



## External Assessment Report 2012

Subject	Music
Level	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

Candidate entries for 2012 showed a significant increase (up by almost 15%), bringing the total number of entries for Higher Music to over 5000. The majority of candidates are still being presented for the Music Performing Course model, though this year there was a 10% rise in entries for Music with Technology.

Candidates' strong performance in the Performing component of the Music with Performing route has been maintained, and there is a high level of consistency with previous years. Candidates' performance in both the Technology and Performing components of the Performing with Technology Course model has increased this year.

There is an encouraging increase in attainment in the Question Paper across the board — for candidates following both the Performing and Technology routes.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

The continued support available from teaching staff and instrumental teachers has again resulted in some excellent performances in a range of instrumental categories. Sampling of Performing programmes now seems to be embedded, with centres preparing their candidates well for this aspect of the exam.

Candidates' responses in the Question Paper overall showed a marked improvement this year. There appears to be a much better grasp of conceptual knowledge and understanding from Access to Intermediate 2, with more candidates now offering Higher level concepts in response to the open-ended questions.

Candidates generally performed well in the Multiple Choice questions, the Cloze question, and the Comparison question. In the Musical Literacy question, candidates performed particularly well in identifying the melodic interval, transposition into the bass clef, and inserting the missing rest.

Candidates do appear to be approaching the Comparison question with much greater confidence, with fewer candidates placing multiple ticks across the columns.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Although candidates' responses to the Question Paper have shown an increase this year, there are aspects of the Question Paper that some candidates still find challenging.

In the multiple-choice questions, some candidates still find difficulty in contextualising answers and tick concepts that are either unrelated, or unlikely to be found in the same

excerpt of music. A number of candidates also ticked three features in Question 4, when four were required. Although responses to both the Musical Map and the Cloze questions showed improvement, some candidates still have difficulty with instrument recognition.

In the Musical Literacy question, candidates tended to have the greatest difficulty with identifying the correct time signature, completing the missing notes, and identifying the chords.

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

### **General**

Centres are commended for responding well to the issues raised in external assessment reports over the last few years. Many of the issues raised in recent reports have now been addressed, and the improved performance by candidates bears testimony to the work undertaken by centres and candidates.

In continuing to help the Visiting Examination run as smoothly as possible, centres should note that:

- ◆ Candidate Mark Sheets must be completed and be available to the Visiting Assessor at the start of an assessment session (morning or afternoon)
- ◆ Details of the instruments or instrument and voice being professed, the pieces to be performed and all timings of pieces must be clearly indicated
- ◆ Candidate Mark Sheets should be completed in pen (not pencil) by centre staff. This Mark Sheet is the formal record of the assessment event and it is very important that it is completed accurately
- ◆ Visiting Assessors must be given a running order, with approximate timings, at the start of a session.

Centres are also reminded to check the exact number of styles and fills required for drum-kit candidates. It should be noted that some commercially available drum-kit publications, although produced for particular graded examinations, may not always contain the requisite number of fills required for SQA examinations. Centres should check the drum-kit section of the SQA repertoire publication (NQ Music: Performing) for clarification.

Centres are also reminded to check the number of chords required in chordal guitar programmes, bearing in mind that guitar candidates presented at NQ levels still need to demonstrate the full number of chords for the level, even if a mixed programme of chordal guitar and melody guitar is offered.

In preparing candidates for the Question Paper, centres are encouraged to remind candidates of the following:

- ◆ Short answers (one or two words, or a phrase) will specifically examine concepts introduced at Higher level.
- ◆ In the case of the Musical Literacy question, each part of the question needs to be completely correct to gain a mark. No half marks are awarded for partly correct answers.
- ◆ Musical Literacy questions requiring identification of the time signature, completing missing notes and identifying chords still need more preparation
- ◆ In the Multiple Choice questions, candidates should note carefully exactly how many features should be ticked.
- ◆ In the Comparison Question, particular attention should be paid to the number of marks available for each column in GRID 2. The number of marks available for each column in GRID 2 (Excerpt 1, Excerpt 2 and Common to both excerpts) clearly indicates how many ticks should be placed in each column.

### **Advice to centres for Absentee candidates or Appeals**

In some cases, a candidate may be unable to sit part of the exam due to health reasons. Likewise, a candidate who does sit the exam may, due to exceptional circumstances, perform less well on the day than expected. In either case, the centre would be required to submit appropriate evidence.

Absentee candidate evidence and Appeals evidence is exactly the same. Candidates are successful when centres provided robust evidence that a candidate's attainment is in line with their estimated grade and the evidence submitted is valid and reliable.

In submitting evidence for Performing, it is good practice to submit an audio recording of the candidate's full programme. Many centres are now routinely making audio/video recordings of prelim exams for this eventuality. If an audio/video recording is not available, centres should submit alternative evidence that a candidate has demonstrated attainment at Higher level. This should include a detailed Candidate Mark Sheet from a prelim-type event that replicates the conditions of the Performing exam — showing that the candidate has achieved the course assessment criteria as well as meeting the course requirements, both in terms of the task level of each piece and the overall length of the programme. Assessment of Performing for this purpose should have taken place on a single assessment occasion, and not have been spread over a period of time.

In submitting evidence for the Listening question paper, centres are reminded that Question Papers used for prelims should replicate the course assessment, both in terms of question type and allocation of marks. A full copy of the marking instructions also needs to be submitted, even if questions are drawn from SQA past papers.

Some submissions are unsuccessful because the question paper used as a prelim exam did not sufficiently replicate the course assessment. In preparing prelim exams centres are reminded that:

- ◆ Questions used from past papers should be drawn from at least three different sources. Details of these sources need to be provided.
- ◆ A past paper or specimen question paper should not be used in its entirety.
- ◆ End-of-Unit tests, or questions from NABs, containing limited types of questions are unlikely to replicate the course assessment.
- ◆ A NAB on its own would not sufficiently replicate the course assessment.
- ◆ The marking instructions used for prelims should reflect the marking instructions used in the final exam — please note that half marks are not used. Examples of marking instructions for past papers can be found on [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk).
- ◆ Questions requiring short answers (one or two words, or a phrase) will specifically examine concepts introduced at Higher level.
- ◆ The type of questions and the distribution of marks should reflect the course assessment. The type of questions, the number of each type of question and the allocation of marks for the Higher Music Question Paper is indicated below:

Type of question	Number	Mark allocation
Multiple choice: select 1 correct answer from 4 options	1	1
Multiple choice: select 3 correct answers from 9 options	2	6
Multiple choice: select 4 correct answers from 10 options	1	4
Short answers (one or two words, or a phrase) will examine concepts introduced at Higher level	5	5
Musical map	1	5
Cloze test	1	5
Comparison of 2 musical excerpts (multiple choice)	1	8
Musical literacy	1	6

When submitting evidence for either appeals or absentee candidates, centres are reminded that candidates' work should already have been assessed by the centre. The role of SQA's examining team is to confirm the assessment decisions made by the centre, not actually mark the candidate's work.

Centres are also reminded that estimates of candidates' attainment should be based on demonstrated evidence of the candidates' actual performance, not on potential.

Component marks for all candidates have been issued to centres for a number of years now. Centres are encouraged to refer to this information, which can be invaluable for confirming areas of strength and identifying areas for future development.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2011	4585
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	5090
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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	49.8%	49.8%	2536	71
B	27.7%	77.5%	1410	61
C	15.6%	93.2%	796	51
D	3.0%	96.2%	155	46
No award	3.8%	100.0%	193	-

## 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.