



# **National Qualifications**

## **Course Report 2008: Music**

**Standard Grade**

**Access 2 and Access 3**

**Intermediate 1**

**Intermediate 2**

**Higher**

**Advanced Higher**



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# Introduction

The purpose of this Course report is to give centres:

- ◆ all information on internal and external assessment for the subject in the one place
- ◆ an easier way of making a comparison across levels and years
- ◆ support in achieving consistency in national standards across levels for both internal and external assessment

We will provide a link on the SQA website from the contents page of the Course report to individual sections of the report to allow for easier navigation, in addition to having access to the complete report.

We encourage you to provide feedback about the usefulness of the Course report. Please contact Mary McDonald, Qualifications Manager for NQ Music, with your comments – [mary.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk](mailto:mary.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk)

# Summary of Findings

## General

New Arrangements for National Qualifications in Music were implemented in 2006/2007 and the 2008 examination diet is the second year of the new format of the external examination. In 2008, across all NQ levels, there is a notable improvement in candidate performance in the external Question Paper.

SQA has continued to support centres through transition and change in a variety of ways: comprehensive Subject Update letters which are sent to all centres and published on [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk); exemplification packs of assessment standards which are published and distributed to centres where appropriate; national training events – the Professional Development Workshop for Higher Music which took place in November 2007; a high level of both Visiting and Central Verification of the Composing and Listening Units of the Course. This support continues in session 2008/2009 with further exemplification of the Composing Unit DV45 and the Advanced Higher Listening Unit DV41 13 - the Listening Commentary.

In 2007/2008, the distinction between Unit and Course in Music continued to be reinforced: the complementary and supplementary nature of Units and Courses; the interface of internal assessment with external assessment; the value of Units as qualifications in their own right.

At certification time, candidates' individual component marks for the external examination are released to centres. For the first time in 2008, SQA released sub-component marks for Music. This means that for diagnostic and development purposes centres now have the mark out of 30 for each Performing instrument and, for the Technology candidates, the mark out of 30 for both the Performing and Technology parts of the folio.

In the external examination, Visiting Examiners and Examining teams report continuing high and, at times, very high standards of Performing. As part of the responsibility of preparing candidates for the external examination at all levels including Standard Grade, centres must check and ensure that performing programmes meet the minimum time duration requirements. These requirements are set out in the Arrangements document and, for NQ levels, in the Course Assessment Specification.

# Entries and Awards

## Entries and Awards — Standard Grade Music

Year	Entries
2008	10,265
2007	10,601
2006	10,542

### Grade boundaries for each assessable element

#### Grade Boundaries 2008

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Listening	60	45	34	50	32	26	45	28	21

#### Grade Boundaries 2007

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Listening	60	45	34	50	32	26	45	28	21

#### Grade Boundaries 2006

Assessable Element	Credit Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		General Max Mark	Grade Boundaries		Foundation Max Mark	Grade Boundaries	
		1	2		3	4		5	6
Listening	60	44	33	50	31	24	45	27	22

### Distribution of awards

	Entries	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	No Award
2008	10,265	35.0%	32.8%	17.6%	8.4%	3.4%	0.8%	0.0%	1.9%
2007	10,601	33.8%	33.1%	18.3%	8.2%	3.5%	0.6%	0.0%	2.4%
2006	10,542	35.5%	31.3%	17.6%	8.4%	3.3%	0.8%	0.0%	3.1%

## Entries and Awards — National Qualification Courses

### Access 2

	Entries	Awards
2008	23	2
2007	31	8
2006	11	1

### Access 3

	Entries	Awards
2008	491	353
2007	489	376
2006	181	107

## Entries and Awards — Intermediate 1 Music

<b>Year</b>	<b>Entries</b>
<b>2008</b>	887
<b>2007</b>	798

### Grade Boundaries

<b>Year</b>	<b>Max Mark</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>2008</b>	100	70	60	50	45
<b>2007</b>	100	70	60	50	45

### Distribution of awards

	<b>Entries</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>No Award</b>
<b>2008</b>	887	22.9%	27.4%	23.4%	73.7%	7.1%	19.2%
<b>2007</b>	798	12.8%	23.4%	26.9%	63.2%	10.7%	26.2%

## Entries and Awards — Intermediate 2 Music

Year	Entries
2008	3,374
2007	3,095

### Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	70	60	50	45

### Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	3,374	44.0%	27.3%	17.5%	88.7%	4.1%	7.2%
2007	3,095	30.4%	29.6%	21.8%	81.8%	5.9%	12.3%

## Entries and Awards — Higher Music

Year	Entries
2008	4,451
2007	4,278

### Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	68	58	48	43

### Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	4,451	37.1%	32.3%	19.6%	89.0%	3.6%	7.4%
2007	4,278	28.4%	32.0%	23.4%	83.7%	5.3%	11.0%

## Entries and Awards — Advanced Higher Music

Year	Entries
2008	1,055
2007	1,235

### Grade Boundaries

Year	Max Mark	A	B	C	D
2008	100	70	60	50	45
2007	100	68	58	48	43

### Distribution of awards

	Entries	A	B	C	Pass	D	No Award
2008	1,055	44.4%	31.8%	16.2%	92.4%	2.9%	4.6%
2007	1,235	42.8%	30.6%	16.9%	90.3%	3.6%	6.2%

# Comments on Verification: Units which make up Courses

## Titles/Levels of National Units Verified

### The Following Units Were Verified:

<b>Music:</b>	<b>Composing</b>	<b>DV45 10</b>	<b>Intermediate 1</b>
		<b>DV45 11</b>	<b>Intermediate 2</b>
		<b>DV45 12</b>	<b>Higher</b>
		<b>DV45 13</b>	<b>Advanced Higher</b>
<b>Music:</b>	<b>Listening</b>	<b>DV41 13</b>	<b>Advanced Higher</b>

## Feedback to Centres

### General comments

A number of centres were again unable to meet the submission date of March 2008. After consultation with SQA, these centres were offered an extension where appropriate.

In 2008, 100 centres were verified at the Central Verification event. The great majority of centres verified were in line with national standards. Of the centres not accepted, all were accepted following resubmission.

This year saw the introduction of verification for the unit DV41 13, the Listening Commentary at Advanced Higher. A pilot sample of 17 centres was chosen and this will be expanded next year.

### Unit DV45 (Composing)

A wide range of Composing folios were submitted for Verification across all levels.

Folios were generally well organised with centres providing evidence that staff were comfortable with their role as internal assessors.

A wide range of musical styles and concepts were encountered, particularly in contemporary and popular genres.

Instruments of assessment, such as detailed programme notes and/or audio materials were not always available from some centres; this led to the return of the folio sample to the centre without Verification taking place. These centres were then required to re-submit complete candidate folios for Verification.

The quality of the detailed programme notes and audio materials was not always acceptable for all candidates.

The Assessor's Pro Forma and Assessor's Observation Checklist did not always provide sufficient information to assist the Verification process.

Misunderstanding and inappropriate application of composing levels was in evidence; this resulted in some candidates having been presented at the incorrect level.

Candidates should show convincing control of all five areas of melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre in at least one composition.

There still a tendency on the part of some centres to continue to be over-generous in assessment decisions i.e. Pass in candidates' Composing folio work.

### Unit DV41 13 (Listening)

Of the 17 centres verified, candidate's work from six centres initially did not meet the assessment requirements for this unit.

Centres are advised to study carefully the current exemplification to be found on the SQA Secure website (see SQA co-ordinator in school/college to access this).

It is essential that the candidate analyses at least two movements/works. Commentaries that merely refer to band line ups, history of musical instruments etc., should be avoided.

## **Areas of good practice and areas for further development**

Generally, centres are to be commended for the time and care which was taken in the submission of folios. The Verification process is both aided and informed by the following:

- ◆ Programme notes which are informative and clarify the stimulus, composition and decision-making process, concepts deployed and actual contribution of the candidate.
- ◆ Assessor's supplementary comments in the Assessor's Pro Forma which bring focus and insight to the centre's rationale for assessment decisions.
- ◆ Scores or performance plans which are complete and accurate.
- ◆ Audio tapes or CDs (not minidisc) that are clearly recorded and labelled. Each candidate should have an individual tape or CD.
- ◆ Computer-generated scores, which are quantized and reflect the timbres chosen.
- ◆ Completed Assessor's Pro Forma and Observation Checklist with comments which inform the verifier.
- ◆ Folio time requirements which are correct for each level.
- ◆ Candidate compositions which show convincing control of all five areas of melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre in at least one composition within the folio.
- ◆ Centres which make full use of exemplification materials provided by SQA in order to assist and inform themselves of the content and standard required for each levels of Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher.
- ◆ Listening Commentaries which follow the methodology found in the exemplification materials on the SQA Secure Website.

# Course Assessment: Standard Grade

In Standard Grade Music, the Course assessment consists of four elements: Solo Performing, Listening, Group Performing and Inventing.

## Feedback to centres on candidate performance

### General comments

Candidate performance in the 2008 Standard Grade music examination was consistent overall with the previous year.

Candidates continue to perform particularly well in the Performing elements of the Course.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates performed well in both Solo Performing and Group Performing / 2nd Solo Instrument.

### Areas which candidates found demanding

No areas were found to be unduly demanding.

### Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

#### Solo Performing Examination

Centres are reminded that 4 minutes is the minimum time requirement for programmes at all levels. Programmes which do not meet the minimum duration of 4 minutes incur a penalty, disadvantaging candidates.

#### Centres are reminded of the following change for drumkit for the 2008 examination and after:

In the past, if all prepared drumkit styles couldn't be accommodated in the 4–6 minute programme it was possible for the centre to profess that the candidate had covered the remaining style. From the 2008 examination and after, the Visiting Examiner will require to hear **all** professed styles, eg four styles at Credit level; judicious cuts or fades can be made in the music to allow this.

Centres should refer to the Standard Grade Music Update Letter issued to Centres in August 2007 for further advice.

## **Internal Assessment of Group Performing / 2nd Solo Instrument and Inventing.**

Visiting Verification of internal assessment continues and was very well received by the centres selected in 2008.

Centres should refer to the GRC (Grade Related Criteria) for all internal assessment.

Candidates playing keyboards as a 2nd Solo Instrument are required to play with two hands, performing both melody line and chords (as in Solo Performing).

Candidates playing keyboards in Group Performing may play one hand melody only. This may impact on the task level.

## **Listening Papers**

Centres should refer to the detailed Marking Instructions which have been published annually since the 2005 examination on the SQA website.

### **Credit Listening Paper**

In the extended writing question (Question 4) candidates must link all concepts to the rubric of the question in order to gain any marks, ie link each musical concept **to the effect created**.

In Question 6 candidates must comment on instruments/voices **and how they are used** in both versions in order to gain the full range of marks available.

## **Appeals**

When compiling and submitting Appeals evidence, centres should ensure that there is a breadth of coverage of Course content and that there is evidence that all types of questions have been sampled in a prelim-type Listening question paper.

# Course Assessment: Intermediate 1 and 2

In Intermediate 1 Music, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and for *Music with Performing* a Performing component and for *Music with Technology* a Folio component.

In Intermediate 2 Music, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and for *Music with Performing* a Performing component and for *Music with Technology* a Folio component.

## Feedback to centres on candidate performance

### General Comments

The majority of candidates were presented for the Music with Performing model of the exam.

The general standard of response to the Question Paper at both Intermediate 1 and 2 levels, now in its second year, was appreciably better than last year. Candidates improved on last year by 4 marks on average, with a slight increase in Performing marks overall. This improvement in the standard of response was also identified in the responses of candidates in the Technology options.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates' responses in the Question Paper at both levels suggested a much better standard of preparation by centres, eg candidates rarely ticked 'extra' boxes above the number demanded by certain questions and very few papers contained examples of candidates offering more than the demands of any particular question.

Practical Performances at both levels were generally secure, particularly at Intermediate 2 level.

There was an increase in the number of Upper A grades awarded, most noticeably at Intermediate 2, suggesting that overall, candidates were increasingly comfortable with the exam as a whole.

Most candidates did not seem perturbed or affected in any way by the sampling procedure first adopted in 2007 for Performing exams. Most were clearly well prepared for this approach.

### Areas which candidates found demanding

A significant number of candidates at Intermediate 1 level were unable to fulfil the requirement of the Performing Exam to perform on two instruments/voice. Instrument 1 in nearly all cases was adequately prepared in terms of task level and time requirement, but in a number of cases, candidates' Instrument 2 was poorly handled.

Some centres had clearly not prepared their candidates for the type of questions they would encounter in the Question Paper. Candidates' answers from such centres suggested that they had been given little or no practice in certain types of question.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

The following comments arise from a significant number of centres' presentations:

- ◆ Many candidates presented Performing programmes which fell substantially short of the time requirements for the external exam. Clearly candidates falling into this category would not be eligible for all the marks available. The time requirements have not changed since the inception of the Courses and centres disadvantage their candidates by allowing this shortfall to contribute to their candidates' awards. The overwhelming majority of referrals to Principal Assessor concerned candidates performing short programmes – in some cases woefully inadequate.
- ◆ The sampling approach in the Performing exam, whilst causing few problems nationally, gave rise to a few anomalous situations. A few centres chose to sample candidates' presentations themselves. This is not the approach. Sampling is done by the Visiting Examiner (VE), on the day of the exam, strictly by the rules governing this approach to examining. Some centres had clearly not given their candidates practice in having their pieces stopped at an appropriate point and their candidates were potentially unsettled by the sampling process.
- ◆ Some candidates were able to perform only one piece, being unable to offer any more. This is not acceptable and further disadvantages candidates' Course prospects. This was particularly prevalent at Intermediate 1 level, which, combined with many short programmes, resulted in almost 13% of Intermediate 1 candidates gaining no award at all.
- ◆ A number of candidates at Intermediate 1 level performed pieces which had very obvious faults identified by the Visiting Examiner but they had been allowed to perform with apparently no intervention from the presenting centre.
- ◆ Centres must prepare candidates for the demands of the Question Paper in terms of the requirements of certain questions and appropriate responses. This is best done by practice and consolidation throughout the Course.
- ◆ Some candidates at Intermediate 2 level had quite simply been entered for the wrong level of Course – they could not cope with the demands of either of the external components – the Performing exam and the Question Paper.

# Course Assessment: Higher

In Higher Music, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and for *Music with Performing* a Performing component and for *Music with Technology* a Folio component.

## Feedback to centres on candidate performance

### General Comments

The number of 2008 candidate entries is relatively stable compared to the 2007 examination. Candidates were better prepared for the external examination this year and responded more positively to the changes in the format of the Question Paper and with the procedures for the external Performing Examination. Additional advice and support from SQA throughout the year and minor revisions to the format of the comparison question (Question 8) had a very positive effect on candidate response in the Question Paper. Visiting Examiners commented favourably on candidate preparation for the Performing component and the readiness of centres in terms of the administration of this part of the examination.

This year there has been a marked improvement in results in all aspects of the exam with candidates exhibiting a significant improvement on last year. The support to centres from SQA in terms of exemplification materials and information made available from the Professional Development Workshop (PDW) in November 2007 and the more focused approach from candidates reflects well on the overall response to this year's exam.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

The strength of Performing remains a stable skill exhibited by most candidates. The level of preparation and performance was again commented upon by almost all Visiting Examiners. Centres and candidates have adapted well to the changes brought by the sampling of performance programmes. The performance of candidates who were entered for the Music with Technology Course model was very encouraging this year. Though some aspects of this exam still require a more focussed approach from candidates and centres, the overall performance of candidates in this part of the exam was significantly improved. Markers commented on the improved understanding of standards and the use of materials from the PDW, and the increase in centre expertise.

It is particularly encouraging to see the improvement in candidate response in particular questions in the Question Paper. The response in the literacy and comparison questions in the paper were particularly encouraging. The literacy aspect of the subject relates significantly to Performing and that, along with the higher order skills involved in the comparison question, demonstrates that candidates are handling these aspects of the examination better than previously.

### Areas which candidates found demanding

Most candidates presented for the Performing component of the exam were presented at the correct level, though in some centres there was a failure to adhere to the specific time requirements for all the areas of the Performing exam. There were less referrals to Principal Assessor on task level content and, again, centres should be congratulated on their partnership with SQA in reducing this issue in the exam preparation through the on-going Approval of Repertoire project. Although overall the response to the literacy aspects of the examination was much improved on last year, it is important to alert centres to Markers' reports which reflect concerns about a number of candidates' responses to literacy questions in the Music with Technology option.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

All centres should be congratulated on the effectiveness of their response to the issues raised following last year's exam. Most of these issues have been addressed and the resulting improvement across both Course models is apparent. However, the continuing improvement in literacy requires to be embedded for all students. The issue of students who opt for the Technology model should perhaps require centres to support candidates in a more focused approach to literacy.

A number of Markers commented on candidates whose knowledge of concepts from lower levels was not good, resulting in them not gaining marks from these more straightforward concepts. It would still appear that more time has to be spent on exam technique in the grid question (Question 8) and also on embedding knowledge and understanding of concepts and literacy.

Among some issues raised by Markers on the Music with Technology folios were:

- ◆ Session logs not fully completed
- ◆ Misunderstanding of the assessment criteria
- ◆ Centres submitting only a snapshot of the computer screen
- ◆ Discs not labelled effectively
- ◆ Use of professional files
- ◆ Files not meeting the time requirements

# Course Assessment: Advanced Higher

In Advanced Higher Music, the Course assessment consists of a Question Paper and for *Music with Performing* a Performing component and for *Music with Technology* a Folio component.

## Feedback to centres on candidate performance

### General Comments

In the Question Paper, candidates seemed to be better-prepared for the types of questions they would encounter. There was still a wide variety of attempts at completing the paper and the overall response was only slightly better than in 2007. Candidates were given additional time to consider the more complex questions before the playing of some audio excerpts.

### Areas in which candidates performed well

Visiting Examiners reported that the majority of candidates' Performing programmes displayed the usual very high standard of preparation and presentation. Sampling of Performing programmes, introduced for the first time in 2007, appeared to be better understood by all except for a few centres; generally candidates had been given the appropriate information by staff in centres and were aware and accepted the method of sampling. Most of the candidates had experienced this procedure at Higher level in 2007.

A few centres and local authorities had organised development visits by a Music Technology specialist. In the work of candidates from several centres it was clear that this support had been put to good use, especially in the Sound Engineering and Production folios. Recent developments in recording software had also been used by several candidates to produce outstanding folios containing highly imaginative, creative use of technology, also demonstrating good advice from their tutors.

### Areas which candidates found demanding

Markers reported that very few candidates had achieved a high mark in the Question Paper (over 30 marks out of 40) and that still fewer had achieved especially high marks. This emphasises the particular need for accurate answers in all four parts of some questions before 1 mark can be awarded.

Question 2 was worth 1 mark for two correct answers; only a few candidates answered both parts of this question correctly in spite of the excerpt being taken from one of the works assigned to Advanced Higher Music from the MUSICWORKS WITH THE RSAMD DVD and its support materials, supplied to every centre.

Question 5, the comparison of two excerpts, was again poorly answered with some candidates finding it difficult to complete the answer grid in the appropriate manner.

Also in the Question Paper, common to both courses, markers reported that Performing with Technology candidates (X233) were often less able to cope with the musical literacy questions. This appears to reflect the high proportion of these candidates who use a “rock”-related instrument – electric guitar, bass guitar or drum kit – where standard musical notation would not be used in the preparation of their Performing programmes. Many of these candidates also appear to be less able to deal with the wide range of concepts from a variety of musical styles included in the paper.

## **Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates**

Almost all Visiting Examiners commented on the notably high standard of performance in candidates’ Instrument 1 but several examiners noted the poorer quality of performance in the Instrument 2 programme. As there is equal weighting of marks for both instruments this is an area where centres could - in some instances - do more to encourage better standards of presentation. Centres have the benefit of sub-component marks issued to them in August and this should aid their identification of any weaker areas in individual presentations. For the first time this year, centres have been issued with the mark out of 30 for each instrument and, for the Technology candidates, the mark out of 30 for both the Performing and Technology parts of the folio.

In the Question Paper, many candidates appear to need a great deal more practice in answering the comparison question (Q. 5 in 2008) by using exactly the same format as the specimen paper and the two papers that have now been used in national examinations. In preparing candidates for this type of question, it may help centres to note that a maximum of 16 concepts taken from those listed in the Course Specification will be included as possible answers in future papers.

Centres should make a careful study of the three available sets of Marking Instructions (Specimen paper, 2007 and 2008) for the final two questions in the paper where continuous prose must be used in the candidates’ responses. These combined with the *Exemplification of Responses to Questions 7 and 8* (available on the SQA secure website since August 2007) give details of how marks are awarded and will help staff advise candidates on the best approach to gaining maximum credit for their answers.

In the Music with Technology Course there are still too many examples of poorly completed folios. In spite of advice, there were several examples of centres failing to submit recordings in suitable formats or with elements missing, leading to a substantial mop-up operation following SQA’s central marking event. This type of problem requires appropriate checking procedures by staff in centres to ensure that CDs contain the required tracks, clearly indexed and capable of being played on standard audio equipment. The pro-formas that accompany the Technology folios must be fully completed with the required details of timings of pieces in the Performing section and details of the hardware and software used by MIDI Sequencing candidates included. The full range of marks will not be available to candidates who produce short programmes in Performing for the Visiting Examiners or in either element of the Technology folios.

A random selection of centres’ Commentaries was centrally verified in 2008. (A Pass is required in this Listening Unit (DV41 13) by all Advanced Higher candidates before a Course award can be made.) Several centres had awarded a Pass to candidates who had clearly not satisfied all areas of the criteria listed on the Assessor’s Pro-forma. Without written and audio quotations from the actual pieces being studied, a candidate cannot be awarded a Pass. Several candidates had failed to include the required points of comparison or the brief summary of the candidate’s findings. These centres had their candidates’ work returned in time for re-assessment and, where possible, the required

information to be added. Staff should be aware of this extra administrative work created for themselves and for all involved in the process of verification if candidates are awarded a Pass without all of the criteria being satisfied.