

## **Mock Paper and Corrections Report 2023**

**Below is a rundown on both the exam papers and the corrections in 2023.**

### Exam Papers

This year, we returned fully to the mock exam market, after three years away. New ideas and methods were adopted.

**First** - We allowed you, the teacher, to create your own LC exam papers.

- This resulted in 35 different **HL listening papers**.
- That led to 17 different **OL listening papers**.
- There were 32 different **HL composing papers**.

As well as creating the actual papers, this also meant 35 different audio folders along with 35 HL and 17 OL solution booklets.

As a result of this, I expect there may have been some mistakes. There may have been omissions or incorrect questions. I'm not aware of any. Importantly, I don't think there were audio mistakes. But, during the corrections, we did discover wrong page numbers and incorrect question numbering. There were also some errors and omissions with the solutions. If anyone was inconvenienced with errors, I apologise.

There was no choice with the 2023 JC paper.

**Second** - We ceased using CDs and distributed the audio via our new weblink/app. This is a big change. I know for some, it wasn't the preferred method. I know in certain areas, wi-fi can be tricky. But, all of you appear to have persevered and, as far as I know, it worked.

For us, it is the most efficient method. For the school, it is the cheapest method, as we only charge one price, irrespective of the number of centres. I hope having the audio available through the app has also made it handy for teachers when correcting.

We used the weblink/app for solution distribution. While the app is the best method for reading the solutions, the weblink can be handy for class use. Reading solutions through the weblink can be fuzzy, unless the page is enlarged. Work continues on this issue.

**Finally** - The distribution of all the LC questions/options to our mock customers. This is currently being attempted. All the questions, solutions and audio codes should be available to each teacher, through your website registration (not the weblink registration). When you login to our website (using whatever registration details you used when accessing and ordering the mocks), you should gain access to the questions. You can download these and use with your students. If you want to give any of the questions to your students for homework, just contact us for audio codes for them.

For JC customers, we are making available some of our questions from the MEB 2021 and 2022 papers.

We may need to change this for 2024. The volume of orders and corrections this year caused delays and issues. We will see.

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## Corrections

Since 2019, when we last corrected, things have changed. It is clear that students taking exams in 2023 have different experiences. There is also an ever expanding IT world and everyone is exposed to a different language and vocabulary.

At the start of the exams, we sit and go through the papers together here. It usually takes a few days to see how students are answering questions. There is usually repetition in the type of answer we receive. We assess answers together and decide our response. We can then all correct and mark in a similar manner.

This year, it took longer for a number of reasons. It was a while before we got repetition, simply because of the different number of papers we sent out and had returned. However, the main issues that slowed us down was the language used by the students and the misinterpretation of questions.

And so, the following is a list of issues that came up during the correcting process. It may explain the marking. It will explain the delays.

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### General Issues - JC and LC

#### Reading the question - (i) missing notes

In the first few weeks correcting, we counted 91.8% of students that inserted the incorrect number of notes in the missing notes questions! We stopped counting after that. Some students even inserted notes over existing notes. While the request was for either 4 or 5 notes, the average number of notes inserted was 8. We've concluded this is some mysterious 'fake news' issue. Do students think this is a trick and that they should insert more notes than are asked? We just couldn't figure out any other reason. Or, did they just not read the question? It is important that students know it is immaterial how many extra notes they insert. We correct from left to right, correcting only the number requested. The rest are ignored.

#### Reading the question - (ii) describe, explain and differentiate

So many marks were lost because the student just did not describe their answer. It is important that they should know that it is the description that carries at least half of the marks. Many answers were single words. If there is no explanation, the student just cannot receive marks.

This became a real issue when the student had to give differences between two excerpts. Many did not indicate which excerpt they were discussing. Many did not mention the feature for both excerpts. Unless the student gives the exact difference and states what is present in both excerpts, they cannot receive marks. As the examiner, we simply cannot second guess what the student is saying.

Giving a negative feature may not receive full marks. For example - stating excerpt 1 uses pizzicato while excerpt 2 does not. You could continue the answer with something like - excerpt 2 uses legato.

#### Reading the question - (iii) giving more features/answers than requested

Many students listed a number of answers - sometimes in one sentence. This may lose you marks in the real exam if any of the answers are incorrect. The examiner will not select correct answers and ignore the incorrect answers.

**Please advise your students to pick one answer at a time and describe it as requested in the question.  
Tell them to always check the number of 'answers' required**

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## Junior Cycle scripts - advice for students

**Q1** - Remember to mention elements from the description when choosing a music option. For example:

- Explain what **echo** means when selecting The Musical Echo;
- In Birds Chatting Happily, what will **birds**, **chatting** and **happy** sound like?;
- Describe the expectations from 'After the Bomb'.  
(Can I suggest a '**happy mood**' would not be an expected answer; some gave that as an answer).
- With March of the Kitchen Utensils, the features of a march (time sig maybe) would be the best answer, along with the sounds representing the utensils.

Avoid suggesting a tonality or a tempo as a reason for your choice.

- Major is not always happy.
- Minor is not always sad.
- A drone is not a 'slow note'; It is not a 'sad note'!
- The After the Bomb excerpt was atonal, not minor. It had no rhythmic element and no pulse.
- The Birds Chatting Happily excerpt was modal - not major.
- Birds Chatting Happily did use semiquavers. However, Semiquavers and quavers do not determine a tempo. Rhythm does not determine a tempo or speed.

### NB

For descriptions, it would be more helpful to simply use ordinary English. So many students wrote lines of musical terms. This was one thing that caused a delay with corrections. We had to check in every music education website we could find to see if this was how students were expected to do descriptions. If there is an edict out there stating this is how the student should speak, I apologise now. We could not find one.

The issue with musical terms (Italian) for dynamics and tempo is that these words do not have a definitive sound. For the most part, terms like ***forte, cresc, f, mf*** and ***Allegro etc.***, are terms that appear on a printed score. If we listen to 10 different recordings of the same Classical piece, we will hear 10 different versions and interpretations, with different dynamics and speeds, even though the performers and conductors use the same score.

If a student chooses to use such terms, then the examiner did check to see what the composer actually used. Invariably, the students' terminology was incorrect. The student will need to pinpoint the exact term - a difficult prospect. If they can't, it is best to avoid using them. There are other questions on the exam paper that require the student to know the meaning of these terms. Describing a piece as lively and loud tells exactly what will follow and is closer to what an official programme note will use.

However, terms with a definite meaning of a sound or effect (*accent, rubato, staccato, pizzicato* etc.) can be used. They would need to be explained however.

### The composing section:

- You must use the given rhythm.
- You must add phrasing.
- You must end on doh.  
(even without any composing element, the above three elements could be completed).

### Q2 - The programme note:

The student was asked to select a **feature** and describe it, as in a programme note. Many students did not select a feature. Many students simply gave an opinion of the music.

**Q3** - We only accepted a **final cadence** in bars 15 and 16. The student needed to end on the tonic chord. Bars 11 - 12 needed to be a cadence. Roman numerals are not accepted.

### **Q5, Excerpt 3:**

The answers given to this also took us by surprise. The majority discussed the speed of the accompaniment. What was disturbing was the fact that students chose to refer to the accompaniment as if it were a separate piece of music. Below are answers that were provided by a large majority of students:

- The guitar player is playing *allegro* and the singer is singing *lento* (because of the lively strumming?).
- The guitar player is playing an *ostinato*. Can we assume that the strumming technique, which is a set style of accompanying, was regarded as an *ostinato* simply because it appeared repetitive?.
- The guitar is playing monophonically while the singing is homophonic. Ascribing a texture to a single activity within a performance, was a common occurrence. Can we assume here, the student thought the guitar was the only accompaniment and so was monophonic? It's hard to know.

The student appeared to be constantly aiming to give a title to every answer - a speed, a technique or a texture - instead of simply describing what they heard. Their meanings of the terms used - the speeds, the texture and the technique - were often incorrect.

### **Excerpt 4:**

It is important to know what a song is. While it is accepted that the internet sites like Spotify and Google, constantly refer to instrumental as a 'song', a student would need to know what the term means. When asked to identify a song with a verse and a chorus, an instrumental piece was a completely wrong choice. Classical works such as arias and cantatas tend not to use verse and chorus structure.

### **Q6, Excerpt 5:**

We had to make some assumptions. A busker, it is assumed, is a performer already and they perform in a particular style. They know their music. They know their instrument. They know their words.

The answers we looked for here were other elements such as: - set up; communication skills; equipment; variety. Other things like volume were important also but needed to be explained. Saying they should sing out loud was not the correct advice.

### **The student's own composition:**

This caused a lot of grief for the student. A description should give the reader a clear picture of what the piece should sound like. But, as this was meant to be their own work (even if it was a fictitious composition), they really should identify

- the actual key, and not just the tonality;
- they should identify the actual instruments used and not just refer to a family of instruments;
- they definitely need to state if the piece is a song or an instrumental;
- they should state its length (either in bars or time);
- state the arrangement - solo or duet etc.

Again, as before, it is best to use ordinary English.

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## Leaving Cert scripts advice to students

Three further issues occurred with the LC Listening Papers.

### 1 - Synch, Syncopation, Unison, Monophony:

(a) The first was brought to light when we were running a check on some JC answers.

A JC student named the song **Sticker** by the k-pop group **NCT 127** in one of their answers. While listening to the song to check if it had a chorus, the comments under it were read. One comment struck a chord (excuse the pun). It referred to the song as being one of the most '**audibly unsynchronised**' songs the person had heard. We felt the complete opposite. The song is full of syncopated elements, all running wonderfully together. But, even the group themselves found the song a challenge.

At the exact same time, we were discussing some LC students who kept referring to the opening bars of Bach's 1st mvt, as being **synchronised**. Some students were calling it un-syncopated. Some referred to it as being **synched**. Combined with incorrect spelling used at times, this had led to some confusion for us. Why were they saying that ex 1 was synchronised (or unsyncopated) and ex 2 was not synchronised?

On discussing this, it seemed that students were referring to music with syncopated elements as being 'in synch' with everything else. Or.. something to that effect. It's the first time this has cropped up for us.

They are saying that bars 9 - 15 of the 1st mvt are not synchronised? Because these bars have no syncopation? The use of the word 'synched' and their understanding of it, might be a little off. It's hard to know. Are they mistaking the word syncopation with unsynchronised music? Or are they simply saying all the off-beat rhythm worked well together? That is possibly something to check with students.

(b) Following on from point (a) above, a large number of students are misusing the terms unison, harmony, monophony (and homophony and polyphony). This time, as an example, the students were referring to the first statement of the **Strife Theme** in Tch. Many stated that it '**moved in unison**'. Others stated it was **monophonic**. This same terminology was used to describe the opening of **Bohemian Rhapsody**. As well as using the afore mentioned 'synchronism', the students seemed to use unison and monophony to mean the section moved as a block - all together. A few students stated they moved 'in harmony in unison' - yes both terms.

### 2 - Repetition, Imitation, Sequence, Dialogue, High, Low

(a) The above terms are causing confusion. Some students are interchanging all four terms, almost as if they are the same. The following are an example of some of the inaccuracies that occurred:

- Antiphonal Dialogue was said to be imitation; one voice states an idea and a second imitates it.
- Canon was said to be repetition; one voice plays an idea; a second repeats it, at a specific distance.
- The term 'repeated sequence' was used - referring to the pizzicato section in Tchaikovsky (bar 38).

Bar 38 onward is either a repeated motif played at different pitches or it is just a number of sequential ideas. The sequence itself is not repeated.

Antiphonal dialogue is not imitation. It is not even repetition necessarily. The second voice replies with an answer that may or may not be similar to the question.

Canon is exact imitation at a specific time and pitch difference, with parts overlapping - it is not repetition.

The problem with 2 (a) above is that the words have a different meaning outside of music. Also, within pop and rock music, **sequence** has a specific meaning. However, if discussing Classical music, the terms would need to carry their Classical meaning. The same applies to the word **upbeat**. It has a specific Classical meaning. Outside of that, it is used for a number of other different things.



Finally, when using the word **repetition** as a feature, be specific. Does the student mean repeated notes? Repeated motives? Repeated phrases? When they say repeated notes, do they mean that one singular note is being repeated over and over? Or do they mean that a number of different notes (i.e. a motif) are being repeated? There is a difference.

(b) **Dynamics** are now being described with the terminology used on devices and electronic equipment. Stating the dynamics increased is fine. However, students are also stating a 'melody is high' and the 'accompaniment is low'. Initially, we assumed this was pitch. However, as the corrections went on, it became obvious that the students were using the terminology associated with the volume dial of their device - going high (louder) or low (softer). It is difficult to know how this can be assimilated into an answer without the student specifying which they are discussing - pitch or dynamic. Different examiners may take the answer in different ways. Other confusion that recurred include:

- The piano accompaniment during the introduction and 1st verse of Bohemian Rhapsody (and also the intro to the Operatic section) was referred to as being monophonic, which is wrong in so many ways. Are they thinking it is a single instrument accompanying?
- A sequence was called an ostinato. Referring again to bar 38 of Tchaikovsky - the pattern was called an ostinato (because the rhythm was repetitive?). This is similar to the strumming of a guitar in an accompaniment being referred to as a rhythmic ostinato.

### 3 - Rhythm, Time Signatures, Tempo

These three terms were used incorrectly by students. The easiest way to explain is through **Q6, Ex 5 and Ex 6**. Students were asked to compare these two different versions of the same song.

- **Excerpt 5 is in a compound time (12/8)**. The accompanying percussion beat therefore, had a 3-quaver pattern with  repeated throughout (the second half especially with 4 x3-quavers patterns per bar). **Excerpt 6 is in 4/4 time**. The accompanying percussion loop here is  leading the majority of student to believe that Ex 5 was faster than Ex 6.

**NB** - If you **conduct it**, you will see/hear that it is the other way around.

**Ex 6 has a faster tempo/speed than Ex 5, which uses a busier rhythm.**




- In the same way, the second statement of the FL theme in Tch (bar 38) was said to be faster than the first statement (bar 1). The rhythm is busier. The speed has not changed.
- Bars 9 - 15 of the 1st mvt of Bach were said to be faster than the opening 8 bars. Again, is that the assumption because of the quaver movement in the second excerpt?
- Students were asked to explain the time signature 3/16 from Barry. The majority referred to it as a 'fast' time signature.



**NB**

And so, from the above examples, it can be seen that the students are mixing up tempo/speed with rhythm. Time signatures are taking on a life they don't have. This was an issue that we never came across in corrections before.

**Time signatures have no bearing on speed. A busy quaver/semiquaver rhythm does not necessarily mean a fast speed. A semibreve or sustained note does not mean a slow speed. A drone or pedal is not slow.**

A good experiment with the student would be to ask them which of the following they think is faster (using 60 is good because of the connection with a second):

-  = 60
-  = 60
-  = 60

Then, getting them to compare  = 180 and  = 120 for example, will tie them up in knots - but might help. They might be surprised to find they are thinking the opposite to what is actually correct.

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### Finally....

- Using biro was a huge issue. Students used ink when inserting missing notes on a stave and when selecting option boxes. So many then had to scribble out or use tip-ex. In some cases, it is possible marks were lost because of the illegibility of the answer.
- A warning should be made regarding writing answers outside the answer box. Writing outside the boxed area may not be seen in the real exam.
- It is important to read the questions. The Irish essay was misinterpreted by many. While students gave wonderful and interesting information, an awful lot of writing did not receive marks because it was off the point of the essay title. Be careful to read it correctly.

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The LC Composing paper threw up very few issues. The main ones were:

- In the harmony, they should try to make sure they maintain the given bass style. This includes all elements of the style - the rhythm and the movement.
- Keep an eye out for the aug 4th in the bass line. And the treatment of the LN in general - be careful.
- In the melody, again try to maintain the given style. Their bars must gel with the given 4 bars. It is meant to be a Classical melody - not a Modern one.

That's it. I hope some of the above is helpful when trying to understand our correction and marks. The real exam may mark completely differently.

Good luck to everyone in June.

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