



# **National Qualifications Course Report 2007: Music**

**Standard Grade, Access 2, Access 3,  
Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher,  
Advanced Higher**



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# Introduction

The purpose of this Course report is to give centres:

- ◆ all information on internal and external assessment for the subject in the one place
- ◆ an easier way of making a comparison across levels and years
- ◆ support in achieving consistency in national standards across levels for both internal and external assessment

We will provide a link on the SQA website from the contents page of the Course report to individual sections of the report to allow for easier navigation, in addition to having access to the complete report.

We encourage you to provide feedback about the usefulness of the Course report. Please contact Mary McDonald, Qualifications Manager for NQ Music, with your comments – 0131 561 6811 [mary.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk](mailto:mary.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk)

# Summary of Findings

## General

Candidate entries increased in 2007 at all levels of Music including Standard Grade.

Following the National Qualifications Review of Music, new Arrangements were implemented in session 2006/2007, with 2007 as the first examination year for new Courses at Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher.

This implementation reinforced the established format of Units and Courses and the clear distinction between them: Units as qualifications in their own right; Units as the building blocks towards the overall Course award. Centres are reminded about the complementary and supplementary nature of Units and Courses and the different assessment demands for each of these.

Each of the National Courses in Music has three component Units, each of 40 hours' duration: Composing, Listening and Performing **or** Performing with Technology. Each of these component Units must be passed by candidates in order to be eligible for the overall Course award.

Units are assessed internally by centres using National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials and assessment decisions are subject to verification by SQA. In tandem with this, centres prepare their Course candidates for the external examination which has two components: for Course X231, the Question Paper and the Performing examination; for Course X233, the Question Paper and the Performing with Technology folio. External assessment is carried out by SQA, marks are awarded and then an overall final grade (A,B,C or D) is assigned to each candidate.

See the following two illustrations of the different nature of Unit and Course assessment:

### **Performing (Unit)**

All prepared pieces in the programme are assessed internally by the centre on a pass/fail basis.

### **Performing (Course)**

SQA's Visiting Examiner samples from the prepared programme and assigns a mark to each of these.

### **Listening (Unit)**

The centre administers the NAB test towards the end of the Unit when the contents of the Unit have been delivered and the candidates are ready. The centre assesses candidate performance on a pass/fail basis. (The centre decides on Unit completion date and date of test and any subsequent re-assessment event).

**Listening (Course)**

All candidates entered for the Course sit the Question Paper during the main examination and a mark out of 40 is assigned to each candidate. The design and the content of the external Question Paper is different from the NAB tests and retention and integration of knowledge and understanding over the period of the Course is a significant factor.

# Entries and Awards

## Entries and Awards — Standard Grade Music

Year	Entries
2007	10,601
2006	10,542
2005	10,229

### Grade boundaries for each assessable element

#### Grade Boundaries 2007

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Listening	60	45	34	50	32	26	45	28	21

#### Grade Boundaries 2006

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Listening	60	44	33	50	31	24	45	27	22

#### Grade Boundaries 2005

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Listening	60	43	33	50	32	26	45	27	21

### Distribution of awards

	Entries	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	No Award
2007	10,601	33.8%	33.1%	18.3%	8.2%	3.5%	0.6%	0.0%	2.4%
2006	10,542	35.8%	31.3%	17.5%	8.4%	3.3%	0.8%	0.0%	3.0%
2005	10,229	37.1%	31.1%	16.6%	8.0%	3.3%	0.8%	0.0%	3.1%

## Entries and Awards — National Qualification Clusters

### Access 2

	<b>Entries</b>	<b>Awards</b>
<b>2007</b>	11	31
<b>2006</b>	11	1
<b>2005</b>	7	0

### Access 3

	<b>Entries</b>	<b>Awards</b>
<b>2007</b>	489	376
<b>2006</b>	181	107
<b>2005</b>	266	140

## Entries and Awards — Intermediate 1 Music

Year	Entries
2007	798

### Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	70	60	50	45

### Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	798	12.8%	23.4%	26.9%	63.2%	10.7%	26.2%

## Entries and Awards — Intermediate 2 Music

Year	Entries
2007	3,095

### Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	70	60	50	45

### Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	3,095	30.4%	29.6%	21.8%	81.8%	5.9%	12.3%

## Entries and Awards — Higher Music

<b>Year</b>	<b>Entries</b>
2007	4,278

### Grade Boundaries

<b>Year</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
2007	100	68	58	48	43

### Distribution of awards

	<b>Entries</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>No Award</b>
2007	4,278	28.4%	32.0%	23.4%	83.7%	5.3%	1.0%

## Entries and Awards — Advanced Higher Music

Year	Entries
2007	1,235

### Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2007	100	68	58	48	43

### Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2007	1,235	42.8%	30.6%	16.9%	90.3%	3.6%	6.2%

# Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses

## Titles/Levels of National Units Verified:

### THE FOLLOWING UNITS WERE VERIFIED:

<b>MUSIC:</b>	<b>COMPOSING</b>	<b>DV45 10</b>	<b>INTERMEDIATE 1</b>
		<b>DV45 11</b>	<b>INTERMEDIATE 2</b>
		<b>DV45 12</b>	<b>HIGHER</b>
		<b>DV45 13</b>	<b>ADVANCED HIGHER</b>

## Feedback to Centres

### General comments

A number of centres were unable to meet the submission date of March 2007. After consultation with SQA these centres were offered an extension where appropriate.

In 2007 144 centres were verified at the central verification event. The greater majority of centres verified were in line with national standards. Of the centres not accepted, all were accepted following resubmission.

A wide range of composing folio work was found across all levels.

Folios were generally well organised with centres providing evidence that staff were comfortable with their role as internal assessors.

A wide range of musical styles and concepts were encountered, particularly in contemporary and popular genres.

Instruments of assessment, such as, detailed programme notes and/or audio materials were not always available from some centres; this led to the return of the folio sample to the centre without verification taking place. These centres were then required to re-submit complete candidate folios for verification.

The quality of the detailed programme notes and audio materials was not always acceptable for all candidates.

The Assessor's Pro Forma and Assessor's Process Observation Checklist did not always provide sufficient information to assist the verification process.

Misunderstanding and inappropriate application of composing levels was in evidence; this resulted in some candidates having been presented at the incorrect level.

Candidates should show convincing control of all four areas of melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre in at least one composition.

There is a tendency on the part of some centres to continue to be over-generous in assessment decisions i.e. Pass in candidates' composing folio work.

## **Areas of good practice and areas for further development**

Generally, centres are to be commended for the time and care which was taken in the submission of composing folios. The verification process is both aided and informed by the following:

- Programme notes which are informative and clarify the stimulus, compositional and decision-making process, concepts deployed and actual contribution of the candidate
- Assessor's supplementary comments in Assessor's Proforma which bring focus and insight to the centre's rationale for assessment decisions
- Scores or performance plans which are complete and accurate
- Audio tapes or CDs that are clearly recorded and labelled
- Computer-generated scores, which are quantised and reflect the timbres chosen
- Completed Assessor's Pro Forma and Observation Checklist with comments that inform the verifier
- Folio time requirements which are correct for each level
- Candidate compositions which show convincing control of all four areas of melody, harmony, rhythm and timbre in at least one composition within the folio
- Centres which make full use of exemplification materials provided by SQA in order to assist and inform themselves of the content and standard required for each level of Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher.

# Course Assessment: Standard Grade

In Standard Grade Music, the Course assessment consists of a

## Feedback to centres on candidate performance

### General comments

Candidate performance in the 2007 Standard Grade music examination was consistent overall with the previous year.

Candidates continue to perform particularly well in the Performing elements of the Course.

In 2007 there was a slight increase in the number of candidates achieving Credit grades in Inventing.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed well in both Solo Performing and Group Performing/(2<sup>nd</sup> solo instrument.)

### Areas which candidates found demanding

No areas were found to be unduly demanding.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

### Solo Performing Examination

Centres are reminded that 4 minutes is the minimum time requirement for programmes at all levels.

The majority of Centres are showing a consistency in the application of Task Levels. However some Centres are not preparing the requisite number of styles for drumkit.

**Please note the following change for drumkit for the 2008 examination and after:**

In the past, if all prepared drumkit styles couldn't be accommodated in the 4 – 6 minute programme it was possible for the centre to profess that the candidate had covered the remaining style. From the 2008 examination and after the Visiting Examiner will require to hear **all** professed styles eg 4 styles at Credit level; judicious cuts or fades can be made in the music to allow this.

Centres should refer to the Standard Grade Music Update Letter issued to Centres in August 2007 for further advice.

**Internal Assessment of Group Performing/2<sup>nd</sup> solo instrument and Inventing**

Centres should refer to the GRC (Grade Related Criteria) for all internal assessment.

A performance which does not meet the criteria for Level of Achievement C is awarded a Grade 7.

Candidates playing keyboard as a 2<sup>nd</sup> solo instrument are required to play with 2 hands-performing both melody and chords.

Candidates playing keyboard in Group Performing may play one hand melody only. This may impact on the Task Level.

**Listening Papers**

Centres should refer to the detailed Marking Instructions for the 2005, 2006 and 2007 Listening Papers which are published on the SQA website.

**Credit Listening Paper**

In the extended writing question (Question 4) candidates must link all concepts to the rubric of the question in order to gain any marks i.e. link each musical concept to **the effect created**.

In Question 6 candidates must comment on instruments/voices **and how they are used** in both versions in order to gain the full marks available.

**Appeals**

When compiling and submitting Appeals evidence, centres should ensure that there is a breadth of coverage of Course content and that there is evidence that all types of questions have been sampled in a prelim-type Listening question paper.

# Course Assessment: Intermediate 1 and 2

In Intermediate 1 Music, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and for *Music with Performing* a Performing component and for *Music with Technology* a Folio component

In Intermediate 2 Music, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and for *Music with Performing* a Performing component and for *Music with Technology* a Folio component

## Feedback to centres on candidate performance

### General Comments

The vast majority of candidates were presented for the Music with Performing Course Model, X231.

The overall demands of the new model of Question Papers were greater than in the previous Arrangements with a number of new style questions, a greater allocation of marks to musical literacy and candidates being required in some cases to identify two concepts for one mark, allowing a wider sampling of Course content.

The majority of candidates coped very well with the demands of these Question Papers and marks were very much in line with previous years. Any variation in candidates' results was not attributable to the Question Papers.

Both Intermediate levels continued to attract S4 candidates with a proportion of 78% at Intermediate 1 and 68% at Intermediate 2.

Technology submissions remained stable in terms of number of entries and attainment.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates were very secure in the Performing component at Intermediate 2 level.

The Technology submissions for Central Marking were also generally secure at both levels, with no problems being encountered in the new assessment approach.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

A significant number of candidates at Intermediate 1 level failed to meet the demands of the Performing component of the external exam. This substantial number of candidates gained low to very low marks for Performing, putting a Course award out of reach from the outset.

The Literacy element in the Question Papers was not well done, with a number of candidates gaining no marks in these questions.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

A substantial number of Performing programmes at Intermediate 1 level were well below the standard required. In Performing at Intermediate 1 level candidates were assessed using a marking grid common to all NQ levels. Candidates entered at this level must firstly meet the task level, ie the pieces are of the correct standard for the level, but their final mark is determined by the quality of their performance as set out in the marking criteria. Centres must ensure that candidates are prepared to the standard required.

In the Performing component, at both Intermediate 1 and 2, there was a large number of referrals to the Principal Assessor. The overwhelming majority of these referred to candidates who had failed to meet the minimum duration required for programme time, in many cases by a considerable margin. This failure to comply with well-established regulations inevitably had a detrimental effect on candidates' final awards.

Whilst the Question Paper appeared in a new format this year, the regulations governing performing presentation have not altered. For Drum Kit in particular centres must ensure compliance with the regulations regarding the number of styles required at each level.

In the Technology folios at both levels some candidates' work was extremely difficult to access. This was caused in the main by CDs which had been submitted which could not be opened and some CDs which were not clearly labelled at all.

Before submission to SQA centres must ensure that all CDs are clearly labelled and can be accessed at the subsequent marking process. This final check by centres will ensure that candidates' submissions can be marked timeously. Whilst all of these cases were resolved satisfactorily in 2007, a great deal of centre time and SQA resources were spent in seeking a resolution and replacement CDs to ensure that candidates were not disadvantaged in any way.

# Course Assessment: Higher

In Higher Music, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and for *Music with Performing* a Performing component and for *Music with Technology* a Folio component

## Feedback to centres on candidate performance

### General Comments

Candidate numbers are relatively stable when compared to the 2006 examination. Generally candidates were well prepared for the external examination where there were changes in the format of the Question Paper and in the procedures of the Performing Examination component. Advice and support prior to the start of the new Arrangements in 2006 had been fully supported by SQA and all centres were alerted to the new format of the components of the exam and to specifics in terms of administration of the Performing component and the new format and weighting of the Question Paper.

Support materials have been published and distributed to centres since 2005, to support issues like appropriateness of levels for Performing and aspects of literacy in the Question Paper. Some of the new questions in the paper require a more focussed response with candidates being required to show a more thorough knowledge and understanding and a more accurate recall of concepts in order to meet the demands of the new exam format. Markers commented on a slightly less robust response in some of the questions but considered that the new format of questions perhaps meant that centres needed to support candidates in a more strategic approach to preparing for the higher order skills required for the new Question Paper.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

Prior to the exam, some centres expressed concern about the efficacy of the Performing Examination where Visiting Examiners were asked to sample from all of the pieces prepared to meet the time requirements for the new exam. Specific guidance was given to Visiting Examiners about how the programmes had to be sampled and how each candidate was to be treated in the administration of the exam. Further detailed guidance on these procedures was given to centres in preparing candidates for the new procedures. It would appear that the exam procedures ran smoothly this year with Visiting Examiners commenting favourably on the high standard of performing skills demonstrated by many candidates. The average mark in Performing was almost exactly the same as in

recent years. Centres are to be commended for the efficient and thorough manner in which they had taken on board the new arrangements and had allowed for the smooth organisation of the Performing Exams.

There was also an improvement in presentations for the new Technology strand of the exam and markers commented favourably on candidate performance and centre support.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

There were some candidates whose performance in the Performing Examination would appear to indicate that they had perhaps been presented at a level that was just too much for their present skills. However the performance of a larger number of candidates in the Question Paper appears to fall into this category. Response in some areas of the Question Paper appears to indicate that some candidates were entered at a level, in terms of listening, which was too high for their knowledge and understanding of concepts.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

*In the first year of sampling of Performing programmes, it appears that through the guidance offered to centres and Visiting Examiners and the robust preparation in almost all centres, any likely problems involved in the new administration procedures were resolved.*

The Question Paper format and weighting has changed with a number of new types of questions. Fewer marks are now available for multiple choice questions and musical literacy features more significantly in the exam. The Specimen Question Paper alerted centres to the need for exam technique and a more thorough knowledge and understanding of concepts.

It would appear that a number of candidates were presented whose knowledge of concepts from lower levels was not good. This resulted in candidates not gaining marks from these easier levels, resulting in some fairly low marks overall for these candidates. Performance in the literacy and the grid question seems to indicate that there are issues for centres in terms of adequate preparation for the new styles of question and a more thorough screening of candidate knowledge and understanding of listening concepts. More time has to be spent on the exam technique but also on embedding knowledge and understanding of concepts and literacy.

In Technology folios, although markers noted an improvement in candidate submissions, there were a few issues raised as a result of Central Marking and

centre preparation for candidate submissions:

1. Titles of pieces not noted on mark sheets
2. Timings not noted
3. CDs not clearly marked
4. Copies of music not included
5. Candidates from different levels recorded performances on the same CD
6. Long programmes.

# Course Assessment: Advanced Higher

In Advanced Higher Music, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and for *Music with Performing* a Performing component and for *Music with Technology* a Folio component

## Feedback to centres on candidate performance

### General Comments

Following the National Qualifications review in Music candidates now opt for one of two Course models. The Course structure has changed with 40% of the available marks allocated to the Question Paper and 60% allocated to Performing or Performing with Technology. To comply with SQA's policy of having only two externally assessed components each candidate must now achieve a pass in each of the three component Units before a Course award can be made; Performing Unit, Composing Unit and Listening Unit (Listening Commentary).

The 2007 average mark for Performing was little changed from previous years. The revised Question Paper required candidates to answer new styles of questions where their answers had to rely on a more detailed knowledge of upper-level musical concepts combined with an additional emphasis on musical notation and literacy.

With fewer Course options than formerly available to candidates in the reviewed Course structure, there was an increase in the number of candidates entered for Technology. Generally within Technology folios there was no significant change in the quality of responses although some centres were obviously new to either Sound Engineering and Production or to MIDI Sequencing and not all of the detailed requirements were supplied by the candidates or by centres.

Marks for individual Performing pieces were out of 10 where previously a mark out of 20 was allocated; there were no known difficulties for centres or Examiners caused by this change. The revised criteria on the Candidate Marks Sheets appear to have been used successfully in all areas. Performing programmes were sampled for the first time by Visiting Examiners and by the team of Examiners marking the Technology folios at a Central Marking event; experienced practitioners were used as specialist Examiners in the MIDI Sequencing and the Sound Engineering and Production elements of the folios. Only a few candidates opted for the Accompanying option in Performing.

## **Areas in which candidates performed well**

Instrumental and vocal Performing standards appear to have changed little according to the Visiting Examiners in spite of changes in the requirements and in the criteria used for assessment. The majority of performances remain at a very high standard.

The folios of a few Technology candidates contained inspired work which demonstrated a range of imaginative creativity in a variety of styles, especially welcome in MIDI Sequencing folios where some submissions were somewhat mechanical.

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

Some candidates appear to have found difficulty in coping with the notation and literacy requirements of the new Question Paper; this might well have been caused by a lack of previous experience and the need for this year's Advanced Higher candidates to gain knowledge included in all lower NQ levels now incorporated in the revised requirements; this should hopefully be less of a problem in future presentations as most candidates will accumulate this knowledge over a number of years.

Feedback from markers suggested that the Question Paper was a fair assessment when related to the requirements of the Course and to the Specimen Question Paper issued to all centres.

Markers suggested that candidates from certain centres had not been prepared for some of the new styles of questions in spite of exemplar materials being issued to all centres, national training events organised by the SQA and an exceptionally detailed, well-focused and well-publicised website containing a wide range of training and assessment materials now provided by LT Scotland.

The question incorporating the majority of the literacy and notation elements in the paper (Question 4) was very poorly answered. In Question 5 many candidates lost marks as a consequence of not answering all parts of the question; most failed to identify the cadences and the interval. Question 6 was a test of the candidate's ability to identify common concepts and many candidates lost marks by ticking the box beside either the first or second excerpt rather than the "Common to both excerpts" box.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Staff in centres should make good use of the exemplification packages already available and the new exemplification material becoming available during the remainder of 2007. New packs will include examples of Listening Commentaries and marked-up examples of answers to Questions 7 and 8 from the 2007 Paper; Advanced Higher materials will be included in a pack of marked-up MIDI Sequencing and Sound Engineering and Production examples from candidates' submissions.

Centres will be able to offer more detailed advice to future candidates if they study the Marking Instructions for the Paper when they appear on the SQA website, especially the marking schemes for Questions 6, 7 and 8.

Centres should be aware that it is possible for any of the Advanced Higher Units to be the subject of external verification. A Pass may not be awarded until the candidate has fulfilled the requirements of the criteria detailed on the Assessor's Process Observation Checklist and the Assessor's Pro Forma. The Assessor's Process Observation Checklist may be used as an interim report on work-in-progress that may be shown to candidates, staff and parents; staff should use an interim report to detail advice as to what is required for the candidate to complete the Unit in order that they may be awarded a Pass.

Centres presenting candidates for Music with Technology must ensure that each candidate's folio contains the appropriate materials as listed on the flyleaf which accompanies the submission. For Advanced Higher the flyleaf details the requirements as follows:

For every candidate:

- Completed Candidate Mark Sheet
- Audio or video recording of instrumental/vocal performance programme
- Sheet music copies of all pieces submitted

For candidates being examined in MIDI Sequencing:

- MIDI/Audio file
- Stereo recording
- Session log

For candidates being examined in Sound Engineering and Production:

- Stereo master recording of 2 contrasting pieces
- Session log for each piece
- A musical score or performance plan for each piece  
(Centres should note that, at Advanced Higher level only, it is possible to submit either multi-tracked recordings or stereo-techniques recordings)

Central Marking of the folios for Music with Technology was hampered by many submissions which lacked a necessary part of the candidate's work. Problems included:

- Limited paperwork such as incomplete or missing logs or scores/performance plans
- CDs and other media lacking clear identification of the contents
- CDs with no recordings on them
- CDs that could not be played on standard audio equipment, only on a computer
- CDs that had not been 'finalised' – made ready for playing on standard audio equipment
- CDs containing the work of candidates at different levels (AH/H/Int.2, etc); markers are allocated a specific level of submissions and, to avoid lengthy searches, no CD (or other media) should contain a mixture of levels
- MIDI files that were saved in the format of the computer/sequencer being used by the candidate rather than as a General MIDI file.

Many centres had to be contacted by SQA staff with a request for fresh copies of media materials before individual candidate submissions could be marked. This added considerably to the burden of work for all those involved in the marking procedures. Where suitable materials are not supplied, candidates cannot be considered for the full range of available marks. Centres must ensure that folios contain work that is recorded correctly in such a way that it may be played on standard audio/video equipment or, with a MIDI file, that it is saved in General MIDI format. Each CD (or other suitable piece of media) should be carefully notated with details of the candidate, the centre and the contents after a member of staff has checked that the appropriate contents can be accessed.