



Course Report 2015

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 examinations. 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 and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Performance

The 2015 National 5 Music Course showed an increased number of candidates, with entries in excess of 7500.

Prior to the Performing external assessments taking place, Visiting Assessors attended training to ensure they were fully familiar with SQA's assessment arrangements and national standards, ensuring consistency across the country in candidate assessments.

Most centres were well organised for the Performance assessments, providing Visiting Assessors with completed paperwork and copies of music at the start of each session.

Component 2: Question paper

The question paper assessed candidate knowledge and understanding of Course content in a range of question types, using a variety of musical excerpts. There is evidence to suggest that centres prepared candidates well for the question paper component, with many candidates demonstrating good aural skills and knowledge of concepts.

The National 5 Music Understanding Standards events, which took place in November/December 2014, enhanced practitioners' knowledge of SQA assessment standards in this component, enabling teachers and lecturers to share key information with candidates regarding good practice and appropriate exam technique.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Performance

Most candidates had prepared well for their assessment and were able to give competent performances on their chosen instruments.

There is good evidence that candidates were well supported by teaching and instrumental staff prior to, and during, their Performance assessment. Many candidates had clearly rehearsed regularly with their accompanist or backing tracks, and this helped them to deliver assured and confident performances.

In some programmes, candidates performed pieces without dynamics, even though they were marked on the music. Dynamics are an assessed element in the assessment criteria, therefore centres should encourage candidates to incorporate them into their performances whenever they are printed.

Component 2: Question paper

Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of Course concepts and music literacy in the question paper. Most centres ensured their candidates were familiar with the range of question formats in the paper, and the different techniques required when answering the questions.

Whilst candidates performed well in a range of multiple-choice questions, other questions which required the identification of a single concept proved more demanding for some candidates.

Some questions asked specifically for an Italian term to be written, however some candidates wrote their answers in English and therefore were not awarded the mark.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Performance

Most candidates demonstrated competent instrumental/vocal ability in their chosen programmes, and there was clear evidence that candidates had been well prepared by centres for their assessments. There was evidence of candidate personalisation and choice in many programmes, and varied instrumental combinations were also presented.

Almost all of the programmes presented were of the appropriate standard for National 5, with candidates demonstrating ability above the minimum Grade 3 standard.

Visiting Assessor reports also indicate that some performances were outstanding, demonstrating technique, flair and musicality to very high levels.

Component 2: Question paper

Most candidates demonstrated good levels of knowledge and understanding in the question paper, and evidence suggests that centres prepared candidates well for this component.

Many candidates achieved good results in the following sections of the question paper:

- ◆ Multiple-choice questions
- ◆ Question 3 (a): The time signature was correctly identified and inserted in the appropriate position by many candidates
- ◆ Question 3 (b): An appropriate Italian tempo was identified and inserted in the appropriate place by many candidates
- ◆ Question 3 (c): Most candidates identified the key signature correctly
- ◆ Question 4 (b): Most candidates recognised Gospel as the style of music
- ◆ Question 8: Many candidates correctly identified a range of prominent features in the music

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Performance

Although many candidates performed competently, there were areas that some found demanding, for example:

- ◆ Performing a drumkit programme in time with backing tracks.
- ◆ Maintaining flow when changing chords in keyboard pieces.
- ◆ Vocalists singing songs which were pitched too high or too low for them.

When devising Performance programmes, Centres should ensure that the music chosen is of an appropriate standard and is suited to each individual candidate.

Component 2: Question paper

Areas of the question paper which some candidates found demanding were:

- ◆ Some short answer questions such as:
 - Question 1 (e) – identifying pentatonic scale
 - Question 1 (f) – naming bassoon as the melodic instrument
- ◆ Question 3 (d) – identifying that the cadence was imperfect.
- ◆ Question 3 (e) – naming the note as B flat. Some candidates did not take account of the key signature when deciding on their answer.
- ◆ Question 3 (f) – inserting the missing notes with accurate pitch and rhythm. The rhythm was printed above the bar as a guide but some candidates, despite correctly writing the pitch of the missing notes, did not copy the rhythm accurately.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Performance

Centres should ensure that the total programme length for National 5 is between 8 and 8 ½ minutes, and a minimum of two pieces should be performed on each instrument/voice.

The minimum requirement in chordal guitar programmes at National 5 is 12 chords, and this applies even if a mixed programme of chordal guitar and melodic guitar is presented.

The Drumkit Style Bank should always be referred to when deciding the content of Drumkit programmes.

Component 2: Question paper

Candidates can find it difficult to identify specific instruments and types of voices. Centres should encourage candidates to develop their aural skills in these areas by using recordings and/or websites to distinguish between similar instruments and vocal types. To prepare for Question 8, candidates should also practise recognising if instruments/voices are singular or plural.

Although some candidates wrote many concepts in their answer to Question 8, a lot of them were irrelevant to the excerpt. Centres should reinforce to candidates that they should focus on identifying the *prominent* features of the music and to keep their answers relevant to the excerpt they hear.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	6945
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Number of resulted entries in 2015	7620
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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 -100				
A	65.7%	65.7%	5007	70
B	19.9%	85.6%	1515	60
C	9.5%	95.1%	721	50
D	2.0%	97.1%	153	45
No award	2.9%	-	224	-

The Course Assessment functioned as intended therefore the adjustment to grade boundaries made last year was not required. Therefore grade boundaries at the notional values of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A were set.