



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Music
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

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

Particularly high marks were gained by many of this year's candidates. After several years of the same format almost all centres appeared to be fully conversant with the Advanced Higher examination requirements of the Question Paper. This resulted in an obvious increase in the number of candidates demonstrating their ability to correctly identify a wide range of musical features from the Renaissance to 20th century popular styles.

Candidates are well-used to the layout of the paper owing to the increasing number of past papers available within centres. Many teachers have commented on the fairness of the questions and on the suitability of the range of musical genres sampled within the paper.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Question Paper

The multiple choice questions, 1 and 4, were well answered.

Questions 3a) and 3e) were particularly well answered.

In Questions 7 and 8, the choice of 20th century musical excerpts gave candidates the opportunity to display a commendable depth of knowledge. The musical excerpts were in styles that sampled areas of the Course that appear to have been particularly well taught in the majority of centres. 10 marks, 25% of the available total for the Question Paper, were available for these questions.

Performing Examination

In the Performing component of the Course the majority of candidates at Advanced Higher level are known to have one-to-one tuition for their instrumental or vocal programmes. This resulted in mostly very well-prepared, technically accurate, committed musical performances.

Technology Folios

The quality of folios for Music with Technology candidates has improved dramatically as more centres have introduced readily-available software packages. This appears to indicate that many centres opting to present candidates for the new Music Technology Courses will be well-equipped to provide appropriate facilities.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Question 2, requiring a one-word response, was poorly answered.

Question 3, the accurate identification of chords, continued to be a problem for the majority of candidates, as did the accurate placing of the *trill* on the musical score.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Instrumental and vocal programmes which do not fulfil the timing requirements at this level will not be able to attract the full range of marks. Similarly, a short Technology folio or a folio that includes fewer parts than the minimum required for Sound Engineering or MIDI Sequencing will not be eligible for the full range of marks.

In preparing candidates for the question paper, centres are reminded that the number of major or minor keys with which candidates should be familiar is limited. Exercises in accurate chord identification, including the position of the chord — root or first inversion or second inversion — should deal with this more basic range of keys. Staff should also stress the need for absolute accuracy when placing answers on a musical score.

There were fewer problems using the CDs that centres submitted for the central marking of Technology folios. It would be particularly helpful if every centre organised their submissions in such a way that the markers could clearly identify any particular candidate's work, especially where larger numbers of entries are involved using more than one of the packets supplied by SQA, each of which holds a maximum of 10 folios.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2012	1300
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	1440
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 100				
A	63.5%	63.5%	915	71
B	23.3%	86.8%	335	61
C	8.9%	95.7%	128	51
D	1.7%	97.4%	25	46
No award	2.6%	100.0%	37	-

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, SQA therefore 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 Business Manager 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.