



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject	Music
Level	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

Performance in the different Course components appears to have been closely in line with previous years.

Visiting Assessors found the standard of performing to be very high in most centres, especially on what could be referred to as a candidate's first instrument.

Music with Technology candidates provided a wide range of submissions. It is clear that ever-changing software is enabling many candidates to produce outstandingly good results approaching, and in a few cases achieving, professional standards. Credit should be given to the many outstanding recorded performances in the production of Sound Engineering folios.

The Question Paper followed an established pattern, with average marks particularly close to previous results.

No change in the boundary marks was required.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

In the Question Paper, Questions 1 and 2, the multiple-choice questions, produced particularly good answers, suggesting that most of the more familiar concepts relating to earlier genres of music had been thoroughly dealt with in centres.

Question 4, for one mark, was particularly well answered, which contrasts with a similar question in the 2011 paper. Question 5(b), relating to key changes on a musical score, and 5(f), questioning a musical interval, were correctly answered by most candidates.

Question 8 referred to an audio excerpt in a contemporary popular music genre; generally, candidates were able to analyse this excerpt at length.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Certain elements in Question 5, dealing with musical theory, caused problems for many candidates. Correcting the pitch of notes, identifying chords, and correctly identifying instrumental entries on the musical score, were poorly answered in many submissions.

Question 6, the musical map, still causes problems for candidates, mainly due to a lack of precise descriptions of the audio excerpt.

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

Centres should continue to encourage candidates to learn and use a wide range of concepts in preparation for the Question Paper. Several areas, such as patterns of chords, require a more detailed approach, especially bearing in mind that root position, first inversion and second inversion chords have to be identified in detail. Candidates have only to learn a limited number of chords to be able to tackle this type of question.

Each year another paper in the established format becomes available. It is necessary for all centres to prepare their candidates for the styles of questions that have to be used. From the evidence supplied for the Appeals process, it is obvious that some centres are still selecting and using outdated formats of questions in prelim question papers.

In the Music with Technology submissions there were still many candidates presenting short programmes, so the full range of marks could not be applied. Several candidates had recorded less than the eight required parts for a multi-track submission. Centres are reminded that two microphones for the recording of a piano or even six microphones for a drum kit will each count as only one part.

Centres should ensure that all candidates have clearly identified each area of their folios, especially where audio and MIDI files are involved. Audio and MIDI files should be annotated with all of the relevant information as outlined on the reverse side of the fly-leaves that provide the cover page for the folios. Staff should also check candidates' files to ensure that what they believe to be recorded is actually audible; several submissions had no data or only sections of the data.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

<b>Number of resulted entries in 2011</b>	1299
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<b>Number of resulted entries in 2012</b>	1300
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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	54.7%	54.7%	711	70
B	29.1%	83.8%	378	60
C	11.3%	95.1%	147	50
D	2.0%	97.1%	26	45
No award	2.9%	100.0%	38	-

## 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.