



External Assessment Report 2013

Subject(s)	Music
Level(s)	Intermediate 1 and 2

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

The majority of candidates in 2013 were entered for the Course model of question paper and Performing on two instruments/voice. This is in line with all previous years at these levels.

At Intermediate 1 level performance of candidates was poorer than in 2012. This was most apparent in the question paper, which showed an average decrease of two marks. However, average marks in the Performing component were virtually identical to the 2012 exam. There was no significant difference in attainment between candidates who opted for Performing on two instruments and candidates who opted for Performing with Technology. This poorer question paper performance was reflected in the number of candidates gaining an A–C award at Intermediate 1, with 75% of candidates in this category. This is the lowest number of A–C awards in the past four years.

18% of candidates gained no award, which is a significant number regardless of the total number of candidates being presented at this level. There is evidence of candidates being entered for a level that is inappropriate for them and their abilities.

At Intermediate 2 level a remarkable level of consistency was again evident, with 93% of candidates gaining an A–C pass. This percentage has been relatively consistent over the past four years. There was a significant rise in the performance of candidates in the question paper, with a two-mark difference from the 2012 paper. The consistent pattern of candidates' Performing component underlines centres' judicious and thorough preparation for the visiting examination.

Question papers at both Intermediate 1 and 2 seem to hold no surprises for well-prepared candidates, suggesting that centres now make full use of the past papers in the public domain and the corresponding marking instructions on the SQA website. This was endorsed by the fact that virtually no examples of bad practice were found, eg supplying extra answers, providing too many answers, ticking too many boxes etc. This also highlights careful preparation by centres.

Areas in which candidates performed well

The familiarity with the question paper layout and the almost complete lack of bad practice is testament to solid preparation and sound performance in this component.

In the Performance component candidates were generally well prepared for the experience, including the process of sampling of performances.

In *MIDI Sequencing* and *Sound Engineering and Production* the folios submitted for central marking illustrated a clear awareness of the demands for these levels, with most candidates able to meet the requirements of this component.

Areas which candidates found demanding

The literacy questions at both levels provided a great diversity of responses, with some candidates (who may be fluent in this medium) gaining very good marks while other candidates were clearly unable to attempt these questions.

At both levels, Questions 5 and 6 in the Question Paper proved to be challenging for most candidates, although improved performance was evident in these questions at both levels.

It is a matter of concern that in the question papers many candidates at both levels were unable to identify a 'solo instrument' as some answers demanded. This also applied to the recognition of traditional Scottish dances at Intermediate 1.

The Performing component at Intermediate 1 was clearly a challenge for a number of candidates this year.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

The number of referrals to Principal Assessor continues to reflect Performing programmes which are significantly short of time. At both levels, centres must ensure that the requirement of four minutes' playing time is met.

Many referrals to PA were also concerned with incorrect or inadequate drum kit and guitar programmes. Centres must ensure that their candidates fulfil the SQA requirements for these instruments.

In the Performing with Technology folios the recording quality of CDs of performances fell well short of the standard in a number of cases. Centres must also make clear to the marker which line of music or part is being performed by the candidate, and this is particularly important when two instruments of a similar timbre are performing.

It is recognised that many candidates do not learn within the context of traditional music notation, eg chordal guitar, drum kit, bass guitar TAB etc. However, in each question paper, 6 marks are assigned to questions demanding a basic knowledge of notation, and some centres are advised to provide candidates with more thorough preparation to allow them to attempt these questions.

Some centres must consider whether presentation at Intermediate 1 level is appropriate for their candidates. Given the 18% of no awards at this level, many candidates are clearly unable to fulfil the requirements of the Course.

In general, however, the majority of candidates at both levels seem to be well prepared and centres are advised to continue to prepare candidates strictly in line with SQA's regulations and requirements to ensure their candidates maximise their potential.

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 1**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	740
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	758
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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	26.0%	26.0%	197	70
B	26.8%	52.8%	203	60
C	22.6%	75.3%	171	50
D	6.6%	81.9%	50	45
No award	18.1%	100.0%	137	-

**Statistical information: update on Courses
Intermediate 2**

Number of resulted entries in 2012	3966
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Number of resulted entries in 2013	3852
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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	53.2%	53.2%	2049	70
B	25.9%	79.1%	999	60
C	14.1%	93.2%	542	50
D	2.6%	95.8%	102	45
No award	4.2%	100.0%	160	-

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.