



Advanced Higher Music

Course code:	C850 77 (performance option) or C878 77 (portfolio option)
Course assessment code:	X850 77 (performance option) or X878 77 (portfolio option)
SCQF:	level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2025–26

This document provides detailed information about the course and course assessment to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the course and the course assessment in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

This document is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver the course.

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Course overview

This course consists of 32 SCQF credit points, which includes time for preparation for course assessment. The notional length of time for candidates to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has five components: three mandatory components and two optional components. Candidates complete the question paper, assignment, and performance — instrument 1, and **either** performance — instrument 2 (performance option) **or** composing portfolio (portfolio option).

The course code for the performance option is C850 77. The course assessment code is X850 77.

Component	Marks	Scaled mark	Duration
Question paper	40	35	1 hour and 15 minutes (approximately)
Assignment	20	15	see 'Course assessment' section
Performance — instrument 1	30	25	see 'Course assessment' section
Performance — instrument 2	30	25	see 'Course assessment' section

The course code for the portfolio option is C878 77. The course assessment code is X878 77.

Component	Marks	Scaled mark	Duration
Question paper	40	35	1 hour and 15 minutes (approximately)
Assignment	20	15	see 'Course assessment' section
Performance — instrument 1	30	25	see 'Course assessment' section
Portfolio	30	25	see 'Course assessment' section

Recommended entry	Progression
<p>Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre.</p> <p>Candidates should have achieved the Higher Music course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ other qualifications in music, for example Higher National (HN) qualifications in music or related areas ◆ further study, employment and/or training

Conditions of award

The grade awarded is based on the total marks achieved across all course assessment components.

Course rationale

National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide time for learning, focus on skills and applying learning, and provide scope for personalisation and choice.

Every course provides opportunities for candidates to develop breadth, challenge and application. The focus and balance of assessment is tailored to each subject area.

Throughout this course, candidates develop and extend their knowledge and understanding of music concepts and music literacy. They learn to recognise, distinguish and apply level-specific music concepts, signs and symbols as they perform, create and listen to music.

The course allows candidates to develop and consolidate practical skills in music and knowledge and understanding of music styles and concepts. It encourages them to self-reflect and explore their creative ideas. Understanding music through listening and analysing enables candidates to build on and extend their knowledge and understanding of music and influences on music.

The course provides opportunities for candidates to perform a range of music in solo and/or group settings.

Purpose and aims

The course provides candidates with a broad practical experience of performing, creating and understanding music. It enables them to work independently or in collaboration with others, and can help them to plan and organise, to make decisions, and to take responsibility for their own learning.

The course aims to enable candidates to:

- ◆ broaden their knowledge and understanding of music and music literacy by listening to music, analysing and identifying music concepts, signs and symbols
- ◆ create original music or arrange existing music, using compositional methods
- ◆ perform music

Who is this course for?

The course is suitable for candidates with an interest in developing their understanding and skills in music. It allows them to consolidate and reinforce skills, knowledge and understanding of music developed through other qualifications or experience. It provides a pathway for those who want to progress to more specialised training, further and higher education, or entry into a diverse range of occupations and careers.

The course takes account of the needs of different candidates and can be contextualised to suit a diverse range of needs, interests and aspirations. There is considerable scope for personalisation and choice through the activities of performing, creating, listening to and analysing music, and through opportunities for using music technology to create or arrange music.

Course content

The course has an integrated approach to learning and combines practical learning and understanding of music. Candidates draw upon their understanding of music styles and concepts when performing and creating music.

Candidates experiment with and use music concepts in creative ways, within a range of compositional methods, as they compose or arrange music and reflect on their creative choices. Through listening, they develop knowledge and understanding of a variety of music styles and concepts, and signs and symbols used in music notation.

Candidates develop their performing skills on one instrument or voice through regular practice and reflection.

Candidates must also:

- ◆ perform on a second contrasting instrument
- or
- ◆ compose a portfolio of music

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

- ◆ aural perception and discrimination through listening to music
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of level-specific music styles, concepts, notation signs and symbols
- ◆ analysis of music
- ◆ creating original music using compositional methods
- ◆ reviewing the creative process of composing and/or arranging
- ◆ performing music in contrasting styles on one or two contrasting instruments
- ◆ self-reflection and review of rehearsal and practice skills

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

The following provides details of skills, knowledge and understanding sampled in the course assessment.

Question paper

The question paper tests skills in aural discrimination and perception, knowledge and understanding of music concepts, music literacy and analysis of music. These are developed throughout the course.

Assignment

The assignment draws on candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding of music composition. The composition or arrangement must show use of **all** of the following elements of music:

- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm
- ◆ structure
- ◆ timbre

Candidates show their understanding of these elements of music through the creative and effective development of a range of musical ideas and compositional methods. They reflect on their own original music and identify areas for improvement. They also analyse a chosen piece of music.

Performance

Candidates demonstrate their performing skills by presenting a prepared programme of music. The following aspects of performance are assessed:

- ◆ melodic accuracy and/or intonation
- ◆ rhythmic accuracy
- ◆ tempo and flow of the music
- ◆ mood and character
- ◆ instrumental or vocal tone
- ◆ dynamics

The selected programme of music must allow the candidate to demonstrate a sufficient level of technical and musical skills at the appropriate level (Grade 5 or above).

Portfolio option

The portfolio option allows candidates to further demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding of music composition and/or arranging. The compositions and/or arrangements must show use of **all** of the following elements of music:

- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm
- ◆ structure
- ◆ timbre

Candidates show their understanding of these elements of music through the creative and effective development of a range of musical ideas and compositional methods. They also reflect on their own original music and identify areas for improvement.

The concepts in the course build on previous knowledge and understanding of concepts in Music courses at lower SQCF levels. Candidates are expected to have a secure understanding of the concepts at National 3, National 4, National 5 and Higher levels, in addition to knowledge and understanding of those specific to Advanced Higher.

These concepts are detailed in the following tables.

Music concepts list

Contexts for learning					
Level	Styles	Melody/harmony	Rhythm/tempo	Texture/structure/form	Timbre
Advanced Higher	Renaissance	Appoggiatura	Hemiola	Fugue	Consort
	Pavan	Turn		Subject	Countertenor
	Galliard	Tritone		Answer	Piano trio
	Motet	Augmented triad		Countersubject	Sprechgesang
	Ayre or air	Suspension		Stretto	
	Ballett	Chords I, IV, V and VI in major and minor keys		Antiphonal	
	Madrigal	Chord II and its first inversion (major keys only)		Bridge	
	Anthem			Song cycle	
	Chorale	Polytonality or bitonality		Leitmotif	
	Nationalist	Tone row or note row		Inversion	
	Neoclassical			Retrograde	
	Serial				
	Contemporary jazz				
	Electronic dance music (EDM)				

Level	Styles	Melody/harmony	Rhythm/tempo	Texture/structure/form	Timbre
Higher	Plainchant	Mode or modal	3 against 2	Basso continuo	Tremolando
	Oratorio	Relative major	Time changes	Concerto grosso	Harmonics
	Mass	Relative minor	Irregular time signatures	Ritornello	String quartet
	Recitative	Interval	Triplets	Passacaglia	Ripieno
	Sonata	Obbligato	Augmentation	Da capo aria	Concertino
	Chamber music	Acciaccatura	Diminution	Sonata form	Coloratura
	String quartet	Mordent		Exposition	
	Lied	Plagal cadence		Subject	
	Impressionist	Interrupted cadence		Through-composed	
	Musique concrète	Tierce de Picardie			
	Jazz funk	Dominant 7th			
	Soul music	Diminished triad			
		Diminished 7th			
		Added 6th			
		Harmonic minor scale			
		Melodic minor scale			

Level	Styles	Melody/harmony	Rhythm/tempo	Texture/structure/form	Timbre
National 5	Symphony	Atonal, cluster	Rubato	Strophic	Piccolo, oboe, bassoon
	Gospel	Chord progressions — chords I, IV, V and VI in a major key	Ritardando	Binary/AB	(French) horn, tuba
	Classical		Moderato	Rondo/ABACA — episode	Viola
	Pibroch	Imperfect/perfect cadences	Cross rhythms		Castanets, hi-hat cymbals, bongo drums
	Celtic rock	Inverted pedal	Compound time — 6 9 12 8 8 8	Alberti bass	
	Bothy ballad	Chromatic		Walking bass	
	Waulking song	Whole-tone scale		Ground bass	
	Gaelic psalm	Grace note		Homophonic	
	Aria	Glissando		Polyphonic	Arco, pizzicato
	Chorus	Modulation		Contrapuntal	Con sordino
	Minimalist	Contrary motion		Coda	Flutter-tonguing
	Indian	Trill			Rolls
		Syllabic, melismatic			Reverb
		Countermelody			Mezzo-soprano, baritone
		Descant (voice)			A cappella
		Pitch bend			
		Tone/semitone			

Level	Styles	Melody/harmony	Rhythm/tempo	Texture/structure/form	Timbre
National 4	Baroque	Major/minor (tonality)	Syncopation	Canon	Brass band, wind band
	Ragtime	Drone	Scotch snap	Ternary/ABA	Violin, cello, double bass, harp
	Romantic	Broken chord/arpeggio	Strathspey	Verse and chorus	
	Swing	Chord progressions — chords I, IV and V (major keys)	Jig	Middle 8	Flute, clarinet, saxophone, pan pipes, recorder
	Concerto		Simple time — 2 3 4 4 4 4	Theme and variation	
	Opera	Change of key		Cadenza	Trumpet, trombone
	Scots ballad	Pedal	Compound time		
	Mouth music	Scale	Anacrusis		
	Reggae	Pentatonic scale	Andante		
	African music	Octave	Accelerando		
	Rapping	Vamp	Rallentando		
		Scat singing	A tempo		
		Ornament	Dotted rhythms		

Level	Styles	Melody/harmony	Rhythm/tempo	Texture/structure/form	Timbre
National 3	Blues	Ascending	Accent/accented	Unison/octave	Striking (hitting), blowing, bowing, strumming, plucking
	Jazz	Descending	Beat/pulse	Harmony/chord	
	Rock	Step (stepwise)	2, 3 or 4 beats in the bar	Solo	Orchestra, strings, brass, woodwind and percussion (tuned and untuned)
	Pop	Leap (leaping)	On the beat/off the beat	Accompanied/unaccompanied	
	Rock 'n' roll	Repetition	Repetition	Repetition	Accordion, fiddle, bagpipes
	Musical	Sequence	Slower/faster	Ostinato/riff	
	Scottish	Question and answer	Pause	Round	Acoustic guitar, electric guitar
	Latin American	Improvisation	March		Piano, organ
		Chord	Reel		Drum kit
		Discord	Waltz		Steel band
		Chord change	Drum fill		Scottish dance band
			Adagio		Folk group
			Allegro		Voice
					Choir
					Staccato, legato

Music literacy

Level	Melody/harmony	Rhythm / tempo	Texture / structure / form	Dynamics / timbre
Advanced Higher	<p>Bass clef C–E two ledger lines below stave to two ledger lines above</p> <p>Transposing from bass clef one octave higher into treble clef</p> <p>Rewriting (in either treble or bass clef) a note at the same pitch using up to two ledger lines below or above the stave</p> <p>Enharmonic equivalent — rewriting a note at the same pitch</p> <p>Scales and key signatures — D major, B flat major, E minor and D minor</p> <p>1st and 2nd inversions of major and minor triads in the keys of C, G, F, D and B flat major and A, E and D minor</p> <p>Chord II and its 1st inversion (major keys as listed above)</p> <p>Identifying chords at cadence points and under melodies</p> <p>Inserting chords at cadence points</p> <p>Creating a bass line using chord information provided</p> <p>Diminished 7th</p> <p>Dominant 7th</p> <p>Added 6th</p> <p>Augmented triad</p> <p>Tritone</p> <p>Augmented 4th</p> <p>Diminished 5th</p> <p>8va (octave higher); 8vb (octave lower)</p>	<p>Ties</p> <p>Syncopated rhythms</p> <p>Time signature: $\frac{5}{4}$</p> <p>Time changes</p> <p>Dal segno (D.S.)</p> <p><i>Fine</i></p>	<p>No additional texture / structure / form concepts are introduced at Advanced Higher.</p>	<p>No additional dynamics / timbre concepts are introduced at Advanced Higher.</p>

Level	Melody/harmony	Rhythm / tempo	Texture / structure / form	Dynamics / timbre
Higher	<p>Bass clef — E–C — range of notes from E below the stave to middle C</p> <p>Transposing from treble clef down one octave into bass clef</p> <p>Identifying chords I, IV, V and VI in major and minor keys in treble and bass clefs</p> <p>Identifying tonic, subdominant and dominant notes in the keys of C, G and F major and A minor</p> <p>Naming diatonic intervals: 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, octave</p> <p>Writing diatonic intervals above a given note in treble clef</p>	<p>Quavers, crotchets, dotted crotchets and dotted minims within 6 9 12 8 8 8 time</p> <p>Triplet quavers, triplet crotchets</p> <p>Rests — quaver, crotchet, dotted crotchet, minim, semibreve, whole bar</p> <p>Da capo (D.C.)</p>	Phrase mark	<p>Accents (>)</p> <p>Slurs</p> <p>Staccato (.)</p>
National 5	<p>Tones, semitones, accidentals — flats, sharps and naturals</p> <p>Scales and key signatures — C major, G major, F major, A minor</p> <p>Chords — C major, G major, F major and A minor</p> <p>Leaps</p>	<p>Dotted rhythms</p> <p>Dotted crotchet</p> <p>Dotted quaver</p> <p>Scotch snap</p> <p>1st and 2nd time bars</p>	Not applicable	<p><i>ff</i> — fortissimo</p> <p><i>pp</i> — pianissimo</p> <p><i>sfz</i> — sforzando</p>

Level	Melody/harmony	Rhythm / tempo	Texture / structure / form	Dynamics / timbre
National 4	Treble clef stave C–A' — range of notes from middle C to first ledger line A Sequences	Quaver Semiquaver Grouped semiquavers Paired quavers Repeat signs	Not applicable	<i>mf</i> — mezzo forte <i>mp</i> — mezzo piano
National 3	Lines and spaces of the treble clef Steps Repetition	Crotchet Minim Dotted minim Semibreve Barlines Double barlines	Not applicable	<i>f</i> — forte <i>p</i> — piano <i>< cresc.</i> — crescendo <i>> dim.</i> — diminuendo

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level, and are available on the SCQF website.

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

This course helps candidates to develop broad, generic skills. These skills are based on [SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#) and draw from the following main skills areas:

3 Health and wellbeing

- 3.1 Personal learning

5 Thinking skills

- 5.3 Applying
- 5.4 Analysing and evaluating
- 5.5 Creating

Teachers or lecturers must build these skills into the course at an appropriate level, where there are suitable opportunities.

Course assessment

Course assessment is based on the information in this course specification.

The course assessment meets the purposes and aims of the course by addressing:

- ◆ breadth — drawing on knowledge and skills from across the course
- ◆ challenge — requiring greater depth or extension of knowledge and/or skills
- ◆ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This enables candidates to:

- ◆ demonstrate a depth of knowledge and understanding of music, level-specific music concepts and music literacy
- ◆ create original music or arrange music and review the process
- ◆ demonstrate analytical skills
- ◆ prepare and perform a programme of music on one instrument or voice

and **either**

- ◆ prepare and perform a programme of music on a second contrasting instrument
- or
- ◆ produce a portfolio of music

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper **40 marks**

The question paper is a mandatory course assessment component.

The question paper assesses candidates' knowledge and understanding of music concepts and music literacy.

Candidates demonstrate their conceptual knowledge and understanding of music by responding to questions that relate to excerpts of music in different styles. A range of question types is used in the question paper. Candidates answer all the questions.

The question paper gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ aural perception, discrimination and analytical thinking
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of a range of music styles, concepts and music literacy

The question paper has 40 marks out of a total of 120 marks. This is scaled by SQA to represent 35% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Marks are awarded for:

- ◆ identifying concepts in a range of excerpts of music and styles
- ◆ applying music literacy skills
- ◆ analysing two excerpts of music, identifying similarities and differences
- ◆ identifying the style and/or period(s) of two excerpts of music and providing a valid justification

Short-answer questions specifically examine concepts introduced at Higher and Advanced Higher levels.

In sequential listening questions, or questions where candidates identify the prominent features of the music, concepts from all levels up to and including Advanced Higher are examined.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

SQA sets and marks the question paper. It is conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

Candidates have approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete the question paper.

Specimen question papers for Advanced Higher courses are published on SQA's website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers candidates sit. The specimen papers also include marking instructions.

Course assessment structure: assignment

Assignment 20 marks

The assignment is a mandatory course assessment component.

The assignment allows candidates to explore and develop musical ideas to create music. It has three parts:

- ◆ composing or arranging one piece of music
- ◆ reviewing the creative process of their composition or arrangement
- ◆ analysing a chosen piece of music

The assignment has 20 marks out of a total of 120 marks. This is scaled by SQA to represent 15% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Marks are awarded for:

- ◆ composing or arranging music (10 marks)
- ◆ review of the creative process (5 marks)
- ◆ analysis (5 marks)

Composing or arranging one piece of music

The composed piece or arrangement can be in any style or genre and must last a minimum of 1 minute and a maximum of 4 minutes and 30 seconds. Carefully-timed cuts or fade-outs can be used to keep within the time limit.

For a composition candidates must:

- ◆ plan their composition
- ◆ explore and develop musical ideas using **all** of the musical elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre
- ◆ create one complete piece of music

For an arrangement candidates must:

- ◆ plan their arrangement
- ◆ creatively rework the chosen music by exploring and developing musical ideas using **all** of the musical elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre
- ◆ create one arrangement

If a candidate submits an arrangement, they must include a copy of the source materials used and clarify details of their input in their review. Candidates must provide clear evidence of the specific content they created.

An arrangement cannot be a basic transcription from an available score. Candidates must creatively rework their chosen piece of music.

Reviewing the creative process of their composition or arrangement

For the review, candidates must, with reference to compositional methods used, include clear details of their:

- ◆ main decisions
- ◆ exploration and development of musical ideas
- ◆ strengths and/or areas for improvement

Analysing a chosen piece of music

Candidates must choose a piece of music by a composer and analyse the key features with reference to compositional methods and music concepts. Candidates must not analyse their own music in this part of the assignment.

The analysis must contain reference to **at least five** of the elements below:

- ◆ style
- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm and tempo
- ◆ texture
- ◆ structure and/or form
- ◆ timbre and dynamics

Candidates must provide an audio recording of their chosen piece. This could be in the form of an audio file or web link. The candidate's analysis must include audio time codes referencing the key features they identify. Candidates do not need to provide edited excerpts of the audio recording.

Candidates can include sections of a score or a guide to the music referencing the key features identified.

Setting, conducting and marking the assignment

The assignment is:

- ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines
- ◆ conducted under some supervision and control

The assignment is submitted to SQA for external marking. SQA quality assures all marking.

Teachers or lecturers must agree the scope and focus of the assignment with the candidate, and must allow personalisation and choice.

The assignment must:

- ◆ allow candidates to apply the knowledge and skills developed throughout the course to show understanding of compositional methods
- ◆ be a meaningful and challenging task that enables candidates to clearly demonstrate application of musical skills in a creative way
- ◆ allow candidates to demonstrate competence in creating and developing musical ideas and an understanding of harmony

A candidate whose composition or arrangement does not show use of harmony will be awarded 0 marks.

Candidates who choose to include tablature (TAB) in their score or performance plan must ensure that all parts are notated in standard music notation. It is not sufficient to show any part in TAB only. A candidate whose score or performance plan has any part in TAB only will be awarded 0 marks.

The composition or arrangement can contain sections of improvisation, but this must be in the context of a wider composition or arrangement that demonstrates composing skills. A piece that is solely an improvisation will be awarded 0 marks.

Candidates who choose to work with pre-recorded loops must ensure that they do this in the context of a wider composition or arrangement and show the compositional process. The candidate's actual creative input must be clearly identifiable. Candidates must provide details of their creative input in their review.

Candidates who choose to write a serial composition must annotate their score showing the note rows. They must indicate which version of their note row they have used throughout their composition. It is not sufficient to indicate only some of their note rows. A candidate who does not annotate all their note rows in their score will be awarded 0 marks.

Candidates should clearly identify their input in their composition or arrangement. For example, they should:

- ◆ make it clear if any part, such as a piano or guitar accompaniment or a drum kit part, has been fully realised by someone else, or what directions the candidate gave for that part
- ◆ state if they used any software to generate chord progressions or melodic or rhythmic ideas
- ◆ state if they used an electronic program to devise an accompaniment

Assessment conditions

Time

The assignment is carried out over an extended period of time in open-book conditions, allowing candidates to develop and refine their work before it is presented for assessment. Candidates start their assignment at an appropriate point in the course, as determined by their teacher or lecturer, allowing for personalisation.

Supervision, control and authentication

The assignment is carried out under some supervision and control. This means:

- ◆ candidates do not need to be directly supervised at all times
- ◆ the use of resources, including the internet, is not tightly prescribed
- ◆ the work an individual candidate submits for assessment is their own
- ◆ teachers or lecturers can provide reasonable assistance

Candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting. Teachers or lecturers may give support and guidance if required and should put in place processes for monitoring progress, for example regular checkpoints to ensure that the work is the candidate's own.

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources that candidates may access while producing their assignment.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates must carry out the assessment independently. However, they can receive reasonable assistance before the formal assessment process takes place.

The term ‘reasonable assistance’ is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If candidates need more than what is thought to be ‘reasonable assistance’, they may not be ready for assessment, or they may have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Teachers or lecturers may provide guidelines for the assignment to lead candidates through the assignment in stages.

Candidates can seek clarification regarding the wording of the assignment assessment tasks if they find them unclear. In this case, teachers or lecturers should clarify this for the whole class.

If a candidate is working on their assignment and is faced with more than one possible solution to a problem, then the teacher or lecturer may explore options with them. The teacher or lecturer and the candidate can discuss the pros and cons of each option. The candidate can then decide on a solution based on the discussion.

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence must be submitted:

- ◆ an audio recording of the composition or arrangement
- ◆ a score or performance plan of the composition or arrangement
- ◆ a review of the creative process for the composition or arrangement
- ◆ an analysis of a chosen piece of music, including reference to audio time codes
- ◆ an audio recording (for example an audio file or web link) of the chosen piece of music used for analysis

In addition to this, candidates who submit an arrangement must provide a copy of the original music, including any harmonies (where available).

Candidates must use the SQA review of the creative process and analysis templates. The review of the creative process template is restricted to one page. The number of pages is not restricted in the analysis template. Both templates are available from the Advanced Higher Music subject page.

Volume

Candidates can present their review in prose or bullet points. It should be approximately 200 to 350 words.

The analysis of a chosen piece of music should be approximately 600 to 800 words.

Word count is given to indicate the volume of evidence required. No penalty is applied.

Assignment marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Advanced Higher Music assignment are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b For each of the parts, select the band descriptor that most closely describes the evidence presented. For composing and arranging, once the best fit has been selected:
 - Where the evidence almost matches the description of the level above, award the higher mark from the range.
 - Where the evidence just meets the standard described, award the lower mark from the range.
- c For composing and arranging:
 - If a candidate does not submit an audio recording of their composition or arrangement, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate does not submit a score or a performance plan, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate submits a performance plan consisting of screenshots of a digital audio workstation, which may include only names of instruments, and no further information, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate submits a score or performance plan with any part as tablature (TAB) only, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate has submitted a piece that is solely an improvisation, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate has submitted a piece that does not show use of harmony, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate only uses four of the elements to create their composition or arrangement, award a maximum of 5 marks.
 - If a candidate does not annotate all their note rows in their serial composition, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate does not provide a copy of the source material used to create their arrangement, award 0 marks.
- d For analysis:
 - If a candidate does not provide an audio recording or a web link to the piece of music they have analysed, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate does not provide audio time codes referencing the key features of the music, award a maximum of 1 mark.
 - If a candidate only refers to four of the elements when analysing their chosen piece of music, award a maximum of 4 marks.

Detailed marking instructions

Composing music

Candidates must use **all** of the elements listed below:

- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm
- ◆ structure
- ◆ timbre

Summary statements	Mark range
An excellent composition demonstrating a range of musical ideas that have been developed imaginatively and convincingly, appropriate to the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements is highly creative and effective.	9–10
A good composition demonstrating a range of musical ideas that have been developed with some imagination, appropriate to the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements shows creativity.	7–8
A composition demonstrating musical ideas that have been developed satisfactorily, appropriate to the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements may be simplistic and straightforward.	5–6
A composition demonstrating musical ideas that have been developed inconsistently within the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements is not always appropriate.	3–4
A composition demonstrating limited musical ideas with little or no development within the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements is poor.	1–2
No evidence produced.	0

Arranging music

Candidates must creatively rework the original piece of music using **all** of the elements listed below:

- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm
- ◆ structure
- ◆ timbre

Summary statements	Mark range
An excellent arrangement that uses a range of compositional methods to develop aspects of the original piece imaginatively and convincingly.	9–10
The arrangement skilfully and effectively employs varied instrumental forces and combinations, shows originality, and is highly creative.	
A good arrangement that uses a range of compositional methods to develop aspects of the original piece with some imagination.	7–8
The arrangement successfully employs varied instrumental forces and combinations, shows some originality, and is creative.	
A satisfactory arrangement that uses compositional methods to show some development of aspects of the original piece.	5–6
The arrangement employs instrumental forces and combinations in a straightforward way.	
A simplistic arrangement that uses compositional methods to show limited development of aspects of the original piece.	3–4
Instrumental forces and combinations are not always appropriate.	
A poor arrangement that shows very limited development of aspects of the original piece.	1–2
Instrumental forces and combinations are inappropriate.	
No evidence produced.	0

Review of the creative process

The review must, with reference to compositional methods used, include:

- ◆ main decisions made
- ◆ the exploration and development of musical ideas
- ◆ strengths and/or areas for improvement

Summary statements	Mark
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a detailed account of the main decisions made◆ a detailed explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ clear details of strengths and/or areas for improvement	5
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a fairly detailed account of the main decisions made◆ a relevant explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ identification of strengths and/or areas for improvement	4
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a satisfactory account of the main decisions made◆ sufficient explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ satisfactory identification of strengths and/or areas for improvement	3
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a limited account of the main decisions made◆ a limited explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ limited identification of strengths and/or areas for improvement	2
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a poor account of the main decisions made◆ a very limited explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ little or no identification of strengths and/or areas for improvement	1
No evidence produced.	0

Analysis

The analysis of the chosen piece must identify key features within the music by referring to **at least five** of the elements below:

- ◆ style
- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm and tempo
- ◆ texture
- ◆ structure and/or form
- ◆ timbre and dynamics

Summary statements	Mark
The candidate demonstrates a perceptive understanding of the chosen piece by giving a detailed identification of key features of the music, backed up with detailed reference to the audio and, where appropriate, a score or guide to the music.	5
The candidate demonstrates a secure understanding of the chosen piece by giving a fairly detailed identification of key features of the music, backed up with fairly detailed reference to the audio and, where appropriate, a score or guide to the music.	4
The candidate demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the chosen piece by giving a satisfactory identification of key features of the music, backed up with satisfactory reference to the audio and, where appropriate, a score or guide to the music.	3
The candidate demonstrates a limited understanding of the chosen piece by giving a limited identification of key features of the music, backed up with limited reference to the audio and, where appropriate, a score or guide to the music.	2
The candidate demonstrates little or no understanding of the chosen piece. There is little or no identification of key features of the music, backed up with little, inaccurate, or no reference to the audio nor, where appropriate, a score or guide to the music.	1
No evidence produced.	0

Course assessment structure: performance

Performance — instrument 1 **30 marks**

Performance — instrument 2 **30 marks**

The performance on instrument 1 is a mandatory course assessment component.

The performance on instrument 2 is an optional course assessment component. Candidates **either** complete this **or** the portfolio.

If candidates choose to perform on instrument 1 and instrument 2, they must be entered using course code C850 77 and course assessment code X850 77.

If candidates choose to perform on one instrument and complete a portfolio, they must be entered using course code C878 77 and course assessment code X878 77.

The performance allows candidates to demonstrate skills on either one or two contrasting selected instruments, either of which could be voice.

Performance on two instruments

For candidates performing on instrument 1 and instrument 2, the total performance time for both instruments must be a minimum of 18 minutes and must not exceed 20 minutes.

Candidates do not need to perform for an equal length of time on each of their instruments, or on their instrument and voice. The performance time on either of the two selected instruments must be a minimum of 6 minutes within the overall programme.

Performance — instrument 1 has 30 marks out of a total of 120 marks. This is scaled by SQA to represent 25% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Performance — instrument 2 has 30 marks out of a total of 120 marks. This is scaled by SQA to represent 25% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Candidates can perform their programme of music for instrument 1 and 2, solo and/or in a group setting. The programme of music must include a minimum of two contrasting pieces of music. These pieces must be of an appropriate level of difficulty.

Performance on one instrument

For candidates performing on one instrument, the total performance time must be a minimum of 6 minutes and must not exceed 8 minutes.

Performance — instrument 1 has 30 marks out of a total of 120 marks. This is scaled by SQA to represent 25% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Candidates can perform their programme of music for instrument 1 solo and/or in a group setting. The programme of music must include a minimum of two contrasting pieces of music. These pieces must be of an appropriate level of difficulty.

Marks are awarded, as appropriate for:

- ◆ melodic accuracy and/or intonation
- ◆ rhythmic accuracy
- ◆ tempo and flow
- ◆ mood and character
- ◆ tone
- ◆ dynamics

Each instrument (or voice) is marked out of 30, and individual pieces are given a mark out of 10. The number of pieces in the performance programme is variable, therefore scaling is used to determine the final mark for each instrument (or voice).

Performance overview

The performance allows candidates to demonstrate their musical and technical skills in an appropriately challenging context.

Music can, for example, be selected from current or past syllabuses (including graded anthologies) at Grade 5 or above from any of the following, or any other equivalent music organisation:

- ◆ Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM)
- ◆ Trinity College
- ◆ Rockschool
- ◆ London College of Music
- ◆ Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) Scottish Traditional Music Graded Exams

The music in the 6- or 18-minute programme should allow the candidate to demonstrate a sufficient level of technical and musical skills. It should include complete pieces of music. However, carefully-timed cuts to music may be required to keep within time requirements. Teachers or lecturers must ensure that the sections of music performed meet the criteria outlined above.

The list of approved instruments and unacceptable combinations of instruments is provided below. Candidates who choose to perform on two instruments must refer to this list.

Approved instruments and unacceptable combinations of instruments

Candidates should demonstrate skills on either one or two contrasting instruments, either of which can be voice. Teachers or lecturers should send requests about presenting instruments not contained in the table below to SQA.

Instrument 1	Unacceptable in combination with Instrument 1
Accordion (free bass)	Accordion (Stradella)
Accordion (Stradella)	Accordion (free bass)
Bagpipes (Scottish)	Not applicable
Baritone/Euphonium	Horn in F Horn (tenor)/Cornet (Eb) Trumpet/Cornet/Flugel (Bb) Tuba
Bassoon	Oboe
Bass guitar**	Double bass**
Cello	Not applicable
Clarinet	Any saxophone
Clarsach	Harp
Double bass**	Bass guitar**
Drum kit*	Pipe band drumming* Snare drum* Timpani*
Flute	Not applicable
Guitar (acoustic)	Guitar (classical) Guitar (electric) Ukulele
Guitar (classical)	Guitar (acoustic) Guitar (electric) Ukulele
Guitar (electric)	Guitar (acoustic) Guitar (classical) Ukulele
Harp	Clarsach

Instrument 1	Unacceptable in combination with Instrument 1
Horn in F	Baritone/Euphonium Horn (tenor)/Cornet (Eb) Trumpet/Cornet/Flugel (Bb) Tuba
Horn (tenor)/Cornet (Eb)	Baritone/Euphonium Horn in F Trumpet/Cornet/Flugel (Bb) Tuba
Keyboard (electronic)	Organ (electronic) Organ (pipe) Piano
Mandolin	Scots fiddle Viola Violin
Oboe	Bassoon
Organ (electronic)	Keyboard (electronic) Organ (pipe) Piano
Organ (pipe)	Keyboard (electronic) Organ (electronic)
Piano	Keyboard (electronic) Organ (electronic)
Pipe band drumming*	Drum kit* Snare drum* Timpani*
Recorder (any one recorder or combination of descant, treble, tenor recorders)	Any other recorder Tin whistle
Saxophone (any one saxophone or combination of soprano, alto, tenor, baritone saxophones)	Any other saxophone Clarinet
Scots fiddle	Mandolin Viola Violin
Snare drum*	Drum kit* Pipe band drumming* Timpani*
Timpani*	Drum kit* Pipe band drumming* Snare drum*

Instrument 1	Unacceptable in combination with Instrument 1
Tin whistle	Any recorder
Trombone (tenor)	Not applicable
Trumpet/Cornet/Flugel (Bb)	Baritone/Euphonium Horn in F Horn (tenor)/Cornet (Eb) Tuba
Tuba	Baritone/Euphonium Horn in F Horn (tenor)/Cornet (Eb) Trumpet/Cornet/Flugel (Bb)
Tuned percussion (any one instrument or combination of glockenspiel, marimba, vibraphone, xylophone)	Any other tuned percussion instrument
Ukulele	Guitar (acoustic) Guitar (classical) Guitar (electric)
Viola	Mandolin Scots fiddle Violin
Violin	Mandolin Scots fiddle Viola
Voice	Not applicable

Combining similar instruments into one programme

Candidates can construct a performance programme that combines instruments from the 'Unacceptable in combination with Instrument 1' column with the corresponding instrument 1. They must also perform a second programme on another acceptable instrument. However, candidates **must not** combine drum kit, pipe band drumming, snare drum and timpani.

For example:

Performance programme one	Performance programme two
Piano and keyboard (electronic)	Any instrument other than : keyboard (electronic) piano organ (electronic) organ (pipe)
Guitar (acoustic) and guitar (classical) and guitar (electric)	Any instrument other than : guitar (acoustic) guitar (classical) guitar (electric) ukulele

*Instruments that cannot be combined into one programme

Candidates **must not** combine any of the following instruments into one performance programme:

- ◆ drum kit
- ◆ pipe band drumming
- ◆ snare drum
- ◆ timpani

Further instrument-specific information

**Bass guitar and double bass

Candidates can present bass guitar and double bass as two separate instruments, providing they use the bow for a substantial part of the double bass programme and use different music for each instrument. The double bass programme should largely consist of arco playing with pizzicato only where the piece particularly requires it. Candidates **must not** play a whole pizzicato programme on double bass and then play a bass guitar programme.

Bagpipes (Scottish)

Candidates must perform on Highland bagpipe at Advanced Higher level. They cannot perform on practice chanter.

Candidates must include piobaireachd, march, Strathspey and reel.

Candidates may not be able to perform an entire piobaireachd within the chosen time allocation. Where they perform sections of a piobaireachd, they must include the crunluath. Candidates may miss out repeats in the march, Strathspey and reel to accommodate their chosen time allocation on the instrument. Candidates must play all pieces from memory.

Drum kit

A drum kit programme at Advanced Higher must have the following content:

Number of contrasting styles required in a programme	Number of different fills required within each style	4-way independence required in
6	4	all styles

Carefully-timed cuts may be made in the printed music. Cuts and fade-outs may be made in the backing tracks to keep within the time limit, and should be at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer. Teachers or lecturers must ensure that the required number of fills is included before the cut or fade-out. Within any one programme, one piece only can include two styles and, in this case, candidates do not have to double the required number of fills. Candidates must demonstrate four-way independence in all styles.

Candidates presenting drum kit must be accompanied, and this may be live or recorded. However, candidates may include one unaccompanied piece within any one programme.

The pieces of music must allow the candidate to demonstrate a sufficient level of technical and musical skills.

Drum kit styles

For Advanced Higher, candidates must perform a programme of six contrasting styles. Candidates must choose their six styles from banks 1 to 9 below. Each of their six styles must come from a different bank.

Bank 1	Bank 2	Bank 3	Bank 4	Bank 5	Bank 6	Bank 7	Bank 8	Bank 9
Rock	Disco	Blues (three quavers to one crotchet)	Shuffle	Jazz (2 or 4 feel)	Waltz	Reggae	Cha-cha	Irregular time signatures
Heavy rock	16th note rhythm		Funk shuffle	Swing	3 beats (simple or compound time)	Ska	Bossa nova	
Rock ballad	16 beat	12/8		Big band swing	9/8		Latin	
Metal rock							Samba	
Pop							Rumba	
Hip hop							Calypso	
Soul								
Hard rock								
Punk								
Funk								
R 'n' B								
Rock 'n' roll								

Guitar and ukulele (electric and acoustic)

There are three separate approaches to presenting a guitar or ukulele programme:

- ◆ a programme of pieces of chordal guitar or chordal ukulele throughout
- ◆ a programme of pieces that is a mixture of melodic guitar or melodic ukulele and chordal guitar or chordal ukulele — in which case the full chordal requirements for each level must be in the programme
- ◆ a programme of pieces of melodic guitar or melodic ukulele throughout

In the third approach, candidates do not have to include chordal guitar or chordal ukulele within the programme and the requirement for a set number of chords does not apply.

Chordal requirements are shown below:

Minimum number of chords	Style
18	<p>Candidates must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ play single melodic lines at the appropriate standard◆ incorporate melody and accompaniment at the same time in at least one piece <p>Chords should be played in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a continuous accompanying style◆ a more demanding arpeggiated style:<ul style="list-style-type: none">— barre chords, varied textures and more complex playing techniques appropriate to the style of the music are expected— techniques might include alternating bass, runs, slurring, bending and harmonics; candidates may also incorporate pieces from the classical guitar repertoire in their programme

Keyboard

Advanced Higher candidates must play fully fingered chords throughout their keyboard programme. If a candidate plays with right hand only or uses single-fingered chords, they will be awarded 0 marks for the piece.

Recorder

Advanced Higher candidates must present a programme that includes performances on **both C and F recorders**, for example:

- ◆ descant and treble recorders

or

- ◆ tenor and treble recorders

Voice

Singers do not need to perform from memory; however this allows for a more convincing interpretation and presentation.

Songs may be accompanied or unaccompanied (where appropriate), and transposed to any suitable key.

Setting, conducting and marking the performance

The performance is set by centres within the following SQA guidelines:

- ◆ The teacher or lecturer must agree the programme for the performance with the candidate.
- ◆ The teacher or lecturer must ensure that the music is of an appropriate standard for Advanced Higher level.

The performance is conducted under a high degree of supervision and control.

The performance is marked by an SQA visiting assessor. SQA quality assures all marking.

Assessment conditions

Time

Teachers or lecturers should ensure that there is sufficient time before the performance for candidates to prepare and warm up their instruments. Before the assessment event, teachers or lecturers are responsible for stating on the candidate mark sheet:

- ◆ the title and duration of individual pieces
- ◆ the playing time on the chosen instrument(s)

This is a single assessment event. The full programme of music is performed in front of an SQA visiting assessor.

Supervision, control and authentication

The performance is marked by an SQA visiting assessor, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for visiting assessment by SQA.

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources that candidates may access while preparing for their performance.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates must carry out the assessment independently. However, they can receive reasonable assistance before the formal assessment process takes place.

The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much help. If candidates need more than what is thought to be 'reasonable'

assistance', they may not be ready for assessment, or they may have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Teachers or lecturers may give reasonable assistance on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, for example, by offering advice on how to select suitable pieces of contrasting music for the performance programme. Teachers and lecturers may also give candidates reasonable assistance on an individual basis.

Group work approaches are acceptable as part of the preparation and also for the formal assessment. However, there must be clear evidence to show that the balance within group performances allows the SQA visiting assessor to clearly hear each candidate's performance programme.

Teachers or lecturers can provide candidates with some formative assistance prior to the formal assessment event.

Evidence to be gathered

An SQA visiting assessor assesses each candidate's performance by listening to their full programme of music. The SQA visiting assessor records assessment decisions on a candidate mark sheet provided by SQA.

Volume

The following evidence is required for this assessment:

- ♦ the candidate's performance of their 6- or 18-minute prepared programme of music on either one or two selected instruments, either of which could be voice

The programme of music must be appropriate for Advanced Higher level and include a minimum of two contrasting complete pieces of music on each selected instrument. Carefully-timed cuts to music may be necessary to keep within time requirements.

Performance marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Advanced Higher Music performance are addressed to the visiting assessor. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is marked in centres by an SQA visiting assessor.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' performances.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b Award marks for the following, as appropriate:
 - melodic accuracy and/or intonation
 - rhythmic accuracy
 - tempo and flow
 - mood and character
 - tone
 - dynamics
- c Add the final marks for each piece of music together, and apply scaling to determine a final overall mark for each instrument, or instrument and voice.
- d Record assessment decisions on a candidate mark sheet.

Detailed marking instructions

Music performance — summary statements

Mark range 9–10: A convincing and stylish performance which demonstrates excellent technique

Melodic accuracy and/or intonation	Excellent level
Rhythmic accuracy	Excellent level
Tempo and flow	Appropriate and musically convincing
Mood and character	Conveyed with sensitivity
Tone	Confident, convincing and well-developed instrumental or vocal sound
Dynamics	Convincing

Mark range 7–8: A secure performance musically and technically

Melodic accuracy and/or intonation	Secure
Rhythmic accuracy	Secure
Tempo and flow	Appropriate and consistent
Mood and character	Conveyed securely
Tone	Secure and effective control of instrumental or vocal sound
Dynamics	Effective

Mark range 5–6: A mainly accurate performance displaying effective technical and musical control

Melodic accuracy and/or intonation	Mainly accurate
Rhythmic accuracy	Mainly accurate
Tempo and flow	Appropriate and mainly consistent
Mood and character	Conveyed with some success
Tone	Some evidence of development and control
Dynamics	Some contrast

Mark range 3–4: An inconsistent performance, lacking sufficient technical and/or musical skill to communicate the sense of the music

Melodic accuracy and/or intonation	Inconsistencies in melodic accuracy and/or passages of poor intonation
Rhythmic accuracy	Inconsistencies in rhythm
Tempo and flow	Inappropriate speed and/or some breaks in continuity
Mood and character	Not conveyed satisfactorily
Tone	Little evidence of development and control
Dynamics	Not observed satisfactorily

Mark range 0–2: A poor performance with little or no evidence of required technical and/or musical ability

Melodic accuracy and/or intonation	Inaccurate melody and/or consistently poor intonation
Rhythmic accuracy	Frequent inaccuracies
Tempo and flow	Totally inappropriate speed and/or frequent stumbling
Mood and character	Not conveyed
Tone	Poor
Dynamics	Ignored

Course assessment structure: portfolio

Portfolio 30 marks

The portfolio is an optional course assessment component. Candidates **either** complete this **or** the performance on instrument 2.

If candidates choose to complete a portfolio, they must be entered using course code C878 77 and course assessment code X878 77.

The portfolio option allows candidates to explore and develop musical ideas to create music. It has two parts:

- ◆ composing and/or arranging music
- ◆ reviewing the creative process of their composition(s) or arrangement(s)

The portfolio has 30 marks out of a total of 120 marks. This is scaled by SQA to represent 25% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Marks are awarded for:

- ◆ composing and/or arranging music (20 marks)
- ◆ review of the creative process (10 marks)

Composing and/or arranging music

The composed pieces or arrangements may be in any style or genre and must last a minimum of 6 minutes and a maximum of 8 minutes. Carefully-timed cuts or fade-outs should be used to keep within the time limit and should be at the discretion of teachers or lecturers.

Candidates must create a minimum of two complete pieces of music. Candidates must not submit the same pieces of music for the assignment and the portfolio.

Each piece can be a composition or an arrangement.

For a composition candidates must:

- ◆ plan their composition(s)
- ◆ explore and develop musical ideas using **all** of the musical elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre
- ◆ create the complete piece(s) of music

For an arrangement candidates must:

- ◆ plan their arrangement(s)
- ◆ creatively rework the chosen music by exploring and developing musical ideas using **all** of the musical elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre
- ◆ create the arrangement(s)

If a candidate submits an arrangement, they must include a copy of the source materials used and clarify details of their input in their review. Candidates must provide clear evidence of the specific content they created. A basic transcription from an available score is not sufficient.

Candidates can compose or arrange more than two pieces of music. If they do this, each piece is marked out of 10 and scaling is applied.

Reviewing the creative process of their compositions or arrangements

Candidates must write a review for each piece in their portfolio.

For each review, candidates must, with reference to compositional methods used, include clear details of their:

- ◆ main decisions
- ◆ exploration and development of musical ideas
- ◆ strengths and/or areas for improvement

Each review is marked out of 5 and scaling is applied if candidates include more than two pieces of music in their portfolio.

Setting, conducting and marking the portfolio

The portfolio is:

- ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines
- ◆ conducted under some supervision and control

The portfolio is submitted to SQA for external marking. SQA quality assures all marking.

Teachers or lecturers must agree the scope and focus of the portfolio with the candidate, and must allow personalisation and choice.

The portfolio must:

- ◆ allow candidates to apply the knowledge and skills developed throughout the course to show understanding of compositional methods
- ◆ be a meaningful and appropriately challenging task that enables candidates to clearly demonstrate application of musical skills in a creative way
- ◆ allow candidates to demonstrate competence in creating and developing musical ideas and an understanding of harmony

A candidate whose composition or arrangement does not show use of harmony will be awarded 0 marks.

Candidates who choose to include tablature (TAB) in their score or performance plan must ensure that all parts are notated in standard music notation. It is not sufficient to show any

part in TAB only. A candidate whose score or performance plan has any part in TAB only will be awarded 0 marks.

The composition(s) or arrangement(s) may contain sections of improvisation, but this must be in the context of wider composition(s) or arrangement(s) that demonstrates composing skills. A piece that is solely an improvisation will be awarded 0 marks.

Candidates who choose to work with pre-recorded loops must ensure that they do this in the context of wider composition(s) or arrangement(s) and show the compositional process. The candidate's actual creative input must be clearly identifiable and detailed in their review(s).

Candidates who choose to write a serial composition must annotate their score showing the note rows. They must indicate which version of their note row they have used throughout their composition. It is not sufficient to indicate only some of their note rows. A candidate who does not annotate all their note rows in their score will be awarded 0 marks.

Candidates should clearly identify their input in their composition or arrangement. For example, they should:

- ◆ make it clear if any part, such as a piano or guitar accompaniment or a drum kit part, has been fully realised by someone else, or what directions the candidate gave for that part
- ◆ state if they used any software to generate chord progressions or melodic or rhythmic ideas
- ◆ state if they used an electronic program to devise an accompaniment

Assessment conditions

Time

The portfolio is carried out over an extended period of time in open-book conditions, allowing candidates to develop and refine their work before it is presented for assessment.

Candidates start their portfolio at an appropriate point in the course, as determined by their teacher or lecturer, allowing for personalisation.

Supervision, control and authentication

The portfolio is carried out under some supervision and control. This means:

- ◆ candidates do not need to be directly supervised at all times
- ◆ the use of resources, including the internet, is not tightly prescribed
- ◆ the work an individual candidate submits for assessment is their own
- ◆ teachers or lecturers can provide reasonable assistance

Candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting.

Teachers or lecturers may give support and guidance if required and should put in place processes for monitoring progress, for example regular checkpoints, to ensure that the work is the candidate's own.

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources that candidates may access while producing their portfolio.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates must carry out the assessment independently. However, they can receive reasonable assistance before the formal assessment process takes place.

The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If any candidates need more than what is thought to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment, or they may have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Teachers or lecturers may provide guidelines to lead candidates through the portfolio in stages.

Candidates can seek clarification regarding the wording of the portfolio assessment tasks if they find them unclear. In this case, teachers or lecturers should clarify this for the whole class.

If a candidate is working on their portfolio and is faced with more than one possible solution to a problem, then the teacher or lecturer may explore options with them. The teacher or lecturer and the candidate can discuss the pros and cons of each option. The candidate can then decide on a solution based on the discussion.

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence must be submitted: For each piece in the portfolio, candidates must submit the following:

- ◆ an audio recording of the composition or arrangement
- ◆ a score or performance plan of the composition or arrangement
- ◆ a review of the creative process for the composition or arrangement

Candidates must use the SQA review of the creative process template. This template is restricted to one page. It is available from the Advanced Higher Music subject page.

In addition to this, candidates who submit an arrangement must provide a copy of the original music, including any harmonies (where available).

Volume

Candidates can present each of their reviews in prose or bullet points. Each review should be approximately 200 to 350 words.

Word count is given to indicate the volume of evidence required. No penalty is applied.

Portfolio marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Advanced Higher Music portfolio are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates' evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b For composing and arranging, once the best fit has been selected:
 - Where the evidence almost matches the description of the level above, award the higher mark from the range.
 - Where the evidence just meets the standard described, award the lower mark from the range.
- c For composing and arranging:
 - If a candidate does not submit an audio recording for their composition or arrangement, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate does not submit a score or a performance plan, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate submits a performance plan consisting of screenshots of a digital audio workstation, which may include only names of instruments, and no further information, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate submits a score or performance plan with any part as tablature (TAB) only, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate has submitted a piece that is solely an improvisation, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate has submitted a piece that does not show use of harmony, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate only uses four of the elements to create their composition or arrangement, award a maximum of 5 marks.
 - If a candidate does not annotate all their note rows in their serial composition, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate does not provide a copy of the source material used to create their arrangement, award 0 marks.
- d For analysis:
 - If a candidate does not provide an audio recording or a web link to the piece of music they have analysed, award 0 marks.
 - If a candidate does not provide audio time codes referencing the key features of the music, award a maximum of 1 mark.
 - If a candidate only refers to four of the elements when analysing their chosen piece of music, award a maximum of 4 marks.

Detailed marking instructions

Composing music

Candidates must use **all** of the elements listed below:

- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm
- ◆ structure
- ◆ timbre

Summary statements	Mark range
An excellent composition demonstrating a range of musical ideas that have been developed imaginatively and convincingly, appropriate to the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements is highly creative and effective.	9–10
A good composition demonstrating a range of musical ideas that have been developed with some imagination, appropriate to the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements shows creativity.	7–8
A composition demonstrating musical ideas that have been developed satisfactorily, appropriate to the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements may be simplistic and straightforward.	5–6
A composition demonstrating musical ideas that have been developed inconsistently within the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements is not always appropriate.	3–4
A composition demonstrating limited musical ideas with little or no development within the candidate's chosen style. The use of elements is poor.	1–2
No evidence produced.	0

Arranging music

Candidates must creatively rework the original piece of music using **all** of the elements listed below:

- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm
- ◆ structure
- ◆ timbre

Summary statements	Mark range
An excellent arrangement that uses a range of compositional methods to develop aspects of the original piece imaginatively and convincingly.	9–10
The arrangement skilfully and effectively employs varied instrumental forces and combinations, shows originality, and is highly creative.	
A good arrangement that uses a range of compositional methods to develop aspects of the original piece with some imagination.	7–8
The arrangement successfully employs varied instrumental forces and combinations, shows some originality, and is creative.	
A satisfactory arrangement that uses compositional methods to show some development of aspects of the original piece.	5–6
The arrangement employs instrumental forces and combinations in a straightforward way.	
A simplistic arrangement that uses compositional methods to show limited development of aspects of the original piece.	3–4
Instrumental forces and combinations are not always appropriate.	
A poor arrangement that shows very limited development of aspects of the original piece.	1–2
Instrumental forces and combinations are inappropriate.	
No evidence produced.	0

Review of the creative process

The review must, with reference to compositional methods used, include:

- ◆ main decisions made
- ◆ the exploration and development of musical ideas
- ◆ strengths and/or areas for improvement

Summary statements	Mark
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a detailed account of the main decisions made◆ a detailed explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ clear details of strengths and/or areas for improvement	5
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a fairly detailed account of the main decisions made◆ a relevant explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ identification of strengths and/or areas for improvement	4
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a satisfactory account of the main decisions made◆ sufficient explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ satisfactory identification of strengths and/or areas for improvement	3
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a limited account of the main decisions made◆ a limited explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ limited identification of strengths and/or areas for improvement	2
The review contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ a poor account of the main decisions made◆ a very limited explanation of the exploration and development of musical ideas◆ little or no identification of strengths and/or areas for improvement	1
No evidence produced.	0

Grading

Candidates' overall grades are determined by their performance across the course assessment. The course assessment is graded A–D on the basis of the total mark for all course assessment components.

Grade description for C

For the award of grade C, candidates will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Grade description for A

For the award of grade A, candidates will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Equality and inclusion

This course is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page:
www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Further information

- ◆ [Advanced Higher Music subject page](#)
- ◆ [Assessment arrangements](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Recent SQA research](#)
- ◆ [Remote assessment](#)
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook](#)
- ◆ [Know Your SCQF Level - Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#)
- ◆ [SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)

Appendix: course support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance to teachers and lecturers on approaches to delivering the course. Please read these course support notes in conjunction with the course specification and the specimen question paper and coursework.

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

This section provides advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that you could include in the course. You have considerable flexibility to select contexts that stimulate and challenge candidates, offering both breadth and depth.

Knowledge and understanding of music, music concepts and music literacy

Developing candidates' skills of aural perception and discrimination involves active listening. You should provide candidates with opportunities to experience a wide range of musical styles and genres. Through a variety of structured listening tasks and activities, they can develop their knowledge and understanding of music styles, concepts, notation signs and symbols. By listening, analysing, performing and creating music, candidates can develop these skills and consolidate their understanding of music styles and concepts.

Skills in creating original music

Throughout the course, candidates develop skills in creating original music using compositional methods. The assignment assesses candidates' ability to explore and develop musical ideas to create music. Candidates explore and develop musical ideas using all of the following elements: melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre. They apply knowledge and skills developed throughout the course to show they understand compositional methods.

Candidates review the creative process of composing and/or arranging by evaluating their main decisions when exploring and developing their musical ideas, and by identifying strengths and/or areas for improvement. You should encourage candidates to review their creative process on an ongoing basis and regularly monitor progress.

Analysing music

Throughout the course, you should encourage candidates to develop their analytical skills by exploring and scrutinising the key features of pieces of music. Candidates should refer to at least five of these seven elements:

- ◆ style
- ◆ melody
- ◆ harmony
- ◆ rhythm and tempo

- ◆ texture
- ◆ structure and/or form
- ◆ timbre and dynamics

Preparing and performing a programme of music on one or two selected instruments

Candidates develop their skills in performing music throughout the course by preparing and practising music in contrasting styles, on one or two contrasting instruments. The programme of music must allow candidates to demonstrate a sufficient level of technical and musical skills. The programme of music must be at Grade 5 level or above.

Approaches to learning and teaching

Developing listening and music literacy skills

The visual and auditory experience of a live performance can enhance learning, for example candidates who see and hear what a consort looks and sounds like are more likely to remember and recognise this concept. Listening to music while following an online score is also very beneficial for many candidates.

Candidates can access live performances online. Useful online material includes:

- ◆ *Howard Goodall's Story of Music*, episodes one to six (TV series, first broadcast 2013)
- ◆ *How Music Works with Howard Goodall* (TV series, first broadcast 2006)
- ◆ *Howard Goodall's Big Bangs* (TV series, first broadcast 2000)
- ◆ *Howard Goodall's 20th Century Greats* (TV series, first broadcast 2004)
- ◆ *Great Composers: Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Puccini* (TV series, first broadcast 1997)
- ◆ *The Unanswered Question* by Leonard Bernstein (lecture series, 1973) — useful for analysis
- ◆ *Leaving Home: Orchestral Music in the 20th Century, a Conducted Tour by Simon Rattle* (TV series, first broadcast 1996)
- ◆ *Play on!* (TV series)
- ◆ *BBC Ten Pieces* website — teaching resources, short films, and arrangements

You should give candidates learning activities that improve their awareness of style and period. Grouping the concepts from the same period together can provide musical and sometimes social context, for example studying pavan, galliard, ayre, ballett and madrigal while learning about Renaissance music. Looking at a particular concept across different periods can be a rich learning experience, for example taking a concept such as mass, song, symphony, or opera and looking at it and the changes it undergoes in different periods. This type of learning experience would directly feed into the knowledge and understanding candidates need to answer question 6 in the question paper and will also support them in their analysis.

To promote the skills, knowledge and understanding required to answer part (b)(i) and (ii) of question 6, you could encourage candidates to answer the following questions when they listen to music:

- ◆ Does the music sound like anything else you have heard? In what respect?
- ◆ What period do you think this music comes from? What makes you think that?
- ◆ What features or concepts make this music of this period? Are they unique to this period?
- ◆ Can you break these features down into categories of melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and/or form, and timbre?

You could ask similar questions for styles and structures and/or forms of music.

Identifying periods, styles, structures and/or forms in this way is a useful approach. You might find the detailed additional guidance in the question paper marking instructions for question 6 parts (b)(i) and (ii) helpful to support this. You could also use publications such as Roy Bennett's book, *History of Music*, which includes informative 'fingerprint' sections at the end of each chapter.

You could encourage candidates to listen to and explore music that links to their composing activities and performance programmes. The learning in one area of the course can directly benefit another area; for example, a piano-playing candidate learning to play the Chopin *Waltz in A Flat Major, Op 69 No 1* could analyse a movement of a Chopin piano concerto as part of their assignment. They could also consider composing a waltz, perhaps incorporating neo-classical influences, having listened to and looked at the scores of the Waltz from Shostakovich's *Suite for Jazz Orchestra No 1* and Poulenc's Valse from *L'Album des Six*.

Instrumental tutors can help candidates to develop their music literacy skills by promoting recognition and understanding of music notation, including pitch, rhythm, signs and symbols. This can help candidates connect their learning in this area with the literacy they encounter in the question paper.

Similarly, when composing, you can encourage candidates to critically listen back to what they have written. Does the written or printed sound or symbol they see and/or hear match their intentions? Utilising and following online scores can improve candidates' ability to relate sound to symbol. Whole-class activities, which can include candidates from other levels, can promote literacy skills; for example, you could encourage a candidate to perform to the rest of the class while they follow the score of the music being performed. You could ask candidates to comment on sounds and symbols used in and on the music and ask questions about intervals, chords and cadences, transposing into a different clef, note lengths, rests and dynamics. You could also ask questions about the melodic and rhythmic accuracy of the performance, or even give candidates a copy of the detailed marking instructions for the performance so that they can peer-assess the performance. This activity could lead into a discussion about the style and period of the music, highlighting the prominent features.

Developing composing and arranging skills

You should advise candidates to listen critically to what has been created when composing or arranging music. You should encourage candidates to try things out, listen, evaluate, and discard musical material if it does not work.

Composing

You may find the tasks below a useful starting point for preparing candidates for the assignment. The four tasks link with listening activities. They demonstrate possible approaches to exploring harmony, melody and compositional techniques.

Task one: focus on harmony

(a) Candidates could listen to and follow a score of the Chopin *Prelude in E minor Op 28 No 4* online.

You could direct candidates to analyse this piece, starting with melody only. They could consider the following questions:

- ◆ Does the melody work?
- ◆ Does the melody have a nice shape?
- ◆ Does the melody have an effective rhythm?

You could then direct candidates to focus on the harmony in the first four bars of the left-hand part. They could consider how the chords are changing by answering the following questions:

- ◆ How frequently do the chords change and by what interval?
- ◆ Which position (inversion) is used and why?
- ◆ Can you name some of the chords?
- ◆ Are there any 7th chords?

You could use a similar approach with the first movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*.

You could ask candidates to consider the overall structure of each piece. Each piece starts and ends in the same key. You could ask them to think about the planning the composers had to complete to ensure this happened, despite changing chords in between.

(b) Candidates would then apply and explore these ideas in the following task:

- ◆ Choose a triad.
- ◆ Change one note by a semitone, then change another note by a semitone, then listen to the effect created by playing these three chords.
- ◆ Create a texture from the first chord using an arpeggio, a broken chord, or by adding passing notes. If this is effective, apply it to the second and third chords.
- ◆ Experiment with these ideas, but ensure that each consecutive chord has at least two notes in common with the chords before and after. Use these ideas to create a chord progression that will take you into keys outwith primary triads.

- ◆ Once you have your chord progression, consider what kind of melody would work above your chord progression.
- ◆ At all times, listen to the sounds you are creating.

You could also advise candidates that they could use this approach to write a minimalist piece.

Task two: focus on harmony

Teachers or lecturers would lead candidates through the following task:

- ◆ Give each member of the class the same pitch, for example E flat.
- ◆ Give them 10 minutes and a piece of manuscript paper and ask them to write down or play as many ways as they can find to harmonise the pitch. Ask them to think about using it as a root, 3rd, 5th, 7th, added 6th, or other added note.
- ◆ Have everyone play the initial pitch as a sustained note (with high notes sitting at one side of the room and low notes sitting at the other side of the room). While this is happening, one candidate at a time plays their favourite harmonisation for eight beats. It is important that everyone can hear this chord and that the sustained notes are not too loud.
- ◆ A second candidate should follow immediately after with their harmonisation. Continue this for five or six chords, with everyone listening carefully all the time.
- ◆ Discuss the chord progression created. What works and what does not? Should the order be rearranged?
- ◆ Try a revised order.
- ◆ Continue this process until all candidates have played their chord.
- ◆ Listen and discuss throughout this process.
- ◆ Then introduce the concept of a pivot note and the concept of moving from one chord and/or key to another, without the need for a formal modulation.
- ◆ Discuss the need for a plan for the chord progression. Underline the importance of trying out ideas and revising ideas once you have listened to them.
- ◆ Candidates can then individually create a texture using some or all of the chords.
- ◆ Remind candidates to listen at all times to the sounds they are creating.

Task three: focus on melody

(a) Candidates could listen to and follow a graphic score of Beethoven's *5th Symphony*, first movement, online.

The famous four-note opening motif is used throughout this movement. You could ask candidates to follow the graphic score and note where it occurs, for example in the bass or in imitation.

You could then show candidates a performance of Beethoven's *5th Symphony*, first movement, and ask them to follow the full score online as they listen.

(b) Apply and explore these ideas in the following task:

- ◆ Write a short three-note or four-note motif using notes from the pentatonic, whole-tone, or chromatic scale.
- ◆ Develop your motif by:
 - changing one note at a time
 - adding a note
 - subtracting a note
- ◆ Use your motif:
 - in sequence, then join the sequences together
 - with rhythms or at different parts of a bar
 - in different registers
 - in inversion
 - in retrograde
 - in augmentation or diminution
 - in imitation, if a part is added

During this task, remind candidates to listen at all times to the sounds they are creating.

Task four: focus on compositional techniques used by other composers

You could encourage candidates to look at a piece of music from the Baroque or Classical period. This might be a piece that they are playing in one of their performance programmes or a piece they heard in a listening class. Following a score of this piece of music will help candidates when considering the points below and can help them to relate sound to symbol.

- ◆ How is the melody developed?
- ◆ Discuss the choice of chords and positions of chords.
- ◆ Observe the relationship of the bass to the melody line.
- ◆ Analyse the length of phrases.
- ◆ Observe the rate and place of chord changes.
- ◆ Note the overall structure.
- ◆ Look at how the instruments are combined and used in different registers.

You could also encourage candidates to think about using these techniques as a basis for their own composition.

These points might be useful for candidates to consider when analysing their chosen piece in the assignment.

Arranging

You should make candidates aware of the difference between a transcription and an arrangement before they start work.

Task one: arrangement versus transcription

You could let candidates hear and see the online version with score of Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565* arranged by Stokowski. You might want candidates to listen to the organ original first. The Stokowski version is a transcription for orchestra, not an arrangement. No musical material has been reworked; the only thing that is different is the instrumentation.

An arrangement is more than a transcription. It is the creative reworking of musical material and can include any of the following:

- ◆ melodic development — taking fragments of the original melody and developing them, adding a countermelody
- ◆ harmonic development — re-harmonisation, key change(s), change of tonality
- ◆ rhythmic changes — varying the rhythm, varying the tempo, changing the time signature
- ◆ structural development — adding an introduction, bridge, coda, varying the texture
- ◆ timbral development — changing the instrumentation and/or voices, adding instruments and/or voices or reducing the number of instruments and/or voices as well as varying the register
- ◆ stylistic development — for example making a bossa nova out of a folk song

You should encourage candidates to think carefully about what kind of piece they would like to arrange. Candidates are more likely to be able to creatively rework the musical material successfully if they choose a simple piece of music as their source material. Think back to the Bach arranged by Stokowski transcription and ask the candidates:

- ◆ Could Stokowski have added anything to this music?
- ◆ Would it have worked if he had added a countermelody or changed key?

In this case it is arguable that the Bach original already had so much in it that there was no room to add anything more without destroying the character of the piece completely.

Task two: arrangements by other composers

Look at some successful arrangements with candidates and spend time analysing the compositional techniques used to develop the musical material.

You might wish to look at some of the suggestions below with your candidates, all of which are available online. In each case you could compare the original piano or melody score (also available online) with the arrangement.

- ◆ *Summertime* by George Gershwin, arranged by Pianos of Cha'n, from the album *Inspirations*. This arrangement for piano is a good example of arranging for just one instrument; candidates do not necessarily have to arrange for a number of instruments in

order to produce a successful arrangement. Also listen to *Summertime* (Funky Company version) Bluavio live for an arrangement that uses a different style and melodic variation, re-harmonisation, and ostinatos.

- ◆ *Dashing Away with the Smoothing Iron*: an arrangement by John Rutter of a traditional English folk song for mixed voice choir. This arrangement utilises countermelody, changes of texture (including imitation), change of key and re-harmonisation.
- ◆ *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*: a jazz arrangement by Trevor Dixon for voice and piano — a good example of a version that has largely been re-harmonised. Also listen to *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* arranged by Yanice Tsang Bonzi and played by the Symbiosis String Quartet for numerous examples of melodic development and re-harmonisation.

Task three: source material and starting the arrangement

You should encourage candidates to select a piece of music that has enough space for them to develop musically.

Possible suggestions for source material are:

- ◆ traditional Scottish songs
- ◆ children's songs, including nursery songs
- ◆ songs from the Great American Songbook
- ◆ traditional folk songs and sea shanties
- ◆ spirituals
- ◆ contemporary pop and rock songs

When candidates have chosen their source material, you should encourage them to complete this exercise:

- ◆ instrumentation:
 - Are you writing for instruments that you are familiar with?
 - Find out about the register for the instruments or voices you have chosen.
 - Which combination of instruments sounds best? This might change as you move from one part of your arrangement to another.
- ◆ melody and harmony:
 - Which instruments will carry the melodic line?
 - Does the melody always need to be at the top of the texture?
 - Can you always hear the melody? If not, what can you do to fix this?
 - Could you add an ostinato?
 - Would it be effective to change the tonality from major to minor (or from minor to major)?
 - Could you simplify the harmony?
 - Do you need to always have the third of the chord in the harmony? If you do, is it best to have it in a higher or middle register, or in a low register?

- Should you use chords in a hymn style, all moving in the same rhythm? Would that be effective in a short section?
- ◆ texture:
 - Consider the use of unison; short unison sections can be very effective.
 - Consider where is best to use homophony or polyphony. Think about how closely or widely spaced the harmony should be.
 - Would a pedal or inverted pedal be effective?
 - Would contrary or parallel motion work?
- ◆ structure:
 - Think about the relationship of the introduction and coda to the rest of the music. Sometimes an introduction acts as a taster of what is to come.
 - Is there a part of your melody or harmonic progression that could act as the theme for the introduction? Could you use this theme in the coda and maybe in a bridge section?
 - Can you extend a section, perhaps by using sequence?
 - Can you compress a section? What effect would that have?
 - Could you add a completely new section?

Developing skills to review the creative process

You should ensure that candidates:

- ◆ note the decisions they make as they are planning and then composing or arranging; this will help them write the review of their creative process
- ◆ avoid a bar-by-bar description of their composition and/or arrangement unless there is something significant to describe

You could advise candidates to consider the following when writing their reviews:

- ◆ main decisions:
 - choice of instrument(s)
 - tonality
 - key(s) and modulation(s)
 - significant chord progressions
 - cadences
 - time signature(s)
 - prominent rhythmic features
 - structure
 - texture
 - style
- ◆ exploration and development of musical ideas:
 - melodic
 - harmonic

- rhythmic
- structural
- timbral
- ♦ strengths and/or areas for improvement:
 - Which musical ideas worked well? Why?
 - Which ideas did not work as well? Why?
 - Candidates should relate strengths and areas for improvement to musical ideas.

For all three areas, candidates should provide a justification for their compositional choices.

Candidates should give bar numbers when describing significant features, and ensure that these bar numbers are accurate.

When composing a serial piece, it is recommended that candidates describe how and why they have used and developed the note row.

Developing analytical skills

You should discuss with candidates the importance of choosing a piece of music that provides sufficient breadth and scope for the analysis. You could advise candidates not to choose an overly long work, for example a whole symphony. You could encourage candidates to choose a work (or composer) that interests them, that is for their instrument(s), or that they have performed. Candidates could ask their instrumental tutor for suggestions. Access to a score will make analysis more straightforward for most candidates. Candidates should then carefully consider which piece to analyse and not necessarily choose the first piece that they come across.

You should explain that analysis is the process in which candidates attempt to answer the question 'how does the music work?' Analysis makes sense of the musical ideas and concepts used. It allows candidates to have a better understanding of the music and to answer the question 'why is the music effective (or not)?'

You should tell the candidates not to include too much biographical detail. They should avoid a bar-by-bar description unless there is a prominent feature they wish to comment on.

You could start by asking candidates to look at online examples of analysis and ask them:

- ♦ Does the analysis just state what happens?
- ♦ Does it state what happens and why?
- ♦ Does it show perceptive understanding with detailed identification of key features of the music?

Another initial task could be to ask the class 'What piece of music will people want to listen to in twenty years and why?' Candidates could present a short analysis focusing on the elements and then discuss this in groups.

Once candidates have selected their piece for analysis, they could begin by listening and focusing on only one element, for example harmony. They should consider what the prominent features of this element are and justify this with reference to compositional methods and music concepts. Candidates should include audio time codes of these prominent features. They can include references to sections of a score or a guide to the music. Candidates can then apply this approach to other elements of the piece.

You should advise candidates to use quotation marks around any text that has come from other sources, and identify clearly what those sources are.

You should regularly review candidates' progress with them and identify next steps together.

Developing performing skills

Programme planning

When planning a performance, candidates should refer to the table of approved instruments and unacceptable combinations of instruments in the course specification. You can make a request about presenting instruments not contained in the table to SQA.

If candidates choose to perform above the minimum standard of Grade 5, you should discuss whether, based on their technical and musical ability, this is in their best interests. You should discourage candidates from playing the same pieces on each instrument, as this does not enhance their musical experience.

You could discuss with candidates the possibility of performing in a group. If they choose to play a piece in a group, they must play a separate part from the other members of the group. The visiting assessor must be able to clearly identify and hear the candidate they are assessing. If two candidates are playing in the same group, they must be assessed at different times.

Candidates have the option of playing repeats. Candidates should play repeats if they are included in the timing of a programme. You should not add repeats to pieces that do not feature them. To keep within time limits, you could make carefully timed cuts to a piece, but it is crucial that the level of difficulty is not below that of the minimum standard at Advanced Higher. You should take care to maintain the musical integrity of a piece when making these cuts. For example, it would be inadvisable to perform just 1 minute of a 5-minute sonata movement.

If appropriate, you or your candidates could add dynamic markings to sheet music that has none. If you remove dynamics from sheet music, the visiting assessor will not be able to award marks for this category.

If a piece includes large sections of improvisation, it is essential that the 'head' is at Advanced Higher level and that the candidate has a harmonic framework over which to improvise.

Some instrument-specific advice

Guitar and bass guitar candidates can perform from tablature. However, teachers or lecturers should give standard notation to the visiting assessor.

You should encourage keyboard candidates to consider whether their choice of tone and rhythm, including the intro and outro, enhances the mood of the piece. They could play a piece without a backing if this is appropriate. You could advise keyboard candidates to write down their chosen settings, for example tone number, rhythm number, tempo, volume and any effects.

You should advise vocal candidates to choose pieces that are within their vocal range. As singers communicate with their faces, you could encourage them to perform from memory or at least use their copies as minimally as possible. You should ensure that the sheet music matches what the candidate is singing. You should amend the sheet music if the candidate is singing a different rhythm.

The ‘Further instrument-specific information’ section of the course specification contains the mandatory information for certain instruments and voice.

Practice and rehearsal

You could encourage candidates to use appropriate warm-up routines for their instrument or voice.

Candidates could develop efficient practice routines by:

- ◆ setting short-term and long-term targets
- ◆ starting slowly when learning something new
- ◆ breaking difficult sections into small chunks, practising slowly and repeatedly, and then gradually building the tempo back up
- ◆ practising at a variety of speeds — perhaps by using a metronome
- ◆ not always starting from the beginning of a piece
- ◆ working on technique to improve tone, for example holding the instrument or sticks or beaters correctly, maintaining a good hand position, using their fingers correctly, breathing, tonguing and bowing

Candidates should observe and practise the notated detail of their pieces, including tempo markings, articulation, guitar effects and phrasing.

You should check that all pieces have an appropriate accompaniment. You should ensure that candidates regularly perform with a suitable accompaniment. You could record the accompaniment for candidates to practise with, but you should also make opportunities for candidates to experience playing along with live accompaniment, where appropriate. You could also give candidates commercially produced backing tracks with which to practise and perform. Candidates should check the balance between their performance and the backing track.

You should provide opportunities for candidates to give informal and formal performances throughout the course. Performing to others in a supportive environment can develop candidates' confidence. You could also encourage candidates to record and evaluate their performances. Sharing and discussing the detailed marking instructions for the performance and encouraging candidates to mark each other's performances using these instructions can greatly assist learning and help candidates to identify next steps.

You should regularly review candidates' progress to ensure they are progressing and meeting standards. This may include liaising with their instrumental tutor. Constructive feedback can help candidates' learning.

Preparing for course assessment

General guidance for the question paper

You should use your subject knowledge and experience to introduce candidates to new concepts within a musical context, whether it be listening, performing or composing. Candidates are more likely to understand concepts taught in isolation where there is a background and context.

You should encourage candidates to read the stem of the question carefully. The stem of the question often gives the context for the music heard and can be helpful.

Question-specific guidance

Music literacy questions

You could encourage candidates to:

- ◆ write notes and rhythms accurately
- ◆ write key signatures and accidentals accurately
- ◆ place time signatures accurately, and not write them as fractions
- ◆ follow the guide to the music on its first playing to help familiarise themselves with the layout before they attempt to answer questions
- ◆ ensure they use the rhythm provided when specified in the stem of the question
- ◆ give a full description of any chords, indicating the chord name or number, and where appropriate, 1st or 2nd inversion and/or 7th
- ◆ ensure they can identify the following intervals:
 - diatonic intervals — 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and octave
 - tritone, augmented 4th, and diminished 5th
- ◆ ensure they can write diatonic intervals above a given note

Providing frequent opportunities for candidates to listen to performances using scores can improve their music literacy skills and develop their aural perception and discrimination. Regularly giving candidates the opportunity to relate what they hear to what they see can help them to answer questions involving melodic and harmonic awareness, for example intervals, cadences, pedal and polytonality or bitonality.

Questions requiring short answers

You should advise candidates that short-answer questions (requiring an answer of one or two words, or a phrase) will specifically examine concepts introduced at Higher or Advanced Higher levels. This does not apply to the 'map' question, for example question 3(b) in the Advanced Higher Music Specimen Question Paper.

Question 6

You could encourage candidates to:

- ◆ avoid writing long lists of unrelated concepts
- ◆ ensure the prominent concepts are relevant to the categories stated in the question
- ◆ give all the relevant information, for example if a piece starts in the minor key and modulates to the major, then they should mention this in their answer; stating 'minor' alone is not acceptable. Similarly, if a piece is polyphonic, but has a homophonic section, then candidates should state this
- ◆ ensure that they identify the type of work in their answer to question 6(b)(i) rather than question 6(b)(ii)
- ◆ justify their answer to 6(b)(ii), using evidence from earlier parts of the question, to provide a response that specifically identifies the features unique to the style or period to which they refer
- ◆ focus more on providing the period of music (for example Renaissance, Baroque, Classical) for each excerpt before providing a justification that specifically identifies the features in each excerpt that are unique to the period; candidates may find it helpful to consider the information they have provided in earlier parts of the question
- ◆ listen especially carefully to the harmonic context of the music when deciding on a period
- ◆ listen to as wide a range of music as possible and to go deeper into what characterises a particular period of music, for example the use of plainchant does not necessarily mean that a piece of music is from the Renaissance period or earlier
- ◆ listen to the excerpt as a whole before deciding on the period

You can refer to the marking instructions for each year's question paper for additional guidance and details about acceptable and alternative answers.

The course report, published each year, describes how candidates performed in the externally assessed parts of the course. It also gives advice about preparing future candidates.

You can find the marking instructions and the course report on the [Advanced Higher Music subject page](#).

Assignment

Authenticity

You can use a number of techniques and strategies to ensure that candidates present work that is their own, for example:

- ◆ having regular checkpoint or progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ using checklists that record activity and progress
- ◆ copying and pasting sections from a candidate's Word document into a search engine to check for plagiarism
- ◆ using plagiarism software to check candidate work
- ◆ using a music audio recognition app to check that the candidate's audio file is their own work

Performance

When planning for the visiting assessor's visit, you should think about what works best for each candidate. Some candidates may prefer to perform one instrument straight after the other, whereas others may prefer to have a break between their performances. You should also consider the most efficient way to use the visiting assessor's time. You should schedule sufficient, but not excessive, time between performances.

You should encourage candidates to think about the best order for them to perform their pieces, for example whether to start with an easier or more challenging piece, and the demands of each piece in terms of stamina.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

You should identify opportunities throughout the course for candidates to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

Candidates should be aware of the skills they are developing and you can provide advice on opportunities to practise and improve them.

SQA does not formally assess skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

There may also be opportunities to develop additional skills depending on the approach centres use to deliver the course. This is for individual teachers and lecturers to manage.

Some examples of potential opportunities to practise or improve these skills are provided in the following table.

Skill	Opportunity to practise or improve skill
3 Health and wellbeing 3.1 Personal learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ identifying personal strengths, areas for improvement and next steps for learning◆ self-reflecting on creative choices and decisions
5 Thinking skills 5.3 Applying 5.4 Analysing and evaluating 5.5 Creating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ applying musical and technical performing skills and understanding of music concepts and level-specific music literacy to realise the composer's intentions for the piece◆ applying understanding of music concepts and composition in creative ways◆ applying understanding of music concepts and basic music literacy through structured listening activities and exercises◆ analysing how others develop their ideas and work when creating original music◆ analysing a composer's piece of music◆ evaluating own and others' performances and compositions◆ developing original ideas for music◆ performing music in solo and/or group settings

Administrative information

Published: September 2025 (version 3.2)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Course support notes added as appendix.	September 2019
3.0	Appendix 1 (grid of approved instruments and combinations of instruments) removed for accessibility. This information is contained in the course assessment structure: performance section.	May 2023
3.1	<p>Guidance on marking pieces that do not show use of harmony added on pages 18 and 40, and to general marking principle (c) on pages 21 and 43.</p> <p>Guidance on annotation of note rows in serial compositions and marking added on pages 19 and 41, and to general marking principle (c) on pages 21 and 43.</p> <p>General marking principle (c) also updated to reflect when 0 marks are awarded.</p> <p>On page 34, the requirements for chordal guitar and ukulele have been clarified.</p> <p>On page 59, paragraph about note row amended in 'Developing skills to review the creative process' section.</p> <p>Tables on pages 1, 7 to 15, 22 to 25, 35, 40, and 46 to 48 reformatted for accessibility.</p> <p>'Further information' links updated.</p>	September 2024

Version	Description of change	Date
3.2	<p>Guidance on performance plans consisting of screenshots of a digital audio workstation, and impact on marking, added to general marking principle (c) on pages 22 and 44.</p> <p>Guidance on parts shown only in tablature (TAB) in a score or performance plan, and impact on marking, added on pages 19 and 41 to 42, and to general marking principle (c) on pages 22 and 44.</p> <p>Guidance on annotation of all note rows in serial compositions, and impact on marking, added on pages 20 and 42, and to general marking principle (c) on pages 22 and 44.</p> <p>Guidance on clearly identifying candidates' input in their composition or arrangement added on pages 20 and 42.</p> <p>Guidance on SQA review of the creative process template on pages 21 and 43.</p> <p>Guidance on SQA analysis template on page 21.</p> <p>What you need to do differently</p> <p>Make sure candidates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ are aware of the penalties related to performance plans consisting of screenshots ◆ are aware of the penalties related to TAB ◆ are aware of the penalties related to serial compositions ◆ clearly identify their input in the composition or arrangement <p>You must update your teaching notes and teaching practice.</p> <p>You must refer to the updated course specification and coursework assessment task for the assignment and portfolio (if applicable), and use the templates for the review of the creative process and analysis.</p>	September 2025

Note: please check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.