

## Principal Assessor Report 2003

**Assessment Panel:**

**Music**

**Qualification area**

**Subject(s) and Level(s)  
Included in this report**

**Xo65 Music:  
Advanced Higher**

## Statistical information: update

| Number of entries in 2002               |                      |     |
|---|----------------------|-----|
| <b>Pre appeal</b>                       | Course award: 624    |     |
| <b>Stand alone presentations/passes</b> | Performing (Ext.1)   | 185 |
|   | Performing (Ext.2)   | 74  |
|   | Inventing Ext.       | 8   |
|   | Listening Ext.       | 3   |
|   | MIDI Ext.            | 4   |
|   | Sound Eng. Ext.      | 3   |
|   | Accompanying Ext.    | 10  |
|   | Training & Directing | 8   |
| PIL Unit (only)                         | 14                   |     |

| Number of entries in 2003        |   |                        |                        |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
|----------------------------------|---|------------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------------|----|-----|--------------------|----|----|----------------|---|----|----------------|---|---|-----------|---|---|-----------------|-----|---|-------------------|---|---|----------------------|---|---|-----------------|--|----|
| <b>Pre appeal</b>                | Course award: 711   |                        |                        |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
| <b>Stand alone presentations</b> | <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Course<br/>+ Extra Unit</th> <th>Free Standing</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Performing (Ext.1)</td> <td>11</td> <td>224</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Performing (Ext.2)</td> <td>10</td> <td>61</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inventing Ext.</td> <td>6</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Listening Ext.</td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MIDI Ext.</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sound Eng. Ext.</td> <td>Nil</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accompanying Ext.</td> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Training &amp; Directing</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PIL Unit (only)</td> <td></td> <td>31</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> |                        | Course<br>+ Extra Unit | Free Standing | Performing (Ext.1) | 11 | 224 | Performing (Ext.2) | 10 | 61 | Inventing Ext. | 6 | 11 | Listening Ext. | 7 | 7 | MIDI Ext. | 1 | 1 | Sound Eng. Ext. | Nil | 7 | Accompanying Ext. | 4 | 2 | Training & Directing | 5 | 6 | PIL Unit (only) |  | 31 |
|                                  |   | Course<br>+ Extra Unit | Free Standing          |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
|                                  | Performing (Ext.1)  | 11                     | 224                    |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
|                                  | Performing (Ext.2)  | 10                     | 61                     |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
|                                  | Inventing Ext.  | 6                      | 11                     |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
|                                  | Listening Ext.  | 7                      | 7                      |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
|                                  | MIDI Ext.   | 1                      | 1                      |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
|                                  | Sound Eng. Ext.   | Nil                    | 7                      |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
|                                  | Accompanying Ext.   | 4                      | 2                      |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
| Training & Directing             | 5   | 6                      |                        |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |
| PIL Unit (only)                  |   | 31                     |                        |               |                    |    |     |                    |    |    |                |   |    |                |   |   |           |   |   |                 |     |   |                   |   |   |                      |   |   |                 |  |    |

### General comments re entry numbers

Numbers again show an encouraging increase. The 2003 pre-appeal statistics show a breakdown of the numbers of candidates being presented for an extra unit in addition to their full course award; the last 2003 column shows the number of candidates being presented for free standing units but not for course awards. These figures emphasise the contrasts between Performing units and the smaller up-take in all other units; Music is still very much a performance-based subject! This appears to be an important indicator for future review of the subject at this level.

## Grade boundaries at C, B and A for each subject area included in the report

Maximum marks - 240

|              |        |           |
|--------------|--------|-----------|
| Upper A      | Band 1 | 204 marks |
| A            | Band 2 | 168 marks |
| B            | Band 3 | 156 marks |
| B            | Band 4 | 144 marks |
| C            | Band 5 | 132 marks |
| C            | Band 6 | 120 marks |
| Compensatory | Band 7 | 108 marks |
| No award     | Band 8 | 96 marks  |
| No award     | Band 9 | 0         |

### General commentary on passmarks and grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create mark schemes which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum 50% of the available marks (notional passmark) and a very well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70%, it is almost impossible to get the standard absolutely on target every year, in every subject and level
- Each year we therefore hold a passmark meeting for each subject at each level where we bring together all the information available (statistical and judgmental). 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 senior management team at SQA
- We adjust the passmark downwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly more demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- We adjust the passmark upwards if there is evidence that we have set a slightly less demanding exam than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance
- Where the standard appears to be very similar to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries
- 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 are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. And just because SQA has altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry 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
- Our main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain standards across the years, even as syllabuses evolve and change

### Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Grade boundaries were set at exactly the same marks as for 2001 and 2002. The high standards of Performance (PIL and Extensions) by the majority of candidates remain an important feature in this examination. Boundary marks were carefully considered by SQA management, but it was clear from markers' and examiners' reports that the general standards of candidates presented for a course award was marginally better this year.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

More candidates were better prepared this year; there is still some carelessness evident in the materials presented in the folios, coursework, commentaries and other documents submitted at the end of April. This makes the task of marking candidates' work more time-consuming than should be necessary. Some fly-leaves were submitted without the candidates' signatures and the countersignatures of those responsible; this leads to occasional concerns about the validation of these submissions. Most centres appear to have read last year's up-date letter from the Qualifications Officer and acted on concerns about specific areas such as the Listening Commentaries. Very few candidates were penalised for inappropriate submissions.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Most candidates were well -prepared and achieved very good results. Extension 2 Performance candidates and Accompanying candidates averaged the highest marks although, when compared with the 2002 figures, the Accompanying candidates' average mark dropped by 11 marks out of 240 whereas the Training & Directing candidates' average mark was up by 11 marks out of 240; the Sound Engineers had a much higher average mark, up by 25 out of 240! The average for the Sound Engineering recordings and logs went up from 17.7 to 29.3 out of 42 and the Training & Directing candidates averaged a better score by raising their marks from 18.2 to 28.4 out of 42.

### Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

#### Listening Core 1 (Commentary)

Generally good submissions this year. Almost all centres had correctly advised their candidates to study two or more compositions as the basis for their commentaries. Submissions based on popular styles of music still contained too many lists of band members, changes in the line-up, makes of guitar with no reference to their sound and other background information that gained no marks for the candidates; details of the music, individual characteristics of performing styles such as the use of effects pedals and other similar details will be awarded marks if these can be demonstrated on a set of short audio extracts provided by the candidate as part of their submission. A few centres are still relying on two sets of teachers' notes on which every candidate writes their commentary, thus destroying the opportunities for "personal insight" which many other candidates display so effectively. Several candidates still attempted to write the history of an instrument with almost no direct references to specific features in any piece of music; a few of these submissions received no marks. Several commentaries were far too long; instead of approximately 1500 words, some stretched to over 3000 words.

#### Listening Core 2 (Paper)

Musical literacy questions were again poorly answered. Many candidates had difficulty responding to questions where direct answers were required. Questions 2 and 5 were answered poorly and in question 2c(i) almost no candidates identified the specific feature of the final chord. Question 7 (the comparison question) was generally well answered but some candidates are still too vague in their responses. A more specific style of question may have to be considered in any review of this paper.

## **Inventing Extension Folio**

Submissions were sometimes lacking in originality and far too repetitive as weaker candidates struggled to make up the minimum time required for this folio. Some candidates displayed limited knowledge of harmony and poor understanding of compositional concepts. Performance plans were sometimes vague with a lack of evidence to prove how much of the detail in a final recording was created by the candidate, for example the style of guitar accompaniment or the rhythm to be used by a bass guitarist.

## **Listening Dissertation**

A few submissions were awarded very few marks owing to the lack of specific, detailed references contained in the candidates' work. The evidence suggested that some centres had left individuals to their own devices with almost no study of the conceptual content of the music.

## **MIDI Sequencing**

There were a few very imaginative and successful folios but technical problems made other submissions very difficult to mark; in response to last year's request, marking was centralised this year allowing a team of specialists to deal with the technical problems experienced in opening and marking the MIDI files which were required to prove how candidates had produced their final audio mixes. In spite of the success of this style of marking, requests for extra information had to be made to some centres before a final mark could be allocated to a few folios.

## **Sound Engineering and Production**

The paper was less successful than last year with poor responses to the questions without audio excerpts.

The paperwork for the audio folio was better, but some take sheets, edit sheets and scores or performance plans were missing; these are a vital part of the marking process required to identify and prove the candidate's understanding of how their final mix is produced.

## **Training and Directing**

There are still some candidates who do not have enough musicianship or personality to cope with this course. Some videos failed to display the work of the candidate by panning around the performers instead of focusing on the candidate as they took a rehearsal or directed a performance. Some candidates were too vague in their approach to rehearsals; careful study of score and planning rehearsal time are essential features of this course.

In the paper questions 1 and 2 were very poorly answered; question 3 was well answered and question 4 was mostly successful; a few candidates seemed uncertain about which features in a score are essential points to note before a first rehearsal.

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

#### **LISTENING(CORE) PAPER**

Some centres were concerned that more than one answer was possible in certain questions; the marking scheme takes into account all possible correct answers based on candidates' responses each year. Candidates should be encouraged to use the correct boxes in the grids used for the "comparison" question (the last question in the paper).

#### **LISTENING COMMENTARY(CORE) and DISSERTATION(EXTENSION)**

Short notes are used for internal assessment and need not be added to candidates' submissions for external marking. Excerpts in the form of musical quotations or audio excerpts must be included within each candidate's work or these elements of the examination cannot be marked until the centre provides further evidence from the candidate, a time-consuming and generally wasteful abuse of everyone's time.

#### **MIDI SEQUENCING**

Centres should ensure that materials submitted are finalised in such a way that the marking team can easily access candidates' answers or settings contained in MIDI files. Failure to do this will disadvantage candidates.

#### **SOUND ENGINEERING AND PRODUCTION**

All materials required in the arrangements documents and in the NAB must be included in the folio. Each recording must be accompanied by appropriate take sheets, edit sheets and annotated musical scores or detailed performance plans.

#### **INVENTING (CORE and EXTENSION)**

The role of the candidate should be clarified if a performance plan is used instead of a score. Directions should include enough information for another musician reading the performance plan to re-create the composition. Performance of guitar parts and bass guitar parts should not only consist of a chord scheme but more detail is required concerning the interpretation of these chords such as the use of rhythm, style of accompaniment, etc.

#### **TRAINING AND DIRECTING**

Videos must show the candidate as he/she works with the performers. The length of the video submitted to SQA should be between 5 minutes and a maximum of 30 minutes. Candidates should make copies of an original score for the annotation required as evidence together with a detailed Rehearsal Log which must be included with the video submission at the end of April.