



External Assessment Report 2014

Subject(s)	Music
Level(s)	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report are prior to the outcome of any Post Results Services requests

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

2014 candidate performance was very much in line with previous years. The question paper was as demanding as expected and results were completely in line with past years. Markers' reports stated that there were no issues with the marking instructions. In the question paper responses gained a wide range of marks.

There were no problems reported with the new provision for centres to record Performing examinations if they wished to do so. Some centres recorded their candidates, but many at Advanced Higher level did not make use of this arrangement.

Candidates opting for Music with Technology produced a similar range of folios to previous years. The Central Marking event for these submissions had far fewer problem folios to deal with than in previous years.

Areas in which candidates performed well

There were particularly high average marks in a considerable number of centres where candidates were obviously well prepared and at a very high standard of musical and technical ability in their performing programmes.

Questions 1 and 4, the multiple-choice questions, were well answered, with candidates showing a particularly accurate knowledge of concepts associated with the Renaissance era.

The folios for Music with Technology included some near-professional submissions. A considerable number of candidates had made outstandingly good use of up-to-date software and the associated technology.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates obtained lower average marks in Question 3 of the question paper, where detailed answers relating to music chords, worth 2 marks, were required. It is clear that many centres had not prepared candidates adequately for this type of question. Similar questions appear in this paper each year.

Question 5, worth eight marks, was rather poorly answered. Markers reported that some candidates still find this style of 'comparison' question very challenging.

Question 6, part 1: as this audio issue related to only half of the required answer, candidates were awarded a full mark for correctly identifying the more obvious instrument heard in the excerpt. No candidates were disadvantaged by any lack of audibility of this particular part of the question.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

In preparing candidates for the question paper, centres should encourage the accurate use of chordal descriptions. This means naming the chord and its position — major or minor (if not using chord symbols) — also root, first inversion or second inversion. Candidates with the skill to identify a range of chords will be able to apply this useful knowledge to the Listening Commentary, where an understanding of interesting chordal patterns in any style of music adds considerable weight to the submission.

Candidates should also gain experience of answering theoretical questions based specifically on the limited range of requirements for this area of the Course. These are given in the Harmonic and Rhythmic concepts lists for this level and lower levels in the Course Specification.

In the comparison question — Question 5 in the 2014 paper — several candidates still placed ticks in too many boxes. Centres are encouraged to ensure that all candidates are fully aware of the standard format of this type of question, especially drawing their attention to the varied number of required ticks. This is detailed near the foot of each column in the answer pages.

In Music with Technology, a small number of centres failed to comply with the exact requirements of the folio. Some of the required evidence was missing, resulting in poorer marks for candidates who, with guidance from staff, could have achieved better marks. Staff in centres should continue to ensure that all of the required elements are submitted, such as musical scores or appropriate performance plans for the Sound Engineering and Production folios, and all of the required evidence for the marking of MIDI Sequencing folios. Recent developments in music software make it necessary for folios, where appropriate, to contain a log with screen shots to clarify each candidate's input to the finished product. Any MIDI data from the finished product should also be available in General MIDI format where possible, or in the format of the programme being used. Folios must be of the required length or the full range of marks will not be available.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2013	1440
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Number of resulted entries in 2014	1497
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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	64.5%	64.5%	965	70
B	22.2%	86.6%	332	60
C	10.2%	96.8%	152	50
D	1.3%	98.1%	20	45
No award	1.9%	-	28	-

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.