

Principal Assessor Report 2004

Assessment Panel:

Music

Qualification area

**Subject and Level
Included in this report**

**X090-X098 Music
Advanced Higher**

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2003	Course award: 746 candidates
	Performing (Ext.1) 400
	Performing (Ext.2) 220
	Inventing Ext 55
	Listening Ext. 17
	MIDI Ext. 12
	Sound Eng. Ext. 21
	Accompanying Ext. 10
	Training & Directing 11

Number of entries in 2004	Course award: 910 candidates
	Performing (Ext.1) 545
	Performing (Ext.2) 220
	Inventing Ext 73
	Listening Ext. 16
	MIDI Ext. 9
	Sound Eng. Ext. 38
	Accompanying Ext. 5
	Training & Directing 6

General comments re entry numbers

Yet again there was an increase in the overall number of candidates being presented for the Course award. Four Extension Units - Training and Directing, Accompanying, Listening and MIDI Sequencing had smaller numbers of presentations, but there was a substantial rise in the number of candidates presented for Sound Engineering and Production, Inventing and especially in Performing, Extension 1.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards

Maximum marks - 240

(Based on figures available for 807 candidates)

Upper A	Band 1	204 marks	66 candidates	8.2%
A	Band 2	168 marks	352 candidates	43.6%
B	Band 3	156 marks	141 candidates	17.5%
B	Band 4	144 marks	96 candidates	11.5%
C	Band 5	132 marks	76 candidates	9.4%
C	Band 6	120 marks	35 candidates	4.3%
D	Band 7	108 marks	24 candidates	2.9%
No award	Band 8	96 marks	13 candidates	1.6%
No award	Band 9	0	4 candidates	0.5%

	(2003)	2004
Performing Ext.1	(400)	545
Performing Ext.2	(220)	220
Inventing	(55)	73
Listening	(17)	16
MIDI	(12)	9
Sound Engineering	(21)	38
Accompanying	(10)	5
Training & Directing	(11)	6

Average marks were as follows:

Performing Core	(43.18)	42.66 out of 60
Inventing Core	(46.25)	45.38 out of 60
Listening Core Paper	(17.68)	19.27 out of 30
Listening Core Commentary	(16.20)	15.32 out of 30
Performing Extension 1	(44.80)	44.5 out of 60
Performing Extension 2	(50.40)	49.4 out of 60
Inventing Extension Folio	(36.80)	36.7 out of 60
Listening Extension Dissertation	(32.30)	20.8 out of 60
MIDI Extension Paper/File	(21.70)	21.3 out of 30
MIDI Extension Folio	(14.20)	17.9 out of 30
Sound Engineering Paper	(11.80)	11.6 out of 18
Sound Engineering Tape and Log	(29.30)	25.6 out of 42
Accompanying Extension	(45.60)	37.0 out of 60
Training & Directing Paper	(11.30)	11.0 out of 18
Training & Directing Video/Log/VV	(28.40)	24.3 out of 42

Performing Core averages were within a range of 41/60 for Performing Extension 1 candidates to 49/60 for Accompanying and Training and Directing candidates.

Inventing Core Folios were within a range of 41/60 for the Accompanists to 51/60 for the MIDI Sequencing candidates.

In the Listening Core Paper the Sound Engineering candidates achieved the lowest average mark of 17.5 and

the Performing Extension 2 candidates had the highest average mark of 21.6 (out of 30). In the Listening Core Commentary (again out of 30) the MIDI Sequencing candidates averaged a poor 8.8 with the highest average being achieved by the Training and Directing candidates with an average mark of 21.3.

Candidates for the Extension Inventing unit averaged 45 for their Core Inventing Folios (marked in centres and approximately 1/3 of centres externally moderated); the same candidates averaged 36.7 for their Extension folio out of 60 (marked externally).

Average marks out of the total possible of 240 and appropriate bands for the different optional Extension units chosen by candidates were as follows:

Performing Extension 1	(163/240)	159/240	B, band 3
Performing Extension 2	(183/240)	181/240	A, band 2
Inventing Extension Folio	(163/240)	159/240	B, band 3
Listening Extension Dissertation	(160/240)	146/240	B, band 4
MIDI Sequencing Extension	(162/240)	163/240	B, band 3
Sound Engineering Extension	(167/240)	157/240	B, band 3
Accompanying Extension	(177/240)	158/240	B, band 3
Training & Directing Extension	(173/240)	177/240	A, band 2

Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards

Following detailed discussion, grade boundaries were set at the same marks as for the last three years. The consistently high standard of Performing by a large majority of the candidates was maintained at Core and Extension levels but there were lower average marks in the Listening Extension Dissertation and the Accompanying Extension Unit.

Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

Distribution of awards (based on 807 candidates)	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
A	51.8	51.8	418	204
B	29.4	81.2	237	144
C	13.8	94.9	111	120
D	2.9	97.9	24	108
No award	2.1	100.0	17	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 arrangements evolve and change.

Comments on grade boundaries for each subject area

Markers reported that the general standard of responses from candidates was similar to previous years but with some centres' candidates appearing to be less well prepared this year. The same boundary marks were retained to reflect the consistency of the papers and marking procedures.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Candidates were mostly well prepared for each element of the examination. In some instances centres need to ensure that candidates include all of the required documentation to accompany their submissions at the end of April – in folios, commentaries, dissertations – thus enabling their candidates to gain appropriate marks for their work during the course; some candidates do not achieve the mark they are capable of owing to missing documentation.

A significant comparison of the average marks for Inventing can be made where the Inventing Extension candidates averaged a high mark of 45 out of 60 for their internally marked Core Inventing but achieved an average of only 36.7 out of 60 for their externally marked Inventing Extension folio.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

Standards of Performing were particularly good, especially the average mark of 49.4 out of 60 achieved by the Performing Extension 2 candidates. The majority of candidates were well up to and often beyond the required minimum standards. Almost all centres provided good accompaniments for candidates.

Visiting Examiners were pleased with the organisation of the programmes within centres. This could be further helped if centres ensure that they know the details of when candidates will be available in May to help organise the visit when the Examiner makes the initial contact with the centre.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

Some candidates, particularly from a few centres where the first presentations at this level have just been made, seem to have been giving misleading guidance on coursework to their candidates. In a few cases candidates gave the impression that they had been left to their own devices during the course, even to the extent of teachers/lecturers failing to countersign the fly-leaves to authenticate the candidates' work. Staff in centres could make better use of the instructions on the reverse side of fly-leaves to help them ensure that all the necessary materials are submitted.

MIDI SEQUENCING candidates achieved a low average mark for their Listening Commentaries (8.8 out of 30) and the Sound Engineering and Production candidates also achieved a poor average in this element (12.8 out of 30). Centres could consider encouraging these “technology” candidates to write commentaries on recordings of music more closely linked to their Extension element using extracts from these recordings to support their scripts.

The average mark for the LISTENING COMMENTARIES was slightly lower owing to some very poor submissions, including a few candidates where no marks could be awarded. Similarly there were some misguided LISTENING DISSERTATIONS displaying very limited understanding of the music chosen for study. Candidates must display a personal understanding of the music; personal insight into technical, performance and analysis issues is most welcome providing that it relates directly to specific pieces of music and that the candidate proves any point being made in the text with the help of written/copied musical quotations, aural extracts (not recordings of entire pieces), or specific references to details in scores if copies of these are included with the submission. Listening Commentaries should be approximately 1500 words long, not stretching for page after page of insignificant detail which will attract no marks.

In the LISTENING (CORE) PAPER candidates are answering the final “comparison” question more accurately without resorting to unacceptable lists of concepts. Candidates obtained less marks for the specific

questions which required a one-word answer, especially in Question 5 which used excerpts of music by J.S.Bach.

In the SOUND ENGINEERING AND PRODUCTION folio of recordings several candidates failed to include all of the necessary paperwork; this resulted in a lower mark being awarded than would have been the case if take sheets, edit sheets, scores or performance plans had been included as specified in the Arrangements document for this Unit.

TRAINING AND DIRECTING candidates produced some good work but centres must ensure that there is sufficient evidence supplied with the Video and the Log to prove what the individual candidate has achieved using his/her own knowledge and judgement rather than an over-reliance on staff and sometimes well-intentioned interference from the centre's staff during rehearsals. In the Training and Directing Aural Perception Paper, Questions 1 and 2 were again poorly answered by almost all of the candidates.

In the INVENTING EXTENSION FOLIOS candidates' compositions often lacked sufficient original material with an over-reliance on basic harmonic structures, repetition and modulation. Over-worked pieces of this type fail to attract a significant mark. In some folios candidates might well produce better results with several shorter pieces rather than a work which meanders on until it runs out of musical "steam".

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

The majority of scripts and folios contained the appropriate responses but there were several problem areas which could lead to candidates being disadvantaged if centres do not follow the appropriate procedures as outlined in Conditions and Arrangements and other associated SQA publications. The areas of concern are as follows:

- **Listening Commentary(Core) and Listening Dissertation(Extension)** – a number of candidates failed to include the appropriate audio/written quotations or scores to prove the points made in their scripts; without this proof, candidates will lose marks. SQA staff and markers waste an inordinate amount of time requesting extra materials from centres to try and give the candidates the benefit of the doubt; centres should ensure that all appropriate materials are included when the Commentary or the Dissertation is submitted at the end of April. A few candidates are still opting for inappropriate choices for these submissions; marks are awarded for accurate comments on the music of 2 or more pieces for the Commentary and 5 or more pieces for the Dissertation; failure to follow these guidelines will make it impossible for a marker to use the full range of marks.
- In the **Listening(Core) Paper** centres are again reminded that candidates should attempt to use the correct boxes in the grids used for the (last) “comparison” question.
- **MIDI Sequencing** files from some centres are still difficult or impossible to open for marking; candidates’ work cannot be marked unless they are “saved” in suitable formats; centres should ensure that folders can be re-opened before submitting candidates’ work.
- Some **Sound Engineering and Production** folios do not include the required paperwork to prove the exact input of candidates leading to a loss of marks for some candidates; take sheets, edit sheets and annotated scores or performance plans must give details of what the marker should be hearing in order that the full range of marks may be used.
- A few **Inventing Extension** folios failed to include enough detail in the required score or performance plan; for example, the candidate’s Programme Note must detail what instructions the candidate has given to each performer in order that improvised passages can be credited as the candidate’s own work or identified as another performer’s work based on an outline provided by the candidate.