



**GCSE MUSIC LEGACY  
(Summer Series) 2010**

# **Chief Examiner's and Principal Moderator's Report**

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#### Grade Boundaries

Grade	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Mark Range	400-369	368-332	331-283	282-234	233-208	207-182	181-157	156-132	131-0

#### Chief Examiner's Report

As expected this year's paper, through a mix of questions in various styles discriminated well over the wide range of abilities. Once again a large percentage of candidates achieved high grades - a tribute to the excellent standards and dedication of teachers in our schools.

#### LISTENING & APPRAISING

The paper followed the pattern of previous years, with a mix of different types of questions reflecting the full depth and breadth of the specification. The examining team felt that all questions differentiated well, and none were outside the scope of the specification. The musical themes provided in the final extract added an extra differentiation, which was necessary as the other questions were more straightforward and approachable.

There are still some recurring matters which cause us concern which need mentioning once again this year.

- Many candidates still have difficulty writing briefly in coherent English, something which we like to see not only in short answers but also in the longer answer required in the final "level" question.
- Too many still rely on vague generalisations, sprinkling answers with terms such as *repetition, sequence, imitation, homophonic, polyphonic*, or phrases such as *there are lots of, "scat singing" ... or "walking bass" ... or "word painting" or "terraced dynamics"*, without referring to specific points in the music or the supplied texts.
- Lists of vague unrelated comments will not do – they must be linked to text or music to have any validity. In marking the final question a more holistic approach was applied again to assess what a candidate has said, so "ticks" on the text were not used to indicate points scored.
- We would like to remind candidates to be as clear as possible in their presentation, preferably using ink, writing legibly and making any notation or figures clear – particularly their school and candidate numbers. They should not use "tippex" to erase text nor make any use of "red" ink, as examiners use this during the marking process and it can lead to confusion.
- Too many candidates are still unable to spell the titles or composer's names of the set works. At the end of a two year course this ought not to be a big problem. "Musical Traditions in Ireland" is the only acceptable title for this area of study, and we were pleased to see that the majority of candidates did use this correct title in Q6.

**Q1 La Rejouissance – Music from the Royal Fireworks – Handel**

This question was structured in a similar way to the opening question in previous years and being one of the more “accessible” set works it was surprising that many candidates did not achieve the expected full marks.

- (a) (i) Some candidates failed to identify the form or the tempo.
- (b) (i) A much smaller number identified the three instruments correctly. Invariably the clarinet was chosen which was not found in orchestras of this period.
- (ii) There were a wide variety of answers here – a good percentage recognised the Timpani, but too many seemed to hear other types of drum which were not available to Handel at the time.

The answers to the last four questions were invariably correct – apart that is from some strange spelling of the title and the composers’ name.

**Q2 Song: The Star of the County Down**

- (a) (i) It was fairly easy to obtain marks here. Many mentioned that the music was the same as the opening of the verse, noted the solo flute (not oboe or clarinet), the pizzicato bass line, and the downward scale passage which led to the verse.
- (ii) A good many were able to recognise the Tenor voice, but suggestions such as “Male Soprano” or “Alto” were used too often.
- (b) (i)-(ii) Some mixed responses here, too many failed to recognise either the tonality or the time signature.
- (c) (i)-(ii) Most candidates knew the form was strophic (Verse & Chorus) and the answers to (ii) varied greatly, some candidates producing inaccurate guesses. As the music was very similar to (a)(i), it was surprising that those who scored well there failed to do so in this question.
- (d) This part of the question was generally well done with a variety of responses.

**Q3 Song: Mack the Knife – from “The Threepenny Opera” – Kurt Weill**

This question – on one of the most popular of the set works, was one that produced some of the best answers.

- (a) (i)-(ii) Hardly any candidates had a problem identifying the Area of Study and the singer.
- (b) (i) Not everyone managed four correct instruments here – there were some wild guesses.
- (ii) Most candidates correctly identified the Jazz ensemble.
- (c) It wasn’t difficult to obtain all four marks here and the majority of candidates did that, but in (ii) not everyone mentioned that the pitch was raised – **and** by a semitone.

**Q4 Extract from: Variations on a theme by Haydn – Brahms – The St Anthony Chorale**

- (a) This type of question, where candidates have had to fill in missing pitch has always been poorly done. However – even with a piece which was not one of the set works a large majority gained full marks here.
- (b) (i)-(ii) These questions were also well answered though not as well as (a).
- (c) (i) This was a more difficult question and discriminated well, with a smaller number of correct answers.
- (ii) This question was not so demanding, yet very few candidates managed to recognise that bars 24 & 25 were a repeat of the previous two bars; even though many of the same candidates managed to gain full marks in the first part of the question.

**Q5 Song: We are the champions – Queen**

Like Q3, this was another very familiar and popular set work, and produced many very good answers. Although at first reading the question seems straightforward – there were areas which did discriminate between candidates.

Questions (a), (b) and (c)(i) in the main were answered very well indeed and the majority of candidates obtained all five marks here.

- (c) (ii) This question was a little more difficult, and many candidates failed to read it correctly. The question required a description of the lines 6 **and** 18 – unfortunately many misread it as being “From line 6 **to** 18” and therefore included much irrelevant information.
- (d) This question - asking why a piece “Celebratory” is is not an easy one and few candidates received the full five marks here. Vague comments like “major key” “repetition”, “crescendo”, “instruments” without some kind of explanation or linkage to the piece will not suffice. The best answers quoted the text or music to which they linked their comments.

**Q6 Extracts from:**

- (a) April 3<sup>rd</sup> – Donal Lunny and friends.
- (b) The Bucks of Oranmore – Hughes Band.
- (c) “Fair Day” from the Irish Symphony Hamilton Harty.
- (d) Schubert – The Trout Quintet 4<sup>th</sup> Movement: Theme and Variations.

This type of question with short answers and short extracts from Set Works was used again this year as a more “friendly” question before the longer Q7. The large majority of candidates scored full marks in this question.

In the first extract almost all candidates were successful, this was not so in the second. Too many thought the piece was a Jig and a good many failed to choose the correct instruments. There were few problems with the extract from the Symphony, and in the Schubert some insisted on calling the song “The Trout Quintet”, and failed to identify the Allegretto section at the end of the work.

**Q7 Humperdinck – Hansel & Gretel – Finale**

This question followed the pattern of previous years by giving the candidates a well structured piece on which they had freedom to write as they chose, bearing in mind the highlighted areas.

The full text was also provided, and there was much to write about here. The number of marks for the question was slightly increased to include comment on the two main themes used in the extract. Only those who referred to the themes as part of their answer were able to score at the third level. This was an attempt to in-build specific differentiation, and compensate for the absence of another “level” type question within the paper.

It proved to differentiate well, and there were many candidates who scored highly at the third level.

There was a lot to get to grips with, and although we had the wide variety of responses as expected – too few actually bothered to mention the themes, in spite of the reference to them in the rubric. The contrast between the two themes even on paper ought to have inspired some more candidates – especially those who did so well in Q4.

The poorest answers were either a vague series of sentences with little definite information, or a list of phrases or words without reference to the text. Many candidates seemed to think it was in “strophic” form, and too many spent all their efforts in writing about the celebratory aspects, ignoring the many things that were happening in the orchestra and the voices.

A minority wrote at length without communicating any facts at all. The best answers tackled the piece as a whole, followed the structure – which was apparent from the text – and detailed the musical events linking them to the text where appropriate.

**PERFORMING AND APPRAISING**

- The examining team thanks the schools for their hospitality and assistance once more in conducting these examinations. Thanks also those teachers who were so well prepared for the visits with prearranged orders of candidates, lists of pieces and exam numbers.
- It is a pity that the same points need to be made every year, few teachers seem to be reading the report which is designed to help prepare candidates more effectively for the following year.
- Although this was the last year of the present specification, the new exam will see few changes in this area of the examination. However examiners did comment on the perception that too many schools appeared to be leaving the preparation of this element to a few months before the actual exam. Often candidates seemed ill prepared and ensembles often put together in a few weeks by the teachers. There also seemed little evidence that pupils were taking any initiative to set up ensembles themselves – which was the original intention of offering this element within the exam.
- Too many ensembles are being teacher led and sometimes teacher dominated. When the new Specification comes into force in 2011 candidates will be disadvantaged by this – a child’s contribution in leading an ensemble and relating to the other players is distorted if a teacher is in charge – either performing in the ensemble or conducting it, and cannot therefore be properly assessed.

It is somewhat disheartening to have to repeat again the following points made in previous

reports which have not been addressed by schools.

- In some schools examiners are kept waiting when they arrive, for last minute rehearsals or administrative problems. It is most important that pupils are ready to begin at the approximate time given, and that there be no long “waits” between candidates. Most examiners have to keep to strict timetables and may have more than one school to visit on any given day. Some examiners are happy to continue working through morning break or lunch periods, and some are not. This needs to be prearranged with the examiner concerned before they arrive.
- We really appreciate schools providing maps/directions before visits, and it would be most helpful if information was available on parking facilities. Most examiners will arrive on time but if parking space is limited it can cause unnecessary delays and a certain amount of frustration. Arrival times are approximate and examiners do everything in their power to be at schools in good time to conduct these examinations. The format of the Practical Examination remains unchanged and sufficient time is allocated to all the examining team so that the examinations can be conducted in a relaxed manner.
- It should be noted that candidates do not receive more marks by playing pieces beyond the required standard. It is better to play a more straightforward piece well than stumble through a more complex one. One solo piece and one ensemble piece is all that is required but each must be of a reasonable length. This year there seemed to be a large number of candidates presenting pieces of one minute or less. After a two year course this is not acceptable. Pieces need to be long enough for the examiner to assess what the candidate can do. However pieces lasting more than five minutes are unnecessary.
- Teachers may remain in the room during the examination but it is expected that they will position themselves at a distance from the pupil and the examiner, avoiding any eye-contact with either – except if they are fulfilling the role of accompanist. On no account should a teacher at any time sit beside the visiting examiner or attempt to take part in the discussion section, or prompt the pupil. It is inappropriate for a teacher when present in the room to “mark” or “record” their student’s performance and then expect to compare this with the examiner.
- It must also be emphasised that no other person should be in the room unless they are involved in accompanying a candidate, after which they must leave. On no account should any other person besides the candidate’s class teacher be in the room if the examiner decides to comment on the performances. Any conversation between the teacher and the examiner at this point is highly confidential.
- At no point is the visiting examiner permitted to enter into a discussion or argument with a teacher over the marks awarded – nor should a teacher challenge the visiting examiner’s ability to carry out their task. Visiting examiners have attended briefings with the Chief Examiner where the accepted standard is laid down. If a teacher wishes to challenge any outcome they should apply for remarking/assessing, as per other paper components upon issue of results at the end of the examination period in August.
- It would be appreciated if the examinations were confined to one room only and, that examiners are not asked to move to different rooms during the examination visit.

- There has been an increase in the number of candidates from different ethnic backgrounds entering the examination. In cases where a pupil has a minimal grasp of English, it would be appreciated if someone could be provided to translate for them during the discussion part of the examination. This person would only be in the examination room for this part of the examination.

Candidates who are unavoidably absent for the exam may be examined at a later date. Visiting examiners will issue forms on the day of the visit to teachers for those with genuine reasons to be examined at a later date. These need to be completed and returned to CCEA.

### **SOLO PERFORMANCE**

Again this year we had a great variety of pieces using a wide range of instruments and styles. It has been mentioned above that the length of the pieces should be long enough to allow an examiner to assess the ability of the student. Usually the pieces presented are well within the required limit. A few candidates chose to present more than one piece, and provided this is within the time frame it is permitted. It does make the examiner's assessment more difficult though, and the assessment would be based on the total performance. If a second piece is less successful than the first, it could affect the candidate's expected mark. It should be remembered that the examination does not unfortunately reward candidate's versatility if they present a very long piece or two pieces performed on different instruments.

Most candidates however do well and understand the specification requirements. Their performances are very "musical", carefully phrased, with attention to dynamics and the intentions of the composers. It was not surprising to see large numbers gaining full marks here. A wide range of instruments were offered, both orchestral, traditional, and electric.

There was another noticeable increase in the number of singers again this year and it was pleasing to see that relatively few singers now hide behind a music stand or a copy of their song when taking part in the exam, allowing them to better communicate with the listener. Teachers are to be congratulated for their accompaniments to instrumentalists and singers – occasionally however there were instances where candidate's performances were marred by insensitive, heavy-handed playing.

Accompaniments help to give candidates confidence when they perform, it is a pity if pupils are left to play complicated pieces without any accompaniment whatever.

### **ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE**

This year a large number of candidates scored highly, with many novel and highly enjoyable ensembles. However there was a feeling amongst examiners this year that in some cases ensembles seemed unrehearsed and appeared to be put together at a very late stage. There also seemed to be more teachers taking part in ensembles. We understand that with small numbers this can often be a necessity, but we would encourage schools to make this part of the examination as "pupil based" as possible.

It was more apparent this year that teachers were still occupying pivotal roles in ensembles. We see the teacher's role as guiding, arranging and preparing. An ensemble which includes a teacher tends to be teacher led.

Once again we congratulate schools on the high standards achieved in this part of the examination.

For examiners this is a very enjoyable part of the examination, and once again a great variety of ensembles were presented. Ensembles using pupil compositions and cleverly arranged traditional music figured once again. The best of these being pupil organised and directed.

Last year we highlighted the increased use being made of “backing-tracks”. Again we need to emphasise that this is fine in the solo part of the exam – if no other accompaniment exists – and if used should be set at an appropriate level. They are not however appropriate in ensemble work as they tend to dictate the tempo which is a very “personal” matter for the candidate. How can pupils be assessed in relating to a backing-track? In extreme circumstances if they *have* to be included, there should be sufficient *numbers of other performers* within the ensemble for them to relate to.

It is also important that any candidate performing in an ensemble should be able to be heard by the examiner. Surrounding the candidate with a huge amount of other sounds from other instruments or amplification puts them at a disadvantage, and can make a true assessment extremely difficult. This can be particularly frustrating during performances by Rock and Pop groups. It is possible for those playing electric guitars to control their volume and the assessment of the performance takes careful note of this. It is also essential to curb the enthusiasm of some of the drummers in the rock groups – too often, when they themselves are not being assessed, given their head, they tend to push the tempo forward and drown out the part which is being assessed. It has been noted that there was a big improvement in this area this year, but some schools still need to be aware of this.

We noted this year that sometimes in ensemble performances there were one or more other participants playing the same part as the candidate. This must be eschewed, as it impossible in such cases to hear exactly what the candidate is contributing to the group. This does the candidate a great disservice.

It is recommended that candidates presenting the Bagpipes as a solo instrument or ensemble with a side drummer should do so in a large space if possible.

## THE DISCUSSION

There was a wide range of responses to the discussions this year. Candidates should be prepared to:

- Talk about the piece they have just played, its background and any problems they may have had during the learning and performing of it.
- Be able to link their piece to an area of study.
- Explain the three areas of study and talk about any of the set works that particularly appealed to them.
- Make a very brief comment on one of their compositions.

Most pupils seemed better prepared for this and many gave interesting explanations of their pieces, how they linked to the areas of study and the difficulties they had encountered during the learning process. Examiners noted that others, however, seemed unprepared and sometimes rhymed off a lot of irrelevant information which had been learned beforehand.

Hopefully, by once again listing the above points, teachers will be able to help candidates in their preparation. Weaker candidates were inclined to repeat information learned specifically for the discussion, whether relevant or not.



## Principal Moderator's Report

As the legacy specification comes to the end of its life, it is encouraging to report once again, that the standard of this component has remained consistent this year. A smaller number of candidates gained full marks for their folios but the artistry and flair exemplified was outstanding. The calibre of such work bodes well for these candidates if they choose to progress to AS/A2 studies. It is again important to recognise the significant amount of time and effort taken by centre staff in presentation of their work and the generally excellent quality of scores, CDs and, to a lesser extent, MiniDiscs. It was encouraging to note that fewer folios gained marks below the lowest grade boundary.

Hand-written scores have been comprehensively replaced in the majority of centres, with Sibelius software being the preferred notational tool. The vast majority of centres included recordings of their compositions and scores. Increasingly sophisticated notational software programs continue to be skilfully used by the majority of centres. It is not, however, a requirement to submit recordings and scores for this legacy specification but their provision is a definite aid during moderation.

Assessments, made by the overwhelming majority of centres, continued to be accurate and correctly reflected the calibre of their candidates' work. There were, however, more centres reviewed at Post Moderation than in the previous year. Assessment of commentaries and the development of the composition (criterion (i)) continued to account for most cases of leniency noted this year. It is disappointing to reflect, that despite previous indication of the causes of lenient marking, some centres do not appear to have heeded the warning and consequently had marks adjusted at Post Moderation. Full marks for commentaries require a full, analytical account of the composition, a sound knowledge of the development of the compositional processes undertaken, reflective evaluation of the final outcome and contain very few or no grammatical or spelling errors. There were also a greater number of centres who had marks amended upwards this year.

A further marked increase in the quality of recordings submitted suggests the frequent and knowledgeable use of in-house equipment, which is to be applauded. The moderation team must be sure that the candidate commentaries **fully** explain the processes involved in these recordings. There was again, clear evidence from the Summer 2010 series of exams, that an unacceptable number of recordings gave an added sophistication to the candidates' work, which had not been fully explained in accompanying commentaries. It is disappointing to note that, in such cases, centre staff had authenticated the work as being the candidate's own and yet gave no qualifying comments on the Candidate Record Sheet.

The advent of Controlled Assessment and the requirement of staff to authenticate the compositional process on three occasions during the life of a composition, will mitigate against lack of transparency in the process.

*Music for Celebration* and *Musical Traditions in Ireland* Areas of Study proved most popular and were artistically handled by the majority of candidates. Links to *Music for Celebration* resulted in many well-structured, stylishly-developed and balanced rock/pop/urban songs with well-established references to the features expected. It was most encouraging to note the attention to detail paid by candidates in writing or researching appropriate texts.

There was a less programmatic element in the work of candidates in the *Musical Traditions in Ireland* Area of Study, but those who did choose this option were particularly effective. Traditional suites of slow airs, jigs, reels etc, were popular and a large number brought new insight to the often formulaic, nature of Traditional Irish/Ulster-Scottish dance forms. The Moderation team would remind centres that larger instrumental participation should not be

interpreted or marked as ‘developmental’ unless it increases the number of independent melodic/rhythmic lines or adds to the textural/timbral complexity of the composition.

**Musical Arrangements** *enjoyed a surge in popularity in this the final year of the specification. There were some outstandingly creative arrangements, but in general, this was the least well-handled option. Too often ‘arrangements’ were merely transcriptions, or re-orchestrations of original melodies for other resources and lacked melodic, rhythmic, textural, timbral or harmonic depth and did not reflect the requirement that original music should be presented in a ‘new light exhibiting varying degrees of flair and imagination’.*

Too many candidates still fail to adhere to the specification requirement to include the **original** music/sound sources with their arrangements. This is especially important when urban/rock songs are chosen for arrangement.

Centres who use class-based compositional tasks as teaching tools clearly outlined individual outcomes showing differentiation between candidates and allowing creativity and freedom of choice.

This year there was a much higher instance of arithmetical errors and non-compliance with authentication procedures by centre staff. Computational errors would have disadvantaged a large number of candidates and in some of these, the margin of error was in excess of 30 marks! Some centres had multiple arithmetical errors which did change rank order. Centre staff are requested to pay particular attention to totalling **across** the criteria and totalling **down** for the final folio mark. Care should also be taken in transferring total marks to the TAC 1 form.

It is a requirement of this specification that all Candidate Record Sheets are countersigned by candidate and teacher and that all Annotation sheets are signed by the candidate. Large numbers of unauthenticated work had to be returned to centres to ensure compliance in this respect. Centres are also reminded that, submissions to CCEA should include the work of the highest and lowest candidate, even if they have not been requested. There is also a requirement to include the TAC 2 form of Internal Standardisation, even in one-teacher centres.

The use of technology in the composition, presentation, notation, editing and recording of work increased again this year. It is most encouraging to note the increase in the technical knowledge shown by candidates in handling a wide range of school and home based media. There were fewer examples of work where candidates had not clearly indicated the use of the pre-programmed tracks/loops, downloaded files or material from media-sharing websites (eg You tube etc). Teacher assessments accurately reflected the original work of candidates in the vast majority of centres.

A large number of centres had submitted CDs which had not been correctly formatted for audio playback. Care should also be taken over MiniDisc formatting, allowing this medium to be played on a standard MiniDisc player.

It is commendable that the high standards of previous years have been maintained in 2010 and especially as this is the swansong of the current specification. Centre staff are further encouraged to continue their good work and focus on the areas of concern noted in this year’s report. It is our hope that the fine work which is being done in centres continues in the new specification and that candidates will continue to benefit from the high quality guidance and direction of their own centre’s Music staff.