



External Assessment Report 2010

Subject	Music
Level	Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The vast majority of candidates were again presented for the Course model Music with Performing: the Question Paper and performing on two instruments/voice.

At Intermediate 1 there was a clear improvement in candidates' marks in both external components, particularly in Performing, with far fewer candidates gaining very low marks in this area. The Performing component remained a safe area at Intermediate 2 level.

Responses to the Question Paper at Intermediate 1 level were similar to those of last year, with the notation question providing an appropriate challenge and serving to differentiate candidates.

Answers to the Question Paper at Intermediate 2 level were very similar to last year, although certain questions were clearly more demanding across the cohort.

Questions 5 and 6 at both levels in the Question Papers continued to test candidates' abilities to answer questions without the support of multiple choice answers, and responses were generally a little less successful.

Overall, the responses from candidates this year were very encouraging with increased pass rates at both Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 levels (see pages 3 and 4 of this report). This represents a steady and pronounced improvement over the past four years.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates at both Intermediate 1 and 2 levels continue to demonstrate growing confidence with the Question Papers. This confidence was reflected in the approach to the Question Papers, with virtually no candidates supplying multiple answers, ie a number of answers in excess of the demands of the question.

Practical Performance on two instruments/voice again proved to be a safe area for the vast majority of centres across the country.

The sampling model used in the Performing component of the exam has become well established, with centres and candidates now fully prepared for the approach adopted by Visiting Assessors.

Overall this year, the standard of presentation showed an improvement on all previous years. This was particularly noticeable at Intermediate 1 level. Centres are to be commended for this.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The final question at both levels was not well done. These questions test standard notation and were clearly demanding for candidates who did not learn or perform using this medium.

A few centres continue to be unsure of the requirements for presentation on drum kit and chordal guitar. Some candidates were not prepared in line with SQA requirements.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Virtually all the referrals from Visiting Assessors highlighted programmes which were short of time, ie candidates had not fulfilled the four minute requirement for both instruments. The sampling approach adopted by Visiting Assessors will, by definition, ensure that candidates perform for less than four minutes but centres must ensure that candidates have prepared the required four minutes to comply with the Course requirements.

The regulations for drum kit and chordal guitar have not changed since the inception of the Intermediate levels of examination. Centres must prepare candidates accordingly.

On a positive note, the majority of this year's cohort at both levels seemed to be well prepared generally and centres are advised to continue to prepare candidates strictly in line with SQA's requirements to ensure their candidates maximise their potential.

Statistical information: update on Courses (Intermediate 1)

Number of resulted entries in 2009	795
Number of resulted entries in 2010	823

Statistical information: performance of candidates (Intermediate 1)

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark — 100				
A	24.4%	24.4%	201	70
B	32.2%	56.6%	265	60
C	22.0%	78.6%	181	50
D	5.3%	84.0%	44	45
No award	16.0%	100.0%	132	—

Statistical information: update on Courses (Intermediate 2)

Number of resulted entries in 2009	3554
Number of resulted entries in 2010	3620

Statistical information: performance of candidates (Intermediate 2)

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - -				
A	56.0%	56.0%	2026	70
B	25.3%	81.2%	915	60
C	11.3%	92.6%	410	50
D	2.5%	95.1%	92	45
No award	4.9%	100.0%	177	—

General commentary on grade boundaries

While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Each year, therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Head of Service and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as Arrangements evolve and change.