pitch bend*, *reverb*, *use of the drum machine* and the *vocoder*. However, quite a number of candidates responded with general comments such as *ostinato* or *sound effects* without any definite description. *Quantising* was another common inaccurate answer along with *mixing*.

Question 3

The majority of the candidates managed to score over half marks in this excerpt with many obtaining maximum credit. The *soprano* or *treble* voice for (a)(i) was mostly correct as was the order of *SATB* for (ii). The music term required for the choir entries was *imitation* and most marks were lost here. Quite a number wrote *canon*, *rondo* or *sequence*. The form was *binary* for (b) and in this there were several *ternary* responses. Almost all the candidates recognized that the music slowed down for (c) and either stated that or used the terms *rallentando* or *rit.* The venue was a *cathedral*, *church*, *chapel* or *abbey* and most managed to state one of these. Occasionally instead of the venue they named a service, which could not gain credit. If they placed the service in the correct building then the credit was obviously given.

Question 4

This format has been kept from the previous year as it appears to allow the candidates to focus on the requirements of the question. Generally, the responses to this excerpt were an improvement over the previous year. There were many possibilities within the music to find features and link these. Many related to the drum rolls at the start and talked about the setting off to America. The male choir

representing the sailors of that time was also a common response. Other correct aspects were the fairly fast *tempo*, the steady rhythm, the instrumental section, all of which were linked to work routines of the sailors or movement of the boat. The humming was often linked to the sailors working together and there were many very effective descriptions throughout the responses to this excerpt. The mark scheme lists the wide range of acceptable responses here.

Question 5

It was hoped that there would be an improvement in the responses to this question. Although there was a very slight improvement in some cases, responses were still weakest over the entire question paper. The format of the question has stayed constant and it was hoped that the candidates would be aware of the possibilities within the different periods. This year each excerpt was played once in succession to allow the candidates to focus on the period and then to use the subsequent playings to justify the choice. Excerpt A was 1800-1830 and the music chosen was that of Beethoven. As the specification refers to Beethoven it has been decided that the music on the listening examination will always be taken from his repertoire. The name of the composer is a correct response as is reference to the more independent woodwind parts heard in the recording. A more comprehensive list of the correct responses to this excerpt and all the remaining ones is available in the mark scheme. Excerpt B came from the Twentieth Century and had a large number of marked characteristics belonging to this time. The classical excerpt (C) was a piece by Mozart and quite a large number of candidates recognized this. It was also agreed that the music chosen for this period would either be Haydn or Mozart, in line with the comments made in the specification. Many commented on the balanced phrases and the melody part in the violin. The last excerpt was 1830-1900 and was a piece by Tchaikovsky. This showed the melodic interchange between the strings and woodwind and the use of counter-melodies across different orchestral families to give two of the possible responses. Candidates gained the most marks in the Twentieth Century excerpt.

Question 6

Answers to this question, with its two excerpts, proved to be rather disappointing. In excerpt A the correct response was either *electric guitar* or *synthesizer*. Several candidates gave *guitar* and this needs to be qualified. There are many different types of guitar and the sound of this excerpt was not that of a classical/acoustic guitar. The musical device was a *pedal note* or *riff* but this again was rarely answered correctly. Many managed the shape B for (b) and the shape D for (c). In terms of inaccurate responses the A and C options were quite common in both these parts. The *syncopation* in the vocal melody for (d) was often left blank or a response unconnected with rhythm was given. The *rock style* for (e) was very disappointing as were the reasons for the second part of that question. Many candidates did manage to place the 1970s decade correctly. Where they did not, 1980s were the most frequent incorrect response. Excerpt B also had mixed responses. Many heard the mixture of *sustained* and *broken chords* for (a) and also named the *echo/reverb* for (b) but had difficulties with the *tremolo/portamento* or *pitch bend* heard in the accompaniment towards the end of the excerpt. The six-eight time signature also proved difficult, with many candidates opting for four-four. The slow *tempo* which was expressed in a variety of ways, was often correct. The different responses may be seen in the mark scheme. It was surprising how many candidates reverted to using an Italian term for this response. Many did so correctly, which was most pleasing.

Question 7

There was an improvement in this question this year. It was hoped that the slower *tempo* might have been more helpful to the candidates managing to deal with this excerpt. Most recognized the time signature and several identified the keys of D major at (a)(ii) and A major at (c). The missing notes for (b) mainly moved by step with a leap of a third at the end. Quite a large number of candidates achieved some marks on this and some achieved maximum marks but not as many as had been expected by the relatively straightforward nature of the music set. A reasonable number of candidates recognized the *sequence* for

(d) but this was still confused with *imitation* and the melodic stepwise movement was confused with *scalic* at times. The majority recognized the *trill* but the type of dance, a *minuet*, proved to be more difficult.

Question 8

The responses to this question were more variable but generally were an improvement on last year. Some of the candidates mentioned valid features and described them in some detail such as a *brass fanfare* or *fairly lively tempo* whereas others merely stated the word *brass* or a *good tempo* without qualification. There has to be some detail rather than a general word for the feature. Several candidates then managed to name suitable links – such as the *sense of majesty* for the brass and the *tempo* being suitable for a procession. This question proved to be the most difficult for the weaker candidates yet it was hoped that the nature of the music linked with the description on the paper would have helped them to be able to give some relevant comments.

Question 9

This question based on the *western* film music also drew a rather disappointing response. The instrument at the beginning was an acoustic guitar or guitar but was not electric as had been the case in question 6. The description of the music was generally answered poorly. Many wrote the word *plucking* here which was inappropriate. Others managed to hear the broken chords, the emphasis on the first beat, the key change and the strumming at the end. Few candidates managed to name the three percussion instruments at (b) but many managed two of them – namely the *triangle* and the *snare drum*. Many wrote *bells* but this needed to be qualified to *tubular bells* to be accurate. Others managed to hear the *whip* and some the *tom-tom* which were also correct. The unfortunate aspect of the response for (c)(i) was that many candidates wrote *country and western* thinking about a musical style as opposed to the film *genre*. The reasons for the choice were often vague and unfocused. Some related the rhythm to the imitation of horse's hooves and the whistling with links to films and the empty desert spaces.

Conclusion

Emphasis still needs to be made on the points made at the beginning of this report. Questions need clear and precise answers and they must relate to the focus of what is being asked. The open-ended questions have improved slightly and it is hoped that as the basic format of the paper remains unchanged, the candidates will become more familiar with what is expected of them and therefore able to obtain a higher mark. Please remember that a description often will obtain credit and that the questions asked are looking for more obvious, rather than complex, answers.

Mark Range and Award of Grades

Unit	Maximum Mark (Raw)	Maximum Mark (Scaled)	Mean Mark (Scaled)	Standard Deviation (Scaled)
3271/CC Unit 1 Composing	60	100	63.0	20.2
3271/CP Unit 2 Performing	60	100	72.5	19.2
3271/A Integrated Assignment	60	100	47.2	19.7
3271/L Listening and Appraising	100	100	42.8	13.6
3271 Overall	--	400	225.4	59.5

		Max. mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
3271/CC boundary mark	raw	60	54	46	38	30	25	21	17	13
	scaled	100	90	77	63	50	42	35	28	22
3271/CP boundary mark	raw	60	55	47	39	32	27	22	18	14
	scaled	100	92	78	65	53	45	37	30	23
3271/A boundary mark	raw	60	47	41	35	29	24	20	16	12
	scaled	100	78	68	58	48	40	33	27	20
3271/L boundary mark	raw	100	70	60	50	41	35	29	23	17
	scaled	100	70	60	50	41	35	29	23	17
Scaled boundary mark		400	306	268	230	193	164	136	108	80

Provisional statistics for the specification as a whole (18971 candidates)

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Cumulative %	8.1	24.7	46.9	68.1	80.7	89.0	94.1	96.9

Definitions

Boundary Mark: the minimum (scaled) mark required by a candidate to qualify for a given grade. Although component grade boundaries are provided, these are advisory. Candidates' final grades depend only on their total marks for the subject.

Mean Mark: is the sum of all candidates' marks divided by the number of candidates. In order to compare mean marks for different components, the mean mark (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).

Standard Deviation: a measure of the spread of candidates' marks. In most components, approximately two-thirds of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean, and approximately 95% of all candidates lie in a range of plus or minus two standard deviations from the mean. In order to compare the standard deviations for different components, the standard deviation (scaled) should be expressed as a percentage of the maximum mark (scaled).