

## Principal Assessor Report 2002

**Assessment Panel:**

**Music**

**Qualification area**

**Subject and Level  
included in this report**

**X065 Music:  
Advanced Higher**

## Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2001	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	Course award: 198 55.5% As (110 candidates) 30.8% Bs (61 candidates) 6.6% Cs (13 candidates) 2.5% Compensatory (5) 4.5% No award (9)  Based on 171 candidates, the number of candidates for the extension units as part of a course award was as follows: Performing Ext.1                      65 Performing Ext.2                      69 Inventing                                      5 Listening                                        4 MIDI    2 Sound Engineering                      3 Accompanying                              13 Training & Directing                      11
<b>Post appeal</b>	N/A

Number of entries in 2002	
<b>Pre appeal</b>	Course award: 624
<b>Stand alone unit presentations/passes</b>	Performing (Ext.1)                      185 Performing (Ext.2)                      74 Inventing Ext.                              8 Listening Ext.                                3 MIDI Ext.                                      4 Sound Eng. Ext.                            3 Accompanying Ext.                      10 Training & Directing                      8  PIL Unit (only)                            14

### General comments re entry numbers

The total number of course awards is more than the total of AH and CSYS Music in 2001. This is very encouraging, especially when the considerable number of 'stand alone' awards is added; there is no available break-down in the statistics for candidates being presented in more than one 'stand alone' unit, or for candidates who were presented for an extra unit in addition to their course award; it might be reasonable to assume that over 200 candidates were presented in addition to the 624 candidates completing the course. Future discussions concerning AH Music might consider if more candidates would be presented for a course award if different combinations of units were made available.

## General comments

A wider range of candidates and still wider range of responses was evident in this year's presentations when compared with 2001. Almost all candidates were suitable for presentation at this level. It would seem that Advanced Higher Music has been successfully introduced in the majority of centres but examiners and markers were concerned that several centres appeared to have spent insufficient time preparing candidates for their external papers. Also, items submitted at the end of April were not packaged clearly by many centres and this was often combined with poorer work from candidates within the same centres. Responses suggested that candidates had often lacked clear guidance as to the requirements for external marking. Some candidates were undoubtedly disadvantaged by centres' lack of awareness in the details of syllabus content.

## Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Maximum marks - 240

A                    168 marks

B                    144 marks

C                    120 marks

### General commentary on grade boundaries

*Notional percentage cut-offs for each grade*

Question papers and their associated marking schemes are designed to be of the required standard and to meet the assessment specification for the subject/level concerned.

For National courses the examination paper(s) are set in order that a score of approximately 50% of the total marks for all components merits a grade C (based on the grade descriptions for that grade), and similarly a score of 70 % for a grade A. The lowest mark for a grade B is set by the computer software as half way between the C and A grade boundaries.

### Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Grade boundaries were set at exactly the same marks as for 2001. These boundaries reflect the high standards of Performance (PIL and Extensions) by the majority of candidates in this examination. The National Rating for AH Music was 1.02, suggesting that, statistically, this is an easier examination than some other subjects; this more likely reflects the higher ability range of the smaller group of candidates in 2001, but it is expected that the National Rating will be closer to the average rating in 2002. Boundary marks for 2003 would have to be carefully considered if AH Music is not closer, especially as examiners believe that the average standard of candidates' work was poorer this year.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

In general, candidates were not as well prepared this year; there were many examples of carelessness in the presentation of submissions and clear signs that centres and their candidates had not read the documentation provided for each unit in various publications. Worse still, some centres appeared to deliberately ignore requirements or present submissions which left markers uncertain as to how much input individual candidates had made. It was obvious that some candidates had received limited help from their centres or had chosen to complete units almost on their own initiative.

There is a possibility that candidates may feel there is not enough time between some questions in the papers for Listening, Training and Directing and Sound Engineering. A further 15 minutes officially added onto the 1 hour timings of these papers would probably help the candidates and the setters.

The introduction of recordings on CDs seems to have gone reasonably smoothly; one paper did not have individual tracks for each question, but this should be the norm for all papers using audio recordings in future years.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

A large majority of candidates were prepared well and achieved very good results. This was especially true for the Extension 2 Performance candidates and in the marks of candidates opting for Accompanying.

In the Listening Core Commentary particularly good marks were achieved by candidates whose work detailed the actual music being studied with integrated musical quotations or audio quotations which were clearly linked to the text.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

#### Listening Core 1 (Commentary)

Some markers felt that candidates were still uncertain as to what was expected of them; extra consideration was given to these candidates this year but centres should be encouraged to give accurate information concerning the requirements for this unit in future years. Well-intentioned use of background information (eg stories of symphonic poems, opera plots, irrelevant biographical details, lists of tracks on albums and lists of performers) distracted candidates from writing about the personal insight they had gained from their studies. A number of texts did little more than repeat obvious features contained on scores such as orchestration, time signatures, tempo markings, etc.

Two centres presented several submissions all obviously based on the teachers'/lecturers' notes on only two works which all candidates used in their commentaries; this seems outwith the spirit of the expected submissions, but clearer guidelines on areas of study are required.

#### Listening Core 2 (Paper)

The comparison question (8) had very mixed responses with obvious confusion as to what was required in the minds of some candidates. Musical literacy questions (2 and 3) were poorly answered. The rhythm feature in question 6 proved to be difficult for many. Most candidates had difficulty responding to questions where direct answers were required rather than where the more familiar multiple-choice answers were offered.

### **Inventing Extension Folio**

Candidates frequently used too much repetition to make up the required minimum time for folios. Often there were not enough original ideas within the compositions. Popular styles of composition were more successful than others. Poorer examples included attempts at pastiche of styles which the candidates did not appear to understand. There was often evidence of a poor grasp of harmony or of only a limited working range of chords involved.

Performance plans were often vague; these must include details of who invented what on a recording and especially details of who improvised what and the basis of the performers' improvisations within a composition – who plays each track and how much of the “composition” is the performers' ability rather than detailed directions from the candidate?

### **Listening Dissertation**

Far too much background was included in these submissions. Centres need to give careful advice to candidates on the choice of subject which must be extensive enough to justify its use for this complete unit.

### **MIDI Sequencing**

Centres are not encouraging candidates to display enough individual ability where several candidates are being presented.

Some centres appear to be cutting corners by basing work on commercial MIDI files, thus not allowing candidates to display enough of their own, individual input. A higher standard of response is obviously possible when candidates are directed by centres to base their work on files downloaded from the Internet where adjustment rather than thorough personal knowledge is required to produce a highly professional sounding final mix.

There was poor use of “audio” facilities as required at this level; candidates and centres still seem unable to cope with audio and MIDI mixed together. Variations in bar numbering between different programs and the use of reverberation were apparent causes of difficulties in the MIDI paper.

There were technical problems with marking almost every submission caused by the range of programs and platforms being used. Central marking using SQA's new computer facilities could prevent many of the delays and the problems created for markers as new technical problems occur each year in this fast-changing area; feed-back to centres could be provided to avoid similar problems in future years.

### **Sound Engineering and Production**

Candidates are weakest in the final section of the paper where no audio extracts are used; this contrasts with some of the earlier questions such as the song analysis in which almost every candidate gains full marks. The paperwork for the audio folio - take sheets, edit sheets and scores or performance plans were often missing, vague or brief; these must be supplied to inform the marker how the candidate has achieved the results heard on the final mix. Many candidates are penalised for not fulfilling the requirements of at least an 8-track recording.

### **Training and Directing**

The quality of candidates was disappointing this year. Many did not have enough musicianship or personality to cope with this course. Standards of preparation for rehearsals and “directing” were disappointing. Lengths of video evidence varied alarmingly. Logs varied incredibly – some were almost non-existent. Often there was a vague approach to early rehearsals although all candidates did show signs of improvement.

Centres must be aware of the commitment required to provide all the resources which can make this such a good and enriching unit; they must stick to the guidelines and advice given in all the appropriate national documents.

The paper again had a varied response; question 1 was reasonable; question 2 was very poorly tackled; question 3 appeared to offer almost too many answers for the candidates; question 4 had a mixed response, but was generally well answered.

## **Areas of common misunderstanding**

### **Listening (Core) Commentary**

Candidates are not always discussing a minimum of two works in their submissions. Short notes on which the commentary is based are for internal assessment only and do not have to be submitted with the commentary. Comments on the actual music being studied will attract marks, not general background information, vague references or lists of associated information.

### **Listening (Core) Paper**

Candidates are uncertain of the appropriate boxes to use for their answers in the comparison question (8).

### **Inventing (Core and Extension)**

Without full programme notes markers may be unable to award marks from the full range available. Details of performers and the candidate's exact contribution to a composition must be included. Several candidates' work was not at the appropriate standard and centres need to refer to national guidelines to ensure that submissions are suitable.

### **Listening Dissertation**

To avoid shorter and less detailed submissions, candidates should be encouraged to study larger works or connected groups of pieces/movements.

### **Accompanying**

Centres failed to realise the time required for the Visiting Examiner to complete the assessment of this unit. Planning for the VE visit should allow anything up to 1 hour 15 minutes for each candidate.

### **MIDI Sequencing**

Candidates must be taught to use Audio sections of appropriate sequencer programs. They must be able to mix audio files with MIDI files and know how to balance the combined sounds. There were technical problems in almost every submission at this level.

When organising equipment for the MIDI paper, centres should check that networked computers will not prevent individual candidates loading the files from the examination disk provided by SQA containing the MIDI and WAV files. Candidates must also be familiar with the appropriate methods of saving their work to CR-R, mini-disc, zip disk or audio tape as required by this paper, again bearing in mind the possible complications of networked computer stations.

### **Sound Engineering and Production**

Candidates or centres often failed to provide the vital paperwork for this unit. Candidates must provide take sheets, edit sheets and scores or performance plans to enable the marker to establish how the candidate has produced the final recording.

### **Training and Directing**

Centres should only present candidates in this unit where the basic skills of reading appropriate scores and communicating clearly with performers at rehearsals would appear to be possible. The level of achievement for this unit should be the equivalent of any other unit. Videos must be organised as instructed in national guidelines. Centres are asked to provide considerable support, even with a highly motivated candidate, and this should be considered before a student is encouraged to embark on this unit; is sufficient time available to candidates and performers to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged?

## Recommendations

### Feedback to centres

Centres should adhere to guidelines contained in the National Course Specification, second edition, July 2000, particularly in the following areas:

- **Listening (Core) Commentary:** Candidates should submit work based on a minimum of two pieces (page 13); from 2003 maximum marks will only be possible if submissions follow this instruction.  
Candidates should be encouraged to incorporate written quotations within the text or/and short audio excerpts to which specific reference should be made in the text. Extensive background notes will not be awarded marks.  
The two short reports do not have to be sent with the completed commentary; they should only be used for internal assessment.
- **Listening (Extension) Dissertation:** Written quotations or/and short audio excerpts should be included and specifically referred to in the text.  
The five short reports do not have to be submitted for external assessment; they should only be used for internal assessment.
- **Listening (Core) Paper:** In the final question – the comparison of two works - centres should encourage candidates to use the answer boxes as accurately as possible with concepts entered under the appropriate headings provided (Melodic, Harmonic, etc). A limited number of marks will be allocated to naming solo instruments or prominent instrumental sections but further marks will be awarded for descriptions of the detailed use of instruments.
- **Inventing (Core and Extension):** Programme notes and performance plans (where no score can be provided) must include accurate instructions for players to follow and not rely on other players' skills of improvisation; some improvisation by the candidate is acceptable within a composition but basic chord structures alone are not sufficient for other players. Instructions or a description of each part should contain enough information for anyone to reconstruct the part.  
Candidates should be reminded that the minimum length of a Core folio should be 5 minutes' duration and the minimum length of an Extension folio should be 8 minutes' duration.
- **MIDI Sequencing:** In the MIDI file submission, evidence must contain at least one digital audio part combined with a minimum of four MIDI parts (page 18 in the Specification).  
In the MIDI practical paper candidates do not have to set up the MIDI and digital audio workstation, only use an existing workstation to edit one piece which includes MIDI and WAV files.  
Centres must provide equipment and sequencing packages which have enough facilities for the candidates to process WAV files and then store their answers for external assessment on suitable media – CD writers or ZIP disk machines and a suitable audio recording device to produce a good-quality audio recording of the final mix.
- **Sound Engineering and Production:** Candidates must adhere to the evidence requirements stated on page 20 of the Specification. For recordings using stereo techniques, there has to be clearly logged evidence of at least 3 takes being edited and used. For recordings using multi-track techniques, recordings must demonstrate a mix of 8 or more tracks. All recordings must be accompanied by appropriate take sheets, edit sheets and annotated musical scores or performance plans.

- **Training and Directing:** Videos should be marked clearly with the centre and candidate numbers. The trainer-director should be audible throughout. Centres should be reminded that the video length may range from 5 minutes to a maximum of 30 minutes. The final, live performance (which must be on the video) should take place before an audience; this might consist of a class or a school concert audience.  
The score requires to be annotated to indicate the level of rehearsal preparation; a score is strongly advised – if a performance plan is used it would require sufficient detail to allow accuracy within the performance to be verified. Candidates could make copies of an original score for the annotation required – any such copy would thereafter be destroyed.  
Candidates should be aware that Rehearsal Logs must be submitted in their entirety. Sections relating specifically to video coverage should be identified and dated within the Log. Background information regarding the level of abilities within the performing ensemble should be referred to, as should the involvement of any members of staff. The Log should also include evidence of target setting and evaluating whether these targets have been met; this should be seen to influence subsequent rehearsals. The audience, although not on the video, should be identified within the Log.  
More detailed teacher comment in the appropriate section would be helpful in allowing the assessor information on the balance of input between the candidate and any teacher/instrumental tutor involved.  
The Viva Voce allows the candidate to clarify several issues; candidates should attempt to give the assessor greater insight into the process which has taken place during the course and offer any helpful information not available within the Log. The Viva Voce often takes longer than the 10 minutes suggested if the candidate seems able to enhance what is already in the Log.