

Component 2: Performing music – assessment guide

This resource gives you technical guidance for Component 2: Performing music to help you prepare for GCSE Music (8271). There are no recordings to accompany this document.

The task

Students must perform live music using one or both of the following ways:

- instrumental (including DJ)/vocal
- production via technology.

One performance must be as a soloist and **one performance** must be as part of an ensemble. It needs to last a **combined minimum of four minutes**. The performance as part of an ensemble must last a **minimum of one minute**.

The repertoire is **free choice**, determined by the student and the teacher.

Students must be able to interpret appropriate relevant musical elements using resources (eg microphones) and techniques (eg pizzicato) as necessary to communicate musical ideas with accuracy and expression and interpretation, including phrasing and dynamics appropriate to the style and mood of the music.

If students choose to perform using non-standard instruments (ie for which there are no nationally recognised accredited music grades) the requirements for the instrumental/vocal must be followed.

In all cases, the recording of the performance must be accompanied by one or more of the following documents, as appropriate to the type of performance:

- notated score
- lead sheet
- guide recording
- annotation.

A **solo performance** can be:

- the student performing solo (unaccompanied)
- the student performing as a soloist with accompaniment/backing track with the student having a substantial solo part.

An **ensemble performance** can be music performed by the student in conjunction with **at least one other musician** in which each player or singer has a unique and significant role.

In terms of DJ performance, the student (as a solo DJ) will use turntables (raw vinyl/CDJ) and/or Digital DJ technology (software controller/DVS) to manipulate tracks and demonstrate an understanding and use a range of techniques. There must be a minimum of **two tracks**.

In the Ensemble DJ performance the student DJ will perform with another DJ, plus one or more live musicians. They might even perform with another DJ and live musicians, in which each performer has a unique and significant role that is not doubled. There must be a minimum of **two tracks**.

Production via technology

In a solo production performance the student will complete a performance of a pre-existing piece of music using music technology, sequencing and/or multi-tracking techniques to record a solo performance of a minimum of **three tracks** with at least **one** of them performed live in **real time**. The pre-existing piece can include a student composition, but not one submitted for component 3. **A solo production performance must be entirely the work of the student being assessed in both performance and editing with at least one track being performed live.**

In an ensemble production performance the student will complete a performance as above, but with a minimum of **four** tracks. A minimum of **three** must be performed by the student and **one or more** by at least one other musician. At least **one** track must be performed live in **real time** by the student and at least **one** must be performed live in **real time** by at least one other member of the ensemble. **In an ensemble production performance, the student being assessed will create the basic performance as in the solo, but there must be at least one other musician contributing at least one other live track.**

Approach and assessment

For both performances:

- there is no maximum duration for the performances
- there is a minimum duration for the performances as stated above
- the performances should take place in a suitable venue in a live setting
- performances should be recorded using the best possible recording equipment available to the centre
- audio recordings of performances and production must be submitted complete and without post-performance editing or augmentation
- audio recordings must be on composite CDs playable on a conventional CD player, in candidate order, with the solo performance followed by the ensemble

- any guide recordings should precede the performance they relate to
- performances should be under the supervision of a teacher for authentication purposes
- performances must take place in the year of certification
- performance documentation must be submitted as evidence and will be referred to when marking the audio recording of the performance.

The overall weighting for this component is 30% using assessment objectives A01. Each performance should be marked out of 36, giving a maximum mark of 72.

The teacher should use the appropriate assessment grid when marking each performance.

Levels of demand (up to 6 marks) – these apply to all types of performances. For DJ performances the mark will depend on the number of basic, intermediate and advanced skills used in addition to the additional sound sources. In the case of production via technology performances, the mark will depend on the use of vocal, instrumental and synthesised/midi sound sources in addition to the effective use of texture and dynamics and the complexity of rhythm within a defined number of tracks.

Performing more than one piece to make up total performance time:

We would recommend that, wherever possible, students should try to perform pieces of the same standard, in order to make application of demand levels straight-forward. However, there may be occasions where students may wish to perform pieces of a different standard, for example, one grade 3 piece followed by a grade 1 piece. To cater for this, we have developed a formula that allows for performances of pieces at different standards up to, but not beyond two grades apart. So a student could submit a grade 3 and a grade 1 piece, but not a grade 4 and a grade 1 piece.

Applying demand levels for performance pieces of a different standard:

Performance of two pieces one grade apart. Apply the higher demand level of the two pieces, eg one grade 3 piece and one grade 2 piece = Demand level 4

One grade 5 piece and one grade 4 piece = Demand level 6

Performance of two pieces two grades apart. Apply the demand level in between the two pieces, eg one grade 3 piece and one grade 1 piece = Demand level 3

One grade 5 piece and one grade 3 piece = Demand level 5.

Instrumental/vocal and DJ performances are assessed in terms of technical control (accuracy) (up to 15 marks) and expression and interpretation (up to 15 marks). Production via technology is assessed using different criteria: accuracy, expression, balance, panning/stereo separation, appropriate use of effects and sense of style, each worth up to 5 marks.

Common guidance question and answers

Why do the performances have to take place in the year of certification?

It's an Ofqual requirement that both performances must be completed and assessed in the year of certification. There is nothing to stop the student practising their performances before this.

One of my students has completed both performances, but the total playing time is just three minutes and fifty five seconds. Can I just knock a few marks off because they are just under the minimum time?

No. If the total time is less than four minutes the work is not valid as assessment evidence and cannot receive any marks. This is an Ofqual ruling.

One of my students has completed both performances with a total playing time of five minutes but the ensemble performance is only forty five seconds. Will this be ok as they've performed for five minutes in total?

Not entirely. Although the solo performance is valid, the ensemble performance is not. Therefore a mark for the solo performance only would be allowed.

One of my students brought in a recording of an ensemble performance they made with their band during one of their practice sessions. Will it be ok to assess this and submit it for moderation?

No. It is your responsibility to sign the CRF (Candidate record form) to state that you are satisfied that the work is entirely that of the student. The circumstances you describe indicate that you do not know if the work is that of the student. You do not know if it is the student performing on the recording. There is nothing to stop you going to such a session and recording one of their performances; the performance does not have to take place on school premises.

In a production performance the student did not perform in real time but put the notes in using a mouse and qwerty keyboard. That's what they are allowed to do in the previous specification, is it still allowed?

No. The Specification states that at least one track should be performed live in real time – other tracks can be performed in step time. The live track does not have to be put in at one take; it can be split up into sections when it's being performed.

I've heard that the student only gets one go at recording their performances, is this correct?

No. Students can have as many chances at performing as they want/you're able to give them. You should record and mark each one and submit the best.

Does the student have to perform their solo performance at the same time as their ensemble one?

No. They can take place and be recorded at totally different times during the year of certification.

One of my students is able to play a Grade 6 piece for their solo performance really well but it only lasts for a short time. This will mean them having to play a really long ensemble piece which they're not happy about; is there any way around this?

Yes. They could submit more than one solo piece for their solo performance. In this case both pieces should be performed one after the other, recorded and assessed at the same time.

The Grade 1 piece one of my students is playing for their solo performance is only very short? Is there any way around this?

Yes. They could perform another piece to make the solo performance longer with both performed, recorded and assessed at the same time. They could also play all the repeats, DCs and D\$S, as long as they're indicated in the original score.

One of my students has done a brilliant ensemble performance with just a backing track. Is this ok?

No. The specification states that an ensemble performance should consist of at least two live performers. Backing tracks can be used, but only if there are at least two live performers including the student.

One of my students has produced a brilliant DJ performance that is complex, technically demanding and demonstrates a high level of command of the chosen resources, but they did not use an advanced skill. Can I still award it 6 marks for level of demand?

No. The marking criteria state that one advanced skill is required to justify the awarding of 4 marks or above. In the situation described a mark of 3 should be awarded. It is similar for the production via technology performances where the marking criteria clearly state what's required for each level of demand mark.

As I'm now with the current specification, I'll be limited at being able to award the higher marks for expression and interpretation if one of my students only performs a Grade 2 piece won't I?

No. Just as in the present specification the mark for expression and interpretation is not affected by the level of demand mark. It could be that an easier piece doesn't offer the student enough opportunity to demonstrate exceptional ability to demonstrate expression and interpretation. This mark may well be compromised because of that. It might be possible to add appropriate additional phrasing, dynamics and articulation if the student is able to perform these.

One of my students wants to perform an ABRSM violin piece that they recently played for their Grade VIII exam when they gained a distinction. However, the accompanist on that occasion is unavailable and I can't play the piano very well. Can they perform the piece unaccompanied?

No. A piece that is intended to be performed with an accompaniment must be performed in that way. An alternative would be to find a piece that's intended for unaccompanied performance, such as a study.