

Designing for Digital – the new Overall Performance criteria in Music Digital Graded Exams.

This blog post from Francesca Christmas, Associate Director of Music at Trinity College London, sets out to describe the way in which the new ‘overall performance’ mark is assessed in Trinity’s Digital Music Graded Exams.

When we started investigating a digital replacement for the supporting tests and session skills, we looked first at the *construct* (the function, delivery method, and content) of the exams. We mapped out the musical knowledge and skills that must be developed by a candidate in order to perform the supporting tests/ session skills successfully, and what the learning outcomes are of the teaching that leads towards them. These are things such as:

- Being able to play with a secure sense of pulse, and rhythm
- Playing with a secure understanding of pitch and intonation,
- Demonstrating awareness of harmonic progression,
- Demonstrating awareness of structure and musical direction,
- Being able to respond creatively to musical instructions,
- Being aware of musical features such as cadences, key signatures, time signatures
- Demonstrating understanding of stylistic features such as form, ornamentation, articulation
- And more

These musicianship skills are not only outcomes of the supporting tests and sessions skills, they are also demonstrated through the performance of the pieces and technical work. So rather than create an entirely new set of tests in replacement, we decided to

devise a set of criteria that would assess the manifestation of these skills *as sustained across the entire exam performance*. We developed the ‘Overall Performance’ criteria that assesses these musicianship skills as follows:

Performance delivery and focus (10 marks): assesses the focus, assurance, and continuity of the performance – i.e. are the musicianship skills sustained meaningfully throughout the candidate’s performance? Are they maintained in a focussed way as they move between pieces and across the technical work?

Musical Awareness (10 marks): assesses whether the candidate has sound musical knowledge of their whole programme – i.e. are they able to demonstrate a sustained awareness of the appropriate interpretations of their pieces, moving fluidly between styles or genres? Is there a sustained commitment to the personal interpretation of the score? Are they confident in their delivery of the entire programme?

This approach has a number of key benefits for our candidates and teachers:

- There is no negative impact on teaching time – candidates are not required to learn something new. Teachers do not have to adapt their planning and can continue with ‘business as usual’ in preparation for the digital grades
- It avoids a reliance on technologies that may not be able to deliver the exam content had we decided to create replacement tasks for the supporting test/session skills – for example, video conferencing software does not reliably deal with latency and requires fast, reliable broadband which not all candidates will have access to
- Candidates are able to submit their exam at the most appropriate time – there are no time zone constraints, they can choose when to record and upload, and can do so from the comfort of familiar surroundings

We have spent some time testing the approach to ensure that the new criteria will provide a result that would be directly comparable to the result of the face-to-face graded exam. We have worked with examiners and teachers to refine the criteria and ensure that it will enable not only a reliable, but enjoyable experience for our candidates. And, as always, we have carefully thought through the adjustments we will make to the marking of the new criteria for candidates with additional needs.

Supporting Tests and Session Skills will remain in our face-to-face exams. After all, part of our mission statement is to offer choice and flexibility to our teachers and candidates, and now they can select the exam structure that suits best.

Adapted from: https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/digital/digital-grades-diplomas/overall-performance-criteria?utm_source=uki-blog&utm_medium=blogpost&utm_campaign=beyond-pieces&utm_term=overall-performance-criteria&utm_content=textlink&__hstc=140353068.01e079e33cd96f0865b101da4a0ffa5f.1688215590596.1688215590596.1688215590596.1&__hssc=140353068.1.1688215590596&__hsfp=3372006991&_gl=1*1n729gb*_ga*Mzc1MzE1NTUzLjE2ODgyMTU1OTI.*_ga_E3K7QGL4FT*MTY4ODIxNTU5Mi4xLjEuMTY4ODIxNTU5Mi4wLjAuMA..

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