



**GCSE
MUSIC
8271/W**

FIRST EXAM 2026

Mark scheme

Sample set 1

Version 1.0

Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writers and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. At preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive, and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A: Listening

60 minutes

68 marks

Please note that Section A has been removed due to copyright expiry.

Section B: Contextual understanding

30 minutes

28 marks

Question 9

Total for this question **[14 marks]**

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
09.1	Give the meaning of 'Allegro con Brio'. Fast (1) With spirit/vigour (1) Any order	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
09.2	Identify two dynamics used by the timpani in the Coda of the movement. Any two of: cresc./crescendo/getting gradually louder ff/fortissimo/very loud p/piano/soft Any order	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
09.3	Violin I plays two very loud (ff/fortissimo) chords at the end of the Exposition section of the movement. Identify two playing techniques used on these chords. Any two of: arco/with the bow double stopping/two notes played at the same time quadruple stopping/four notes played at the same time triple stopping/ three notes played at the same time Any order	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
09.4	Explain how Beethoven has used dynamics , harmony and rhythm to create a sense of mystery in the Introduction section of the movement.	
	Level 4: A comprehensive response which is consistently coherent and logically structured.	7-8
	Level 3: A wide-ranging response which is mostly coherent and well structured.	5-6
	Level 2: A relevant response despite some inaccuracy/omission and weaknesses in terms of coherency and structure.	3-4
	Level 1: A limited response with some significant inaccuracy/omission and a lack of clarity.	1-2
	No work submitted or worth credit	0

Indicative Content

Extended responses could include the following:

Dynamics

- starts with fp (loud then soft) in the woodwind, f/loud chord is followed by a p/soft chord in the strings
- crescendos/getting gradually louder
- diminuendo/decrescendo/getting gradually softer
- the introduction ends piano/soft

Harmony

- (largely) diatonic
- chords are functional, going towards cadences at the end of phrases
- (some) chromaticism
- the introduction does not clearly establish the key of C major – it starts with a chord of C7 (the dominant seventh of F major) which includes a chromatically altered note (Bb)
- the C7 first chord resolves to F major, acting as a perfect cadence
- the second phrase starts on G7 but instead of resolving onto C goes to a chord of Am.
- interrupted cadence
- the introduction ends with a cadential 6/4: IC, V (7), I
- the resolution comes at the start of the exposition

Rhythm

- (mainly) crotchets and minims used in the first three bars
- demi-semiquavers/semibreves/semiquavers
- dotted notes (introduced in bar 4) and are a rhythmic feature throughout the movement
- semiquavers
- tied notes.
- variety of different rhythms (used from bar 5)

Any other valid point under any of these **three** headings.

Ensure that there is no repetition of points across different elements.

Ensure that responses refer only to the three given elements.

Give credit for accurate notation where relevant.

Question 10

Total for this question [**14 marks**]

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
10.1	<p>Identify two melodic features of the opening vocal line “Fear me, you Lords and Lady preachers” in the song <i>Seven Seas of Rhye</i>.</p> <p>Any two of:</p> <p>descending descending through a (perfect) 4th repeated notes scalar/conjunct/stepwise</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
10.2	<p>Identify the two time signatures used in the song <i>Seven Seas of Rhye</i>.</p> <p>$\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ /C/common time</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
10.3	<p>Identify two harmonic features in the Outro section of <i>Bohemian Rhapsody</i>.</p> <p>Any two of:</p> <p>complex chords diatonic chords diminished 7th dominant 7th non-diatonic chords rate of harmonic change is mainly every two beats the piece finishes on an F major chord (which is not the tonic chord)</p> <p>credit correctly named chords [such as Db6, Cb9, Bb11]</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
10.4	Explain how Queen use harmony, melody and tonality in <i>Love of My Life</i> to create a song about pain and loss of love.	
	Level 4: A comprehensive response which is consistently coherent and logically structured	7-8
	Level 3: A wide-ranging response which is mostly coherent and well structured	5-6
	Level 2: A relevant response despite some inaccuracy/omission and weaknesses in terms of coherency and structure	3-4
	Level 1: A limited response with some significant inaccuracy/omission and a lack of clarity	1-2
	No work submitted or worth credit	0

Indicative content

Extended responses could include the following:

Harmony

- the rate of harmonic change is quite slow, with mostly one or two chords per bar
- use of pedal notes eg the opening has a C pedal in the bass
- harmony moves around the same chord, but with different additions eg G Gsus4 G and G7 (at the end of the introduction) ready for the C major chord
- (mainly) one chord per bar in the Interlude section
- perfect cadence
- (use of) some complex chords with added notes and chromatic alteration eg F#m7b5
- diminished 7th (F#dim7)
- plagal cadence (at the end)
- sustained chords eg C7sus

Melody

- the introduction has seven bars (consisting of one three bar phrase and one four bar phrase)
- the RH piano playing is mostly disjunct
- (some) occasional repeated notes
- RH trill is used in the piano (bar 5)
- verses 1 and 2 have rising and falling phrases
- rising (perfect) 5th “my life”
- word painting on the lyric “hurt me”
- (some) repeated notes
- (rising) octave leap “now you”
- wide range used - between F and A (major 10th/compound major 3rd)
- bends in the guitar solo
- a trill is used in the piano RH just before the guitar solo begins
- the Interlude has some repeated notes
- (some) arpeggiated writing
- (some) conjunct/stepwise writing
- (some) higher register notes (falsetto) in the vocal line
- repetition (down an octave)

- use of glissando, slides/portamento
- use of the higher register guitar playing (up to top F)
- use of 3rds and 6ths in the faster melodic passages.
- (descending) sequence on the second “love of my life” (coda)

Tonality

- there are several different, but closely related keys used in this piece
- overall the piece is mainly in a major tonality, but there is a change to minor
- (implied) F major start in the introduction, with a temporary modulation to Bb major
- C major (verses 1 and 2)
- modulation to F major from “(can’t you) see?”
- Bb major (instrumental bridge)
- D minor/relative minor in the Interlude
- G minor (passing modulation)
- F major/C major/Bb major (guitar solo)
- D minor (coda)
- the piece finishes in F major

Any other valid point under any of these **three** headings.

Ensure there is no repetition of points across different elements.

Ensure that responses refer only to the three given elements.

Give credit for accurate notation where relevant.

Question 11

Total for this question [14 marks]

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
11.1	<p>Identify two dynamics used in the song <i>Little Fly</i>.</p> <p>Any two of:</p> <p>crescendo/cresc./getting gradually louder diminuendo/dim.decrescendo/descresc./gradually getting softer(starts/ends)p/piano/soft</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
11.2	<p>Identify two harmonic intervals (eg 2nd, 3rd etc) used at the start of the double bass riff in the song <i>Little Fly</i>.</p> <p>4th/fourth = 1 mark 5th/fifth = 1 mark</p> <p>augmented fourth/4th/diminished dim.5th (aurally) = 2 marks perfect fourth = 2 marks perfect fifth = 2 marks</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
11.3	<p>Identify two features of tonality in the song <i>I Adore You</i>.</p> <p>Any two of:</p> <p>ambiguous/unclear (G) mixolydian</p> <p>Any other valid point</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
11.4	Explain how Esperanza Spalding uses harmony, melody and rhythm to create a fusion of Samba and Jazz in the song <i>I Know You Know</i> .	
	Level 4: A comprehensive response which is consistently coherent and logically structured	7-8
	Level 3: A wide-ranging response which is mostly coherent and well structured	5-6
	Level 2: A relevant response despite some inaccuracy/omission and weaknesses in terms of coherency and structure	3-4
	Level 1: A limited response with some significant inaccuracy/omission and a lack of clarity	1-2
	No work submitted or worth credit	0

Indicative Content

Extended responses could include the following:

Harmony

- (almost) all chords contain four different notes
- chromatically altered notes
- jazz chords, with added notes/extensions beyond a seventh
- repeating four bar, four chord patterns
- suspended notes

credit examples [such as Am7b5, D7b5, B13#11]

Melody

- (some) chromatic/semitones writing (double bass riff)
- (some) disjunct intervals/leaps (vocal melody for the verse)
- (some) disjunct intervals/leaps (double bass riff)
- swoops around an octave (vocal melody for the verse)
- repeated notes (vocal melody for the verse)
- repeated notes (double bass riff)
- (some) triadic movement (vocal melody for the verse)

Rhythm

- avoidance of the first (quaver) beat of the bar (vocal melody)
- polyrhythmic effect (layering up of different rhythms)
- rests
- scotch snap/lombardic rhythm (quaver/dotted crotchet pattern) in the vocal melody
- syncopated/off beat (piano quaver chords in the chorus gives the effect of double time)
- ties
- syncopated block chord signal for the end of a section eg at end of each verse
- vocal, bass and chords all have different rhythms, as well as the drumkit in the Verse 1/chorus

Credit musical notation examples given which are accurate

Any other valid point under any of these **three** headings.

Ensure there is no repetition of points across different elements.

Ensure that responses refer only to these three elements.

Give credit for accurate notation where relevant.

Question 12

Total for this question **[14 marks]**

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
12.1	<p>Identify two percussion instruments used in <i>Slightly Topsy</i>.</p> <p>bass drum/grand cassa/gr.cassa timpani/timp/kettle drums</p> <p>Do not allow bass drum and grand cassa/gr.cassa</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
12.2	<p>Identify two melodic features of the piccolo part in the Coda of <i>Swineherd's Dance</i>.</p> <p>Any two of:</p> <p>repeated (patterns) scalic/stepwise/conjunct semiquavers (only) three notes are used</p> <p>NB credit correct notation/pitches of ABC</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
12.3	<p>Identify two time signatures used in <i>An Evening in the Village</i>.</p> <p>Any two of:</p> <p>$\frac{4}{4}$ /C/common time</p> <p>$\frac{2}{4}$</p> <p>$\frac{3}{4}$</p>	2

Question	Marking guidance	Total marks
12.4	Explain how Bartók uses articulation, melody and rhythm to create an energetic mood in <i>Bear Dance</i> .	
	Level 4: A comprehensive response which is consistently coherent and logically structured	7-8
	Level 3: A wide-ranging response which is mostly coherent and well structured	5-6
	Level 2: A relevant response despite some inaccuracy/omission and weaknesses in terms of coherency and structure	3-4
	Level 1: A limited response with some significant inaccuracy/omission and a lack of clarity	1-2

Indicative Content

Extended responses could include the following:

Articulation

- accents
- almost no legato (just a few slurs eg slurred pairs of crotchets)
- marcato
- staccato
- tenuto

Melody

- (descending falling) (perfect) 4th a melodic feature
- (mostly) 4 bar phrases
- aeolian mode on D#
- acoustic scale/lydian dominant scale (most of Section B) (a raised 4th (G#) and a flat 7th (C natural))
- (some) chromatic changes to this mode though (eg with the F naturals and E naturals at the end of the first section)
- conjunct/scalic/stepwise in Section B (woodwind)
- ornamentation eg acciaccaturas
- repeated melody
- tritone (final bassoon melody at the end of the piece)

Rhythm

- crotchet-crotchet-minim pattern is a feature
- (mainly) crotchet melodic line
- Hungarian kanász (folk dance rhythm)
- (some) longer note values (semibreves/tied semibreves towards the end)
- ostinato/near constant quavers
- general pause bar (just before the return of the A2 section)

Any other valid point under any of these **three** headings.

Ensure there is no repetition of points across different elements.

Ensure that responses refer only to the three given elements.

Give credit for accurate notation where relevant.