



Course report 2019

Subject	Music Technology
Level	Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected. Feedback from markers indicated that there was a wide range of music excerpts which provided suitable challenge and demand for this level.

The question paper is now worth 40 marks, with a number of new questions, as detailed in the course specification, the audio presentation and webinar, and exemplified in the specimen question paper.

Assignment

The Higher Music Technology assignment was completed successfully with many candidates submitting high quality material which showcased creativity. Candidates mainly submitted radio broadcasts or Foley contexts.

The assignment this year is now worth 80 marks, Mandatory skills and content has been migrated from unit assessment, as detailed in the course specification document, the audio presentation and webinar.

Candidates submit a multi-track of electronic sound and/or music, and a multi-track of sound and/or music within their chosen context. However some candidates were not able to access the full range of marks for particular stages, as they did not include all of the mandatory skills listed in the course specification; and/or a multi-tracked electronically produced sounds and/or music within their assignment.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(a): Candidates identify a genre and associated music concept. The majority of candidates accessed the full range of marks.

Question 2(b): Candidates identify a music feature present in the excerpt. The majority of candidates answered correctly.

Question 3(a)(i) and (ii) and 3(b)(i) and (ii): Candidates identify a fault present in the recording and give a solution. The majority of candidates accessed the full range of marks.

Question 4(a): Candidates identify a reverb setting. Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 5(b) and 5(c): Candidates answer questions on intellectual property. The majority of candidates accessed the full range of marks.

Question 6(a): Candidates identify a genre and an associated technology concept. The majority of candidates answered correctly.

Question 8 (part 6): Candidates identify a music feature. The majority of candidates answered correctly.

Question 9: Candidates identify five production features from a list of ten. Candidates performed well in this 5 mark question.

Assignment

Stage 1a: Planning sound design: Many candidates submitted evidence planning which was improved in comparison with previous years.

Stage 2a: Audio capture: Most candidates completed the implementation stages successfully, and to a reasonable standard. Some candidates demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of audio capture techniques and were able to access the full range of marks.

Stage 2b: Processing skills: Most candidates successfully applied equalisation and compression and/or limiting to a reasonable standard. Some candidates demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of processing skills and technical awareness and were able to access the full range of marks.

Stage 2c: Applying effects: Most candidates completed this to a reasonable standard, applying effects and including at least two from the mandatory list. Some candidates completed this to a high standard, completing all of the mandatory requirements for this stage.

Stage 2d: Mixing and sequencing skills: Most candidates completed this to a reasonable standard, applying a range of mixing techniques, demonstrating accurate synchronisation and/or sequencing and mixing down to an audio master in an appropriate file format. Some candidates completed this to a high standard, completing all of the mandatory requirements for this stage, and were able to access the full range of marks.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(b): Candidates describe musical features of a genre/style. This proved to be a discriminating question for candidates, with some candidates accessing the full range of marks.

Question 4(b): Candidates identify a guitar playing technique. This proved to be a discriminating question for candidates.

Question 5(a): Candidates identify an element of the music that has infringed intellectual property law. Many candidates found this question demanding.

Question 6(b): Candidates answer questions on mic'ing. This proved to be a discriminating question for candidates, with some candidates accessing the full range of marks.

Question 6(c): Candidates identify a textural concept. Many candidates found this question demanding.

Question 7(a): Candidates describe a key innovator, attribute and technology associated with a chosen genre. This proved to be a discriminating question for candidates, with some candidates accessing the full range of marks.

Question 7(b): Candidates describe a key innovator and their influence on a chosen technology. Many candidates found this question fairly demanding.

Question 8 (part 1): Candidates identify a type of equaliser used in the excerpt. Many candidates found this question demanding.

Question 8 (part 3): Candidates identify an effect and a process. Many candidates found this question fairly demanding.

Question 8 (part 4): Candidates identify the manipulated control on a synthesiser. Many candidates found this question fairly demanding.

Question 8 (part 5): Candidates identify a drum group/submix. Many candidates found this highly demanding.

Assignment

Stage 1b: Planning the recording, creating, editing and mixing: Some candidates did not provide sufficient evidence of their planning for both the audio multi-track and the MIDI/virtual instrument multi-track.

Stage 2a: Audio capture: Some candidates did not provide evidence of all the mandatory requirements for this stage, with many missing out evidence of stereo mic'ing, the use of at least two polar patterns, and selecting and using virtual and/or MIDI instruments.

Stage 2b: Processing skills: Many candidates did not provide evidence of all the mandatory requirements for this stage, particularly the use of noise gate and editing a minimum of three takes into a single take.

Stage 2c: Applying effects: Many candidates did not provide evidence of all the mandatory requirements for this stage, particularly manipulating the controls of virtual and/or MIDI instruments.

Stage 2d: Mixing and sequencing skills: Many candidates did not provide evidence of all the mandatory requirements for this stage, particularly grouping/bussing and the use of send effects.

Stage 3: Evaluating the production: Many candidates did not provide evidence of all the mandatory requirements for this stage, particularly in evaluating planning, and providing justifications for significant technical and creative decisions.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

In preparing candidates for the question paper, centres should ensure that candidates are well prepared for the range of questioning. In particular candidates should be prepared for questions on technological developments and technological innovators.

Candidates should be encouraged to study microphone technique and its application in both studio and live contexts. It would be useful for candidates to study common microphone techniques for woodwind, brass, strings and percussion instruments, as well as common rock and pop instruments.

Assignment

It is important for centres to ensure that candidates are evidencing all the mandatory skills described in the course specification. Centres should refer to the detailed marking instructions in the course specification to ensure candidates are completing the assignment to the required level.

Candidates should be encouraged to provide clear and concise evidence in their logs and may benefit from a structured approach to evidencing the mandatory skills required for the assignment.

Centres should ensure candidates are providing an electronic multi-track and an audio multi-track and that these are included in their main context, which should also be multi-tracked. Contexts are described in greater detail in the common questions document, which can be found on the [Music Technology subject page](#).

Below are three examples which illustrate different contexts that were submitted as assignments in 2019.

Example 1

An audio book which contains narration and a minimal amount of sound design and Foley sounds. Many of the sound design and Foley sounds were sourced from the internet and are of varying quality. The candidate included one multi-track with both audio and electronic sound sources. This assignment did not allow the candidate to access the full range of marks.

The multi-track contains acoustic guitar, DI'd electronic keyboard, a shaker and a vocal. The candidate has not manipulated the controls of MIDI/virtual instruments and has not used a stereo mic'ing technique.

Example 2

A radio broadcast, contained multi-tracked parts of the presenter, an interview, weather and news reports, a sweeper using loops and imported royalty free music to use as beds. The electronic multi-track is an excerpt from a synth pop track and the audio multi-track is an

excerpt from an indie rock track. This assignment allowed the candidate to access the full range of marks.

In this instance, the electronic multi-track contained programmed synth drums, a programmed synth bass part, an arpeggiated chordal pattern, a lead synth part and a vocal. The virtual synth parts had the ADSR manipulated, as well as automation of the filter cut off and resonance controls.

The multi-track contained multi-mic'ed drum-kit, DI'd bass guitar, mic'ed rhythm and lead electric guitar cabinet, and vocals. The vocal is recorded three times and edited down to a single track.

Example 3

A short piece of animation, containing Foley and sound design created by the candidate for each sound required in the animation. The electronic multi-track is a portion of the score for the animation, and the audio multi-track syncs to a more action based sequence and is a rock track, with typical rock instrumentation. This assignment allowed the candidate to access the full range of marks

In this instance, the electronic multi-track contains VI synthesisers, with string, brass and bass synth sounds and synth drums added in places. These were played in using a MIDI controller keyboard. The virtual synth parts had the ADSR manipulated, as well as automation of the filter cut off and resonance controls.

The audio multi-track contains multi-mic'ed drum-kit, DI'd bass guitar and mic'ed electric guitar cabinets. An electric guitar solo has been recorded three times and is edited down to one track.

For further clarification on course requirements, please access the common questions document available found on the [Music Technology subject page](#), the audio presentation detailing changes to the course assessment valid from 2018/19 and the Higher Music Technology webinar (available from the [Understanding Standards webpage](#)).

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	669
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	772
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	22.3%	22.3%	172	69
B	29.7%	51.9%	229	59
C	26.3%	78.2%	203	49
D	15.9%	94.2%	123	39
No award	5.8%	-	45	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.