

Examiners' Reports

June 2011

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Music (J535)

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Chief Examiner's Report

Introduction

The new specification has been welcomed by centres because it meets the needs of a wider range of musicians, is less complex in its demands and is less prescriptive in its requirements. This series marks the first full size cohort of candidates entering, after a very small number entering as Y10 candidates, in June 2010.

Senior examiners have been pleased to meet many teachers on the numerous training events that have been held over the past three years, and the consequent professional dialogue has supported many colleagues in teaching the specification in a way that has enabled their students to achieve well. Where issues have been encountered, it has often been because those teachers are not yet fully conversant with the requirements, and have presented work which related to the legacy rather than the current specification. Further courses are available in the OCR training brochure for 2011–12.

Unit B351 Integrated Tasks and B352 Practical Portfolio

Controlled Assessment: Units B351 and B352

The controlled assessment element of the music GCSE examination is divided into two separate units. In most cases the two units are dealt with by the same moderator. However centres should be aware that

- they now receive two sample requests, one for each unit, and the sample may be different for each unit, dependant on the distribution of marks
- the units are moderated completely separately
- the assessment forms are no longer required in advance and should be provided with the work. Centres are encouraged to use the on-line candidate assessment form to avoid unnecessary clerical errors.

A minority of centres used the OCR repository. This is the most economical and efficient way of submitting work, the only disadvantage being the limitation on file size. However, this should not be a problem if mp3, pdf and Word file-types are used, as requested in the instructions for this submission process. Centres using the repository should not forget to place the CCS 160 form in the administration section. Using the repository saves all of the work and cost of parcelling and posting and means that the work is immediately accessible to the moderator.

If sending the work by post, each unit should be separated. **The most suitable method of presentation is a compilation CD for Unit B351 and a separate compilation CD for Unit B352, with each candidate's performance and composition on consecutive tracks.** It is not helpful to put the work of both units on one CD or to put all performances on one CD and all compositions on another.

Most centres sent only the work that was required and this was helpful. In most cases moderators were able to work through the materials in whatever format it was presented. However for future years, centres should note that

- additional materials are not helpful to the moderation process – only the final versions of the work requested should be sent
- if submitted work is spread randomly across a number of CDs, mixed up with other materials, they can expect to have it returned with a request to present it in a more accessible format.

In presenting the work, most centres effectively use manila folders, one per candidate, or plastic wallets. Work sent in ring binders causes more expense, particularly when one folder per candidate is used. A small number of centres helpfully presented all of the work electronically on CD.

CDs must be accompanied by a track list and this needs to be checked before being sent to ensure that the correct work is presented. In a minority of cases the wrong piece had been presented, or the candidates' work was in a different order to the list. Information about tracks should be presented on a separate sheet and not written on the CD, which is not visible when the CD is being played.

Centres are reminded that work sent by post should be on CD, and that OCR no longer accepts cassette tapes or minidisks. For security reasons, it is not possible to accept memory sticks or work sent by email. It would be helpful if centres state whether an audio or data CD has been submitted.

Unit B351

Performances

There were, as always some outstanding performances and these can now be recognised through the award of the highest marks.

Candidates scored best when they played music that was not too difficult for them. In many cases the careful choice of pieces within candidates' grasp enabled their musical understanding to manifest itself, thus resulting in high marks. The difficulty mark only accounts for a fifth of the total marks for a performance.

Music that has accompanying parts should be performed with the accompaniment to enable a musical performance to take place. Similarly if the piece chosen involves the performer in an accompanying role, such as a rhythm guitar or drum kit, then the other parts need to be performed to create a musically satisfying whole.

Moderators were pleased to note that a number of candidates chose to create performances by realising music. Centres with candidates taking this option are advised to review carefully the assessment criteria and in particular the marks for difficulty. Many centres were generous in their assessment of this work. It should also be noted that the realisation should be accompanied by a copy (score or CD) of the original.

The careful choice of performance piece in this unit needs not only to facilitate a demonstration of the candidate's musical understanding, but also to enable the candidate to have things to say in the commentary. Some pieces, which explored the instrument's timbre, range, and ability to articulate in particular ways, provided fertile ground for such discussion. Other pieces, often arrangements of pieces originally written for another instrument, did not, and these were not good choices.

With continuing advances in technology, candidates can gain additional credit if they enhance their performance in some way. Any kind of enhancement must be fully documented. Moderators are also aware that it is possible for someone else to manipulate weaker performances to make them sound better, such as by using auto tune, or by cutting and pasting hesitant sections of a performance seamlessly together. This type of enhancement, which is not the result of a candidate's own work, has to be treated as malpractice. Teachers must uphold the integrity of the examination and its standards in this respect.

Recordings were generally of good quality, enabling the moderator to make a fair assessment of the candidates' achievements.

Whilst there were many outstanding performances, the most generous area of assessment was at the top of the range. The mark of 12 + 12 + 6 represents a performance above the standards normally expected at GCSE level. Many performances, which may have just achieved full marks in the legacy specification, were incorrectly awarded 12 + 12 + 6 and this was three marks too high.

Compositions

The specification requires candidates to create a composition, and therefore arrangements are not an option in this unit.

Under the rules of controlled assessment, compositions should be accompanied by a written score or detailed annotation. This is so that the moderator knows exactly what the candidate has composed. If the written score is the product of ICT, then an annotation is still necessary to verify how much of the music was generated by the software itself. A few centres provided the

detailed annotation required, but many centres did not and just named the software, without explaining how it had been used. **This is contrary to the requirements of the specification and, in future, candidates will be penalised if this information is not forthcoming with the submission.**

The annotation can be provided by the teacher or the candidate, and if space permits, can be written on the reverse of the assessment form.

Where others are involved in the performance of a composition, then detailed information must be provided about how the part was communicated to the other player (s). It is not sufficient to say that the candidate provided instructions: some detail of what those instructions were must be provided. There were some cases where the assessor wrote that the candidate had provided an outline score of what other players were required to do, and in these cases, the score should have been sent with the work.

Many interesting and quite original works were observed in this unit. The link made through the candidate's instrument, often with a specific genre which the candidate understood through performance, provided a secure starting point for imaginative and assured work. There were also many less musical offerings which contained technical devices which did not come together to create a stylish, or even sometimes coherent piece of music. Teachers are reminded that the use of compositional devices on their own will not automatically generate high marks. Some assessors helpfully annotated the composition scores, indicating where compositional devices had been used, but in a few cases, failed to take into account the limited musical impact of the outcome in the assessment.

The composition in this unit must be written for the candidate's instrument. This has the benefit that candidates understand the resource that they are composing for. Where a composition does not include the candidate's instrument at all, then no Area of Study marks can be awarded. There were a small number of vocal compositions where the recording had no evidence of the vocal sounds (words or otherwise) intended.

When ICT was used as a vehicle for the creation of a piece, the candidate's instrument was often neglected in favour of creating a broader texture of sound. Whilst this could be musically satisfying, the area of study mark is nevertheless based upon the extent to which the candidate exploits their instrument in the piece.

Commentaries

Many commentaries were successfully produced, and the four-paragraph structure enabled candidates to focus well on what the specification requires. The format provided in the specification was used by most. Some candidates considerably exceeded the recommended 400 words, because they had a lot of perceptive and in depth comments to make. Such candidates were not penalised.

There were only a few candidates who did not follow the required format and here it was clear that a small minority was working to the legacy requirements. Moderators therefore did their best to extract that which was relevant to enable some credit to be upheld. A small number of candidates produced brief, untidy pieces of written work that barely addressed the key points needed for inclusion.

The specification states that the commentary should be presented in written (rather than recorded) format. Some centres appeared to interpret this as handwritten, whereas word processed work is very acceptable and was undertaken in the majority of cases. Candidates may also use spell checkers, although when it came to musical terminology, some interesting words emerged as a result of the application of this tool.

Moderators recognised that some pieces did not provide much scope for comment in the first paragraph. This was usually made up for in the second paragraph where the candidate was able to explore the specific techniques that the piece used. Candidates who fared best here wrote of techniques and exemplified them in specific bars of the piece, rather than just referring broadly to such things as intonation or breath control, without relating them to the actual piece performed. Candidates gained no credit for referring to things that they had no technical control over, such as having the piano tuned in advance of the performance.

In the third paragraph there was a wide range of response with some candidates gaining credit for describing what went well in the performance and how it could be improved. Centres are reminded that this paragraph should be based on the performance which is recorded for the examination and not on a previous rehearsal of it.

The composition brief needs to be built around the way the instrument is going to be deployed in the composition and the techniques to be used, with reasons why. Of the four paragraphs in the commentary, this was the least well done because the instrumental focus was sometimes lost. Some candidates were able to draw on not just the piece they were performing but also a range of repertoire that they knew, to construct a musical brief. This is perfectly acceptable: OCR would not want to over restrict the opportunity for creativity by only crediting reference to the piece played.

The quality of written English forms a part of the assessment. Most commentaries were written in well constructed sentences, although where appropriate, bullet points were successfully used without penalty. It was pleasing to see that candidates had been well trained to extend their sentences to explain the impact of techniques, in order to access the 6-8 bands. Whilst most assessors seemed to find the criteria for assessment straightforward to apply, some commentaries were over marked because the candidate did not focus sufficiently on the resource, and wrote about the historical background to the piece, going on to describe structural and elemental features of the music (speed, metre, etc) without reference to the instrument.

Assessors are reminded that to receive the zero mark, there is either no work, or what is presented is unintelligible. The assessment at the bottom of the range was often severe, with candidates who had made a small number of points of limited value receiving zero marks where one or two would have been appropriate.

It was helpful when teachers annotated the commentaries by ticking or underlining specific phrases or sentences which demonstrated achievement against the marking criteria. It was less helpful when annotations appeared to be correcting the candidates' work: this is not appropriate as the candidate should be producing the work entirely on their own.

Assessment

Taking the unit as a whole, there was a tendency for assessors to be lenient to candidates near to the top of the range, and in the mid range of marks, and often slightly severe at the bottom. Compositions tended to be assessed more leniently than performances and commentaries. Overall the assessment of this unit was slightly less lenient than unit B352.

Unit B352

Performances

There were some outstanding group performances and these can now be recognised by awarding the highest marks. The mark of 12 + 12 + 6 represents a performance above the standards normally expected at GCSE level. Many performances which may have just achieved full marks in the legacy specification were awarded 12 + 12 + 6, whereas the correct mark should have been 11 + 11 + 5.

Whilst recordings were generally of good quality, it is important that they enable the moderator to hear the balance of sounds to support the ensemble awareness mark. There were a number of cases where the candidate's part was amplified and this gave the impression of insensitivity to the balance of the ensemble, and called in question the mark for ensemble awareness that had been awarded.

Performances in this unit tended to be more generously marked than in unit B351 because there was often not sufficient interaction between the parts to gain a high mark within the category *Interpretation and Ensemble Awareness*. The choice of repertoire for the group performance is very important in this respect. The piece needs to enable the candidate to show genuine interaction with other players in terms of balance, articulation, and keeping together. Whilst it is acceptable to perform with backing tracks, careful thought needs to be given to their use as they can restrict the opportunity to display genuine ensemble skills. Performances which did not have a second part and were simply solos could not achieve more than five marks out of twelve here because not all aspects of the criteria could be met.

There were a few centres who mistakenly submitted their performances in the wrong unit. In such cases it is not possible for the moderator to swap them round. When the ensemble includes two or more instruments or voices of the same kind, then a score should be sent. In the case of ensembles (such as steel pan) where the music is not notated, then video evidence will be accepted. If a way cannot be found of identifying the candidate's part, then the work is not suitable for submission.

Centres should note that candidates must not use performances where their own part can be heard on the backing track, however faintly. Such doubling makes the part easier to perform, and is not appropriate at GCSE level. There has been a gradual increase in this practice recently, and it is an infringement of examination regulations.

With continuing advances in technology, candidates can gain additional credit if they enhance their performance in some way. Any kind of enhancement must be fully documented. Moderators are also aware that it is possible for someone else to manipulate weaker performances to make them sound better, such as by using auto tune, or by cutting and pasting hesitant sections of a performance together. This type of enhancement, which is not the result of a candidate's own work, has to be treated as malpractice. Teachers must uphold the integrity of the examination and its standards in this respect.

Compositions and Arrangements

Under the rules of controlled assessment, compositions and arrangements should be accompanied by a written score or detailed annotation. This is to enable the moderator to understand exactly what the candidate has composed. If the written score is the product of ICT, then an annotation is still necessary to verify how much of the music was generated by the software itself. Many centres did not provide the necessary annotations to the work, and just named the software that was being used, without explaining how it had been used. **This is contrary to the requirements of the specification and, in future, candidates will be penalised if this information is not forthcoming with the submission.**

The annotation can be provided by the teacher or the candidate, and if space permits, can be written on the reverse of the assessment form.

All compositions and arrangements submitted in this unit should be accompanied by a written brief which is assessed alongside the Log and Evaluation. Compositions and arrangements that did not have a brief could not access any marks under the Area of Study criteria. Many candidates provided detailed briefs describing the focus of the piece and providing detail of what they intended to do. This level of detail provided support for the Area of Study mark. Where

candidates wrote general and non-specific briefs such as to write a piece of dance music or a piece of film music, the area of study mark could not be accessed.

The new specification brought less formulaic results than previously, now that so many options are available. There were still a few centres where all candidates produced formulaic waltzes and these were often generously assessed because they lacked musical and stylistic impact.

There were some highly imaginative and inventive arrangements submitted which demonstrated high levels of musical understanding. More often, though, the arrangement consisted of a simplified version of the original which did not add anything creative or musical to it. Such pieces tended to be created by guitarists in the popular genre. Centres are reminded that a copy of the starting point must be sent with any arrangement submitted.

There was a significantly increased use of Garage Band type software. This is a useful tool for sequencing or recording but where the composition relied on samples, without any original input from the candidate, only limited credit was possible. Such compositions will gain no more than half marks.

Log and Evaluation

The logs and evaluations are a new aspect of the examination and whilst there were some very detailed pieces of work presented, many candidates wrote very sketchy logs with a word or two about what had been done each week. To achieve high marks, the log needs to set out reasons for the decisions made throughout the process. There is no prescription as to how the log should be presented although there is an example format in the specification. There were some good examples of centres providing their own formats which enabled candidates to be more expansive in their comments about the process.

The log should be constructed entirely by the candidate. In cases where it was clear that the log had been built up during the process, more credit could be given than where the logs were written in a rather formulaic way. In cases where several candidates made the same decisions as each other at exactly the same point in the process, moderators genuinely questioned not only the validity of the work but also the value of the exercise to the candidates.

The logs have the potential to provide useful information about the composition process, especially where technology has been used. However such information should not replace the annotation.

The specification suggests that an evaluation might be about 200 words. Those that were longer tended to redefine the process and sometimes the brief as well. These were usually generously assessed. Quality evaluations showed the candidate standing back from the process and considering the impact of the outcome. References to specific features of the composition or arrangement that were successful or otherwise, with musical reasons, gained high marks.

Assessment

There was a tendency for assessors to be lenient to candidates near to the top of the range, and in the mid range of marks, and often slightly severe at the bottom. Compositions tended to be assessed more leniently than performances and commentaries. Overall the assessment of this unit was slightly more lenient than unit B352 and this additional leniency manifested itself most often in the assessment of the composition.

Unit B353 Creative Task

General Points

Although this is the third series that this unit has been offered, it is the first where a full cohort of candidates was entered.

The changes in the new specification and its slightly different requirements raised a number of challenges, particularly for centres that had not made themselves familiar with the new structure, either by reading the specification, attending some of the many OCR Inset events that have been available, or both.

The Creative Task is externally marked by OCR examiners and **not** moderated like its equivalent legacy component, the Terminal Task. A large number of centres failed to realise this and consequently sent their candidates' work to their Unit B351/B352 moderator. Whilst OCR was able to redirect most of the incorrectly addressed work to the correct personnel, particular problems arose when a submission for B353 had been recorded on the same CD as the Controlled Assessment work. It is imperative, therefore, that in future all centres are aware that this is an examined unit and are careful to ensure that the work is sent to the correct **examiner**, using the address label supplied by OCR, as soon as the examination has been completed. The examining window will change for the June 2012 series and will be from 15th March to 15th May for that and each future June series.

Some work sent directly from centres was very late arriving, putting pressure on examiners to complete the assessment within the OCR deadline. It seemed that these centres were waiting for the examiner to contact them to request the work (as with the legacy Terminal Task), whereas centres had been sent labels for posting to their examiner some weeks earlier.

Some centres applied for an extension to the examining window. Such extensions were not and will not be granted. This is a timetabled examined unit and its question paper can only remain confidential until the final date of the examining window. The work of candidates sitting the examination after the final date cannot be accepted by OCR.

The experience of the first two series indicated the need for each candidate's work to be accompanied by a **cover sheet** on which the teacher can provide basic details of the work submitted. These sheets, although not referred to in the specification, were sent to centres with the Question Paper and in most cases were completed. One particularly important aspect of these sheets is that the centre can indicate the extent of the support given by technology in the composition process. It is important that teachers do not just name the software used but also provide precise information about the extent of the candidate's individual creativity, fully acknowledging any use of sampling, preset sounds, loops, or other devices that facilitate the composing process. Insufficient information could jeopardise candidates' marks. Since examiners have no contact with centres, there is no opportunity to clear up any queries in this area by direct means. Centres should therefore take note that the cover sheets are an integral part of the marking process. In addition to the hard copies, these cover sheets are also available to download from the OCR website.

A few centres seemed confused over which box to tick relating to the method of communication of the task. If a candidate used Sibelius to create a score of a piece for violin, for example, then the "Written" box should have been ticked. The "ICT" box should be used when responses are in recorded format but not performed live by the candidate.

Centres are reminded that **recorded responses should be submitted on CD**; they will not be accepted on cassette tapes or memory sticks.

Centres are reminded, also, that their submissions should be accompanied by a completed **Attendance Register**, as with all other examined units.

Most of the work was clearly presented, although there were a few cases where it was hard to identify the candidate because the centre had not provided a track list for the CD. Sometimes the CD followed the order of the attendance register, but this was not always the case. There were a few isolated cases of the wrong piece of work being submitted for a candidate; this can have serious consequences for the individual concerned. Centres must exercise extreme care in ensuring, and checking, that the correct recording is submitted. Announcements at the beginning of the track on the CD are helpful but not essential if the hand list is accurate. Announcements should not be overlong: the candidate name and number is sufficient.

There were a few examples where tracks on the CD did not exist or were corrupted. In these cases the work could not be marked. Centres are asked to ensure that they check the recordings thoroughly before sending them.

Forty-five minutes are allowed to complete and communicate the task and there was some clear evidence that this enabled many candidates, especially those of higher ability, to achieve a more musical outcome.

With the exception of the Melodic Phrase, the work presented must be entirely that of the candidate. If, for example ICT is chosen as a medium, the stimulus must be inputted without assistance. There were occasions where it was clear that the teacher had recorded the stimulus and the candidate had used this as the basis for their response. **This is a serious infringement of examination regulations.** It is good practice for the candidate to have a recording of the stimulus to refer to during the process, but the outcome presented must be entirely the candidate's own work.

There is no optimal length for a successful response: marks are awarded for the quality of the music, not the length of the piece. Responses of less than 45-seconds duration are unlikely to demonstrate the necessary musical development to access high marks. There were a number of very lengthy responses, many of which drifted away from the stimulus and lacked musical shape and structure. These tended to outstay their welcome and would have benefitted from being much shorter.

Quality of Response

In providing a wider range of options, it is hoped that candidates will find a stimulus that suits them. This was generally the case, although there was a minority of candidates who chose a stimulus that they could not work effectively with. Some candidates attempted the sequence of events using a single line instrument whereas this particular response needs to have some textural and timbral variety to effect a successful outcome. Candidates who used ICT were clearly at some advantage in this case. Other candidates attempted to use the melodic phrase but did not follow the requirement to add a bass line or descant to it.

Examiners are looking for a response which makes sense as a coherent and stylish piece of music. There were many responses that used devices mechanically without a clear understanding of their musical impact, as well as a number that drifted from one idea to another without any sense of structure or unity to the piece as a whole. Sometimes, simpler, uncomplicated responses scored better than those which were cluttered with a disarray of musical techniques and devices.

The task is designed to challenge candidates to build a composition around a given stimulus. Failure to use the stimulus is the equivalent of not answering the question in an essay. Examiners adopted a uniform approach to this issue, which centres should take note of. If the stimulus was changed by the candidate and not used in its initial format in full, then a maximum

mark of 9 out of 15 was awarded. This applied to cases where a beat of the rhythmic phrase had been changed, or where a chord of the chord sequence had been omitted or altered. Examiners did not over penalise candidates for not sticking closely to the stimulus but some reduction in the mark awarded was necessary in fairness to candidates who had used it in the original format. Where the stimulus was not used at all, or was only used fragmentarily, then the maximum awarded was 6. Candidates therefore need to be trained to take great care in presenting the stimulus in its original form from the start and not in a modified way. Some very musical responses did not achieve the highest marks due to the stimulus being incorrectly used.

Rhythmic Phrase

The rhythmic phrase stimulus attracted many drummers as well as a number of players of single line instruments who created a melody to fit the rhythm. The best responses used key features of the rhythm throughout, often returning to it in its original form at key points in the piece. Whilst the time signature of 2/4 has not been used before, it did not seem to present any difficulties for candidates. Melodically the semiquavers lent themselves to scalar treatment, although there were a lot of candidates, particularly those who chose to present their responses in writing, who created angular and unmusical shapes to their responses. Some did not develop the rhythm at all, using it over and over again, or as a backing to something totally different. This defeated the object of the task.

Note Pattern

The note pattern provided opportunities for candidates to create a melody. The best responses moulded the stimulus into an interesting rhythmic shape from the outset. Some of the more able candidates saw the opening on the dominant note as having potential for an anacrusis. Examiners encountered some very craftsman-like musical responses where a balancing phrase was added to make a successful opening statement. A number of candidates did not do anything rhythmically with the stimulus and just drifted along in crotchets throughout the piece. Ternary form was a common structure with a middle section in the relative minor. Again the best responses manipulated the stimulus into a new theme at this point, whilst others composed a middle section which bore little thematic or stylistic relationship to the opening and therefore did not add anything to the quality of the outcome.

Melodic Phrase

The melodic phrase is designed to provide opportunities for those candidates who understand the principles of two part writing. Some very effective responses gained high marks. Although it is possible to gain full marks by simply adding a stylish and musical second part (either a descant or a bass line), many candidates extended the material, and there were some remarkable compositions which were in ternary form, containing elaboration of the original material in the final section.

It is disappointing to report that a number of candidates ignored the instruction that accompanies this test by extending the melody without a second part. In effect this treated the phrase in the same way as the note pattern. Such responses were given no credit.

This is the only task where the candidate may have support from another player in performing the stimulus. This rarely happened because the vast majority of submissions were in written form.

Chord Sequence

The chord sequence was in C major, although a number of candidates created pieces which were in G, playing the fourth chord as D major rather than D minor. Whilst this was a case for restricting the marks awarded, the reality provided that responses rarely merited more than 9

marks anyway. Playing the sequence through a couple of times, some candidates realised that it made musical sense and therefore created interesting pieces based on the chords. Chord sequences (and note patterns too) are often deliberately open ended to allow candidates to find their own resolutions to them. There were a number of very musical responses here, mainly from guitar and piano players. There were also some where, by using ICT, candidates had recorded the sequence and looped it, then improvised something totally unrelated over the top. The outcome was usually not coherent enough to reach the 7-9 bands.

Words

Examiners saw a range of responses and many candidates created a successful, simple melody to complement the words provided. Most candidates extended the words, often with lyrics that demonstrated a lack of understanding of the mildly humorous nature of the original. A large number of candidates accompanied themselves, often with block chords on the piano. Whilst this may have had benefits in keeping in tune, it rarely added anything to the quality of the response, sometimes detracting from it completely.

Sequence of events

There were few high level responses here, mainly because the stimulus is attractive to candidates who have more limited musical skills. When considering the responses, examiners were looking their overall musical effectiveness, rather than a sequence of sampled sound effects. The opportunity to create a coherent piece by using thematic development or transformation, from the happy chatter of the opening, to the shocked mood that follows, was missed in most cases.

Area of Study Criteria

Area of Study 1

Now that there is a specific set of criteria relating to Area of Study 1, it is important that candidates explore the potential of the instrument they are employing in their composition. There were written responses that lost up to 5 marks because they did not write the name the instrument anywhere on the score.

Centres need to encourage candidates to think about the resource that they are composing for so that they create a 'line' that is appropriate to the instrument in terms of tessitura, range, and technical constraints. Additionally, in the case of written task, centres would do well to spend time discussing how best to mark up a score for the candidate's chosen instrument so that the music gains greater credibility

There is no requirement for candidates to compose for the instrument which they used to perform in Units B351 and 352. However, it makes sense for candidates to employ a resource of which they have a good working knowledge.

A number of candidates responded to the task using ICT and since this now counts as an instrument under AoS 1, this was acceptable. To gain high marks for the area of study mark, candidates needed to demonstrate their understanding of the potential of the software and explore it in a way that is appropriate to their compositional style. Many responses did this, but there were a lot of responses which used the software in a limited way, perhaps by utilising a couple of different timbres, or a melody and a rhythm, and therefore were not able to access a high area of study mark.

Area of Study 2

There were two stimuli where these criteria came into play: the melodic phrase and the chords.

The melodic phrase will always be written in a way that enables candidates to demonstrate both textural as well as harmonic understanding. It was pleasing to see that most candidates understood this and there were very few note-for-note responses. Some responses had good harmonic understanding which was combined with a musically shaped second melody. Teachers can be assured that the occasional consecutive fifth or octave is unlikely to be penalised since the assessment of the task takes into account a wide range of musical achievement.

Where candidates had responded to the chord sequence with two instruments, one playing the chords and the other playing a melody over it, examiners considered the response in the context of the Area of Study 2 criteria. This included the effect of the working together of the two parts into a balanced musical outcome, the harmonic interplay between the parts, and the range of textures created.

Area of Study 4

The Sequence of Events stimulus is primarily intended for those candidates who are skilled in using ICT. Pieces were sometimes created on an instrument which had limited potential to convey the spirit of the scene. Drummers struggled and examiners felt that many just played a repertoire of riffs and fills. However there were some extensive and interesting responses from guitarists.

Some candidates had clearly been taught how to create tension in music, and many candidates effectively used the diminished seventh chord or some chromaticism to achieve the sense of shock. Some responses tended to protract the second section of the piece, whereas those who changed the mood and ended within a few bars, tended to have more impact thereby achieving a higher mark.

Many candidates submitted pieces using technology and there were a few very good examples. However, some pieces relied on a backing with a melody above, bearing very little resemblance to anything and just meandered along.

Quality of Communication

Ten marks are offered here, and this gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their performing skills, even though they may have struggled with the compositional aspect. Thus a musically weak composition, performed articulately could be marked on a level with a musical piece that was performed in a hesitant, colourless fashion.

As with the legacy Terminal Task, candidates who responded with a performance tended to access higher ranges of marks more easily than those who created a written version. A strong performer can create a compelling performance using her or his natural musical aptitude, whereas much detail needs to be included in a score to ensure a stylish performance.

There were some methods of producing the composition, such as audio versions of Sibelius, which created accurate but rather unmusically shaped pieces. Teachers therefore need to consider carefully with candidates, on an individual basis, what source of communication might gain the highest marks. Some centres clearly adopted this strategy, and their candidates were able to communicate their composition in a way that suited them best. In other cases, whole cohorts of candidates were producing their pieces in a repetitive, prescriptive way without achieving any significant credit for their efforts.

Concluding Comments

A large number of points have been covered in the report this year. The key points that impacted, sometimes very severely, on the marks that were awarded are:

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- The stimulus must be used as the basis for the composition
- The melodic phrase must have one second part added to it
- Written responses must state the instrument being composed for
- There must be no teacher input into the outcome, except in the case of the melodic phrase where the given part, and any linear extension of it, may be played whilst the candidate plays their additional part.

Unit B354 Listening Examination

General Comments

There were many parts of this paper where candidates performed well. Most candidates understood the rubric, and some detailed answers were seen. Some candidates have developed a good concept of material within the specification and there was evidence of good aural discernment.

The area of study which seemed to be the most accessible for all candidates was Dance Music and many good answers were seen from these questions.

Area of Study 4 was also accessible to all but the level at which candidates answered the questions varied considerably. Many candidates answered at a superficial level, not showing a high level of aural perception. To access higher marks in questions where more detailed answers or prose are required, eg Q2 (a), candidates need to give evidence of a deeper level of thinking beyond basic musical elements.

Questions relating to Area of Study 2 were not always well understood. This focus of 'Shared Music' involves the way parts work together and it is important that candidates remain aware of this aspect if they are to access higher marks.

There were also occasions where specific musical terminology was not understood. Words such as 'timbre' and 'tempo' used in this paper are found in the Language for Learning and should be learnt so that candidates can access all questions.

- Q1 (a) (i) Most candidates gained the mark here.
- Q1 (a) (ii) Good observations were seen, with many candidates identifying enough ways that the voices worked together to get full marks. Some answers were rather more vague and lacked focus.
- Q1 (a) (iii) Candidates who related their answers to the key word of 'timbre' gained marks but there was a significant number of candidates who did not understand this word (even though the meaning was given) and repeated answers from the previous question.
- Q1 (b) (i) To gain marks here candidates needed to identify a tempo for the music and then relate that to the title of the piece. Many were able to do this well, others were simply not specific enough to gain credit.
- Q1 (b) (ii) Some good answers were seen here with many candidates identifying accurate musical features such as brass/trumpet fanfare, loud and major. Some answers did not use musical terminology but used vague terms like 'jolly' and 'like a celebration', which were not worthy of credit.
- Q1 (c) (i) Nearly all candidates answered this correctly.
- Q1 (c) (ii) A significant number of candidates identified the rhythmic nature of the music and gained credit. There were those that wrote about the tempo which was not credited.
- Q1 (c) (iii) Most candidates identified the country correctly.

- Q1 (c) (iv) Many accurate responses seen here.
- Q1 (c) (v) Many candidates gave the correct answer of Bandoneon or Accordion, although some candidates chose an instrument that was not traditional.
- Q2 (a) Many candidates identified basic features of the music and gained marks in the lower mark bands. Some candidates wrote more about the story of the little boy than the music itself. It should be remembered that this question is to test aural perception and the ability of the candidate to write about specific features of the music heard. To get marks in the highest mark band there must be a wide range of musical detail and an element of chronology. Candidates are advised to use the preparation page in order to make notes which can help them to organise concise and focussed answers.
- Q2 (b) To get marks for this question candidates needed to use specific technology terminology such as synthesiser, multi-tracking and panning etc.
- Q3 (a) Most candidates correctly identified the number of beats in a bar.
- Q3 (b) (i) This question proved challenging to many.
- Q3 (b) (ii) Good responses here included answers relating to tonality, dynamics, scales, quavers/fast notes/triplets.
- Q3 (c) Candidates needed to focus on the relationship between the voice and piano to gain full marks here, not on the individual parts. Many answers did not give three different points and so limited their marks and other answers were vague or talked about irrelevant musical elements such as tempo, tonality or 'the music was loud'.
- Q3 (d) Most candidates were correct here.
- Q3 (e) Many candidates had learnt a correct composer for this style. There also inappropriate answers such as 'Pavarotti'.
- Q3 (f) This was usually correct if the candidate understood the term 'cadence'.
- Q4 (a) Many candidates recognised this instrument correctly. Some did not read the entire question and did not take into account the word 'quavers' or 'introduction' and so gave the incorrect answer of violin, which was the solo instrument.
- Q4 (b) A challenging question which saw a good number of candidates gaining marks for shape, particularly in bars 33 and 34. Thinking about sequences, step wise motion and leaps is important when dealing with this type of question.
- Q4 (c) (i) Most candidates wrote the 'rit towards the end of this extract, placing it where they thought it should go rather than listening carefully to where the music actually slowed down.
- Q4 (c) (ii) Many candidates were able to identify the triplet correctly.
- Q4 (d) This question differentiated well. Some excellent answers were seen with those candidates who were thinking musically gaining at least 3 marks. Other answers were too vague with phrases such as 'pretty tune', 'peaceful feel' or 'sounds like waves' being more about the picture that was created in their minds not the musical detail that was required.
- Q5 (a) Nearly all candidates were correct.

- Q5 (b) Many candidates were correct in the two dances that they chose but some wrote them in the wrong order and so did not gain marks.
- Q5 (c) Many candidates gained at least one mark here. Some candidates did not appreciate that four ticks were required and only gave two which limited their mark. Others did not understand the concept of simple or compound time and so muddled their answers. Some candidates felt that each answer should be ticked only once and did not feel able to tick duple as correct for both extracts.
- Q5 (d) Many answers were correct.
- Q5 (e) To get marks for this question candidates needed to be focused in their comparative listening and then to be clear to which extract they were referring. Good responses came from those candidates who wrote concise, comparative points about each extract.

Candidates who tried to qualify their answers about tempo with words such as 'very' fast or 'much' faster did not gain credit because this was inaccurate detail.

Many candidates correctly heard the melodic instruments.

For the accompanying instruments candidates were often vague about the extract or used words such as 'bass' or 'drum' which were not detailed enough.

The final box was the most challenging part of the question. Some candidates had written about the features of the accompaniment in the box above and then did not give that information here. Other candidates did not answer with precision, instead using vague terms such as 'bouncy', or they wrote about what they expected to hear rather than what was actually being played, walking bass being a common error.

- Q6 (a) The correct answer of harp was usually given with violin being the most common error.
- Q6 (b) Good answers were seen with many candidates identifying that the notes were fast and staccato and that there was a crescendo. Other candidates used vague words such as repetition which was not worthy of credit here.
- Q6 (c) Many candidates gained full marks. Some candidates did not give specific information, instead writing that a 'different instrument' or 'different pitch' was used. It is important to name the instrument or say whether the pitch is higher or lower in order to gain credit.
- Q6 (d) Many candidates were correct here with 'forte' being the most common incorrect answer.
- Q6 (e) Some candidates used appropriate terminology here such as homophonic or harmony. Others were again too vague writing things such as 'they all play the same at different pitches' and some incorrectly gave the technique of call and response.
- Q6 (f) Many accurate answers here. Some were too vague gave 'string ensemble' instead the precise requirement of string quartet.
- Q6 (g) (i) Many candidates were correct. All answers were selected, which did show a lack of understanding of the term tonality from some candidates.

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- Q6 (g) (ii) This was a challenging question which saw a limited number of correct answers.
- Q6 (h) (i) Many candidates were correct here, although Romantic and Baroque were common errors.
- Q6 (h) (ii) To answer this question correctly candidates need to have an understanding of the features found in music from the Classical period. They would then be able to use this knowledge to identify appropriate features rather than vague statements like 'strings were used'.
- Q7 (a) (i) Nearly all answers were correct.
- Q7 (a) (ii) Most answers were correct.
- Q7 (b) Many candidates did not focus on the question here, giving answers such as 'male,' rather than features of the vocal line.
- Q7 (c) Many candidates gained three out of four marks here. Few candidates achieved all four marks because they mistakenly thought that there was a walking bass line. Other candidates thought that a brass band was used in this disco song.
- Q7 (d) (i) Good responses were seen that were able to describe accurately the music played by the flute such as counter melody or descending patterns. Other answers were vague using phrases such as 'the flute was high' which is what might be expected from this instrument and so not detailed enough.
- Q7 (d) (ii) Many candidates were able to state that the drum kit 'kept the pulse' or 'gave a steady beat' and a number mentioned 'four to the floor'. Some gave other accurate detail of what each part of the drum kit played.
- Q7 (e) Nearly all candidates gained a mark here.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

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Facsimile: 01223 552553

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