



National  
Qualifications

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# Music Technology Assignment

## General assessment information

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This pack contains general assessment information for centres preparing candidates for the assignment Component of Higher Music Technology Course assessment.

It must be read in conjunction with the specific assessment task(s) for this Component of Course assessment, which may only be downloaded from SQA's designated secure website by authorised personnel.

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# Introduction

This is the general assessment information for the Higher Music Technology assignment.

This assignment is worth 70 marks. The marks contribute 70% of the overall marks for the Course assessment. The Course will be graded A-D.

Marks for all Course Components are added up to give a total Course assessment mark which is then used as the basis for grading decisions.

This is one of two Components of Course assessment. The other Component is a question paper.

This document describes the general requirements for the assessment of the assignment Component for this Course. It gives general information and instructions for assessors.

It must be read in conjunction with the assessment task for this Component of Course assessment.

## Equality and inclusion

This Course assessment has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to assessment. Assessments have been designed to promote equal opportunities while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the Assessment Arrangements web page: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html)

Guidance on inclusive approaches to delivery and assessment in this Course is provided in the *Course Support Notes*.

# What this assessment covers

This assessment contributes 70% of the total marks for the Course.

The assessment will assess the skills, knowledge and understanding specified for the assignment in the *Course Assessment Specification*. These are:

- ◆ application of skills in using music technology hardware and software to capture and manipulate audio
- ◆ application of music technology in creative ways
- ◆ skills in planning, implementation and evaluation of a sound production
- ◆ the ability to critically reflect on own work

# Assessment

## Purpose

The purpose of this assessment is to generate evidence for the added value of this Course by means of an assignment.

## Assessment overview

The assignment is a meaningful and appropriately challenging task requiring challenge and application. The candidate will draw on and apply technological and musical skills and knowledge, at an appropriate level, developed through the Units of the Course. The creative production should involve any two appropriate contexts, such as (but not limited to) live performance, radio broadcast, composing and sound design for film, TV themes, adverts and computer gaming.

The specification for the assignment should be agreed between the candidate and the assessor. The agreed specification should allow the candidate to demonstrate competence in a range of advanced recording, editing and mixing skills, in creative ways.

An appropriate assignment will be a meaningful and appropriately challenging task, which will allow the candidate to apply technical skills developed in the *Music Technology Skills* Unit, show musical understanding developed in the *Understanding 20th and 21st Century Music* Unit, and show understanding of context developed in the *Music Technology in Context* Unit.

The production must:

- ◆ involve complex sound design involving a wide range of processes and effects
- ◆ use (and justify) appropriate techniques to capture, manipulate and sequence audio
- ◆ involve multiple parts, at least two of which should involve the use of a microphone (see note below)
- ◆ apply accurate synchronisation and/or sequencing
- ◆ demonstrate (and justify) creative and appropriate use of music from more than one genre or style
- ◆ involve a combination of two or more different contexts (eg recording a small group and incorporating that into a radio broadcast or into the sound design for a film or animation)
- ◆ be at least four minutes in length

Note: any instrument recorded with more than one microphone (eg a drum kit) should be classified as one musical part using one microphone.

The assignment is designed to assess candidates' ability to work independently.

The assignment is set by centres within SQA guidelines.

Marks will be awarded for:

- ◆ planning the production
- ◆ implementing the production, comprising:
  - audio capture, including mic placement and techniques
  - manipulation and sequencing skills
  - creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music
- ◆ evaluating the production

The assignment will be marked by SQA, in line with the marking instructions provided in this document.

Appendix 1 of the *Assessment task and sample briefs* document contains exemplification material showing five possible alternative assignment briefs, each based on different combinations of contexts:

- ◆ a brief which requires the candidate to **record a live rock band**, and to use this live recording in the context of a **radio broadcast** (Radio One Live Lounge style)
- ◆ a **multi-tracked recording** of original or non-original music, bounced down to a stereo master, and then used in the **soundtrack for a short film**
- ◆ multi-tracked **electronic-based music**, bounced down to a stereo master and used as part of the **sound design for a computer gaming** environment
- ◆ a **radio documentary** on a local folk group, featuring **live and studio recordings** of the group engineered by the candidate and on-location **interviews** with group members and friends/family
- ◆ **multi-tracked backing tracks** and sound effects, used in a **live drama production** – a stereo master of the whole production is required for assessment

Full instructions for candidates are contained within each assessment task.

## Notes for assessors adapting these assessment tasks

Centres may adapt these exemplar assignments to suit individual local needs, resources and circumstances, as long as these meet the requirements stated in the Higher Music Technology *Course Assessment Specification*. For example, in the radio documentary assignment, the rock band could be replaced by a classical ensemble.

Where centres adapt these tasks, they must ensure that the adapted assignment is of similar complexity and demand, and meets all the conditions described above, to be a valid assessment for the Course.

### **Example assessment task: radio broadcast using live recording of a rock band**

The example brief involves live recording of a rock band, comprising at least five different musical parts included in a radio broadcast similar to a Radio 1 'Live lounge' type programme. The brief may be amended to suit other groupings of instruments/voices requiring similar levels of technical skill to capture. For a production based on this brief to be of an appropriate standard for Higher, it would be expected to involve recording of at least five musical parts and at least one of these must use multiple mic'ing techniques or a stereo mic'ing technique (eg multi mic'ing a drumkit or stereo mic'ing acoustic guitar). The broadcast should include excerpts from three or more performances recorded 'live', interspersed with interviews conducted between performances. The broadcast should also include relevant content (eg music, spots and/or jingles) selected, edited and/or recorded by the candidate.

### **Example assessment task: multi-track recording used in a film soundtrack**

When devising your own assessment based on this example task, the film sequence chosen should require multi-tracked music, accurately sync'ed sound effects and Foley, and multiple synchronous events. Candidates must devise a complex and detailed sound design map and would be expected to produce the sound design themselves using creative and imaginative approaches to sound sources and mic'ing techniques/placement. Candidates should use an appropriate range of automation, both within the stereo field and in their handling of time domain effects, to give a sense of depth and distance. The multi-tracked recording should involve at least five musical parts and include at least one multiple mic'ing technique or a stereo mic'ing technique (eg multi mic'ing a drumkit or stereo mic'ing acoustic guitar). This multi-tracked recording should be mixed and bounced to a stereo recording prior to inclusion in the sound track, where further processing may be required to allow it to fit the sound design map.

### **Example assessment task: electronic music used in computer gaming**

When devising your own assessment based on this example task, the game sequence used should require complex sequencing of sounds and music, accurate syncing of multiple synchronous events, fades and automation of many mix elements (eg plug-in automation, automated mutes, panning, automation of EQ). The candidate should record at least five sounds or elements using microphones. A suitable game sequence would feature a central 'theme' which is to be an electronic composition using virtual instruments, loops and samples. Although this may be relatively simple musically, featuring loops, ostinatos and repetition, the handling of the programming, effects and processing must be appropriately complex, eg candidates would be expected to programme soft synths and virtual instruments to create an evolving composition with creative use of effects, processes and automation.

### **Example assessment task: radio documentary featuring live and studio recordings of a folk group**

When devising your own assessment based on this example task, the radio programme should be an involved piece of documentary, gathering together interviews, anecdotes, and/or factual information on the chosen group. These interviews should be conducted using recording techniques appropriate to the medium, and mixed with studio recordings of narrated voice over. The narrative should be well-informed. This should be interspersed with three or more short performances, capturing both live performances and studio recordings. These should be recorded using a range of microphone techniques, from multiple close mic'ing to stereo captures, appropriate to the location. The folk group may be substituted for an alternative grouping which should be essentially acoustic in nature. The emphasis here is on clear recordings, which may be enhanced in post-production using a broad range of mixing skills, editing and processing. The documentary should also include relevant content (eg music, spots and/or jingles) selected, edited and/or recorded by the candidate.

### **Example assessment task: multi-tracked backing tracks used in a live drama production**

When devising your own assessment based on this example task, the drama piece chosen should require accurate synchronisation of pre-recorded sound effects and music. These should be captured prior to performance, mixed and processed as appropriate and bounced down to stems which will be triggered from an appropriate source during the drama performance. The drama performance itself should be recorded using stereo/multiple microphones to capture both the speech/stage action and the triggered sound effects and music. The backing tracks should be recorded using appropriate instrumentation and should have at least five musical parts. Sound effects required by the drama production should be produced in the studio using appropriate microphone techniques and the addition of EQ and effects/processes as required. Candidates should produce a radio microphone plot, detailing changeovers and sound desk mutes.

## Assessment conditions

Assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

This assessment is a single assessment event. Candidates should undertake the assessment at an appropriate point in the Course. This will normally be when they have completed most of the work on the Units in the Course.

This is an open-book assessment. There are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access.

Candidates must undertake the assessment independently. However, reasonable assistance may be provided prior to the formal assessment process taking place. The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If any candidates require more than what is deemed to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment or it may be that they have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, for example, advice on how to develop a project plan. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something the candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment and assessors need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

Clarification may be sought by candidates regarding the wording of a brief, specification or instructions for the assessment if they find them unclear. In this case, the clarification should normally be given to the whole class.

**Some guidance may be provided during the planning stage, but the candidate should work independently throughout the implementation and evaluation stages.**

Assessor input and advice on the candidate's planning is acceptable in order to allow the candidate to progress to the next stages of the assessment. The assistance provided must be recorded so that the candidate's own planning work can be marked fairly.

Support and guidance during the implementing and evaluating stages should be limited to minimal prompts and questioning, referring the candidate to the instructions provided in the assessment task.

The assignment will be conducted under some supervision and control. Assessors should put in place processes for monitoring progress and ensuring that the work is the candidate's own and that plagiarism has not taken place.

Assessors should put in place mechanisms to authenticate candidate evidence.  
For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress
- ◆ photographs, film or audio evidence

Group work approaches as part of the preparation for assessment can be helpful to simulate real-life situations, share tasks, and promote team-working skills. However, group work is not appropriate once formal work on assessment has started.

**Once the assignment has been completed and submitted, it should not be returned to the candidate for further work to improve their mark.**

## **Evidence to be gathered**

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ a formal plan for the production, which includes detailed explanations and justifications for all decisions relating to technological and musical aspects of the production (in written, electronic and/or oral form)
- ◆ the completed audio master (and, for tasks involving synchronisation with film or computer game, the relevant video or game sequence)
- ◆ a record of progress through the task (such as an electronic log or diary maintained by the candidate)
- ◆ a report evaluating the production and the development against clearly stated criteria (in written, electronic and/or oral form)

This evidence must be retained for quality assurance purposes.

# General Marking Instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following general marking instructions are addressed to the Marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for Course assessment.

Evidence will be submitted to SQA for external marking.

All marking will be quality assured by SQA.

## General Marking Principles for the assignment

*This information is provided to help you understand the general principles you must apply when marking candidate responses to this assignment. These principles must be read in conjunction with the Detailed Marking Instructions, which identify the key features required in candidate responses.*

- (a) Marks for each candidate response must always be assigned in line with these General Marking Principles and the Detailed Marking Instructions for this assessment.
- (b) Marking should always be positive. This means that, for each candidate response, marks are accumulated for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding: they are not deducted from a maximum on the basis of errors or omissions.

## Detailed Marking Instructions for the assignment

Marks will be awarded for:

- ◆ planning the production (15 marks)
- ◆ implementing the production, comprising
  - audio capture, including mic placement and techniques (15 marks)
  - manipulation and sequencing skills (15 marks)
  - creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music (15 marks)
- ◆ evaluating the production (10 marks)

Assessors will allocate a mark for each of these stages, by applying the Detailed Marking Instructions below to the evidence provided, and adding a comment justifying why the mark was awarded.

**Marks for planning** will be based on the formal plan provided as evidence.

**Marks for implementing** will be based on the completed audio master and the record of progress.

**Marks for evaluating** will be based on the evaluation report provided as evidence, which must relate to the audio master provided.

For each of the stages, the Marker should select the band descriptor which most closely describes the evidence presented. Once the best fit has been selected:

- ◆ where the evidence almost matches the level above, the highest available mark from the range should be awarded
- ◆ where the candidate’s work just meets the standard described, the lowest mark from the range should be awarded
- ◆ otherwise an appropriate mark from the middle of the range should be awarded
- ◆ where the evidence completely matches the highest level band descriptor for any stage, and has been produced by the candidate working independently, **full marks** should be awarded for that stage

### Notes

- ◆ If no audio master is provided, award 0 marks for implementing and evaluating.
- ◆ If the production does not involve a combination of two or more different contexts, or is less than four minutes in length, award 0 marks for implementing.
- ◆ If no record of progress is provided, award 0 marks for implementing.

### Band descriptors for stage 1: planning the production

Fully informative, detailed and complete evidence of planning, including detailed explanations and justifications for all decisions relating to technological and musical aspects of the production	13-15 marks
Informative and complete evidence of planning, including explanations and justifications for most decisions relating to technological and musical aspects of the production	10-12 marks
Evidence of planning which is mostly complete and appropriate, but lacking in explanations and justifications in some areas	7-9 marks
Incomplete evidence of planning	4-6 marks
Little or no evidence of planning, or with evidence of significant assistance and advice given	0-3 marks

**Band descriptors for stage 2(a): implementing the production – audio capture including microphone placement and techniques**

Completed to a high standard, demonstrating comprehensive skills in the application of a range of recording techniques, fully documented and justified in record of progress	13-15 marks
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating a good knowledge of a range of recording techniques, and documented and justified in record of progress	10-12 marks
Completed to a minimally acceptable standard, demonstrating some knowledge of recording techniques, partially documented in record of progress	7-9 marks
Partly completed, or completed but with little evidence in record of progress	4-6 marks
Incomplete, or with no evidence in record of progress	0-3 marks

**Band descriptors for stage 2(b): implementing the production – manipulation and sequencing skills**

Completed to a high standard, demonstrating comprehensive skills in the application of processes and effects to mix and manipulate audio effectively, and ability to apply accurate synchronisation and/or sequencing, fully documented in record of progress	13-15 marks
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating skills in the application of processes and effects to mix and manipulate audio, and ability to apply synchronisation and/or sequencing, and documented in record of progress	10-12 marks
Completed to a minimally acceptable standard, demonstrating some skills in the application of processes and effects to mix and manipulate audio, and some ability to apply synchronisation and/or sequencing, partially documented in record of progress	7-9 marks
Partly completed, or completed but with little evidence in record of progress	4-6 marks
Incomplete, or with no evidence in record of progress	0-3 marks

**Band descriptors for stage 2(c): implementing the production – creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music**

Implementation includes significant creative use of appropriate sounds and/or music, from more than one genre or style and fully documented in record of progress	13-15 marks
Implementation includes some creative use of appropriate sounds and/or music, from more than one genre or style, and well documented in record of progress	10-12 marks
Implementation includes some creative use of appropriate sounds and/or music, and partially documented in record of progress	7-9 marks
Implementation includes minimal creative use of appropriate sounds and/or music, and with little evidence in record of progress	4-6 marks
Implementation shows little evidence of appropriate choices of sound and/or music, or with no evidence in record of progress, or is less than four minutes in length	0-3 marks

**Band descriptors for stage 3: evaluating the production**

Evaluation report is consistent, detailed and relevant, and with clear, valid evaluation of both the production and the development process against clearly stated criteria	8-10 marks
Evaluation report is consistent and relevant, and with clear, reasoned evaluation of both the production and the development process	5-7 marks
Evaluation report is consistent and relevant, with some evaluative comments but does not fully cover both the production and the development process	3-4 marks
Evaluation report is incomplete, unclear or inconsistent	0-2 marks

## Administrative information

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### History of changes

Unit details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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