



Course report 2023

Advanced Higher Music Technology

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. You should read the report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics in the report were compiled before any appeals were completed.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022: 58

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 59

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	15	Percentage	25.4	Cumulative percentage	25.4	Minimum mark required	91
B	Number of candidates	14	Percentage	23.7	Cumulative percentage	49.2	Minimum mark required	77
C	Number of candidates	14	Percentage	23.7	Cumulative percentage	72.9	Minimum mark required	64
D	Number of candidates	9	Percentage	15.3	Cumulative percentage	88.1	Minimum mark required	50
No award	Number of candidates	7	Percentage	11.9	Cumulative percentage	100	Minimum mark required	N/A

Please note that rounding has not been applied to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

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 and information](#) page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Project

This is the second year of SQA marking this course since it was implemented in session 2019–20. The course assessment performed as intended.

Candidates this year were generally well prepared for the project. Many candidates demonstrated strong implementation skills.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Project

In general terms, candidates performed best in the production element of the project. Candidate performance in the research element of the project was mixed.

In stage 1: identifying an appropriate research topic in a music technology context, and produce an outline specification:

- ◆ some candidates chose contexts that were too broad or did not provide sufficient scope for the research aspects of the project
- ◆ some candidates did not provide evidence for the production element of the project, frequently omitting a timeline, proposed resources, and projected outcomes

In stage 2a: investigating and analysing technology skills, techniques, and processes, and relevant musical analysis as appropriate:

- ◆ candidates often completed in-depth investigation of identified skills, techniques, and processes, but did not complete any analysis
- ◆ candidates sometimes did not include the media files they had investigated and analysed
- ◆ candidates sometimes provided links to videos as citations for their investigation but did not annotate precise timings

In stage 2b: experimenting with music technology skills, techniques, and processes, many candidates performed well, providing the required evidence.

In stage 2c: synthesising investigation, analysis, experimentation, and drawing conclusions, some candidates drew conclusions and completed synthesis based on their experimentation only and did not fully detail the impact on their own practice.

In stage 3: planning the production, candidates performed to a higher standard than in previous years.

In stage 4: implementing the production, candidates performed well, although some candidates provided evidence of using plugin presets. Candidates are more familiar with this stage, and the practical application of audio capture and microphone techniques are improved on last year.

In stage 5a: mastering the production — analysis and critical listening skills:

- ◆ some candidates provided only one reference recording
- ◆ some candidates did not complete a sufficiently robust analysis and critical listening commentary, including detailed comparisons with reference recordings and proposed mastering decisions

Stage 5b: mastering the production — finalising and mastering techniques was completed reasonably well. However, some candidates provided evidence of using plugin presets. Candidates must not use presets in their mastering chain.

In stage 6a: evaluating and reflecting, most candidates completed the evaluation report but lacked evaluative comments.

Stage 6b: organising and presenting, including using information from a range of sources was completed well by many candidates. However, some candidates included synthesis as part of stage 2b.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Project

Given the size of the project, teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to provide a log format that evidences all the mandatory requirements. Candidates who submit a log based on a diary approach often omit aspects of the mandatory requirements and have large and unwieldy logs.

Centres should note that the projects are split into a research project and a production project for session 2023–24, and that the research project will have an earlier uplift date.

Stage 1

In session 2023–24, a separate outline specification is required for each of the research and production projects. For further details, see the amended coursework assessment task document available on the Advanced Higher Music Technology subject page on SQA's website.

Stage 2

Teachers and lecturers should discourage candidates from selecting contexts that lack scope, such as Foley mic'ing techniques that limit the candidate's ability to investigate and analyse, experiment and synthesise in the research element of the project.

Similarly, candidates should be discouraged from selecting contexts that do not allow them to research technology skills, techniques, and processes. An example of this could be manipulation of Foley props.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are both investigating and analysing in stage 2a, and that candidates have clearly identified, investigated and analysed skills, techniques, and processes. They should also ensure that candidates have investigated and analysed the media files they submit as evidence.

In stage 2b, teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates focus on the clearly identified skills, techniques, and processes they investigated and analysed in stage 2a. In this stage, candidates often embed the required media files in their log. Candidates who choose not to do this should clearly and correctly label their media files prior to submission to SQA.

For stage 2c, teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are synthesising their investigation, analysis, and experimentation, and that their conclusion is based on evidence generated in stages 2a and 2b. Candidates should detail the impact of their conclusions on their own practice.

Stage 3

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to ensure they have provided all the evidence required for this stage, in particular for their mixing plan (for the production

element) and their production plan (for Foley and sound design contexts). Where required, candidates must provide reasons for their choices.

Stage 4

For stage 4a, candidates should ensure they are experimenting with microphone and capture techniques (for example using multi-mic'ing and ambient or room mic'ing) and documenting these under the audio capture section of their logs.

For stages 4b, 4c and 4d, candidates must not use presets.

Stage 5

As mastering is a new skill for most candidates embarking on Advanced Higher Music Technology, teaching and learning should allow candidates opportunities to prepare for this stage of the project.

Teachers and lecturers should develop candidate analysis and critical listening ability in preparation for stage 5a, and guide candidates to provide all the evidence required of this stage.

Examples of model mastering chains may be useful to candidates for stage 5b. Candidates must not use presets.

Stage 6

For stage 6a, teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to use technical language, demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the music technology skills, techniques and processes they employ in their project.

For stage 6b, teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to not only structure and present their work to the best of their ability, but to cite their sources throughout, and use an appropriate referencing system. Many candidates use video references, and if these sources are used, precise timings must be provided in candidate referencing.

In terms of structure, candidates should be encouraged to work sequentially, presenting evidence for stage 2a, followed by 2b, then 2c.

Appendix: 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 was developed to support learners and centres. This included modifications to course assessment, retained from the 2021–22 session. This support was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic while recognising a lessening of the impact of disruption to learning and teaching as a result of the pandemic. The revision support that was available for the 2021–22 session was not offered to learners in 2022–23.

In addition, SQA adopted a sensitive approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining

standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams continue to do so in different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019 and 2022.

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 2023 and the ongoing impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on learners. 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 the removal of revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2023 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 2023 Awarding — Methodology Report](#).