



External Assessment Report 2015

Subject(s)	Music with Performing, Music with Technology
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

Candidate performance was yet again outstandingly good, with the Performing components of the Advanced Higher Music Course displaying a particularly high degree of attainment. The majority of candidates had successfully built on their prior attainment in two instruments/one instrument and voice or by selecting the option of the Technology folio plus one instrument/voice.

There were no changes in the assessment criteria that were applied to the components of the Course.

Overall the question paper produced the expected range of responses. Positive feedback was received from markers and teachers in presenting centres regarding the wide range of Course coverage in the question paper.

Areas in which candidates performed well

It was particularly encouraging to note that the candidates opting for performing on a second instrument/voice continued to score an average that was only two marks below the average mark for the first instrument. These high scores reflect an extraordinary degree of dedication on the part of candidates and their teachers.

For candidates who opted for Performing with Technology, the folios averaged a particularly high mark with examples of near professional standards of recordings. Many folios displayed a particularly secure knowledge of the complex software and hardware used in the creation of the final products.

In the Question Paper particularly high marks were gained in Question 1, a multiple choice question. Certain sections of Question 3 – ‘a’, the identification of the key, ‘c’ based on note values and ‘d’, the identification of an interval – also achieved high average marks.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the performing components, a few candidates failed to cope with the demands of their choice of programme for their second instrument.

In the question paper candidates’ responses were poorer in Question 2, where a one-word answer was required; in 3 /e, the identification of chords; and in 6 /5, the identification of a chord within a cadence.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Based on this year's responses centres would be well-advised to spend more time in the teaching of chords. It would be helpful to place more emphasis on the use of chordal knowledge required in the Composing and Listening Units. References to the chordal structure in pieces used by the composers of the candidates' chosen repertoire for Performing would also be useful. Teaching should be based on the limited number of major and minor keys and chords specified in the Harmonic listings within the Literacy Content section of the Course Specification.

It has also become apparent that candidates need more help in the identification of instruments within an orchestral texture.

A detailed knowledge of the concepts listed as part of the Course is necessary. This should include the ability to associate individual concepts with the appropriate column headings such as Melodic, Harmonic, Structural, Styles and Forms.

In the submission of Technology folios, centres should attempt to ensure that paperwork associated with the candidates' recordings should not be an after-thought but should be kept up-to-date throughout the process which leads to the final product. With the use of current software, centres should ensure that regular screenshots of candidates' work are kept and, where appropriate, included in the log.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	1497
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	1531
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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	62.1%	62.1%	951	70
B	22.3%	85.8%	362	60
C	10.0%	95.8%	153	50
D	1.9%	97.6%	29	45
No award	2.4%	-	36	

The intention was to set a similar grade boundary to last year. The Course Assessment functioned as intended therefore no adjustment to grade boundaries was required.

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.