GCSE

Music

J536

OCR Report to Centres June 2018

About this Examiner Report to Centres

This report on the 2018 Summer assessments aims to highlight:

- areas where students were more successful

- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection

- points of advice 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.

The report also includes links and brief information on:

- A reminder of our **post-results services** including **reviews of results**

- Link to **grade boundaries**

- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme

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GCSE Music (J536)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

J536/01/02/03/04 Integrated Portfolio and Practical Component

<u>Introduction</u>

This was the first assessment of the new specification, GCSE Music 9 – 1, J536 specification. This report provides a commentary on the following components:
- 01: Integrated Portfolio (Repository entry)
- 02: Integrated Portfolio (Postal entry)
- 03: Practical Component (Repository entry)
- 04: Practical component (Postal entry)

The first part of this report covers the findings of, and provides advice on, issues relating to all four components. In general, comments relating to the Integrated Portfolio refer to both 01 and 02, whilst comments on the Practical Component relate to both 03 and 04.

Later on in the report, a component specific commentary is also provided.

It is evident that the vast majority of centres had prepared their candidates well for the NEA element of the specification. Performing and composing across an extremely wide range of styles and genres was evident in the submissions of work from both components. These also represented a wide range of achievement. At the upper end of the assessment range, moderators enjoyed listening to some outstanding work by some highly talented musicians, whilst at the lower end of the assessment range, the submissions from lower ability performers and composers showed that this specification has something to offer and a purpose in the musical education of less able musicians as well, providing a breadth of access to all.

The new specification contains a number of new regulations, the most significant of which relate to the minimum durations for performing and composing that candidates have to adhere to across the two components. Related to this is the minimum requirement for a candidate to perform as part of an ensemble for at least one minute. The vast majority of centres were clearly aware of these new regulations and prepared their candidates extremely well, with some candidates submitting multiple pieces to meet the minimum time requirements. There were a small but significant number of candidates who did not meet the minimum time regulations for performing, and to a lesser extent for composing; these candidates were credited zero marks for either performing or composing, as stated in the specification. The same regulation is also flagged up to centres on the candidate cover sheet, so some candidates then had to be disadvantaged by a failure to achieve the minimum time duration requirements.

The assessment of candidate work by centres tended to be lenient; this was especially the case with composition work. As a result of this most centres will have experienced a small reduction to their marking under moderation. A small, but significant number of centres will have experienced a much larger reduction. A few centres were actually harsh with their marking and their marks were raised.

Administration of the Specification

The vast majority of centres provided their work and marks promptly and the work of the complete centre or the sample (if requested) arrived, or was uploaded within a few days of the official deadline of 15th May. Moderators appreciate such organisation and efficiency as they too have important deadlines to meet. Centres have to provide the work of all their candidates if their entry is of 15 or fewer, so this can be posted or uploaded as soon as the candidate marks have been finalised.

Most centres were very well organised and presented their work clearly with quality recordings and well produced candidate forms. A recurring issue with the candidate cover sheets was the incorrect completion of the "Total combined duration" boxes at the bottom of the second page of the candidate cover sheet. This refers to the total duration of performances and compositions across both components. The same figure will therefore be entered on the cover sheets for both components. This is intended to act as a reminder to centres to check that the minimum duration requirements of the specification have been met. It also enables the moderator to make an initial check on combined timings, as the work of the same candidates was not always seen for both components.

A further issue with the time lengths of performance and composition recordings was that some centres entered this as the track length, as opposed to the actual duration of the piece which the candidate performed or composed. Some of these track timings included a (sometimes lengthy) announcement, and significant silences at the beginning and/or end of the track. Whilst a short silence at the start and end of a track of up to 2 seconds is to be expected, any more than this begins to be significant. Announcements are not necessary. Some compositions that were exported as sound files were particularly susceptible to a long silence at the end of the track. As a result of this, a significant number of candidates were therefore on the borderline of receiving a mark of zero. The checking of timings is high on a moderator's checklist of duties, so care must be taken to be accurate in this area.

Moderators were happy with centres submitting their postal work on either a CD or a pen drive. However, a couple of centres had sent their work on an encrypted pen drive. This encryption could only be opened on a Windows computer and was unreadable on Apple Macintosh computers. Work needs to be provided in a format that is universally accessible, and if the centre policy is such that an encrypted pen drive must be used, then the better option would be to upload the work to the repository.

The repository has become an increasingly popular option in recent examination sessions, and has proved to be a good platform for accessing the work for moderators. Centres are asked to ensure that the files uploaded are clearly labelled. Wherever possible centres are asked to upload audio files as mp3s. These are quicker to upload, and download. Video files are an essential part of some submissions. These do take significantly longer to upload and download, so should only be used in cases where the sound file on its own is not sufficient.

For postal moderation, most centres provided one CD per component, which made the moderation process straightforward. A small number of centres submitted a CD per candidate and one or two centres provided a CD of performances and a CD of compositions, which makes the moderation process rather more time consuming. Therefore the preferred option is to send one CD per component, with the candidate performance, immediately followed by the candidate composition. This should of course be accompanied by an accurate track list. This is detailed on a guidance fact sheet which can be found on the OCR Music webpage under "Teacher Guides".

Most centres, when contacted, responded quickly and were very helpful in resolving any issues, and providing additional information by return. It is hoped that centres will appreciate the more detailed feedback in the individual centre reports provided by the moderator this year on the

accuracy of their marking, along with additional comments on the sample of work submitted. It is intended that this will reassure those centres that are assessing the specification accurately, and provide guidance to others where there has been evidence of some inaccuracies in the application of the specification in general, or in the application of the marking criteria.

Performing (01/02 and 03/04)

Overall the assessment of performance was found to be accurate from a good majority of centres throughout both 01/02 and 03/04.

The quality of performing work was generally extremely good with a wide range of abilities heard from beginner level to way beyond GCSE standard. Essentially, performances in the 10 - 12 mark band should be confident, fluent and musical, with good technical control. Technical control includes intonation, and there were many cases of singers with weaker intonation being incorrectly marked in this band. Intonation also applies to other instruments, most notably guitarists, (but also string, woodwind and brass) where the instrumentalist has the responsibility to tune the instrument prior to the recording.

A number of centres used the awarding of the difficulty mark of 6 quite liberally. For example, vocal pieces were often one or two marks too high for difficulty. Simple, repetitive pieces with a fairly narrow vocal range and relatively straightforward rhythms rarely exceed +4. Likewise, drum kit parts and guitar parts were frequently based on long repetitious passages, which reduce the challenge of the piece. A number of challenging pieces were also performed well, but at a significantly reduced tempo, thus making a good performance easier to achieve. This should therefore be reflected in a reduced difficulty mark.

Where marks needed to be adjusted, the majority had been too generous and had to be adjusted downwards. This year, a popular choice was to perform a vocal piece (often with a karaoke style backing in 01/02)), with piano and electric guitar following closely behind. A limited number of centres offered a wide range of instruments, from the traditional 'classical' instruments, through to electric guitars, drums and voice. Overall, there was a wide range of musical genres evident. For example, a small number of centres also successfully featured world instruments, and it is pleasing to see the breadth of access this specification offers to all types of musician.

One of the new regulations for this specification relates to the provision of score evidence for all performances. Thanks are due to the vast majority of centres that took this regulation extremely seriously, and supplied accurate scores for their candidate's work, some of which had clearly been purchased specifically for the exam submission just days before the exam deadline. An area of weakness here however was in the submission of vocal scores; a significant number of centres submitted just a copy of the lyrics, with sometimes the chords as well. Just as with any other instrumentalist, a vocal performance requires a melodic line. OCR recognise that within certain genres of music, the score will only be a guide to the performer's intention. Nevertheless some form of notation must be provided; performers who musically embellish the written notation stylishly and appropriately will still access the full range of marks.

In 03/04, there were a handful of candidates who performed with a piano accompaniment that offered limited ensemble opportunities. An ensemble really does need to consist of at least two live performers who interact with each other in an interesting way as the specific purpose of performing in 03/04 is to assess a candidate's ability to interact with other live musicians.

Therefore, in order to access the full range of marks for "Expression, Interpretation and Ensemble awareness", it is important that repertoire is chosen that enables the candidate to show specific ensemble skills that go beyond a solo and accompaniment type of piece.

OCR accepts an ensemble as any piece that involves the performance of an individual part in a group consisting of two or more voices or instruments. However there were several cases in this session where this was stretched to the limit of plausibility. This most often applied with vocal ensembles in which a solo song had been adapted for two or more singers. More often than not, these were performed to a karaoke style backing track, and therefore not a live accompaniment. The performers then sang the song using a combination of unison singing (not an individual part), and alternate solo lines, with perhaps the odd moment of harmony. This type of performance is not acceptable as an ensemble, unless it features extended harmony singing through which the performers can show the skills of maintaining an extended individual part in the context of an ensemble.

A number of vocal ensembles did indeed successfully feature improvised vocal harmonies – whilst this is perfectly acceptable, not least because the ability to improvise harmonies by ear is an advanced musical skill, it is important that the centre provides sufficient information to the moderator to enable the part performed by the candidate to be identified on the recording. Score annotations are therefore particularly important, especially if the performers keep changing parts.

On the positive side it was noted for 03/04 that quite a number of centres had two or three (or more) candidates joining together for their ensemble performance, as part of the classroom experience. These performances were usually excellent and very enjoyable for the listener. Moderators also enjoyed listening to some far larger ensembles such as wind bands and big bands. Centres seem to be really using candidates to support each other more so than before.

Centres are reminded that the minimum duration for ensemble performing is one minute. Whilst moderators were not timing to the second the amount of actual interaction within an ensemble, it was clear in a number of cases that whilst the piece performed as an ensemble may have lasted considerably more than a minute, the actual interaction between the candidates within the piece was not that significant. In some cases, this therefore resulted in a considerable reduction to the mark credited by the centre.

There were also a number of "manufactured" ensembles in evidence, for example, where a solo piano piece has been turned into an ensemble by adding a drum kit accompaniment. Whilst this is technically an ensemble, the ensemble skills shown by the pianist are limited as the original purpose of the piece performed is as a self-contained solo. This type of ensemble is therefore unlikely to achieve full marks against the "Expression, Interpretation and Ensemble awareness" criteria.

Centres are also reminded that a candidate's own composition cannot be assessed as a performance in 01/02. Performances of candidate compositions are accepted in 03/04, provided that a detailed score of the part being performed is provided.

The submission of multiple pieces within either of the components, to meet the minimum performance time requirements is an acceptable approach that many centres took. Centres are however reminded that where candidates have submitted several pieces to meet the minimum time requirement of the specification, the difficulty mark applied should be the one that relates to the piece with the **lowest** level of demand.

A small number of centres also seemed unaware of the regulation that states that it is not permissible to award marks in the 10 – 12 mark bands for performances of easier pieces with a difficulty level of 1 or 2. Therefore the performance of an easy piece in either component is capped at 9 + 9 + 2, however well performed it may be.

Sequencing was also a popular alternative to performing in a number of centres, for both 01/02 and 03/04. There was a range of achievement evident, including some excellent realisations of complex pieces that had clearly taken hours of work to perfect. Centres are reminded of the need to provide a score of the original source material (as opposed to a print out of the completed sequenced parts).

This option also requires a requirement for some element of live control, which is detailed in the specification.

It is good practice to provide a screen shot of the final realisation that ideally shows or describes any automation applied to the different tracks; this information is a great help to the moderator in justifying the assessment of the candidate.

As stated earlier in the report, candidates who did not perform for 4 minutes, including 1 minute of ensemble performing, were given zero marks.

Composing (01/02 and 03/04)

A wide range of approaches was evident in the compositions submitted for 01/02. Many centres successfully continued the approach of the previous specification, and taught their candidates to base a composition on a piece they had studied as a performance piece. Other centres taught their candidates to write in a specific style (eg waltz, minimalism, Techno, etc.); these pieces were often ICT based, and at times formulaic, but some good quality outcomes were also evident from this approach. Other centres gave their candidates free rein to compose in any style that they felt comfortable with. These pieces were often the most successful, presumably because the candidates were writing in styles and genres they felt knowledgeable and confident with. Centres need to be aware that compositions based on standard chord sequences and/or specific genres such as the 12 bar blues are also unlikely to access the highest mark bands because of the dependence on a pre-existing chord sequence and certain clichés of the genre, which restricts the originality of the candidate.

Composition in 03/04 featured a new element to this specification that requires candidates to select an Area of Study brief and to then use one of the given stimuli to create a piece that fulfils the brief. This element of the component functioned well, and produced some marvellously diverse compositions, some of which successfully used the Area of Study brief with a stimulus in combinations that hadn't been anticipated. For example a number of candidates wrote effective AOS5 popular songs using the image as the stimulus. It was pleasing to note that all the eight stimuli featured in the work of candidates in this session.

The composition should be assessed for the quality of its outcome as a standalone piece of music against the core criteria. The relationship to the brief mark is then considered with regard to the use and development of the stimulus, and the appropriateness of the piece as a whole to the brief. It is of course expected that candidates should use the OCR set brief stimuli as a

starting point for their composition. This doesn't mean it has to be at the start of the composition, but it must form a significant part of a section of the composition. Small errors in the use of the stimulus did not result in significant (if any) reductions to marks and moderators were happy to see the words used in two separate couplets, as opposed to in a single verse. It was however expected that the chords, rhythms and note patterns should appear at some point as written besides being developed elsewhere in the piece. To gain higher marks, it is expected that this starting point will be significantly developed and extended by the candidate. Compositions that make excessive and repetitious use of the chosen stimuli are therefore unlikely to access the higher mark bands.

The two stimuli that were most open to subjectivity were the story and the image. The image offered many possible interpretations for candidates to work with: is it a sunrise or sunset; is the winding road significant, how the hill can be incorporated into the storyline, etc. Either way it is an image that suggests peace and tranquillity, and interpretations that tried to envisage the scene as the site of a past or future battle (and therefore wrote a battle scene score), or as a journey though the trials and tribulations of life were considered to be rather tenuous, and this needed to be reflected in the "relationship to the brief" mark.

The contents of the cave in the story stimulus also stretched belief at times, with some candidates using the fact that they imagined the cave to contain a disco (for example) as an excuse to write a dance style piece. Successful interpretations of the cave story needed to bring out the "distant misty hills" in the introduction before developing the ideas further into the imagined storyline.

There were some superb examples of film music that captured the atmospheric style of film composition expected for this Area of Study; the intention of the study of film music is that candidates write music appropriate to the image or storyline provided, as opposed to using a set of chords as an excuse to write an AOS4 composition in a popular style and calling it film music, because pop music is sometimes used as background music in films. In AOS4, it is therefore helpful to the justification of the assessment of the "Relation to the set brief", for the candidate to provide a short justification of how they have interpreted the chosen image or storyline in the music. This can be in the form of annotations on the score, or as a short accompanying written paragraph.

The AOS5 brief was also a popular choice with candidates, most commonly with either the chords or the lyric stimulus. It is important to note that the set brief for AOS5, which is all about popular song genres, specified a popular song, which required lyrics; instrumental pop style pieces were therefore not able to access the full six marks for the relationship to the brief. Moderators listened to many song compositions using the AoS5 composition brief where although the lyrics were transcribed into the score; there were no live lyrics in the performance of the piece. Whilst appreciating the reluctance of some song composers to trust their voice, there is no problem with using another performer to sing the vocal line, so long as it has been properly notated, and recorded as an instrumental line in the original production.

Overall AOS4 and AOS5 were the most popular choices with candidates. Nevertheless, the AOS2 and AOS3 briefs were well represented, with some centres submitting working in all four categories. One error in the application of the AOS2 brief was that some candidates wrote a piece for solo piano, when the brief clearly states that the composition should be for "one or two instrumental soloists, with an accompaniment of your choice." Instrumental duets (for example Violin and Cello) were however acceptable. In AOS3 some centres had submitted rhythm based layered pieces based on repetitive ostinato, as this style of work sits well with world music

genres such as Samba. However, without melodic and harmonic interaction as well, it is hard to justify higher marks for this style of piece.

The assessment of composition in both 01/02 and 03/04 tended to be lenient for the majority of centres. Marks in the top band (26-30) were credited rather too frequently by centres and this inevitably led to their overall marks being out of tolerance. Centres may benefit from applying the following overarching statements to the composition criteria, before looking at the extent to which each of the criteria is met when placing the composition within the mark band.

01/02 mark band	03/04 mark band	Holistic descriptor
26 - 30	21 - 24	Musically accomplished and stylish; Excellent development of ideas.
21 - 25	17 - 20	Musically successful; good musical understanding shown through the development of ideas.
16 - 20	13 - 16	Development of ideas shows musical understanding, but the ideas lack imagination. For example, the melodies and harmonies work, but feel predictable – constructed rather than imaginative.
11 - 15	9 - 12	Mostly successful piece, but lacking extension of ideas – perhaps some sections are better than others.
6 - 10	5 - 8	Musically simple piece – short (or excessively long and meandering).
1 - 5	1 - 4	No real success – melodies and harmonies clash; awkward length phrases, etc.

Top band marks should therefore only be applied to excellent work that displays a high level of sophistication, musicality and imagination. Good pieces sit comfortably in the second band down.

A number of centres marked compositions that had significant repetition or a lack of musicality at least a mark band too high. For example, the structure ABA is commonly used, and centres should encourage their candidates to develop the ideas of the second A section in order to access the higher marks. Other common structures were pieces based on repeating sequences of four chords. Some effective compositions can be created this way, but the texture and the figurations of the accompaniment, as well as the melodic ideas of the tune need to be regularly developing in order to access the higher mark bands.

Many highly musical and successful compositions were heard, and the increasing use of technology was particularly evident through the use of various computer software programmes, to layer up musical ideas as well as to notate a detailed score. Some highly impressive ICT based pieces were submitted, that used many of the advanced functions of the programmes to enhance the musical effectiveness of the composition.

A new requirement of this specification is the need to provide a detailed score to accompany compositions. Thanks go to the vast majority of centres who taught their candidates to meet this requirement effectively. The variety of approaches was quite impressive, and at times creative, with scores presented in forms as diverse as annotated computer screen shots, traditional notation, PowerPoint presentations, word documents with diagrams and screen shots inserted, and detailed written accounts. All the afore mentioned formats are acceptable; the key fact is that the chosen method must provide the moderator with all the musical detail and content that enables the chronology of the composition to be followed in lieu of a "traditional" score. Lyrics

and chords, with no additional information, is not an acceptable composition score for a popular song

Where scores lacked detail, this tended to be in the figuration and rhythmic patterns of chordal accompaniments (for example in guitar pieces), and the melodic detail of vocal lines and backing vocals. Computer screenshots on their own are also lacking in detail. For example additional annotations highlighting the structure, and the chords used in the different sections should also be provided as annotations. Detailed guidance and further advice on acceptable submissions can be found at: http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/379273-composition-for-integrated-portfolio-and-practical-component.pdf.

Where the candidate was also the performer, the level of detail in the score was not regarded as too much of an issue, so long as a genuine attempt had been made to provide proper evidence. However, where other performers are involved in the performance of the composition, the score provided for them to play from must be completely accurate. No stylistic enhancement of this score is permitted, even if the candidate has verbally communicated their intentions to the other musicians. Some centres provided effective video evidence of the candidate teaching the additional parts by rote to the other performers. Whilst this works for relatively simple parts, this is not always a suitable solution to more complex and extended parts in a composition.
There were therefore a small but significant number of cases where the procedure relating to the use of additional performers was not being followed. The centres concerned have been informed of this in their moderators report, and they will be checked for compliance in the next session.

Arrangements of existing melodies are not permitted for this specification in lieu of a composition. Some centres queried this as the wording of the introduction to the composition criteria for 03/04 (but not 01/02) suggests that this is possible. This was therefore permitted for this year, but will not be acceptable in future sessions.

Finally, centres are reminded that the OCR Music subject specialist, Marie Bessant is available to provide centres with ongoing support for this specification (music@ocr.org.uk).

J536/05 Listening and Appraising

1.   General Comments:

This was the first year of the J536 specification. Centres that had chosen to continue with OCR would have recognised similarities in some of the styles within some of the questions. All centres appeared to find the structure and type of questions accessible.

There was clear evidence from the answers seen in the paper of some excellent teaching and the candidates appeared to engage well with the music. Many answers were seen that showed good understanding of the styles across the whole range of questions within the paper. There were however, a few areas where candidates showed a lack of knowledge or understanding and centres are advised to address these.

One of these areas is that of terminology. On every paper there will be use of musical language and if candidates do not understand the terms then they will struggle to give the correct answers. In this paper words like structure, dynamics, ritenuto, tempo and time signature were used as command words. Candidates need to learn terms like these so they can use appropriate responses in their answers. The list of required vocabulary is in the specification in the "Language for Learning" section.

Another area is that of instrument recognition. There were several places where the recognition of instruments was required and whilst many candidates gained good marks for these questions there were a significant number who lost marks for the lack of recognition of basic orchestral instruments such as trumpet and flute. This is something that should be worked on across all ability levels. As well as orchestral instruments candidates should be able to recognise the timbre of the various world music instruments as well as instruments used in popular music.

Another issue that caused some confusion for candidates was the various styles within Area of Study 3. In both questions for this Area of Study candidates muddled some of the basic features. Three of the four geographical regions within this Area of Study have several genres and it was these that were confused, ie Bhangra with Indian Classical Music and Greek music with Arabic music. Whilst these subgenres have similarities within the music they do not have the same roots and therefore differences should be made clear.

Centres are reminded that examiners are only supposed to mark the number of answers specified by the question. Therefore candidates should be discouraged from adding extra numbers to their answers. Examiners are required to mark only the first 2, 3, etc. answers provided by the candidate. Answers that are extended generally do not receive credit.

2.   Comments on Individual Questions:

Q.1 This proved to be a good first question and some excellent answers were seen. The music was from a popular style that obviously appealed to many of the candidates.

Q.1(a) The vast majority of candidates gained a mark for this question. Whilst many knew the correct artist, others gained a mark for a suitable one.

Q.1(b) All answers to this question were given with the correct answer of '5th' being seen most often.

Q.1(c) The majority of candidates heard the correct rhythm but all answers were seen.

Q.1(d) There were some excellent succinct answers given for this question with 'melisma' and 'falsetto' being the most popular. Some candidates were able to gain the marks for explaining these terms whilst others gained marks for 'long notes', 'slide' and 'high'.

Q.1(e) Most high ability candidates gained full marks most often for recognising that the (tubular) 'bells' played an 'ostinato' pattern and that the 'strings' or 'synthesiser' played 'long notes'. Some of these candidates were also able to recognise the 'repeated chord pattern'. Middle ability candidates gave other correct answers including 'cymbal crash', drum 'roll', 'backing voices' but a significant number of lower ability candidates included references to the repeated rhythm that they had been told to avoid.

Q.2 Once again some very good answers were seen although the period of composition proved to be a challenge for many.

Q.2(a)   The vast majority of candidates gained a mark for recognising that the solo instrument was a 'flute'.

Q.2(b)   Well over half the candidates gained two marks or more, most often for 'question and answer' or 'call and response' and 'melody and accompaniment'. A number of very good answers were seen which were chronological in nature. Candidates recognised that there were two sections that had 'alternation between the solo and the orchestra', the first 'led by the orchestra' and the second 'led by the flute'. Answers that described the solo flute or orchestra in isolation did not gain credit.

Q.2(c)(i) The majority of candidates gave the correct answer of 'Baroque'. The most popular incorrect answer was Classical, followed closely by Romantic.

Q.2(c)(ii) Many good answers were seen here with many candidates recognising the sound of the 'harpsichord' within the texture and some went on to explain the nature of the way this instrument is used as the 'continuo' which is typical of Baroque music. Others were able to hear that there was a 'small orchestra' playing with 'only or mostly strings'. There were a number of candidates who wrote that there was no harpsichord which led them to Classical or Romantic periods. However, there were candidates who, despite writing the incorrect period of composition, were able to gain marks for hearing the 'small orchestra', the use of 'sequences' and the 'diatonic harmony'.

Q.2(d) It is important for candidates to be able to recognise tonality aurally. It was clear from the answers to this question that many candidates were not able to hear that the music went from a major key at the beginning to a minor one at the end.

Q.3 Whilst the majority of candidates gained a mark within the middle band, 4 to 6 marks, the full range of marks were seen. Candidates of all ability levels were able to demonstrate some understanding of this genre. High ability candidates were able to write clearly about what they heard, often in chronological order, and also to elaborate on what was typical of the style. Whilst writing chronologically is not a prerequisite for a top band answer it is often the best way to approach this type of question. The notes page opposite the answer page can be used very successfully by candidates to prepare the answer during first two hearings.

Middle ability candidates were also often able to write successful answers that also showed understanding of the genre. Lower ability candidates often made inappropriate links between Bhangra and Indian Classical Music. Whilst they are from the same continent they are quite different styles, with Bhangra having developed from the traditional harvest dance from the Punjab region not from traditional Indian Classical Music. These candidates incorrectly wrote

about tala rhythm patterns, raga melodic patterns, drones from tamburas and the alap section. These are all features of Indian Classical pieces not of Bhangra.

Correct features that were heard in this extract included: the 'Chaal rhythm played on the dhol drum', used by the 'solo singer', played by the 'sitar or synthesiser', 'shouts of hoi by the backing singers', use of technology such as 'autotune', 'reverb', 'bass guitar' and 'chords on beats 2 and 4'. General features of this extract were that it was in '4 beats in a bar', was 'fast', was in a 'minor key' and had a 'repeated 4-chord progression'.

Centres are reminded that candidates should write in prose as indicated by the asterisk at the start of the question. Answers written in note form or using bullet points are unable to access full marks.

Q.4 This question was generally answered very well. Candidates of all abilities were able to access a good proportion of the marks.

Q.4(a)(i) The vast majority of candidates gained a mark for a 'piano' or 'soft' dynamic.
Q.4(b)(ii) This was not the case for the second part of this question. Whilst the correct answer of 'crescendo' was seen candidates incorrectly wrote 'loud' or 'forte'. They did not recognise that the dynamic increased gradually throughout the extract.
Q.4(b) The vast majority of candidates gained a mark for 'strings'.
Q.4(c) Some excellent answers were seen to this question. Over half of the candidates gained three marks or more. Many candidates gained marks for answers such as 'minor', 'slow', 'build-up of texture', (mostly) 'stepwise' and 'repeated patterns'. Some answers were concise, only writing a few words to gain full marks. Others explained more fully the relationship of the music to the scene, which was not necessary but showed good insight. Some candidates did not gain marks because of contradictions such as major and minor, whilst others went on to repeat the answers from the previous three parts of the question which were not able to gain credit. Candidates had been expressly told that answers relating to dynamics would not be credited and yet many still chose to include these in their answers.

Q.5 This was a question that differentiated well with mixed responses from across the ability range.

Q.5(a) This notation question proved challenging to some, however there were very few candidates who did not gain some credit. Many candidates recognised that the music moved in step and a good number of them gained 5 or 6 marks for accurate shape. The most difficult note for many to find was the first one where many candidates did not recognise the upward leap of a fourth from the final note given in bar 6. This, however, only meant that the top mark of 7 was inaccessible. Few candidates were able to annotate the last two notes with the correct accidentals. Many lower ability candidates gained 2 or 3 marks for the basic shape in bar 7 and the last three notes of bar 8. Centres should spend time on this type of question. Teaching candidates to write their notation clearly with a pencil is important. Some note heads were written so that they covered more than one line making the specific note impossible to determine. Others who wrote in pen crossed notes out and re-wrote them once again making it very difficult for examiners to read. The tie was not always understood by candidates with many moving the second note within the tie which obviously caused errors.
Q.5(b) The correct answer of 'octave' was seen most often with all the possibilities being given. Cadenza was probably the most popular incorrect answer.
Q.5(c) The correct answer of 'countermelody' was seen most often.

Q.5(d) This question was answered well by high ability candidates. Many candidates clearly expected the ritenuto to be at the end and wrote a bar number from the last line. This was not the case and good score reading was required in order to identify the correct bar. Those who were able to follow the score were able to access this mark, but others found this challenging. This is another skill that is part of the GCSE specification and should be practised throughout the course.

Q.5(e) The most popular answer was Mozart which was incorrect. This was a concerto from the Romantic era so the correct answer had to be a Romantic composer. A third of the entry wrote a Romantic composer and of these a good proportion named the actual composer of 'Rachmaninov'. Other candidates gained marks for 'Brahms', 'Chopin' and 'Beethoven'.

Q.5(f) Over two-thirds of the candidates wrote an appropriate answer, most often 'concert hall'. Incorrect answers often referred to small venues which were not appropriate for a Romantic concerto.

Q.6 This is a new genre for this specification and some very good answers were seen to all parts of this question with many candidates responding well to the musical extracts within a comparative setting.

Q.6(a) Most candidates gained a mark for the comparison of tempo. 'They are fast', 'the same or similar' being the statements that were credited most often. Some candidates chose a tempo that was too slow for this music and so although they recognised that they were similar their choice of specific tempo was incorrect and so the mark could not be credited.

Q.6(b) The vast majority of candidates recognised that they both had '4 beats in a bar'.

Q.6(c) Those candidates who understood the key word of 'structure' often gained full marks. They were able to succinctly write that 'they both had a verse and chorus structure'. Some candidates gained no credit because they only wrote about one of the extracts and not both. However, it was clear that a significant number of candidates did not understand the word structure and instead wrote vaguely about the instruments and voices and so gained no credit.

Q.6(d) Nearly all candidates gained at least one mark in this part question. Most marks were credited for 'loud', 'shout', 'high', and 'backing voices'.

Q.6(e) A very good proportion of the candidates scored at least two marks and at least a quarter gained 4 and above. Candidates were able to write informatively about the use of 'electric' guitars and a 'bass' guitar, as well as the use of 'distortion', 'power chords', and 'amplification'. Top band answers required detail about the use of 'riffs', and 'melodic' ideas and the best answers were able to successfully compare how these features were used in each extract. It should be noted that this was also a question that need an answer in prose to gain full marks.

Q.7 This was a question that differentiated well. Some excellent answers were seen from candidates who were familiar with instrumental timbres and score reading and some good answers were seen from candidates who had some skill in this area. Weaker candidates found some of these questions very challenging.

Q.7(a) The vast majority gained a mark here for an appropriate tempo. There were some candidates who did not understand the word tempo and who wrote answers that were not relevant.

Q.7(b) The majority of candidates wrote the correct time signature. It was pleasing to see that very few candidates wrote only one number in the box and even when the answer was incorrect two numbers for a time signature were written. Incorrect time signatures were seen where candidates did not realise that they could look at the music to check whether their aural response was correct.

Q.7(c)(i) A good proportion of candidates were able to hear that the harp glissando was in 'bar 8'.

Q.7(c)(ii) Likewise a good proportion of candidates were able to hear that the timpani entered in 'bar 9'.

There were a number of candidates who wrote bars 8 and 9 respectively for these questions, rather than the correct '7' and '8'. It is possible that these candidates waited until they had heard the instruments and then wrote the following bar rather than the bar that they had actually heard them in.

Q.7(d)(i) Candidates were clearly less familiar with the timbre of the 'French Horn' and a wide variety of incorrect instruments was seen including other brass instruments, clarinet and even violin.

Q.7(d)(ii) About two-thirds of the candidates were able to recognise this instrument as a 'trumpet'.

Q.7(d)(iii) Likewise about two-thirds of the candidates recognised this instrument as a 'flute'.

Q.7(e) Candidates who understood what a dynamic is usually gained a mark for this question. However, a varied assortment of inappropriate answers were seen from candidates who did not understand the term.

Q.7(f) Some good answers were seen here. Over two-thirds of the candidates gained half marks or more. The most popular correct answers were 'strings', 'vibrato', 'legato', 'high', 'major' and 'crescendos and diminuendos'. Some candidates only repeated the answers to the part questions before and so were not able to gain credit for these.

Q.8 This is another new genre for this specification. Some candidates responded well to this question whilst others showed their lack of understanding of some of the features.

Q.8(a) The correct answer of 'Bouzouki' was often seen. However, many candidates wrote the incorrect answer of Oud, which is a Middle Eastern instrument, not a Greek one. Others recognised the type of instrument but did not know the correct name and instead wrote Greek guitar which was not good enough to gain credit.

Q.8(b) Few candidates recognised this ornament as a 'mordent'. This was an area within the specification that revealed a lack of understanding from candidates of all abilities.

Q.8(c) High ability candidates were able to recognise the typical features of this style within the music, that of 'two parts', 'parallel', 'playing in thirds' in a 'scalic' manner. Some candidates noticed that the music got 'louder' at this point which was credited as was the use of 'faster notes'. However, some candidates felt that the music itself got faster which was incorrect, the tempo remained constant. Some candidates wrote about general features of the music, not just the melody and these did not gain credit. The vast majority of candidates gained at least one mark.

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