Course Report 2017

Subject	Music Technology
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: Assignment

The Music Technology assignment was successfully completed, with many centres and candidates submitting creative material of a very high standard. A wide variety of assignment briefs was submitted, including multi-track recordings, radio broadcasts, Foley for film, sound design for gaming, and audio books. In most cases, candidates followed the design briefs effectively for this component.

Component 2: Question paper

Most candidates responded well to the demands of the question paper. This component performed in line with expectations and feedback from the marking team. The question paper contained a wide range of music excerpts, and provided suitable pace and challenge for National 5 level.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Assignment

Generally, the Music Technology assignment was completed successfully. There was evidence of centres implementing a variety of different assignment briefs.

Most candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of:

♦ Stage 1 planning the production
♦ Stage 2(a) implementing the production — audio capture
♦ Stage 2(b) mixing skills
♦ Stage 2(c) creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music

Candidates seem to be well prepared and knowledgeable of software programmes and capturing and manipulating sound. Some very interesting and creative projects were submitted. Logbooks were submitted in paper form or electronically as Word documents or PowerPoints. There is evidence that centres have appropriate resources, and are well placed to provide a good level of support.

Component 2: Question paper

Question 1(a), (c), (d): Candidates were assessed on styles of music and related concepts. Most candidates were well prepared and able to identify the correct answers.

Question 2(c) (i) and (ii): Candidates were assessed on microphone selection and type of polarity. Most candidates were well prepared and able to identify the correct answers.

Question 3(a), (c), (d) (e): Candidates were assessed on a range of technological and music concepts. Most candidates were able to identify the correct answers.

Question 5: Candidates were assessed on identifying instruments/voices and linking these to controls and effects. Most candidates were able to identify the correct answers.

Question 6(b): Candidates were assessed on describing the correct tonality of a song. Most candidates were able to identify the correct answer.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Assignment

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

Component 2: Question paper

Question 1(b): Some candidates had difficulty identifying the correct music concept describing the way a bass guitar was being played.

Question 2(c) (iii): Some candidates found difficulty describing a technical consideration for mic'ing a large choir with two microphones.

Question 3(b): Some candidates had difficulty identifying the correct music concept describing a string playing technique used by a violin.

Question 6(a): Some candidates had difficulty in answering this question in which an instrument/voice is linked with an effect and another instrument and voice is linked with panning on two versions of the one song. Some candidates did not specify the type of voice used, eg backing or lead vocals.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Assignment

Candidates are reminded of the number of tracks which use a microphone. A minimum of five tracks is needed for National 5, including two microphones. This should be clearly documented and evidenced in the planning and progress report. Some candidates failed to use the required number of microphones in their assignment.

Most centres submitted recordings and logbooks electronically on a memory stick. There were very few problems accessing assignments — file management was of a good standard.

The supporting documentation for Stages 1 and 3 could be better prepared. In some cases, candidates submitted little evidence of formal plan, progress report and evaluation, subsequently losing marks.

Component 2: Question paper

♦ In preparing candidates for the question paper, centres should ensure that candidates have experience of identifying the full range of music concepts.

♦ In preparing candidates for the question paper, centres should ensure that candidates have experience of identifying different effects, controllers and processes applied to a section of music, and experience of effects processor settings.

♦ Candidates should also encourage the experience of mic'ing different instruments in a variety of situations.

♦ For Question 6(a), candidates are required to distinguish between acoustic and electric guitars and also between lead and backing vocals.

♦ As a matter of good practice, centres should ensure that speakers are tested for left and right balance prior to the question paper exam commencing.

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

Number of resulted entries in 2016	745

Number of resulted entries in 2017	852

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	49.9%	49.9%	425	70
B	21.9%	71.8%	187	60
C	16.1%	87.9%	137	50
D	5.2%	93.1%	44	45
No award	6.9%	-	59	-

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.