



Course report 2019

Subject	Music Technology
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

Question paper

Most candidates responded well to the demands of the question paper. It performed in line with expectations and received positive feedback from the marking team. It contained a wide range of suitably challenging excerpts of music.

Assignment

Most candidates responded well to the demands of the assignment. Many candidates submitted creative material of a good standard, including multi-track recordings, live recordings of a small group performance, radio broadcasts, sound design and Foley for film, sound design for a computer game, and audio books.

Some candidates, however, 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 in either one or both of their chosen productions.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Generally, candidates were well prepared for the following questions and responded successfully:

- ◆ Question 1(a), (b), (c), and (d)(i), (e), (f) — candidates were assessed on genre and styles of music and related concepts.
- ◆ Question 2(a) and (c) — candidates were asked to identify panning and effects and processes applied to a piece of music.
- ◆ Question 3(b) — candidates were asked to identify two production features.
- ◆ Question 3(d) — candidates were asked to identify effects and processes applied to a piece of music.
- ◆ Question 4(a) — candidates were asked to identify a genre or style of music.
- ◆ Question 4(b) — candidates were asked to identify two music and production features.
- ◆ Question 4(c)(i), 4(c)(ii) — candidates were asked to select microphone type and polarity.
- ◆ Question 4(d) — candidates were asked to identify the correct time signature and related concept.
- ◆ Question 5 — candidates were asked to identify instruments or voices and to link these to controls, effects and processes, including delay, reverb, multi-effects processor, EQ and panning.
- ◆ Question 6(a) and (c) — candidates were given a case study and asked to answer questions from the text provided.
- ◆ Question 7(a) — candidates were asked to link an instrument or voice with an effect, and another instrument and voice with panning on two different songs.

Assignment

Most candidates completed the assignment successfully. Centres used a variety of assignment briefs for both tasks.

For the assignment brief, most candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of:

- ◆ stage 2(a) — implementing the production — audio capture
- ◆ stage 2(c) — creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music

Candidates were well prepared for stage 2(c) and had a good knowledge of music software programmes and capturing; manipulating sound and applying suitable effects; and processes and controls.

Most candidates submitted logbooks electronically as Word documents or PowerPoint presentations saved onto memory sticks or CDs, but some candidates submitted logbooks in paper form.

Candidates' assignments demonstrated that centres have appropriate resources, and are well placed to provide a good level of support.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

- ◆ Question 2(b) — candidates were asked to identify the term that described the change of dynamics.
- ◆ Question 3(a) — candidates were asked to identify the genre or style of the music.
- ◆ Question 3(c) — candidates were asked to identify two main features of using virtual instruments.
- ◆ Question 4(c)(iii) — candidates were assessed on microphone placement.
- ◆ Question 4(e) — candidates were asked to identify the tonality.
- ◆ Question 7(b) — candidates were asked to identify the tonality.

Assignment

Most candidates successfully completed stage 1 — planning the production. However, some candidates did not include all of the key elements of the planning stage, for example microphone placement, position and sound design tables.

Most candidates completed stage 2(b) — mixing skills to a good standard. However, some candidates did not add the required effects, controls and processes, which are mandatory and listed on page 15 of the *National 5 Music Technology Course Specification*.

Some candidates had difficulty with stage 3 — evaluating the production. In some cases, candidates wrote lengthy evaluations with little or no reasoned information or justification.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

To prepare for the question paper, teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are familiar with the full range of music concepts, different effects, controllers, and processes applied to a section of music. To prepare for the mic'ing question, candidates should complete practical activities to identify the polarity, microphone selection and microphone placement needed for mic'ing up individual instrument or voices. Guidance on this is provided in the course support notes on page 20 of the *National 5 Music Technology Course Specification*.

Teachers and lecturers should work with candidates on case studies about intellectual property and ensure that they can identify the full range of technological terms listed on page 6 of the course specification.

To prepare for the question paper, teachers and lecturers should give candidates listening activities, with correctly positioned stereo speakers. This gives candidates practice identifying different types of panning (left, right or centre).

To complete the question paper, candidates must be able to distinguish between acoustic and electric guitars, use the concept 'drum kit' rather than 'drums', and distinguish between lead and backing vocals when describing panning.

Assignment

The assignment is an assessment and not a learning and teaching activity.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates have experience of mic'ing other instruments in different situations before they complete the Music Technology assignment, for example a drum kit, acoustic guitar, vocalists, and other acoustic and orchestral instruments. They should have experience of mic'ing and creating their own Foley effects and experience of mic'ing different voices for a radio broadcast or audio book project.

Teachers and lecturers should make candidates aware of the requirements of the assignment before they undertake it. Candidates must use at least five tracks at National 5 and work with two microphones.

Teachers and lecturers should remind candidates to check and implement the mandatory list of technical skills listed in each assignment brief.

Teachers and lecturers should remind candidates that each production should involve a minimum of five parts, at least two of which should involve the use of a microphone. Each production should be between 1 and 3 minutes in length. Each task should allow the candidate to demonstrate all of the following technical skills:

- ◆ selecting and making appropriate use of at least two microphones, with placement appropriate to the sound sources

- ◆ selecting and making appropriate use of at least one of the following: direct line input, USB keyboard controller, MIDI controller or imported audio
- ◆ successfully and safely constructing the signal path for one or more inputs
- ◆ choosing and setting appropriate input gain and monitoring levels, with no distortion
- ◆ applying creative/corrective equalisation
- ◆ applying time domain effects and using compression or noise gate controllers
- ◆ applying mixing techniques including volume, panning and fade-in/out
- ◆ editing tracks (for example to remove spillage)
- ◆ mixing down to an audio master in appropriate file format(s)

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the marking instructions in the *National 5 Music Technology Course Specification* to ensure that candidates are fully prepared to complete the supporting documentation for the assignment. Candidates' supporting documentation for stages 1 and 3 should show evidence of formal planning, progress reporting and evaluating, to access the full range of marks available.

Teachers and lecturers should remind candidates submitting recordings and logbooks electronically to check that these files are accessible and that they have transferred correctly onto CDs and/or memory sticks.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	883
Number of resulted entries in 2019	1110

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	31.8%	31.8%	353	70
B	32.9%	64.7%	365	60
C	20.3%	85.0%	225	50
D	10.5%	95.5%	117	40
No award	4.5%	-	50	-

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.