

Principal Assessor Report 2005

Assessment Panel:

Music

Qualification area

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

Music Higher

Statistical information: update

Number of resulted entries in 2004	3,829
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Number of resulted entries in 2005	4,056
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General comments re resulted entry numbers

In 2005, there was a 9.3% increase in MIDI Sequencing candidates and an 8.2% increase in Sound Engineering candidates. There was a 22% decrease in the number of Listening (Extension) candidates and an increase of 17.3% in the number of Inventing (Extension) candidates. It is encouraging to see the increase in the number of candidates opting for the Sound Engineering and MIDI Sequencing options of the Higher Music Course.

Statistical Information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of awards	%	Cum %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark- 240	-	-	-	-
A	47.7	47.7	1,934	168
B	30.1	77.8	1,220	144
C	15.4	93.1	624	120
D	2.6	95.7	104	108
No award	4.3	100.0	174	-

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 any significant changes in distribution of awards/grade boundaries

In 2005, grade boundaries are the same as the past three years. Although there is a 1% decrease in the number of candidates achieving an upper A, there is an increase of over 1% in the number of candidates achieving an overall A award. The numbers for B and C awards are similar to 2004.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

Performing

In this element of the examination, Visiting Examiners' reports indicate that centres and candidates seem to be well prepared and the quality of performances is being maintained in line with previous years' improvement. The average mark for the Extension option is in line with previous years. The perennial problems of failing to meet task content and time requirements – though less than in previous years – resulted in referrals. It is worth acknowledging the valuable support which instrumental teachers offer pupils and centres and the extra rehearsal time which teachers are willing to offer candidates, during and after the school day.

Technology

The improvement in performance in **MIDI Sequencing** over the last three years has been maintained and the rise in candidates opting for the Course suggests that the interest in the subject and the need for skills to be upgraded within departments has supported the increase. Markers reported issues regarding incomplete saving and merging of tracks as the main weaknesses across centres.

In terms of **Sound Engineering** markers generally commented favourably about the standard of candidate submissions. Markers raised issues related to saving of files and, in a few cases, lack of full knowledge of the Course content.

Listening

Marks in the Listening (Mandatory) Core Question Paper were consistent across the course models with the possible exception of those candidates who were entered for MIDI Sequencing or Sound Engineering Courses. There was a marked increase in the performance of candidates who chose Listening (Extension), where there was a 10% improvement in candidate response in the Listening (Extension) Commentary. There was evidence that centres had focussed on those aspects of submissions which were highlighted in 2004.

Inventing

Candidates generally performed well in Inventing and no additional concerns were raised at Central Moderation, where the majority of submissions were in line with national standards.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates performed well

As mentioned earlier, the high standards in Performing continue. The level of preparation within centres also continues to improve resulting in the more efficient use of Visiting Examiner time in centres.

Areas of external assessment in which candidates had difficulty

In their reports, markers highlighted aspects of the Technology options which continue to cause concern and centres are advised to check which software programmes candidates are using to save submissions for Central Moderation.

Recommendations

Feedback to centres

Generally candidates were well prepared and centres should be commended for the consistency of candidate performance. Some aspects of the Technology Courses continue to cause concern: issues of saving and merging tracks and full knowledge of course content in Sound Engineering were raised by markers as requiring attention.