



Course report 2022

Subject	Music
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	1755
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	55.3	Cumulative percentage	55.3	Number of candidates	970	Minimum mark required	68
B	Percentage	25.2	Cumulative percentage	80.5	Number of candidates	445	Minimum mark required	58
C	Percentage	12.3	Cumulative percentage	92.8	Number of candidates	215	Minimum mark required	48
D	Percentage	4.8	Cumulative percentage	97.6	Number of candidates	85	Minimum mark required	38
No award	Percentage	2.4	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	40	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

- ◆ 'most' means greater than 70%
- ◆ 'many' means 50% to 69%
- ◆ 'some' means 25% to 49%
- ◆ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of [SQA's website](#).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected. It was a fair and balanced paper, challenging in some areas but with an appropriate level of demand. The question paper provided opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their subject knowledge and music theory and notation skills. Most candidates attempted every question. In general, candidates were well prepared for the question paper, however, responses to some literacy-based questions were not as successful compared with previous years.

Assignment

The requirement to complete the assignment was removed for session 2021–22.

Performance

Most candidates were well prepared for the performance components and, as in previous years, most candidates demonstrated a good level of skills in this area.

Portfolio

Candidates composed in a wide variety of styles and genres. Personalisation and choice continue to be very evident in this component. Candidates performed slightly less well this year than in previous years.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Many candidates approached the paper appropriately and were well prepared for the requirements and format of the question paper.

Candidates answered multiple-choice questions 1(a) and 5(c) well.

Candidates answered question 1(b) well. This question asked them to identify the correct ornament.

Candidates answered question 2(a)(ii) well. This question asked them to rewrite notes at the same pitch in the bass clef. Candidates also identified the interval (a 4th) in question 2(b)(i) very well.

In question 3(b), most candidates identified the polyphonic or contrapuntal texture. Candidates identified the key in 4(b)(i) well.

Overall, candidates appeared to have quite a good understanding of the requirements of question 6. This was particularly evident in questions 6(a)(i) and (ii), where many candidates were able to provide a good number of concepts relevant to the music under the given headings. Markers also commented that candidates did not write down concepts indiscriminately. Candidates did quite well with 6(b)(i) and made good comparisons between the excerpts. In question 6(b)(ii) many candidates identified the period of excerpt 2 correctly and gave clear justifications. Most of these were related to instrumentation, including electric guitar and drum kit.

Performance

The overall standard of performances was very high. Personalisation and choice were evident in most candidates' programmes, and a wide variety of instruments were presented with a range of musical styles.

Some candidates played pieces above the minimum requirements and performed very well.

Most centres used the drum kit style bank and offered an appropriate spread and number of drum kit styles.

Most guitar and ukulele chordal programmes were presented correctly, contained 18 chords and incorporated a melody along with chordal accompaniment in one piece.

Some performances on orchestral instruments were of a very high standard.

Portfolio

Some candidates displayed considerable skill and imagination in their pieces, writing coherently, stylistically and imaginatively for their chosen instruments. Candidates achieved a wide range of marks, with some very good submissions.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Some candidates found a few of the musical literacy questions in this year's question paper quite challenging.

In question 2(a)(i), many candidates identified the first chord correctly (G first inversion), but named the second chord as A and not A minor. In question 2(b)(ii), many candidates realised that a flat symbol was needed but they often placed it incorrectly.

In question 4(a)(i), candidates did not always identify the correct time signature, although most candidates did place their answer at the correct place on the staff. The chord in 4(b)(ii) was not well answered, with candidates often not including the seventh. Candidates did not clearly understand the use of the octave sign and, where they did identify it, did not place it accurately. Candidates did quite well with the identification of the correct pitches in question 4(b)(iii) but were often not accurate with the given rhythm.

Candidates found the melodic dictation in question 5(a)(ii) extremely challenging.

The identification of the cadence (plagal) in 2(c) and the identification of augmentation in 3(c) were not well answered. The stem of question 3(c) asked candidates for a rhythmic device. Some candidates had not read the stem with sufficient care; these candidates incorrectly offered inappropriate concepts relating to harmony.

Many candidates did not identify the viola in question 3(b) part 1 and instead answered violin. The second part of this question was also challenging, with many candidates writing countermelody instead of answer. Many candidates did not identify sequence in part 4.

Candidates could have given more detail when comparing voices and instruments in question 6(b)(i). For example, excerpt 1 contained an SATB choir, whereas excerpt 2 had a solo voice with backing vocals. Similarly, excerpt 1 used brass and percussion, and excerpt 2 used a rock band.

In question 6(b)(ii), many candidates had difficulty identifying the period of excerpt 1. Some candidates did not appear to be drawing together their findings from the earlier parts of the question to come to an insightful conclusion.

Performance

A few candidates' performance programmes did not meet the required time allocation of 15 minutes. Where judicious cuts had been made to accommodate timings, a few candidates were playing sections of music below the minimum requirements (Grade 5 or above). Chordal guitar and ukulele candidates did not always meet the requirements, as a few did not incorporate a melody along with chordal accompaniment in at least one piece.

A few drum kit candidates' programmes did not demonstrate four-way independence in all styles.

A few keyboard players did not demonstrate full fingered chords. At Advanced Higher level, candidates must play fully fingered chords throughout their entire keyboard programme.

Portfolio

Marks are awarded for developing and refining musical ideas in music that is original to the candidate, as well as for the creative and assured use of compositional methods and music concepts including melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre.

As in previous years, some candidates' work demonstrated a lack of harmonic awareness that hindered the development of their ideas. Some of the most successful compositions showed considerable development and refinement of musical ideas, but were not scored for a large number of instruments. Equally, candidates who wrote for instruments they were more familiar with wrote more fluently and stylistically. The review of the creative process should concentrate on the musical elements of the composition, including explaining how candidates used and developed these elements. This was not as successful as in previous years. While some reviews were relevant and coherent, many lacked harmonic vocabulary, focus or did not give detail about the musical content and how it had been developed.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

To help prepare future candidates for the question paper, teachers and lecturers should consider the following advice and possible strategies.

While the Advanced Higher question paper focuses on concepts from the upper levels of National Qualifications, centres should remind candidates that they may encounter concepts from all National Qualification levels.

Short answers (one or two words, or a phrase) will continue to specifically examine concepts introduced at Higher or Advanced Higher level. This does not apply to the 'map' question (question 3(b) in the 2022 Advanced Higher question paper). For example, questions 1(b) and 5(b) in this year's question paper tested two Advanced Higher concepts, turn and modal. Questions 3(a), 3(c), 3(d) and 5(d) tested Higher concepts: passacaglia, augmentation, Tierce de Picardie and Impressionist.

Centres should encourage candidates to read the stem of the question carefully. Some candidates lost marks because they did not do this.

On the whole, candidates answered musical literacy questions less well this year. Centres should provide frequent opportunities for candidates to listen to performances, using scores where possible, to promote literacy skills and develop aural perception and discrimination. Regularly giving candidates the opportunity to relate what they hear to what they see will directly benefit candidates' attainment in these types of questions.

In questions 6(a)(i) and (ii) there were again fewer instances of candidates giving long lists of unrelated or contradictory concepts. However, centres should continue to remind candidates that their responses should contain the prominent concepts under each category relating to the music heard.

In questions 6(a) and 6(b)(i), centres should encourage candidates to focus on identifying concepts or similarities and differences under the given headings. Centres should also advise candidates that in question 6(b)(i), the number of similarities and differences will vary depending on the musical excerpts; for example, there may be more differences than similarities or vice versa.

In question 6(b)(i), centres should advise candidates to give comprehensive answers when detailing the vocal and instrumental forces.

In question 6(b)(ii), many candidates found it difficult to identify the period of excerpt 1 and suggested a range of periods. Some candidates found it difficult to justify their answers and, in some instances, provided a response that did not specifically identify the features unique to the period they were referring to. Centres should work with candidates to ensure they use the evidence they gave in earlier parts of the question to point the way to a period of music and provide relevant justifications. Centres should encourage candidates to listen to as wide a range of music as possible and consider more closely what characterises a particular period of music. For example, with reference to excerpt 1 in question 6(b)(ii), some

candidates thought the excerpt was from the Romantic period and their justification was that 7th chords and additional percussion were present. Candidates need to listen to the excerpt as a whole before deciding on the period, which in this case was twentieth century. Question 6(b) did not ask for the type of work this year. Candidates should be reminded that they should carefully read the stem of the question, including the categories asked for, as these may change from year to year.

Candidates may find it helpful to look at the detailed additional guidance for questions 6(b)(i) and (ii) at the end of the Advanced Higher question paper marking instructions document (available on SQA's Advanced Higher Music web page). Centres should access the marking instructions for past question papers and the specimen question paper. These provide considerable detail regarding acceptable answers for all questions.

If centres are submitting exceptional circumstance evidence for the question paper, the assessment papers used for prelim-type events should replicate the course assessment in terms of question type and mark allocation. It was evident this year that centres had taken on board the guidance on question paper content when making up their prelim papers.

Centres should also submit a full copy of the marking instructions, even if questions are drawn from SQA specimen or past question papers. Centres should note the importance of identifying prominent concepts in question 6 and that a balance of paired and excerpt 1 and 2 only concepts are required.

When preparing prelim and listening assessments, centres must consider the following:

- ◆ A past paper or specimen question paper in its entirety must not be the only evidence submitted for exceptional circumstances consideration. These papers are accessible on SQA's website and therefore candidates may be familiar with the structure and content before assessment.
- ◆ Class tests or other forms of evidence must demonstrate that candidates have knowledge and understanding of concepts appropriate to the course assessment.
- ◆ Some questions from older past papers may not provide the appropriate scope, coverage or balance, and may need to be amended.
- ◆ The marking instructions used for centre-devised assessments should reflect the marking instructions used in the final exam. Half marks are not used. Examples of marking instructions for past papers are available on SQA's website.

Performance

The following advice may help to prepare candidates for the performance components. Centres should ensure that the music to be played is at the appropriate level (Grade 5 or above).

A few candidates' performances were under or over the required time allocation. For session 2022–23, an Advanced Higher programme should last a minimum of 15 minutes between the two instruments. The maximum time is 17 minutes. The performance time on either of the two selected instruments, or instrument and voice, must be a minimum of 5 minutes within the overall 15-minute programme. Centres must ensure that candidates adhere to the minimum and maximum time limits. Centres should also ensure that the music to be played is at the appropriate level (Grade 5 or above).

Carefully timed cuts may be appropriate to keep within the time limit, as long as they do not lower the technical demands. Centres should also consider the length of individual pieces after any cuts have been made. If significant cuts are made to a piece of music, it can become challenging for a candidate to access the full range of marks.

For guitar or ukulele programmes, centres should specify if the candidate is performing a 'chordal', 'melodic' or 'mixed' programme. Chords can be included in a melodic guitar or ukulele programme but are not counted if it is not a chordal programme.

Chordal guitar and ukulele programmes must:

- ◆ include 18 chords
- ◆ be in standard notation — this could simply be a copy of the melodic line that the guitar or ukulele is accompanying, with the chord names printed above or below the staff; TAB alone is not sufficient for assessment purposes, and neither is a lyric sheet with only chord names and no music notation
- ◆ have a melody for candidates to play along with (played, sung or from a backing track) — this is essential to provide a context for the performance of the chords
- ◆ include melody and chords in at least one piece

Drum kit programmes should specify each style performed and style bank number. For session 2022–23, a programme must include five different styles, with four different fills within each style. Teachers and lecturers should refer to SQA's style bank for a list of acceptable styles. Drum kit programmes must exhibit four-way independence in every piece. For notated music, the minimum requirement is four bars of the groove and four fills with a performance plan or map.

Keyboard programmes must:

- ◆ include both the right and left hand in the performance
- ◆ perform full fingered chords; candidates playing single fingered chords are awarded 0 marks for that piece

To help visiting assessment run smoothly:

- ◆ Candidate mark sheets issued by SQA must be completed in pen (not pencil) by centre staff and be available to the visiting assessor (VA) at the start of each assessment session (morning or afternoon). The candidate mark sheet is the formal record of the assessment event, and it is very important that it is completed accurately.
- ◆ Centre staff should give the VAs a running order with approximate timings at the start of each session.
- ◆ To avoid unexpected candidate absence disrupting the planned running order, centre staff should have the next two candidates ready to perform. This ensures the maximum use of the VA's time.
- ◆ Timetabling should take account of the candidates' chosen performance time on each instrument. It is helpful if centres consider the time allocated for each candidate performance to make the best use of the VA's time in each centre.

- ◆ Details of the instruments, or instrument and voice used, the pieces to be performed, and all timings of pieces should be clearly indicated on the candidate mark sheet. The total length of time for each instrument or voice should also be indicated.
- ◆ Each drum kit style should be clearly named on the candidate mark sheet, irrespective of the title of the piece, for example 'Download' — rock, bank 1.

If a candidate is absent for the performance exam for health reasons or other unexpected circumstances, SQA will try to arrange an alternative date for them to sit the exam. If this is not possible, centres must submit evidence of the candidate's attainment in performance. Centre staff should submit an audio or video recording of as much of the candidate's programme as possible, along with copies of the music and the marks awarded for all the pieces performed. Many centres routinely make audio or video recordings of prelim exams for this eventuality. If centres do not have an audio or video recording of the candidate's performance programme, they should submit alternative evidence to show that the candidate has demonstrated attainment at Advanced Higher level. Other supplementary evidence may include a certificate from a graded examination at an appropriate level.

Portfolio

Centres should consider how best they can support candidates with their harmonic understanding, particularly if candidates are writing tonal music. An increased awareness of the harmonic language used would benefit candidates, both in this part of the course and in the question paper. Focusing on the development of musical ideas, either melodically, rhythmically or harmonically, will aid understanding.

Candidates should not spend time writing about the programmatic content of their piece. They should concentrate on the main decisions they made regarding using musical elements in their composition or arrangement, and explain how they explored and developed these elements. When they construct a review of their composition or arrangement, candidates should use the analytical skills they developed in other parts of the course, and apply these skills of critical reflection to consider their strengths and areas for improvement.

You can find Understanding Standards materials to support this course on SQA's secure site. There is candidate evidence of Advanced Higher compositions and arrangements, and commentaries on how they have been marked. The Music assignment catalogue (also available on SQA secure) details all available candidate evidence and commentaries. You can use it to find, for example, compositions and arrangements in a particular mark range, performance plans, and compositions and arrangements with specific instrumentation.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- ◆ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the [National Qualifications 2022 Awarding—Methodology Report](#).