



## Course Report 2017

Subject	Music
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It 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.

# **Section 1: Comments on the Assessment**

## **Summary of the Course assessment**

### **Component 1: Performance**

To ensure that candidates are marked consistently, visiting assessors attend a full day annual SQA training event using a wide variety of instrumental and vocal exemplars at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher levels.

Centres continue to prepare candidates well for the performance component. As in previous years, most candidates demonstrated good levels of skill in this area.

The performance component is worth 60% of the course award and candidates perform on two instruments, or instrument and voice. Each instrument/voice is marked out of 30 and is then totalled to give a mark out of 60.

### **Component 2: Question paper**

The question paper consisted of question types which are consistent with the established format of previous National 5 Music papers, and included a wide variety of musical excerpts across a range of genres.

The paper was at an appropriate standard and performed in line with previous question papers, demonstrating good course coverage and clearly worded questions.

The question paper is a 45-minute assessment which requires candidates to listen to excerpts of music and answer a variety of question types including multiple choice, short answer and analytical. The question paper is worth 40% of the course.

## **Section 2: Comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

#### **Component 1: Performance**

Visiting assessors noted that most candidates were well prepared, and there were many performances which were of a high standard.

In most centres, there was clear evidence of personalisation and choice in varied programmes selected by candidates.

Candidates performed on a wide range of instruments in a variety of musical styles. Many candidates chose to perform pieces above the minimum requirements, performed to a high standard, and clearly enjoyed performing.

Most drum kit candidates performed their four drum kit styles, chosen from the drum kit styles bank demonstrating four-way independence and four fills within each piece. Candidates choosing to include two drum kit styles within one piece noted that they were not required to play double the requisite number of fills, and that two styles may be included in one piece only.

Guitar chordal programmes requiring the candidate to demonstrate 12 chords within their programme were, on the whole, performed well.

Many candidates presenting voice chose songs which were within their technical range and musical ability, and performed with good diction and communication.

## **Component 2: Question paper**

Most candidates demonstrated familiarity and knowledge of question types, evidenced appropriate exam technique, and almost all candidates attempted all questions.

Questions which were performed well include:

- ◆ multiple choice questions
- ◆ sequential listening question – Question 2
- ◆ recognition of the key signature, time signature and tempo in the literacy Question 3(a), (b) and (c)
- ◆ identification of styles in Question 7(a)(i) and 7(b)(i)
- ◆ recognising prominent features – Question 8

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Component 1: Performance**

Candidates are required to perform a minimum of two pieces on each instrument/voice, with a total performance time of between 8 and 8½ minutes. Centres should ensure that candidates prepare the appropriate number of pieces and have accurate timings, as visiting assessors are advised to refer any candidate who does not meet these requirements.

Where judicious cuts had been made, some candidates were playing sections of music that did not meet the required minimum requirements (ie Grade 3 or above).

Some vocalists chose to sing pieces that were not within their technical or musical ability, or were in an inappropriate range for their voice. Centres should guide candidates to choose suitable music that will enable them to demonstrate their vocal ability.

A few candidates playing keyboard did not meet the requirement to play with left hand chords.

Some candidates presenting drum kit as one of their instruments had two styles within more than one piece. Only one piece can contain two styles. In addition, some notation for drum kit did not meet the required minimum standard of four bars of groove and notated fills.

## **Component 2: Question paper**

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

- ◆ Question 3(d) – correcting the rhythm. Bar 2 was to be altered so it matched the rhythm in bar 1 and bar 3.
- ◆ Question 3(f) – completing the missing notes. In bar 5, candidates were required to identify that the missing two notes on beat 4 were a repeat of beat 4 in the previous bar.
- ◆ Question 4(e) – identifying the electronic effect. ‘Reverb’ was the expected answer for the excerpt.
- ◆ Question 7 – providing an appropriate reason in part (b)(ii). Many candidates correctly identified ragtime in part (i), but were unable to provide an accurate reason for their choice.

## **Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates**

### **Component 1: Performance**

Many candidates are well prepared by centres for performance assessments, but all centres should ensure the following points are considered when preparing programmes for presentation:

- ◆ The candidate mark sheet should be completed with accurate timings that include the repeats, fade outs etc, specific to individual candidates. These should be completed in pen (not pencil) by centre staff. This mark sheet is the formal record of the assessment event, and it is very important that it is completed accurately.
- ◆ There should be a copy of every piece of music to be performed for the assessor to follow.
- ◆ Visiting assessors should be given a running order, with approximate timings, at the start of each session. Centres should organise the assessment day to make best use of time available. Centres are advised to allocate 10 minutes for each National 5 candidate, but if the candidate has chosen to perform for two minutes on one instrument, the time allocation should be less. Many centres organised timetables to run effectively during the visit, although some centres allocated too much or too little time for each performance. Advice on suggested timings per candidate is issued to centres before visiting assessment.

- ◆ Keyboard performance must include left-hand accompaniment in each piece.
- ◆ A minimum of 12 chords are required when presenting a National 5 guitar/ukulele programme of pieces, which is a mixture of lead/melodic guitar and chordal/rhythm guitar.
- ◆ A minimum of two pieces must be presented for each instrument or voice.
- ◆ If a vocalist sings in a different key to the printed music, it is not necessary for the centre to rewrite the music in a new key. It is acceptable for centres to indicate the new key on the visiting assessor's copy.
- ◆ The minimum requirement for notated drum kit music is 4 bars of groove and 4 fills with a performance plan/map.
- ◆ Accompaniments can support a candidate, and consideration should be given to a suitable and appropriate form of accompaniment for each candidate. Rehearsal time with the chosen form of accompaniment will benefit the candidate greatly. A range of accompaniments were offered, and many candidates demonstrated that they had practised with backing tracks or live accompaniment prior to their exam, helping them to perform confidently.
- ◆ For candidates performing guitar/ukulele programmes, the candidate mark sheet should state whether it is lead/melodic, or chordal, or a mixed programme. To provide a context for chordal programmes, centres should provide visiting assessors with a notated melody line which has chords inserted at the appropriate points.
- ◆ If submitting Exceptional Circumstance evidence for performing, it is helpful to have an audio recording of as much of the candidate's full programme as possible. Many centres are now routinely making audio recording of prelim type events for this eventuality. Audio recordings should be accompanied by paperwork showing assessment marks allocated by the centre.

## **Component 2: Question paper**

Candidate responses indicate that many practitioners are confident and familiar with question formats and appropriate exam technique, and they prepare their candidates well for the question paper.

For preparation of future candidates, please take account of the following advice:

- ◆ In Question 2 (the sequential listening question) candidates should use the information provided within the question, which is designed to guide them towards the answer — eg an 'untuned percussion instrument' was asked for when 'snare drum' was the answer, but some candidates wrote concepts from other instrumental families.
- ◆ In Question 3, candidates should take account of the key signature of the excerpt and its impact on relevant notes. When completing missing notes, 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 7, answers should be quite specific to demonstrate that the candidate understands the definition of the style, eg an acceptable reason for Jig would be the identification of '6/8' or 'compound time', whereas 'Scottish music' is not a specific enough reason to distinguish Jig from other Scottish dances.
- ◆ In Question 8, most candidates wrote answers related to the excerpt and avoided long lists of unrelated concepts. Centres are reminded that from 2017 onwards, lists of concepts unrelated to the music and/or extensive lists of contradictory concepts result in penalties being applied.

Papers used for prelim type events should replicate the course assessment, both in terms of question type and allocation of marks. When preparing prelim and listening assessments, centres are reminded that:

- ◆ A past paper or specimen question paper should never be used in its entirety.
- ◆ Some questions from older past papers may not provide the appropriate scope, coverage or balance, and may need to be amended.
- ◆ The type of questions and the distribution of marks should reflect the course assessment (ie they should be similar to the final exam).
- ◆ The marking instructions used for centre-devised assessments should reflect the marking instructions used in the final exam. It should be noted that half marks are not used. Examples of marking instructions for past papers can be found on the SQA website. Reference should also be made to the detailed marking instructions for the specimen question paper and past papers.
- ◆ If using prelim and listening assessments as part of evidence for candidates to be entered for exceptional circumstances, a full copy of the marking instructions should also be submitted to SQA, even if questions are drawn from SQA specimen or past papers.
- ◆ End of unit tests, or other forms of evidence, must demonstrate that candidates have the appropriate knowledge and understanding of concepts appropriate to the course assessment.

## Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2016	7542
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Number of resulted entries in 2017	7344
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### Statistical information: Performance of candidates

#### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	62.2%	62.2%	4569	70
B	21.2%	83.4%	1555	60
C	10.9%	94.3%	800	50
D	2.5%	96.7%	181	45
No award	3.3%	-	239	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and 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.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ 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.