



Course report 2019

Subject	Music
Level	National 5

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

Summary of the course assessment

Question paper

This year's question paper performed as expected. Feedback from markers indicated that the question paper had good coverage of course content, was of a fair and appropriate standard, covered a wide range of styles which were accessible to candidates, and had clearly worded questions.

Assignment

Most of the music composed by candidates for their assignment was of a satisfactory standard, and the composing reviews provided a satisfactory account of their main decisions and strengths or areas for improvement.

Performance

As in previous years, most candidates demonstrated good levels of skill in this area.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Most candidates demonstrated appropriate exam technique and displayed familiarity and knowledge of question types. Almost all candidates attempted every question.

Candidates completed the following questions well:

- ◆ multiple choice questions — most parts of questions 1, 4 and 5
- ◆ sequential listening question — question 2
- ◆ recognising key signature, note name and cadence — questions 3(a), 3(c) and 3(f), and correcting the rhythm 3(e)
- ◆ inserting relevant concepts in the text — question 6
- ◆ identifying styles — questions 7(a)(i) and 7(b)(i)
- ◆ giving a relevant reason — question 7(a)(ii)
- ◆ recognising prominent features, appropriate to the excerpt — question 8

Assignment

Some candidates' compositions showed imaginative development of musical ideas, and demonstrated their ability to select and use elements creatively.

Most candidates wrote a composing review containing satisfactory accounts of main decisions, and indicated satisfactory strengths and/or areas for improvement.

Some candidate submissions evidenced personalisation and choice, demonstrating original ideas which were developed effectively and creatively.

Performance

Feedback from SQA's visiting assessors (VAs) shows that most candidates prepared well for their performances, many of which were of a high standard.

In most performances, there was clear evidence of personalisation and choice in the varied programmes selected. Many opted to perform pieces above the minimum requirements and performed very well.

Most centres used the drum kit style bank and presented an appropriate spread and number of drum kit styles and fills.

Vocal programmes in the main were performed from memory, although this is not mandatory, and candidates chose songs that were appropriate for their musical and technical skills.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Some candidates found the following areas of the question paper demanding:

- ◆ Question 3(b) — identifying the time signature. Candidates were asked to identify three beats in the bar, and write the appropriate time signature in the correct place.
- ◆ Question 4(b) — identifying the style as minimalist.
- ◆ Question 4(f) — identifying the scale. Candidates were asked to identify the whole-tone scale used in the excerpt of impressionist music.

Assignment

Some candidates composed music which lacked harmonic understanding, resulting in clashes in melodic and accompaniment parts.

Most compositions show candidates' initial ideas are appropriate, but some do not show they have successfully developed these ideas. Development is one of the key elements of the assessment criteria.

In the composing review, there were many candidates who did not provide details of how they had explored and developed their musical ideas, one of the three requirements of the review. Some candidates showed limited identification of strengths and/or areas for development, for example: 'I like the flute part', 'I could add another instrument', 'I would make my piece longer' or 'if I had more time I would add a drum beat'.

Performance

Some programmes did not meet the minimum 2 minute time requirement on one instrument.

Some candidates' programmes did not meet the minimum time requirement of 8 minutes overall.

Some drum kit candidates did not select their four styles from the drum kit style bank and did not demonstrate four-way independence in every style.

Some drum kit programmes did not meet the minimum required number of fills. Four fills are required in each piece. The National 5 Music course specification contains the requirements for drum kit programmes and the drum kit styles bank.

Some candidates' chordal guitar and ukulele programmes were short of the required minimum number of chords at this level. A minimum of 12 chords are required.

Some candidates performed keyboard programmes without left-hand chords.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Most candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of course content.

The question paper consists of concepts drawn from National 3, National 4 and National 5 concept lists. Candidates should be able to identify concepts from each of the levels.

Using a wide variety of resources, including online resources, can help candidates to practise identifying concepts.

The following advice is helpful to teachers and lecturers when preparing candidates for the question paper:

- ◆ In multiple choice questions, candidates should read the instructions carefully to avoid ticking an inappropriate number of responses.
- ◆ In question 3, candidates should look elsewhere in the printed music to see if there are similar patterns in pitch and/or rhythm that may assist them in their answer. In question 3(d), bar 4 is a repeat of bar 2. The rhythm is provided above the bar, and both pitch and rhythm must be written accurately to be awarded the mark.
- ◆ When writing notation, candidates should clearly indicate whether a note head is on a line or in a space, and it should be very clear if a note head has been filled in or left empty. If a candidate has not made their intention clear, then markers cannot award marks.
- ◆ In questions 5 and 8, the table headings may change, as indicated in previous SQA communications. Candidates should carefully read the questions to ensure their answers are relevant. Candidates are asked to comment on prominent instruments in question 8. However, many also wrote playing techniques, for example, arco, which are not asked for and are not awarded marks.
- ◆ In question 8, candidates should give answers related to the excerpt and avoid long lists of unrelated concepts. Lists of concepts unrelated to the music and/or extensive lists of contradictory concepts result in markers applying penalties.

If centres are submitting exceptional circumstance evidence for the question paper, the assessment papers used for prelim-type events should replicate the question type and mark allocation from the course assessment. Centres should also submit a full copy of the marking instructions, even if questions are drawn from SQA specimen or past question papers. When preparing prelim and listening assessments, centres must consider the following information:

- ◆ A past paper or specimen question paper in its entirety cannot be the only evidence submitted for exceptional circumstances. These papers are accessible on the SQA website and therefore candidates may be familiar with the content prior to assessment.
- ◆ Class tests, or other forms of evidence, must demonstrate that candidates have knowledge and understanding of concepts appropriate to the course assessment.

- ◆ Some questions from older past papers may not provide the appropriate scope, coverage or balance, and may need to be amended.
- ◆ The marking instructions used for centre devised assessments should reflect the marking instructions used in the final exam. Half marks are not used. Examples of marking instructions for past papers can be found on the SQA website.

Assignment

Candidate personalisation and choice should be encouraged, allowing candidates to compose in a genre or style that interests them. Centres should avoid using a centre-devised template that directs candidates to compose specific styles of music, as this can limit candidates' creativity.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to develop ideas creatively as the music progresses, within the context of their chosen style. For example, a ternary form composition in which the A section is identical on its return, does not show a candidate's ability to develop their ideas progressively throughout the composition. Appendix 2 of the National 5 Music course specification suggests a range of ways that candidates can develop music. The Understanding Standards examples on the SQA secure website illustrate how development is necessary for candidates to access the full range of marks.

Candidates who present an electronic composition, or one that makes use of pre-recorded loops, must ensure that they do this in the context of a wider composition. Using the composing review, candidates must clearly identify their original creative input within an electronic composition. This ensures markers can distinguish a candidate's own work from pre-recorded elements which have been selected from within a program.

The composed piece may contain sections of improvisation, but this must be in the context of a wider composition that demonstrates composing skills. The score or performance plan and composing review should indicate which areas within a composition are improvised. Markers award no marks to a piece that is solely an improvisation.

A composition that is submitted solely using tablature (TAB) is not sufficient; candidates should submit a score or performance plan showing the harmonic framework. A performance plan that includes, for example, a guitar riff in TAB within a harmonic framework is acceptable.

An arrangement of another piece of music is not acceptable.

In their composing review, candidates must reference all three bullet points; the main decisions made, how they explored and developed musical ideas, and strengths and/or areas for improvement. Their main decisions could include comments on, for example, instruments and voices chosen, tempo, time signatures, chords and chord sequence, modulations and structure, and should also include decisions they made as their composition progressed. Some candidates only referenced their early decisions, which impacted on the marks awarded.

To successfully capture the exploration and development of their musical ideas, candidates should be encouraged to give details of what they have tried and perhaps dismissed, for example 'I added a countermelody on trumpet but it didn't go with the other instruments so I

changed it to flute which sounded much better'. Comments such as 'I changed the rhythm to develop my piece' offer a very limited explanation of how the candidate explored and developed the piece of music. Further explanation such as 'to develop the melody from bar 17, I tried a variety of rhythms such as quavers and semiquavers, but decided to use dotted rhythms to add more interest to this section'.

Candidates should provide a minimum of two strengths and/or areas for improvement. These should ideally refer to musical aspects rather than the candidate's feelings about the piece. For example; 'A strength was using piano broken chords in the final section instead of block chords, as this helped to create a lighter accompaniment', shows the candidate's musical understanding. Whereas the candidate has provided little identification of their strengths in 'I like the piano in the last section'.

Reviews must be submitted in the correct template and be limited to one page. The mandatory template is published on SQA's website. The composed music should be within the stated times (1 minute to 2 minutes and 30 seconds), and all audio files should be clearly labelled with candidate names. Scores and reviews can be printed or submitted electronically — both are acceptable. The composing review must be individual to each candidate and be their own work.

Centres do not have to submit separate CDs or memory sticks for each candidate. A memory stick or CD can contain the work of up to 10 candidates. If centres are submitting more than one packet, each packet must contain a separate CD or memory stick, relevant only to the candidates in that packet.

All media files should be in MP3, MP4, WAV or WMA format. Centres must not submit Sibelius files; these should be exported into an acceptable file format before submission. Candidates and centres should ensure that all instrumental parts can be clearly heard on the audio file.

Centres must check all candidate submissions before sending to SQA. There were issues this year with a significant number of candidates' work. For example missing scores or reviews, wrongly labelled tracks, and instruments showing on the score but not heard in the audio.

Performance

The following advice may help to prepare future candidates for the performance component:

- ◆ Keyboard performances must include left-hand accompaniment in each piece.
- ◆ Keyboard pieces (melody plus chord symbols) played on piano are acceptable, however playing block chords only may affect mood and character. Alternatively, centres may wish to notate a left-hand part to reflect what the candidate is playing.
- ◆ For guitar and ukulele programmes, centres should specify on the candidate mark sheet if the candidate is performing a programme which is chordal, melodic or a mixture of both. Chords may be included in a melodic programme and in this case 12 chords are not required.

- ◆ Chordal guitar and ukulele programmes must include the required number of 12 chords. Teachers and lecturers should refer to the National 5 Music course specification which explains the guitar and ukulele requirements.
- ◆ For chordal guitar and ukulele players, music must be provided in standard notation. This could simply be a copy of the melodic line that the guitar is accompanying, with the chord names printed above or below the staff. There should be a melody performed for the guitarist to accompany (played, sung or from a backing track). This is essential to provide a context for the performance of the chords.
- ◆ Some centres offered the visiting assessor TAB for guitar programmes. This is insufficient for external assessment. Centre staff must also give the VA standard notation, even if the candidate is playing from TAB. Similarly, a lyric sheet with only chord names and no music notation is not sufficient.
- ◆ Drum kit programmes must include four different styles, with four different fills within each style. Teachers and lecturers should refer to SQA's style bank for drum kit for a list of acceptable styles.
- ◆ The four styles chosen from the drum kit style bank should include four-way independence and four fills within each style. Candidates choosing to play two styles within one piece should note that double the requisite number of fills are not necessary. Only one piece within the programme may contain two styles.
- ◆ Drum kit programmes must exhibit four-way independence in every piece.

To help visiting assessment run smoothly:

- ◆ Candidate mark sheets issued by SQA must be completed in pen (not pencil) by centre staff and be available to the VA at the start of each assessment session (morning or afternoon). The candidate mark sheet is the formal record of the assessment event and it is very important that it is completed accurately.
- ◆ Centre staff should give VAs a running order, with approximate timings, at the start of each session. Centre staff should refer to *Information for Centres* for advice about timings. This document is issued to all centres before the visiting assessment period.
- ◆ Timetabling should take account of the candidates' chosen performance time on each instrument.
- ◆ Details of the instruments or instrument and voice used, the pieces to be performed, and all timings of pieces should be clearly indicated. The total length of time for each instrument or voice should also be indicated.
- ◆ Music for candidates playing chordal guitar and ukulele programmes, where 12 chords must be demonstrated within their programme, should have a melody line to allow the performance to be put into context.
- ◆ In the case of drum kit performances, each drum kit style should be clearly named on the candidate mark sheet, irrespective of the title of the piece for example 'Mr Brightside – rock'.
- ◆ If a vocalist sings in a different key to the printed music, centre staff do not have to provide the printed music in a new key. Centres can indicate the new key on the VA's copy of the printed music.

If a candidate is unable to sit the performance exam due to health reasons or other exceptional circumstances, SQA will try to arrange an alternative date for the candidate to sit

the exam. If this is not possible, centres have to submit evidence of the candidate's attainment in performance. Centre staff should submit an audio or video recording of as much of the candidate's programme as possible, along with copies of the music and the marks awarded for all the pieces performed. Many centres routinely make audio recordings of prelim exams for this eventuality. If centres do not have an audio recording of the candidate's performance programme, they should submit alternative evidence that the candidate has demonstrated attainment at National 5 level. Other supplementary evidence may include a certificate from a graded examination at an appropriate level

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	7099
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	7202
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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	60.8%	60.8%	4382	71
B	22.3%	83.2%	1608	61
C	10.8%	94.0%	777	51
D	4.1%	98.1%	296	41
No award	1.9%	-	139	-

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.