

Principal Assessor Report 2003

Assessment Panel:

Music

Qualification area:

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

Music: Intermediate 1 and 2

Statistical information: update

Number of entries in 2002	
Pre appeal	Int 1 179 entries 154 pass
	Int 2 810 entries 729 pass

Number of entries in 2003	
Pre appeal	Int 1 299 entries 246 pass
	Int2 1,202 entries 1,080 pass

General comments re entry numbers

The number of candidates being presented has continued to rise, most dramatically at Intermediate 2 level. This may be due to a combination of the suitability of the course for S5 candidates and the increasing practice of entering candidates from S4 at these levels.

Candidates generally coped quite well with the range of mandatory papers and the practical demands, although in a significant number of cases there were weaknesses identified at extension level.

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

Intermediate 1

Award	Mark (lowest)
Upper A	204
Lower A	168
B	144
C	120

Intermediate 2

Award	Mark (lowest)
Upper A	201
Lower A	165
B	141
C	117

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

Intermediate 1 grade boundaries are as in 2002 examinations.

In Intermediate 2 however the grade boundaries were lowered by three marks compared to last year's

levels.

This decision followed considerable discussion by the Exam Team in the light of markers' feedback on the performance of candidates in the Core Listening paper. This was perceived as more demanding than last year and in fairness to candidates and in the interests of consistency the grade boundaries were altered appropriately.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Overall the performance by candidates in the PIL unit was acceptable. Candidates in the main had been entered at the appropriate level and performance across the range of papers bore this out.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

The **Performance** element of the exam continued to be safe ground for candidates and centres. There were however many more Principal Assessor referrals than last year — sadly concerning the same areas of centres' shortcomings. These were almost exclusively candidates who performed programmes which were short of time and /or below the task level required.

Listening was quite well done at PIL level although there were very few candidates who gained marks above 50 out of the raw 60 marks. A significant and disappointing number of candidates gained less than half marks.

Inventing submissions at PIL were generally in line with national standards.

The **Technology** folios were generally well done with some centres submitting MIDI files of a very high standard.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

The **Listening Extension** papers at both Intermediate 1 and 2 were not done well. The average mark at each level was below half marks and was in marked contrast to performance in the PIL components. Literacy questions in these papers were not well answered and candidates seemed less well prepared for the demands of the papers.

Inventing Extension at both levels was poorly done. The average mark in each paper was below half — and a significant number of candidates gained very few marks in this option. Many programme notes gave little in the way of assistance to the assessor and scores and performance plans were sometimes hopelessly inadequate.

In **MIDI Sequencing** some centres submitted folio material which was of poor musical quality and this was reflected in the mark awarded. A significant number of candidates did not gain high marks in the MIDI exam, despite having submitted excellent folios. This may simply reflect the exam conditions and time constraints of the paper.

In the **Sound Engineering** folio markers felt that some candidates had too little input into the final mix. There was overuse of direct injection, commercial recordings as backing and a general dearth of live/acoustic recording.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Two requirements of the practical exams are still causing difficulties in a significant number of centres' presentations — failure to comply with the requirements in terms of time and task level. Candidates' grades are undoubtedly being adversely affected by such centres' shortcomings.

It is essential that centres presenting Technology candidates, especially for the first time, familiarise themselves thoroughly with the requirements of the folio and the written paper.

It is not acceptable to submit TAB guitar scores. This applies to the Practical exams and the Inventing element. It is of course perfectly acceptable to allow guitar candidates to learn or perform using the TAB system.

In the marking or moderating process for Inventing it is essential that a score or performance plan be submitted. This need not be in standard notation but must be sufficient to allow the assessor/moderator to 'follow the geography' of the piece.