

## Principal Assessor Report 2004

**Assessment Panel:**

**Music**

**Qualification area**

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

**Music : Intermediate 1 and 2**

### **Statistical information: update**

|                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Number of entries in 2003</b> | Int 1 341, Int 2 1,273 |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|

|                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Number of entries in 2004</b> | Int 1 557, Int 2 1,885 |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|

### **General comments re entry numbers**

The number of candidates being presented at Intermediate levels continues to rise. This increase is most dramatic at Int 2 level with an increase of over 600 candidates this year.

## **Statistical Information: Performance of candidates**

### **Distribution of awards**

After considerable discussion within the exam team no upper A awards were made at Intermediate 1. Upper A awards at Intermediate 2 however rose considerably, with 74 candidates gaining this award.

At Intermediate 1 level, 15% of candidates gained no award while at Intermediate 2 this fell to 7% of candidates.

### **Comments on any significant changes in percentages or distribution of awards**

Most significant is the high number of candidates gaining an upper A award at Int 2 level. A factor in this statistic is undoubtedly the high number of candidates being presented in S4. This year's presentation at Int 2 consisted of 51% S4 candidates. (When Int 1 candidates from the same year group are included this percentage rises to 63%). Centres are clearly viewing these awards as apposite to S4 pupils and in the transfer from Standard Grade to NQ at this level candidates who may have gained a Credit award are clearly performing very well in Int 2, resulting in a large number of A and upper A awards.

## Grade boundaries for each subject area included in the report

| Distribution of awards |       | %    | Cum % | Number of candidates | Lowest mark |
|------------------------|-------|------|-------|----------------------|-------------|
| A                      | Int 1 | 18.3 | 18.3  | 90                   | 168         |
|                        | Int 2 | 38.4 | 38.4  | 620                  | 168         |
| B                      | Int 1 | 36.0 | 54.4  | 177                  | 144         |
|                        | Int 2 | 34.3 | 72.8  | 620                  | 144         |
| C                      | Int 1 | 30.5 | 84.9  | 150                  | 120         |
|                        | Int 2 | 20.4 | 93.2  | 368                  | 120         |
| D                      | Int 1 | 15.1 | 100.0 | 491                  |             |
|                        | Int 2 | 6.8  | 100.0 | 1805                 |             |

## 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**

Intermediate grade boundaries were set as in 2003 examinations. Intermediate 2 pass mark was set at 120 which was in line with all previous years except 2003.

The boundaries at Int 1 level resulted in no awards of upper A, but it was felt by the exam team that this reflected the performance of candidates this year.

In Int 2 the upper A boundary was set at 204, as last year, but resulted in a considerable increase in the number of candidates gaining this award.

## Comments on candidate performance

### General comments

Overall the performance in the PIL units at both levels was acceptable. In the view of the exam team and in the light of markers' reports, candidates appear to have been entered at an appropriate level and performance across the range of mandatory papers reflected this.

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

The **Listening** element showed a significant improvement this year with a notable number of candidates gaining in excess of 50 marks out of a raw 60. There were candidates who failed to gain half marks but these appeared to be much fewer in number and most were not acutely short of the pass mark.

In the **Performance** element candidates generally performed well and reached the standard required of the respective level. This was the case at both mandatory and extension levels. This area of the exam is familiar territory for both centres and candidates and performance continues to be the mainstay of most presentations.

The **Technology** exams were well handled in the main with centres and candidates showing a good understanding of SQA requirements. The folios submitted in the areas of MIDI Sequencing and Sound Engineering were generally acceptable with a significant number of candidates submitting work of a very high standard.

**Inventing** folios at PIL level were generally in line with national standards.

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

A disturbing number of PA referrals concerned candidates who had performed programmes which were seriously short of the time required. Out of sixty-plus referrals the majority reported short programmes. The time requirements at all levels have remained unchanged for some four years but a large number of candidates and indeed centres seem unable or unwilling to comply with these. Inevitably this approach is to the detriment of candidates' grades.

Extension Listening was not well done at both levels. This has been the pattern from the inception of these courses with most candidates struggling to reach half marks.

A similar pattern emerged in Inventing Extension, with very few candidates gaining more than half marks. Of greater concern is the number of candidates and centres who failed to comply with the documentary evidence required for all submissions, i.e. Score or performance plan and programme note. A number of candidates also failed to meet the time requirements in this extension.

In MIDI Sequencing a small number of centres still need to articulate with the demands of the course. Some of

the folios submitted did not comply with the stated minimum standard required.

In Sound Engineering a number of centres continued to employ commercial recordings and there is a general scarcity of live or acoustic recording.

## **Recommendations**

### **Feedback to centres**

In the practical exams, centres need to comply with the time requirements of the levels. This is as important as satisfying the 'task level' in terms of grade of difficulty of the programme or pieces. Candidates' grades will inevitably be jeopardised by programmes which are short of the stipulated time.

Centres presenting in any of the technology areas must be conversant with the demands of the course and the desired outcomes. Familiarity with the requirements of the folios and the written papers is essential. It is crucial that folios in MIDI Sequencing are checked by centres prior to submission to SQA to ensure accessibility for the marker.

It is a requirement that a score or performance plan be submitted with all Inventing Folios. This may be in standard notation but this is not a requirement. It is essential however that if another format is used as a score or plan, the SQA marker/moderator must be able to follow the piece. Guitar TAB and computer screen plans are not acceptable in this area.