



Course Report 2017

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| Subject | Music Technology |
| Level | Higher |

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: Assignment

The assignment was completed successfully, with many centres submitting high quality material which showcased candidates' creativity. Candidates submitted a wide range of material, from radio broadcast, through audio books to Foley and sound design for film, animation or gaming. In most cases, candidates successfully followed the sample briefs or briefs that had been adapted by their centre. Centres are confident in adapting assignment briefs successfully.

Component 2: Question paper

The question paper performed well overall during year three of the Higher Music Technology course. Candidates were presented with a wide range of music excerpts which provided suitable challenge and demand for this level.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Assignment

Candidates performed particularly well in this component, with many achieving excellent marks. The average mark for the assignment was 51/70.

In most cases the Music Technology assignment was completed successfully. Evidence suggests that centres are comfortable in implementing a variety of assessment briefs, and in adapting sample briefs to suit their own candidates.

The majority of candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of stage 2: implementing the production, comprising:

- ◆ 2 (a) audio capture, including mic placement and techniques
- ◆ 2 (b) manipulation and sequencing skills
- ◆ 2 (c) creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music

There is strong evidence that centres are preparing candidates well for stage 2. Centres are using appropriate resources and are providing candidates with good experiences at this level, in working both with hardware and software. Candidates are generally adept at the practical implementation of acquired skills, knowledge and understanding. Centres are demonstrably confident in preparing candidates and in adapting assignment briefs.

Component 2: Question paper

Many candidates performed well in this component, and it was clear that centres had prepared them well.

Question 1: Candidates were to identify a musical genre and associated feature of the music. The majority of candidates accessed the full range of marks.

Question 2(b): Candidates identified a feature of the music. Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Question (5a): Candidates were to identify the genre of the music and an associated feature of the excerpt. A high number of candidates answered successfully.

Question 6 (part 6): Candidates were to identify panning. The majority of candidates answered successfully.

Question 7: Candidates were to identify five music/production features from a list of ten. Many candidates were well prepared for this question and answered successfully.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Assignment

Some candidates had difficulty with stage 1: planning the production. Some candidates did not submit sufficiently detailed planning following the criteria in the course assessment task and course assessment specification documents.

Some candidates had difficulty with stage 3: evaluating the production. Some candidates did not submit sufficiently evaluative reports following the criteria in the course assessment task and course assessment specification documents.

Component 2: Question paper

Question 3(b)(i) and (ii): Candidates were to identify a fault and describe a solution. Candidates had difficulty in answering this question correctly.

Question 5(b): Candidates were to describe mic'ing techniques. Some candidates found difficulty in adapting their knowledge and understanding to the given context of the question.

Question 6 (part 3): Candidates were to identify a process applied to a lead guitar track. Some candidates were unable to identify the process.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Assignment

Candidates should be encouraged to adhere to the assignment briefs given to them by centres. In particular, candidates should be encouraged to provide adequate evidence for stage 1 and stage 3 and in maintaining a fully informative log, in as succinct a form as possible without an excessive burden of paperwork.

In stage 2 it is important for candidates to ensure that they are working in two distinct contexts, that both contexts are robust in their implementation, and that candidate assignments include music from more than one genre.

Candidates should be encouraged to submit assignments which are of sufficient length to demonstrate the requisite skills, knowledge and understanding. However, care should be taken to ensure that assignments are not excessive in length — marks are awarded holistically across the full assignment.

Component 2: Question paper

In preparing candidates for the question paper, centres should ensure that candidates are well prepared for the range of question types. In particular, candidates should be prepared for questions on music technology faults and their possible solutions.

Candidates should be encouraged to study microphone technique and its application in both studio and live contexts. It would be useful for candidates to study common microphone techniques for woodwind, brass, strings and percussion instruments as well as common rock and pop instruments.

Whilst it was pleasing to see that the conditions of assessment for coursework were adhered to in the majority of centres, there were a small number of examples where this may not have been the case. Following feedback from teachers, we have strengthened the conditions of assessment criteria for National 5 subjects and will do so for Higher and Advanced Higher. The criteria are published clearly on our website and in course materials and must be adhered to. SQA takes very seriously its obligation to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates in all qualifications through consistent application of assessment conditions and investigates all cases alerted to us where conditions may not have been met.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information

Statistical information: update on Courses

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| Number of resulted entries in 2016 | 486 |
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| Number of resulted entries in 2017 | 639 |
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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 | 39.6% | 39.6% | 253 | 69 |
| B | 26.0% | 65.6% | 166 | 59 |
| C | 19.7% | 85.3% | 126 | 50 |
| D | 5.9% | 91.2% | 38 | 45 |
| No award | 8.8% | - | 56 | - |

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.