



A-LEVEL MUSIC

7272/CE Composition
Report on the Examination

7272
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General Comments

2022 saw the first fully examined series of this NEA unit since 2019. The two intervening years (2020 and 2021) were characterised by variants on centre-assessed grades and, indeed, this year's NEA component only required students to complete **one** composition (whether in response to one of the published briefs, or a free composition). As a result, the required minimum time of this composition was reduced to **two minutes**. It was pleasing to see that hardly any centres had students that did not meet this minimum requirement for duration; those very few that did had a penalty applied on a sliding scale that increased with the severity of the shortfall.

Examiners were, as before, treated to a wide range of creative work in this unit, inhabiting a spectrum of genres, forces and structures. Given the range of circumstances experienced by students during the global pandemic, it was not surprising to see some of this reflected in the work. However, inspiration for students' compositions came from a wide range of sources and this always leads to an engaging and interesting marking process.

Composition to a Brief

With the obligation to complete one composition to a brief withdrawn, more students opted to offer a free composition rather than to attempt one of the briefs offered. Of those that did attempt a brief, the best work showed careful consideration of the brief and an inventive interpretation of it. Although to a lesser extent than in previous series, some students also unfortunately failed to read the brief carefully, omitting crucial details (the given structure or instrumentation, for example) or miscopying the given stimulus material.

Although examiners always consider the submitted work as a whole, the mark scheme has a section for meeting the brief. In cases where compositions do not meet the brief in one or more aspects, this will adversely affect the mark for otherwise worthy creative work. Examples of brief infringement seen in this examination series included:

- Miscopying of chorale melodies and bass lines
- Miscopying, alteration or omission of lyrics or, in brief 2, not using the given lyrics in a chorus as instructed
- Not including the required amount of given stimulus musical material (brief 2, 5, 7) or omitting some of the requisite musical features (brief 5 and 7)
- Not writing for the specified ensemble (relevant to brief 4 and, to a certain extent, brief 5)

The mark scheme descriptors for use of the brief range from "Rudimentary use is made of the Brief" up to "Imaginative use of the Brief fundamentally informs the composition". Regardless of the tasks set, the best work was always successful in trying to transcend the limitations imposed and to do something creative and imaginative with the stimulus material. It is therefore in students' best interests to consider fully the possibilities offered by each brief at the selection stage before committing to the task of composition.

As with 2019, chorales was the most popular of those briefs attempted. This made up a higher proportion of brief compositions, most likely due to the fact that many more students offered a free project as their submitted composition and therefore the number of brief compositions offered was smaller.

Brief 1: Chorales

The chorale exercises again proved to be the most popular of the seven published briefs. For this option, the two minute minimum duration was waived, though a number of centres simply chose an appropriate tempo to meet this minimum. As a result, tempo was not a major consideration when it came to marking the exercises, though students who had addressed the issue and made a case for their tempo choice could be acknowledged for this. It is worth reiterating for future series that tempo is a compositional choice that students should feel empowered to make; and that this decision should be based on the intricacy of the solutions offered, rather than blind acceptance of the default tempo offered by the scorewriting package of choice.

As before, the brief is split into two exercises: one where both soprano and bass parts are given (exercise 1) and one where only the melody is provided (exercise 2). The very small number of students that elected to make changes to the given material in their solutions inevitably created unforced problems and may even have slightly compromised the mark received. It is important for students to understand that the given melodies and bassline are not to be changed; care should be taken to ensure that these have been copied correctly before attempting to work the exercises.

Although students may choose whether to submit their chorales in open or closed score, closed score submissions (two staves, with Soprano and Alto on the treble staff and Tenor and Bass on the bass staff) tended to show greater control and technical fluency. Writing in open score is more difficult and hardly any of the small handful of submissions of this type profited from the decision.

The majority of chorale submissions demonstrated knowledge of appropriate technique and style. Examiners look for evidence of:

- The ability to modulate
- In exercise 2, good choices of keys in the wider tonal context of the chorale
- Strong cadences, with stylistic details such as suspensions or passing sevenths
- Idiomatic (i.e. singable) writing for the individual voice parts, as well as good spacing amongst them in the formation of chords
- Quaver enrichment, usually through suspensions and passing notes (auxiliary notes tend to be less idiomatic than these, but can be made to be effective)
- In exercise 2, a strong and purposeful bass line, driving progressions forward with interest

Technical errors commonly found in solutions included the following:

- Consecutive 5ths and octaves (including those that occurred by contrary motion), as well as consecutive unisons
- Unprepared dissonances (4ths, 7ths and 9ths)
- Dissonances (4ths, 7ths and 9ths) that fail to resolve downwards appropriately
- Awkward melodic intervals, such as augmented 4ths, 5ths and 2nds or, in some contexts, diminished 4ths and 5ths (these can both be acceptable if the note following the diminished interval moves back on itself by a semitone, e.g. G - C# - D – especially in a bass line). Unidiomatic diatonic 7ths (major and minor) were also found
- Wide spaces (greater than an octave) between Soprano and Alto or Alto and Tenor, leading to poorly spaced chords
- Inappropriate doubling of the major 3rd in chords
- Unsuitable use of second inversion chords
- Use of diminished triads in root position

- Overlapping of voices (both within a chord – alto below tenor, for example – and where a voice leaps above or below an adjacent voice on the next beat, such as an alto moving to a note that is below the soprano but above the soprano's PREVIOUS note)
- Bass notes unmoving from one beat to the next (especially before and after a barline) – though the intensification of that unmoving bassline by, for example, a suspension or a V^7d chord is acceptable and stylistic

It should also be reiterated that chorales have as their basis sung hymn tunes. Although not stated, the melody has an implied text and therefore the number of syllables in the soprano should be matched by those found in the lower parts. A lack of consideration for this resulted in needless repeated notes and over-long notes.

As with 2019, there was one instance of a student that had completed chorales set in a previous year. Cases like these do not assist the student and can lead to disqualification (especially if the exercises attempted have had an examiner's report published that outlines possible solutions).

Exercise 1

The vast majority of students recognised and were able to complete the cadences as follows:

Bar 2 Perfect in F
 Bar 4 Perfect in F
 Bar 7 Imperfect in D minor (Phrygian)
 Bar 20 Perfect in G minor
 Bar 16 Perfect in D minor

A large proportion of students chose to end the chorale with a tierce de Picardie, which was an appropriate stylistic touch. Many found opportunities for suspensions, sevenths and other decorations, which shows a willingness to engage with the style despite having half of the parts already completed. Imaginative use of this given material (for example, mirroring passing notes in the bass with parallel tenths or sixths in another part) was pleasing to see.

The G# in the bass of bars 6 and 15 opened up the possibility to deploy a diminished 7th chord, and many students were able to do so convincingly. The B flat quaver at the end of b.13 was treated as an echappée by most students and this was also a logical choice.

Exercise 2

This A major chorale needed careful consideration, as the melody not only has several phrases that could be rendered as imperfect cadences in that key (thus restricting somewhat the tonal plan of the solution) but also has a longer-note conclusion in the final phrase which requires careful thought in terms of its harmonic rhythm.

The **first phrase** (anacrusis – bar 2) was almost universally treated as an imperfect cadence in A major and this is the most logical choice (a B minor perfect cadence would be a probably overly bold move here). The anacrusis leading into the first full bar also needed some thought: options here were moving from I to Ib, I to IV or even repeating a root position chord I but with the bass leaping up an octave from the anacrusis to the downbeat.

The **second phrase** (bars 3 and 4) is also most logically handled as an answering perfect cadence in A major, thus firmly establishing the key. There is also the opportunity for a stylistic $ii^7b - V - I$

progression in b.4. Modulating to F# minor (the relative) is also possible here, but it somewhat steals the thunder of the enforced move to F sharp minor in b.8.

The **third phrase** (b.5 - 6³) offered an opportunity to modulate early to F# minor, or to deploy an imperfect cadence in B minor, in place of another A major perfect cadence. Whatever the decision, the quaver in b.6 was best handled as a note of anticipation rather than as an early resolution.

The **fourth phrase** (b.6⁴ - 8) is one of two enforced modulations implied by the given melody and most students were able to deploy the suggested perfect cadence in F# minor, with the requisite E# accidental in the preceding chord V. Where students did not fully understand the need for a raised seventh here (and anywhere else where a minor key was handled), the somewhat modal flavour of the music was unlikely to sound especially stylistic.

The **fifth phrase** (bars 9 and 10) offered another opportunity to cadence imperfectly in A major, but more imaginative students saw the possibility of an imperfect cadence in E major, therefore setting up the fifth and sixth phrases as a matching pair. The approach in this case was often through IVb on beat 2.

The **sixth phrase** (bars 11 and 12) contained the only chromaticism in the given melody and most treated this as indicating a perfect cadence in E major, though it was also possible to modulate to C# minor. Bar 11 made it difficult to modulate early, but enterprising students were able to slip in a passing modulation through B minor or D major, which could be made to work well.

The **seventh phrase** (b.13 - 14³) was another chance for an imperfect cadence in A major and there was certainly some logic in this if wider keys had been explored in the middle of the chorale. However, there was also an opportunity to move to B minor here and further scope for modulation in bar 13.

The **final phrase** (b.14⁴ - end) concludes with three longer note values and adventurous students were able to find interesting ways of supporting this melody without also slowing the harmonic rhythm to match it; indeed, some even managed to double it at this point, with an implied relaxing of tempo to the conclusion. Many students saw an opportunity to decorate the final bar with a suspension or double appoggiatura with accompanying lower auxiliary to fill the space. Some adventurous students were able to work in a passing modulation to the subdominant in bar 15, which helped to create anticipation for the conclusion.

In exercise 2, it was more common for students to attempt to treat the soprano melody as a seventh that was then unable to be resolved with the given notes (i.e. an upward contour when the seventh required downward resolution). Unless there is an acceptable echappée (e.g. b.7²) or other commonly used melodic decoration, this will always be called out by examiners as an error.

Examiners found numerous centres where all students had offered chorales and many of these showed strong teaching of how to approach this style. Despite this, as always, there are also many students who struggle with the “rules” and stylistic conventions of these exercises.

Brief 2

The requirements this year were to compose a pop song in an R&B style to be performed at a fashion show. Students were provided with three short motifs, of which **two** should have been

used. Lyrics were also provided to be used in the chorus of the song, with the option to add further lyrics by the student (the quality of which was not assessed).

The brief elicited a range of approaches, the best of which made good use of the given material. However, some students struggled with using the given material effectively, such as using a melodic line (motif 1 or 2) where it did not fit the prevailing harmony, or mixing the given motif very low in the mix so that its jarring effect was minimised. A further infringement occurred where the lyrics were used outside of the chorus with completely newly written lyrics were offered in their place.

Brief 3

Students had the opportunity here to write music to accompany an advert or promotional video for a luxury, driverless car. There was much scope for creativity within the brief, which simply gave a description of the three required sections and a time limit of between two and three minutes.

A number of students chose to write purely for electronic sound sources in a sequencer; others opted for an electro-acoustic mix with some parts scored for live instruments alongside the electronic timbres. Most students were able to clearly demarcate the three sections required, though differentiating the music to fit each scenario proved more of a challenge for some. There was a wide range of styles on offer in response to the brief, which clearly captured the imagination of a number of students.

Brief 4

The brief required students to write a song for a musical about the life of an environmental or peace activist. The context for the song was given, as well as lyrics for a first verse and chorus, to which students could add.

The brief also specified available instrumentation and, whilst infringements of this brief were few, it is a shame some students chose only to write for piano as an accompaniment to the voice in a song that had such significance to the story of the musical. The music theatre genre is one with which students who chose this brief were often very familiar, with some audible nods to many of the established names in the genre, past and present. Some, however, failed to convince stylistically, writing music that didn't really seem to enhance the emotional or dramatic situation and thus offering a more dilute musical experience.

Brief 5

Brief 5 invited students to compose a piece for between five and ten big band players to be performed at a regional jazz festival. A 16-bar bass line was provided as the basis for the piece and there were stipulations on a solo section for either saxophone, trumpet or electric guitar. Furthermore, the piece also needed to contain a number of stated musical devices. Success in this brief firstly required for all of these elements to be understood and planned carefully, as this was one of the more prescriptive briefs on offer this year. In order for the piece to be based on the given bass line, for example, it was not enough to hear this entirely once, much less to hear only part of it once. Certainly there was scope for extending, fragmenting and

sequencing elements of the given part, but fundamentally the resulting piece should be seen as deriving a significant amount of its discourse from that given material.

Other infringements of this brief included solo sections that were not clear or not long enough. Some were also, whilst fully notated as expected, not entirely idiomatic for the chosen instrument. Although there were very strong responses to the brief that clearly had a deep understanding of the language of jazz, there were some that again showed a less than secure understanding of the style, despite being able to satisfy all of the requirements for meeting the brief.

Brief 6

Students opting for Brief 6 had to choose one of the given images as inspiration for a piece to be performed at a World Music festival. Three indicative features were required to be present, including a folk (non-classical) instrument, alongside between two and four other instruments of the student's choosing.

Although this was not one of the more popular briefs this year, there was an opportunity here for students to bring in elements from the picture selected as inspiration, with a variety of features of the natural world (such as running water or a dramatic rock face) that could have interesting musical analogues. Whilst modal harmony is something that many students were able to engage with confidently, writing effective polyrhythms is more of a challenge, and not all students showed full understanding here.

Brief 7

This brief was an opportunity to write in a minimalist style, using three given motifs in a piece for up to five instruments of the student's choice. In addition, a number of specific features were stipulated, all of which are familiar minimalist techniques.

This brief appealed to a significant number of students, many of whom had clearly taken time and care to understand the techniques required and had absorbed good compositional models (perhaps through their own learning within optional Area of Study 7). As such, there were some excellent and imaginative responses to this task. Others were happy to let motifs run unaltered for large stretches at a time, sometimes for instruments that were really not able to sustain them (even in the hands of the most capable professionals). Still others had an incomplete understanding of what a "remote harmonic region" might be in the context of three motifs that suggest C minor. However, looping, phasing and inversion were generally well understood.

Free Compositions

Students continue to demonstrate unending and ever-widening creativity through their submissions. Notwithstanding the reduced contact time pupils have had with teachers due to the global pandemic, an impressive level of creativity shines through this year's work.

As before, many free compositions drew inspiration from the areas of study that students had covered during the course (for example, music theatre songs or pieces inspired by film music). Others took the opportunity to inhabit a genre that appealed to them outside the course (writing a

brass band competition piece, for example). Restrictions enforced by the pandemic led to some very creative personal realisations of pieces, as well as a number of poignant and introspective responses to it. Conversely, others wrote songs to celebrate being able to mix socially once again. In addition, the pandemic seems to have given some students more time to hone their production skills in their own rooms and there was a slight increase in this style of music production or DAW-based submission this year.

As was stated in 2019, in a free composition the student is effectively creating his or her own question. It is important to emphasise once again that, whilst inspiration may come from anywhere, the nature of the project and its scope should be chosen carefully to best enable the student's talents to be fully demonstrated at the *advanced level* required in the specification.

What this means in practice is to follow a genre in which the student feels comfortable, but with which a certain level of complexity and creativity can be written into the piece. Having one eye on the published mark scheme can be useful here, but the bottom line is that the music submitted should not be in a style that is overly restrictive (and therefore precluding access to the upper bands for ideas, contrast, development, structure and musical elements) nor overly ambitious (meaning that a successful style is too hard to inhabit or that technical control will suffer).

Examples of submissions which are overly restrictive include:

- Songs based on a simple verse-chorus structure, based on the same short chord progression
- Pieces with restricted textures that remain unchanged throughout
- Pieces that remain in the same key throughout, that are entirely diatonic or have a harmonic rhythm that never changes
- Compositions that are highly sectional, or which use a 'sketchbook' approach. These rarely satisfy structurally and offer little opportunity to develop musical ideas; these are two important aspects scrutinised against the mark scheme.

Aspects of submissions which set an improbable challenge include:

- Writing effectively for large orchestra (though naturally some can, and do)
- Writing effective virtuosic writing, particularly for piano (examiners heard a number of pieces that would have sounded impressive when played back in software but were impossible to play in real life)
- Writing in an advanced harmonic idiom or complex time signatures.

As in 2019, one area that attracted a number of students was film music (or other types of media music such as gaming or animation), especially where Hans Zimmer has been taken as the model. The report from 2019 outlines some of the challenges of scoring highly in this style but some points bear repeating. Zimmer's style often revolves around intricate layering over a simple harmonic progression (for example, the "four-chord trick"). Because of his reliance on music production techniques (which is taken in his music to an extremely high level), this style can seem seductive on the surface, but it is hard to replicate with the requisite degree of subtlety. In addition, Zimmer's style relies on a wide and colourful sonic palette. Students without a good grounding in orchestration or a mastery of the sound sources in their sequencers can end up writing music that is either unfeasible for an orchestra or simply lacks the variety to sustain interest. That said, there seemed to be a stronger showing in this area than in 2019, with some students offering stunning work that showed attention to detail in orchestration as well as a real imagination in matching the scenario described.

One increased area of submissions this year was of pop songs composed and performed using DAW software. For those who might have been working in this arena for the first time, it's worth bearing in mind that, whilst song writing and singing skills may be at a high level, the extent to which the song can be successful as a composition also depends on the production of the song: sound sources and instruments used, how they are mixed and the imagination found in the arrangement. Examiners appreciate that many pop songs have beauty in simplicity, but it's also important to remember that they are looking for a musical experience that is advanced and confidently polished.

A few students offered free compositions but subdivided this into two short pieces (usually for piano). With such a restricted minimum time this year, this was a decision that was questionable, even if there were strong links between the two pieces (mostly, unfortunately, there were not). This kind of offering is unlikely to be able to access the upper band on structure and the development of ideas in most styles, regardless of the merits of other aspects of the composition.

It is to be expected that teachers may not have been able to have the same role in advising students about what projects might work best for them. However, as in 2019, it is important that students understand that the planning stage of this composition is incredibly important, regardless of the challenge students set themselves, and students will find it easier to compose if they have a clear idea of what it is they are trying to achieve in the end. For many, this process is easiest away from software, whether with an instrument, sketches on paper or brief ideas recorded on a phone for referral and refinement later. This process is just as important in music production-based styles, where the temptation to loop and copy passages is strong and a clear sense of the proportions and overall effect of the music is difficult when working in a strictly linear way.

Administration

With extra pressures coming from various angles in the past two years and with the last time that the process of sending everything off being in 2019, it is understandable that collecting and sending materials off this year was a challenge. However, the care and attention given to this by the vast majority of centres was greatly appreciated.

This was the first year that centres were able to submit work via USB drive, though CDs continue to be accepted. The method used by centres should be the one that is simply easiest for them, though it is important that any CDs sent in are **audio discs** not **data CDs**. Examiners have access to CD players for their work but will not necessarily have a computer with a CD drive for reading data CDs. Indeed, such devices are becoming increasingly rare as technology marches inexorably on.

It is important to remember the following when submitting work via USB drive:

- The drive should be formatted such that it will open on a standard Windows PC
- Audio files should be a standard format, preferably **.mp3** or **.wav**
- Only the student's **audio files** should be provided on the drive
- The drive should not be passcode protected or encrypted in any way (there is not the same safeguarding issue around composition audio that may be present with other types of submission)

It is important to note that **scores, aural guides** and **Candidate Record Forms** (CRFs) should continue to be **printed out in hard copy** and enclosed with the submission. Many centres did this efficiently; a few deemed that simply adding electronic copies of CRFs and scores to the USB drive was acceptable. It is not.

Examiners reported hardly any broken CDs this year, so centres should be commended for their care and attention here. It is worth noting, however, that a USB drive is more robust than a CD and so multiple layers of bubble wrap and sticky tape are not necessary.

Notated Scores/Lead Sheets/Aural Guides

Students have the option to submit one or more of the above three types of written evidence to show their intentions, in addition to the programme note. Although this evidence will always be heard in conjunction with the submitted recording, it is important to consider which is the most appropriate written submission for each student.

A printed full score is **not always the most appropriate submission for the work** and, where students are working in a sequencer, it's worth pointing out that the process of turning the sequencer data into a highly polished full score is time consuming and complex. Some additional points to bear in mind, which were made in 2019 but bear repetition:

- **Scores exported from sequencing software** may not accurately reflect the recording if left unedited, and students who are less comfortable with notation may fail to pick up on this, simply trusting the software to produce the score. Issues that were found again in this series included:
 - Overly complex rhythmic notation arising from unquantized MIDI data
 - Incorrect spelling of accidentals
 - Incorrect key signatures
 - Incorrectly labelled sound sources
 - Bizarre clef choices
 - Music notated in the wrong octave (as a result of other MIDI transpositions or transformations not transferring accurately to the score)
 - Audio parts that had been recorded into the software not being notated at all, including vocal parts, important rhythm guitar lines and instrumental solos

Where scores were deficient in a number of these areas, examiners were left in a quandary as to how to assess the work. Students are almost always better served by providing a suitably detailed **aural guide** in place of a deficient score.

- **A set of parts** is not an acceptable substitute for a score, whether partially complete or not (e.g. drums and bass created in a sequencer exported as a score, supplemented with separate, handwritten guitar parts in tab). Moreover, parts do not need to be submitted *in addition to* a score. Where a student is used to handwriting parts rather than notating in score, a **lead sheet** or **aural guide** would be a preferable alternative.
- **Aural Guides** varied considerably in quality. The purpose of this written annotation to the recording is to help guide the examiner through the composition. A few pointers to bear in mind here:

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- An accurate **timeline in minutes and seconds** is practical for examiners to follow. References to bar numbers are not, though referring to the *number of bars* in a section might be appropriate.
 - Screenshots which show the score section of an idea can be very useful. Screenshots of clearly audible reverb settings are far less useful.
 - The prose description should try and explain how the ideas develop through the composition and should refer to structural terms (e.g. verse, bridge, transition, outro). Remember that the aural guide is provided as an alternative to a score and so can provide valuable written evidence to support the student's intentions in the recording.
 - Score notation is far more instructive in most cases than piano roll notation.
 - A simple explanation of what effects have been used to shape a given sound is preferable to several screenshots of the effects used.
 - A summary of chord progressions using guitar symbols can be very useful in helping to identify sections aurally.
- **Discrepancies between score and recording** happened frequently this year, usually as a result of live performances being a part of the submitted recording. This can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, examiners appreciate hearing live performance as an element of the submission and this can go a long way towards bringing students' work to life. On the other hand, however, where the live element does not match or even improves on the submitted score, examiners need to balance the style of the music versus the part the recorded discrepancy has played in the overall submission. This happened where vocal or solo parts were recorded live, or where files in score writing software were then exported to sequencing software to produce a superior recording. If there are significant discrepancies between the score and recording, then submitting both synthesised and live recordings is best practice (and many centres did this). It should be remembered that examiners will always consider the practicalities of a live performance of a piece, even where a synthesised recording from software is provided. Wherever a score is submitted, this will always be seen as the primary evidence for the submission.
 - **Collaborative performances** were found this year where the student was one performer with teachers or friends playing along. Where the submission included only an aural guide and no indication of how parts had been worked out, it was sometimes difficult to see how the performance could be recreated with only the aural guide, and therefore the extent to which the authorship of the final piece was really down to the student. The programme note can be helpful here in clarifying the extent to which the student had provided a lead sheet, notated parts or even a set of instructions to performers to realise intentions. Inclusion of some of these details in the aural guide is reassuring and can really help the examiner to understand what the student's intentions and process of composition were.
 - **Quality of score editing** again varied considerably this year, especially with a higher proportion of students using MuseScore or another free score writing package, which might lack the finesse of more professional packages usually available in schools. There were, as always, examples of clear, detailed and well-edited scores that would be worthy of professional publication. At the other end of the scale, however, some scores were presented with the bare minimum of information, leading to unclear intentions or notation that precluded practical performance. Performance directions should be considered an integral part of the composing process, rather than just afterthoughts, or a later stage of

writing. A compositional process that integrates these aspects will ensure that a score is always detailed. Some points to bear in mind here:

- A score should contain **all the performance directions necessary for a good performance without the composer present**. These include:
 - Appropriate staves and labels for the forces used
 - Dynamics
 - Tempo indications
 - Expressive markings (including articulation, slurs and phrasing)
 - Technical directions (including use of mutes, specialist directions like pizzicato, pedalling or flutter-tonguing)
 - Any other helpful instructions (including fingering, bowing)
- The larger the number of staves, the more practical it is to reduce the stave size in order to fit the music onto as few pages as possible for the music to still be legible.
- Landscape formatting should be avoided, if submitting scores double-sided, as the obverse pages are almost always upside-down. This is something to be borne in mind especially if writing organ music, which is commonly published in this orientation.
- Spiral binding and booklet format for scores is unnecessary, as are staples. The easiest way for an examiner to deal with the submission is to have all of the submitted printed evidence on loose sheets of A4 paper (A3 should be avoided), or fastened simply with a paperclip, with the Candidate Record Form (printed as an A3 double-sided sheet and folded to make an A4 booklet) wrapped around it.

Candidate Record Forms (CRFs)

Candidate Record Forms, as mentioned above, should be printed and signed (whether electronically or by hand in hard copy). The best way to handle these is to print it as a booklet, on one sheet of A3, double-sided and folded. A few centres had to be contacted for signatures on CRFs – it is important to note that those signatures represent the declaration that the work examiners are scrutinising is the student's own. Without them, that work is invalid.

A reminder that a separate, coursework submission form is not required for this component, as teachers do not mark the work. Where teachers do mark the work or provide their own analyses, these will always be ignored by examiners.

Recordings

Centres and students should be congratulated on the increasing quality of recordings on the whole. Far more songs now include live vocals (often by the student) and there were some incredibly impressive live performances of challenging compositions. Examiners always enjoy and appreciate these live recordings.

Inevitably, for many projects, the software recording is the most appropriate way of submitting the audio file required (as it is of course with compositions produced in a DAW). However, students should consider carefully the quality of the recording and the balance of instruments or sound sources when they produce these. If time, making a duplicate version of the composition with

edited dynamics, mixing positions or tempos can really help to make the synthesised recordings feel more “real”.

Final Comments

Once again, examiners were impressed with the creativity and hard work shown by students and appreciate both this and the support given to this unit by teachers. Whatever the difficulties faced during the past two years, it has been gratifying to see this creativity and hard work undimmed. It is fondly hoped that the experience of this year will renew confidence with the specification, before the need for two compositions (one brief and one free composition) is reinstated next year. There is certainly a sense that centres and students alike feel more comfortable with the requirements for this component, and this is pleasing to see, even without the previous two series’ work being scrutinised by examiners.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.