



Course Report 2018

Subject	Music
Level	National 5

This report provides information on the performance of candidates. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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.

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

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Summary of the course assessment

Component 1: question paper

This year's question paper performed as expected. Marker feedback and statistical analysis of each question show that the paper was of an appropriate standard, demonstrated good course coverage, and contained clearly worded questions.

Component 2: assignment

Most of the music composed by candidates for their assignment was of a satisfactory standard, and the composing reviews provided a satisfactory account of their main decisions and strengths or areas for improvement.

Components 3 and 4: performance

Teachers and lecturers continue to prepare candidates well for the performance and, as in previous years, most candidates demonstrated good levels of skill in this area.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: question paper

Most candidates demonstrated familiarity and knowledge of question types and displayed appropriate exam technique. Almost all candidates attempted every question.

Candidates completed the following questions well:

- ◆ multiple-choice questions — most parts of questions 1, 4 and 5
- ◆ sequential listening question — question 2
- ◆ recognising key signature, time signature and where the drum kit started to play in the literacy question — questions 3(a), 3(b) and 3(e)
- ◆ inserting relevant concepts in the text — question 5
- ◆ identifying styles — questions 7(a)(i) and 7(b)(i)
- ◆ giving a relevant reason — question 7(b)(ii)
- ◆ recognising prominent features, appropriate to the excerpt — question 8

Component 2: assignment

Some candidates produced compositions of a good to excellent standard. These candidates imaginatively developed a range of musical ideas, and selected and used elements creatively.

Most composing reviews contained a satisfactory account of candidates' main decisions, their strengths and/or areas for improvement.

Some teachers and lecturers offered candidates' personalisation and choice and this approach often resulted in more original ideas and creative development.

Components 3 and 4: performance

Feedback from SQA's visiting assessors (VAs) shows that most candidates prepared well for their performances, many of which were of a high standard.

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

Centres offered a range of accompaniments, and many candidates had practised with backing tracks or live accompaniment before their exam, helping them to perform confidently.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: question paper

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

- ◆ Question 3(c) — correcting the rhythm. Candidates were asked to amend beats 3 and 4 in bar 2 so they matched the dotted crotchet and quaver rhythm in bars 7 and 9.
- ◆ Question 3(f) — completing the missing notes. In bar 11, candidates were asked to identify that the pitch and rhythm of the missing two notes on beats 3 and 4 were a repeat of the latter two notes in bar 3.
- ◆ Question 4(e) — identifying the type of voice. Candidates were asked to correctly identify the type of voice in an excerpt. The excerpt clearly demonstrated the upper, middle and lower ranges of a mezzo soprano voice.

Component 2: assignment

While some candidates presented composing assignments of a high standard, a significant number of candidates did not meet all of the requirements of the assignment. Many candidates' compositions did not demonstrate successful development of their initial ideas — development is one of the key elements of the assessment criteria.

In the composing review, many candidates did not explain how they had explored and developed their musical ideas, one of the three requirements of the review. Some candidates showed limited identification of strengths and/or areas for development, for example: 'I like the instruments chosen' or 'I would add another section' or 'I would add some more dynamics'.

Components 3 and 4: performance

Some candidates presented drum kit programmes that did not meet the requirements for National 5. Teachers and lecturers should direct candidates to the drum kit styles bank when they are preparing drum kit programmes. The National 5 Music Course Specification contains the requirements for drum kit programmes and the drum kit styles bank.

Some candidates' chordal guitar programmes were short of the required minimum number of chords — 12 for National 5.

Some candidates performed keyboard programmes without left-hand chords.

Some vocalists chose to sing pieces that were not within their technical or musical ability or were in an inappropriate range for their voice. Teachers and lecturers should guide candidates to choose suitable music that enables them to demonstrate their vocal ability. More teachers and lecturers annotated scores this year to match candidate performances, but there were still several performances where candidates took melodic or rhythmic licence too liberally.

Section 3: advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: question paper

Teachers and lecturers prepared candidates well for this year's question paper. Most candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of course content.

Candidates should make use of a wide variety of resources, including online resources, to practise identifying concepts. The question paper consists of concepts drawn from National 3, National 4 and National 5 concept lists and candidates should be able to identify concepts from each of the levels.

The following advice will be helpful to teachers and lecturers when preparing candidates for the question paper:

- ◆ In short-answer questions, candidates should use the information provided, which is designed to guide them towards the answer, for example in question 1(c) when castanets was the answer, candidates were asked for a percussion instrument, but some candidates gave answers from other instrumental families.
- ◆ In question 3, 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.
- ◆ When writing notation, candidates should clearly indicate whether a note head is on a line or in a space, and it should be very clear if a note head has been filled in (crotchet) or left empty (minim). If a candidate has not made their intention clear, then markers cannot award marks.
- ◆ In question 5 and question 8, the table headings may change, as indicated in previous SQA communications. Candidates should carefully read the questions to ensure their answers are relevant. This year, candidates were asked to comment on prominent rhythmic features in question 8, however many also wrote tempo concepts, which were not asked for and not awarded marks.
- ◆ In question 8, candidates should give answers related to the excerpt and avoid long lists of unrelated concepts. Lists of concepts unrelated to the music and/or extensive lists of contradictory concepts will result in markers applying penalties.

If centres need to submit exceptional circumstance evidence for the question paper, the question papers used for prelim-type events should replicate the course assessment, in terms of question type and mark allocation. Centres should also submit a full copy of the marking instructions, even if questions are drawn from SQA specimen or past question papers. When preparing prelim and listening assessments, centres must consider the following information:

- ◆ A past paper or specimen question paper in its entirety cannot be the only evidence submitted for exceptional circumstances consideration.
- ◆ Some questions from older past papers may not provide the appropriate scope, coverage or balance, and may need to be amended.
- ◆ The marking instructions used for centre-devised assessments should reflect the marking instructions used in the final exam. Half marks are not used. Examples of marking instructions for past papers can be found on SQA's website.

- ◆ Class tests, or other forms of evidence, must demonstrate that candidates have knowledge and understanding of concepts appropriate to the course assessment.

Component 2: assignment

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the Understanding Standards materials on SQA's secure website for a range of approaches and development ideas for the National 5 Music assignment.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to develop ideas creatively as the music progresses, within the context of their chosen style. For example, a singer-songwriter could show creativity and development of their ideas by adding a middle 8, a second voice in harmony, and changing strumming patterns in sections as the piece progresses. Singer-songwriter compositions should be supported by a performance plan, which includes both lyrics and chords and gives details of other relevant features used.

Candidates who present an electronic composition, or one that makes use of pre-recorded loops, must ensure that they do this in the context of a wider composition. Candidates must clearly identify their actual creative input in their composing review, for example, if they select a chordal structure but use an electronic program to devise an accompaniment, they must indicate this in their review.

The composed piece may contain sections of improvisation, but this must be in the context of a wider composition that demonstrates composing skills. Markers will award 0 marks to a piece that is solely an improvisation. An arrangement of another piece of music is not acceptable.

To encourage personalisation and choice for candidates and to allow them to compose in a genre or style that interests them, teachers and lecturers should avoid a structured template approach to composition. Many teachers and lecturers are directing candidates to compose specific styles of music for a set number of instruments and this limits many candidates' creativity.

Appendix 2 of the National 5 Music Course Specification suggests a range of ways that candidates can develop music. The exemplars on SQA's secure website illustrate how development is necessary for candidates to access the full range of marks.

In their composing review, candidates should include the main decisions they made, how they explored and developed their musical ideas, and their strengths and/or areas for improvement.

Their main decisions could include comments on, for example, instruments and voices chosen, tempo, time signatures, chords and chord sequence, modulations and structure, and should also include decisions they made as their composition progressed. Some candidates only referenced their early decisions.

To successfully capture the exploration and development of their musical ideas, candidates should give details of what they have tried and perhaps dismissed, for example 'the piano block chords sounded heavy but worked better as broken chords'. References such as 'I

experimented by using the piano' only provide a very limited explanation of how the candidate explored and developed the piece of music.

Candidates should provide a minimum of two strengths and/or areas for improvement. These should ideally refer to musical aspects rather than the candidate's feelings about the piece, for example:

- ◆ 'The flute countermelody in the final section added nice harmonies and used the dotted rhythms from the start of my tune.'
- ◆ 'If I was writing in this style again, I would start with fewer instruments and build them up in each new section so that my piece doesn't sound so cluttered. This would help each instrumental part to be heard.'

The composing review must be individual to each candidate and be their own work. Teachers and lecturers should check that the reviews are submitted in the correct template and are limited to one page. The mandatory template is published on SQA's website. The composed music should be within the stated times (1 minute to 2 minutes and 30 seconds), and audio files should be clearly labelled with candidate names. Scores and reviews can be printed or submitted electronically — both are acceptable.

Centres do not have to submit separate CDs or memory sticks for each candidate. A memory stick or CD can contain the work of up to 10 candidates. If centres are submitting more than one packet, each packet must contain a separate CD or memory stick.

All media files should be in MP3, MP4, WAV or WMA format. Centres must not submit Sibelius files; these should be exported into an acceptable file format before submission. Candidates and centres should ensure that all instrumental parts can be clearly heard on the audio file.

Components 3 and 4: performance

Teachers and lecturers should consider the following points when preparing candidates and their performance programmes for presentation.

- ◆ Centre staff should complete the candidate mark sheet with accurate timings, which include repeats and fade outs specific to individual candidates. They should complete these in pen (not pencil). This mark sheet is the formal record of the assessment event and it is very important that it is completed accurately.
- ◆ Candidates must perform at least two pieces on each instrument. The performance time must not exceed 8 minutes and 30 seconds. Candidates must perform for a minimum of 2 minutes on one of the instruments. Carefully-timed cuts may be appropriate to keep within the time limit, but the piece must still meet the technical demands of National 5 level (Grade 3 or above).
- ◆ Centre staff should give VAs a running order, with approximate timings, at the start of each session. This year, some centres allowed too much or too little time for each performance. Centre staff should refer to the *Information for Centres* document for advice about timings. This document is issued to all centres before the visiting assessment period.
- ◆ Keyboard performances must include left-hand accompaniment in each piece.

- ◆ For drum kit programmes, centre staff should write the style of each piece on the candidate mark sheet and not simply the title of the piece.
- ◆ Guitar or ukulele programmes should contain a minimum of 12 chords and a mixture of lead or melodic guitar and chordal or rhythm guitar pieces. The National 5 Music Course Specification explains the guitar and ukulele requirements. Centre staff must provide a context for chordal programmes — this is not required for lead or melodic programmes. Centre staff must also provide VAs with a notated melody line, with chords inserted at the appropriate points.
- ◆ Centre staff should write on the Candidate Mark Sheet if the programme is melodic or chordal or a mixture of both. Melodic programmes may still contain chords, for example Rockschoo! pieces. In a chordal programme, where the candidate follows chord symbols, the way in which they realise the chords is their choice, but they should include a variety of strum styles within their programme.
- ◆ Some centres offered the VA tablature for guitar programmes. This is not sufficient for external assessment. Centre staff must also give the VA standard notation, even if the candidate is playing from tablature.
- ◆ If a vocalist sings in a different key to the printed music, centre staff do not have to provide the printed music in a new key. Centres can indicate the new key on the VA's copy of the printed music.
- ◆ If a candidate is unable to sit the performance exam due to health reasons or other exceptional circumstances, SQA will try to arrange an alternative date for the candidate to sit the exam. If this is not possible, centres would have to submit evidence of the candidate's attainment in performance. Centre staff should submit an audio recording of as much of the candidate's programme as possible, along with copies of the music and the marks awarded for all the pieces performed. Many centres routinely make audio recordings of prelim exams for this eventuality. If centres do not have an audio recording of the candidate's performance programme, they should submit alternative evidence that the candidate has demonstrated attainment at National 5 level. Other evidence may include a certificate from a graded examination at an appropriate level.

Grade boundary and statistical information:

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2017	7344
Number of resulted entries in 2018	7099

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum mark				
A	58.3%	58.3%	4139	70
B	24.6%	82.9%	1747	60
C	12.0%	94.9%	849	50
D	3.8%	98.6%	267	40
No award	1.4%	-	97	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

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.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which 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.

Therefore SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring 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.

Grade boundaries from exam papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the corresponding practice exam paper.