

GCSE



WJEC GCSE Music

Approved by Qualifications Wales

Non-Examination Assessment Handbook

Unit 2: Composing (3620QSL-2)

Teaching from 2025

For assessment from 2027



This Qualifications Wales regulated qualification
is not available to centres in England.

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Tasks

Task 1a: Compose an original piece of music in response to a brief set by WJEC.

Task 1b: Compose an original piece of music in response to your own devised brief.

Task 2: Present a reflective log based on the compositional process of either the composition in response to your own devised brief or the composition based on the brief set by WJEC.

Supervision and monitoring:

- No formal supervision.
- There is no restriction on the amount of time learners spend on their compositions and reflective log.
- Teachers may provide guidance and support to learners to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the requirements, including the composition briefs, the reflective log and the assessment grid.
- Before the composition process begins teachers may advise learners on the suitability of their approach to the chosen brief.
- Once composition work is underway, feedback must be limited to general advice on what needs to be improved. Teachers must not provide specific guidance on how to achieve these improvements.
- Teachers may provide only general guidance on the reflective log.
- Once the work has been submitted to the teacher to assess, no further amendments may be made.
- To be able to authenticate the work as the learner's own and complete the necessary declaration form, which forms part of the composing log teachers must:
 - see each composition in progress at least three times at different stages during the compositional process
 - see at least one draft of the reflective log.

Submission:

Each candidate submission must include:

- An mp3 audio file of each piece composed
- A score or equivalent of each piece composed
- A reflective log which refers to one of the two compositions. This can be in any appropriate format
- A composing log which details the process and includes a declaration of authenticity signed by the candidate and the teacher, and a completed mark sheet (please use the template on the website)

Weighting:

- There are 78 marks awarded in Unit 2
- Unit 2 makes up 32.5% of the GCSE Music qualification.

Information for Candidates

Composition Briefs

- One composition must be composed in response to a brief set by WJEC.
- There will be a choice of four briefs, from which you must select one.
- WJEC set briefs will be released on WJEC's Portal in the September of the first year of study; for example, briefs will be first available in September 2025 for submission in summer 2027. They will be relevant to that examination series only.
- For the second composition, you must set your own brief. This brief must contain details of the occasion, audience or context of the piece and any additional relevant musical details.
- The brief must be included on the composing log document. (Please use the template provided on the WJEC website).
- The brief itself is not assessed; however, you will be assessed on your musical response to the brief. It is important that you think carefully about the choice of composition brief to ensure that it will allow you to meet the assessment objective.
- If in doubt about composition briefs, refer to the resources and guidance on the WJEC public website or contact WJEC.

The Reflective Log

For this task you must reflect on the process you went through to write one of your compositions. There are a number of ways you could present this:

- A short, written document
- An audio or video file of you talking about your piece, or being interviewed by someone
- A PowerPoint presentation
- Any other appropriate way to present your work.

Content of your compositions

Your musical compositions must be your own original work. If you use anything non original, you must declare it on the log, and you will not be credited for it. This could include pre-recorded loops and samples, a theme or a chord sequence copied from another piece of music, an AI generated accompaniment pattern, or any other use of musical ideas which were not composed by you.

Remember that the lyrics of a song are not assessed, although the way you compose music to reflect the words will be. This means that you are allowed to use pre-existing song lyrics, poems, or lyrics generated by AI. You should declare this on your log but it will not affect your marks. Make sure that if the words come from a song you know, you do not copy any of the rhythms or melodic lines from that song.

You must not compose pieces with offensive lyrics, such as swearing, or references to drugs, violence or any form of discrimination.

What you need to submit

For both pieces you must have a score or leadsheet which shows the details of your composition. This should be a pdf or a word document. This will help the teacher, and the moderator, to understand your piece.

As well as the assessed Reflective Log there is a non-assessed composition log document which includes the declaration you must sign to say that the work is your own. This should be completed and submitted with your compositions.

Both pieces must be recorded, either live, or using the output from computer software. Only audio recordings can be submitted, not videos, so make sure that if you are writing for film the music will work on its own.

If you ask someone else to perform your piece it is important that you note on the composition log how they knew EXACTLY what to play. This is easy if there is a traditional score, but if not, you need to explain how the recording came about. For example, you could record a guide track for them to learn from. If you do, then this can be submitted with your work.

You can work on your compositions at any time during your GCSE course, up to the deadline set by your teacher.

Information for teachers

Giving guidance to learners

It is expected that you will teach your learners how to compose, for example melody writing exercises, fitting chords to a tune, cadences, musical devices...

Once a learner is working on what will be their composition for submission, you should give only general advice. It can be helpful to use the assessment criteria to show them what bands their compositions could fall into and highlighting the aspects of the criteria they have not yet addressed.

Performing compositions

The candidate does not have to perform their own compositions, but if anyone else is involved then you must not give credit to the candidate for the ideas and edits of the performers. For example, a drummer should not be adding improvised fills, a keyboard or guitar player should not be realising a chord sequence into an accompaniment, and a vocalist should not just be given lyrics and allowed to make up their own melody. If these things happen, they should be noted on the log, and you should not give the candidate additional marks for work which is not their own.

Recordings must be audio only. If candidates compose film music, then it must be successful as a standalone piece (without video) which is submitted as an audio recording.

Notating compositions

Candidates in many schools use computer software for composing, which tends to fall into two main categories – notation packages (such as Sibelius, Dorico and MuseScore) and DAWs (such as Logic, Cubase, GarageBand and Ableton.) Candidates must submit a score or equivalent with each composition. If you are using a notation package then you should export the score as a pdf file, so that the moderator will be able to open it. If you are using a DAW, it is more sensible to take screenshots of the project and to annotate these appropriately. There are examples of annotated screenshots available from the WJEC Music team.

Teachers are permitted to help candidates with the notation of their ideas but must be careful not to suggest improvements or changes in the process.

Some candidates may prefer to draw a graphic score of their pieces, or to give a written description, and either of these approaches is acceptable.

There are no marks available for the score itself.

Timing

There are no time penalties in composing. Very short pieces are unlikely to contain sufficient material to access the higher marking bands, and over-long pieces often lose focus and become self-penalising. However, there can be exceptions to this, so the submission will be judged on the content. Do not include exact repeats in the audio recording, but if these are part of the structure they should be noted on the score and detailed in the log.

Authentication

You must monitor the composing work on at least 3 occasions, and the reflective log at least once. You may choose to monitor the work more frequently in order to be able to sign the authentication document.

Once the work has been submitted for final assessment you may not give any further feedback. Before this point feedback should be general, and you should use the assessment bands to discuss areas for improvement, rather than giving specific marks.

Assessment (and calculating the final mark)

Assessment may be undertaken at any time during the qualification. However, centres should ensure that assessment is completed only when learners have undertaken the necessary teaching and learning and developed the required skills and knowledge.

The total mark for this Unit is 78.

Each composition is marked out of 36. The reflective log is marked out of 6, and these marks are added together.

Assessment – Compositions (Task 1a)

For each composition:

- the appropriate band for each column should be established by determining which descriptor best reflects the learner's composition
- the appropriate mark within the band should then be established by determining the extent to which the learner has met the criteria within the relevant band Guidance for Assessment
- the marks for each column may reflect different bands across the assessment criteria, for example, a learner may achieve band 4 in column 1, band 3 in column 2 and band 2 in column 3.

It should be noted that the bands do not correlate with grade boundaries.

Guidance for Assessment

There are 3 columns for each of the three aspects being assessed.

Column 1 – Creativity:

- assess how well the quality of the initial thematic material (pitch and rhythm) and/or harmonic material, as appropriate to the piece, allows for further development. This will include material at the beginning of the piece, and any new ideas introduced subsequently
- assess how well the thematic and harmonic content has been developed throughout the piece. This can include use of compositional devices, plus extension and working out or manipulation of ideas
- assess how well the piece includes different tone, colours and moods (e.g. changes of tempo, texture and dynamics) to create the intended mood.

Column 2 – Elements and Devices:

- assess whether the choice of musical elements is sufficient and appropriate for the piece
- assess the variety of musical devices used and how well the chosen musical devices are controlled and used within the piece
- assess how well the musical ideas are presented and how well the piece has been structured.

Column 3 – Outcome of Brief:

- assess how well the piece connects to / reflects the chosen brief
- assess the style and character of the piece and whether it makes sense as a unified and musical whole
- assess how well resources, including technology as appropriate, are controlled and used within the piece.

Assessment –Reflective Log (Task 1b)

There are 6 marks available for this task, two each for the three columns of the criteria.

Reflect on, analyse and evaluate your work in terms of:

- Response to the chosen brief and its context
- Initial ideas and creative choices
- Use of elements of music to develop initial ideas.

For each, one mark is awarded for reference to the response to the brief/initial ideas/use of elements, and a second mark is available for giving a brief evaluation.

Assessment Grid – Compositions

Band	AO4 Create and develop ideas to communicate meaning in compositions		
	Creativity Creation of initial ideas and their development	Elements and Devices Use of elements of music and musical devices	Outcome of Brief Outcome with consideration of style, character and resources
4	10-12 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas are creative and highly original, offering many opportunities for development. Ideas are skilfully developed and extended throughout the piece. Repetition and contrast are handled securely to create the intended mood. 	10-12 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly convincing understanding of the elements of music is evident throughout the piece. A variety of musical devices are used skilfully to develop and extend ideas. A well-structured piece with a highly successful presentation of musical ideas. 	10-12 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcome is a highly effective response to the chosen brief. The style and character is appropriate, highly convincing and coherent. Resources, including technology, have been handled convincingly throughout.
3	7-9 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas are original and generally convincing, offering potential for further development. Ideas are competently developed throughout the piece. Repetition and contrast are handled well in most of the piece to create the intended mood. 	7-9 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally convincing use of the elements of music is seen throughout the piece. A variety of musical devices are used competently to develop ideas. A structured piece with a successful presentation of musical ideas overall. 	7-9 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcome is a generally effective response to the chosen brief. The style and character is generally appropriate and coherent. Resources, including technology, have been handled effectively.

	4-6 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">Original ideas are simple and offer some potential for further development.Some development of ideas is evident throughout some of the piece.There is some appropriate treatment of repetition and contrast to create the desired mood.	4-6 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">Simple use of musical elements throughout most of the piece.The use of musical devices to develop ideas is mostly secure but at times inconsistent.An attempt to structure the piece has been made but the presentation of musical ideas is inconsistent.	4-6 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">The outcome is an inconsistent response to the chosen brief.There is some attempt to demonstrate an appropriate style and character.The use of resources, including technology, is simple, and inconsistent at times.
2	1-3 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">Original ideas are limited throughout most of the piece, offering little opportunity for development.Ideas show limited evidence of development.Repetition and contrast have a limited, or negative effect on the desired mood.	1-3 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">Insecure use and understanding of musical elements throughout the piece.The use of musical devices to develop ideas is limited.There is little attempt to structure the piece.	1-3 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">The outcome is a limited response to the chosen brief and has many inconsistencies.There is little attempt to demonstrate an appropriate style and character.The use of resources, including technology, shows little understanding.
0	0 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">No evidence.	0 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">No evidence.	0 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none">No evidence.

Assessment – Reflective Log (Task 1b)

Assessment Grid – Reflective Log

AO3 Reflect on, analyse and evaluate their own work and the work of others		
Response to the chosen brief and its context	Initial ideas and creative choices	Use of the elements of music to develop initial ideas
2 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to the response to the chosen brief and its context. A brief evaluation of the effectiveness of their response to the chosen brief in context. 	2 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to the initial ideas and creative choices. A brief evaluation of the effectiveness of their initial ideas and creative choices. 	2 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to the use of the elements of music to develop initial ideas. A brief evaluation of the effectiveness of the use of the elements of music to develop initial ideas.
1 mark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to the response to the chosen brief and its context. 	1 mark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to the initial ideas and creative choices. 	1 mark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to the use of the elements of music to develop initial ideas.
0 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No creditable content. 	0 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No creditable content. 	0 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No creditable content.

Guide to Controls

Unit 2: Composing is internally assessed through NEA.

Controls are provided to:

- ensure that all candidates taking a specific qualification spend approximately the same amount of time on their assignments
- prevent third parties from providing inappropriate levels of guidance and input
- mitigate concerns about plagiarism and improve reliability and validity of results
- allow centres an appropriate degree of freedom and control
- allow candidates to produce an original piece of work.

There are a number of different aspects that are controlled within the internal assessment.

These are:

- supervision – how closely candidates should be monitored as they carry out the tasks
- guidance – how much help you are allowed to provide candidates as they are completing the tasks
- resources – whether candidates are allowed access to any resources as they're completing the tasks and if so, what resources
- collaboration – whether candidates are allowed to work with others as they're completing the tasks.

Controls	Unit 2: Composing
Supervision	No controls
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not permitted – Once composition work is underway, feedback must be limited to general advice on what needs to be improved. Teachers must not provide specific guidance on how to achieve these improvements.
Resources	No controls
Collaboration	Not permitted