GCSE (9–1)  
Candidate style answers

MUSIC

For first teaching in 2016

Composition for integrated portfolio and practical component

Version 1

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Introduction

The new J536 GCSE Music specification is explicit about the requirements for composition submissions. Page 23 of the specification states that:

*The composition should be submitted in a recorded form and accompanied by a score, lead sheet or written account of the composition which has been produced by the learner.*

Despite many learners being confident music readers, as a result of their facility on their performance instrument, it is recognised that the production of a detailed notation score is a challenge to the majority of learners at GCSE level. It is also acknowledged that certain genres of music do not lend themselves particularly well to a formal written score.

There are a number of music software packages available that produce a musical score with varying degrees of accuracy. It is anticipated that this will be the favoured method of score generation for many learners. However this does not mean that a print off of the notation generated is necessarily the most effective way of presenting the score; it may be more appropriate, for example, to submit an annotated screen shot of the overall composition.

It should be noted that the accuracy of the score does not form part of the criteria for the assessment of either composition. The requirement is simply to produce a score in a format that details the learners intention as clearly as possible. A well annotated score can however effectively aid the verification of the centre's assessment.

Therefore, the necessity to submit a score should not restrict creativity. Provided that a genuine attempt has been made to provide score evidence of the intentions, learners have the licence to embellish their written scores during the recording phase of the composition. Many learners (for example a gospel vocalist) may be able to create melodies of a greater complexity than they are able to formally notate. In these circumstances an outline of the melodic intention (rather than the exact notation) is sufficient. However, it must be stressed that any music performed by additional performers within a composition must ALWAYS be accurately notated in order to gain credit. It is not acceptable for learners to aurally teach other instrumentalists or vocalists the parts they wish them to play or sing.
1. Screen Shot

This format of submission is most appropriate for multi layered pieces, which have generated a significant number of tracks.

![Screen Shot Image]

Commentary

This colour screen shot of a piece created on Logic software, complete with learner annotation, effectively displays the following information:

- structure
- instrumentation
- organisation of texture
- how repetition has been used to build the composition.

Some indications of the notation and harmony have been generated by the score facility of Logic, although the groupings of the 7/8 time signature are not strictly accurate. However, when the piece is listened to, in conjunction with this score evidence, the learner’s intentions are clear.

Many centres enable their learners to submit compositions created on software such as Logic, Garageband, Cubase, etc., often in genres such as Club dance and Techno. Although some software has the facility to print such compositions as a notated score, a score containing this number of tracks will spread over many sheets of paper, and an assessor would need to spend a significant amount of time studying the content of the score. An annotated screen shot (or shots) along the lines of this exemplar contains all the information that is required, with the learner’s notes immediately providing a clear indication of their intention.

In this example, a second screen shot would need to be provided with annotations relating to the harmonic structure of the B section.

This form of submission should only be used in cases where the learner has recorded all the tracks of the composition themselves.
2. Written Account

The components of the composition are described in detail with the use of technical vocabulary.

‘Stormy Sea’ written annotation – A composition for solo piano

- I begin my piece gently with opening chords based around B flat minor – I played them in an arpeggiated style with occasional accents to depict the rise and fall of the waves as they break onto the rocks. I used dynamic swells and a 6/8 time signature to add to the feeling of the gentle movement of the waves.

- As the section progresses, I added some melodic interest to keep the music alive.

- Around 55’ I changed the metre of the music to indicate the growing intensity of the waves as the wind begins to blow. Running semiquavers replace the compound time signature.

- As the movement of the sea intensifies, there is more separation between the hands – and I added some sudden dischords to add to the tension.

- 1’15’ – I built the intensity further with rapid right hand broken chords and a powerful rising left hand melodic idea. The dynamic is now predominantly ‘forte’.

- 1’40’ – the movement of the sea is now more intense; I indicated this through the increasingly wide pitch range, and powerful accented chords as the waves crash onto the rocks.

- 2’00’ – the storm rapidly subsides as the sun comes out – the sea returns to a calmer state as the piece ends. I reflected this in the music by returning the dynamic to ‘piano’ and the pace of both the rhythm and the harmony slows down.

Commentary

This composition was written as an exemplar response to the ‘Stormy Sea’ picture on the Sample Assessment Paper for Composition 2 of this specification (the board set brief). The learner completed this description after the piece had been recorded based on notes that had been kept during the composition process. This written annotation describes the progress of the piece, using timings as the reference point. Of particular significance is the use of musical vocabulary, often linked to how the music describes specific elements of the mood of the image.

Throughout the writing, reference is made to:

- the tonality of the piece
- the pianistic techniques applied (and why)
- the changing metre of the music
- the use of dischords
- the articulation
- the dynamics.

The use of musical vocabulary (linked to the time progression) is therefore key to the success of this type of submission as it provides genuine musical detail about the composition intention and process. This written account would however have benefitted from a greater focus on the harmonic structure of the piece.

It should be noted that this form of submission is only appropriate to certain genres and styles of composition, most probably where a learner has the facility to create quite advanced music due to their ability to improvise to a high standard.

Therefore a written account stating the following would not be an acceptable alternative to a score:

‘I wrote an AABA melody for Flute in C major, with a middle bit in A minor. I added some piano chords as an accompaniment.’

This form of submission should only be used where the learner is the sole performer.
3. Tabular presentation

The principal score evidence is presented as a chart, in conjunction with a lyric sheet (not shown below) and a simplified version of the notation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>No of Bars</th>
<th>Chords</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Further info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Am, Em, G, Dm</td>
<td>Piano and bass</td>
<td>Drums come into the second bar. Bass added for an effect on the chords.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Verse</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Am, Em, G, Dm</td>
<td>Vocals, piano and bass</td>
<td>Piano used for chords. Vocals multi-tracked three times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into to chor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>G, G, F, C</td>
<td>Piano and bass</td>
<td>Melody for the chorus comes in at the end of the bar. Bass added to give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>texture to the chords.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Em, G, Dm, Am</td>
<td>Piano, bass, drums and</td>
<td>Piano used for chords and melody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vocals</td>
<td>1st 16 bars lead vocals and single backing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd 16 bars – lead vocals and backing in harmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Verse</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Am, Em, G, Dm</td>
<td>Piano, vocals and bass</td>
<td>Multi-tracked vocals. Call and response vocals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Em, G, Dm, Am</td>
<td>Bass, Piano and 2 Part</td>
<td>Harmonies sung on top of each other, in harmony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vocal Harmonies</td>
<td>Chords played on bass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Piano used for melody line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Verse</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bm, F#m, A, Em</td>
<td>Piano, Piano(Melody),</td>
<td>Vocals multi-tracked three times. Key change to Bm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bass, Drums</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is an example of a multitracked Popular song composition based on an initial stimulus of the four chords used in the Introduction. The original submission included a separate lyric sheet, and a print out of the notation of the composition as inputted into the computer (see excerpt below). All parts were inputted by the learner, with the vocals (including the backing vocals) performed by the learner onto additional tracks once the backing track was complete.

Score excerpt
Commentary

In this example, the learner has presented the composition as a chart that displays the structure, harmony, instrumentation and texture of the piece.

- The Structure column gives a straightforward overview of the composition, with the bar numbers indicating the relative length of each section.
- The Chords column provides an immediate overview of how the initial four chords have been manipulated and developed as the piece progresses.
- The Instrumentation column shows the contrasts of timbre between the sections.
- The Further Information column provides the assessor with additional points to look out for, most of which are related to the texture of the piece.

On the notation extract, it should be noted that the melodic line of the piece was inputted into the score using simple rhythms; the learner’s recording enhanced both the rhythm and the notation of the printed score – this is acceptable as the vocal parts were performed by the learner, and not an additional performer.

Therefore this submission, although not containing a completely accurate notated score, provides very good evidence of the learner’s intention. Whilst the notation score itself would have been sufficient (with the lyrics written in under the melodic line), it is actually the chart and recording that provides the most useful assessment information, due to the clear signposting of the structural and harmonic components of the piece.
4. Lead sheet with letter names and an accompaniment texture description

The piano needs to play long held notes

Verse 1
C     Em
G A C D E
I lose my mind
C
D E G C C
Thinking of your name
C     E     Am
G A C D E A G E E
I’m going crazy I think I’m insane
Em     C
G A C D E D G C C
You make me feel some type of way
Dm     G     C
G A E D C E D C C
But it’s hard to put into words

Chorus
F     C
F F F E E D C
Why are you doing this
Em
C C C G E E G E E
Why are you breaking my heart this way
F C     C
F F F E D E E D E D E C C D A G
But now all the love I have felt for you has gone away
F G
C C A G
I’m torn
Commentary

In this lead sheet style submission, the lyrics have been provided, along with chord indications and the letter names of the melody. There is little indication of the rhythm of the melody.

The piano accompaniment is to be played as ‘long held notes’.

The submission of the melody as letter names (and without a rhythm) is acceptable, as on the accompanying recording, the learner sings the melody to their chosen rhythm. Also on the recording, a second performer accompanies the learner by playing long block chords. This is acceptable score evidence as the second performer does not enhance the learner’s written intentions in any way.

This example is particularly basic, as the piano texture is not varied. Learners could however be taught a range of textures, which can be indicated in words. Here are two further examples:

- Broken right hand chords with held bass notes - one per bar. This would describe the following notation:

- Rocking quaver pattern in right hand E/G – C; left hand repeats bottom note of chord on each beat. This would describe the following notation:
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