



Course report 2023

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: 926

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 1,075

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	392	Percentage	36.5	Cumulative percentage	36.5	Minimum mark required	70
B	Number of candidates	335	Percentage	31.2	Cumulative percentage	67.6	Minimum mark required	60
C	Number of candidates	217	Percentage	20.2	Cumulative percentage	87.8	Minimum mark required	50
D	Number of candidates	93	Percentage	8.7	Cumulative percentage	96.5	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Number of candidates	38	Percentage	3.5	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

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected this year. Candidates demonstrated their musical and technological knowledge through questioning styles that were like those used in previous years.

The modifications from 2021–22 were still in place, as detailed in the national course modification summary document. The intellectual property and technological development questions were removed, resulting in the question paper being marked out of 32, which was then scaled to 30% of the overall course award.

All questions proved to be accessible, with some providing more of a challenge for candidates.

Assignment

The assignment included the modifications from 2021–22 which removed the requirement to demonstrate multi-tracked electronically produced sounds and/or music.

Many candidates submitted high-quality and creative work, with most submissions being multi-track recordings within a radio broadcast or multi-track recordings within a film project.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(a): Candidates identify a genre and associated concept. Most candidates did well in this question.

Question 2(a): Candidates identify a genre and give technology features. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 2(b): Candidates identify a feature of the excerpt. Most candidates answered correctly.

Questions 3(a)(i) and 3(b)(i): Candidates identify a fault present in the recording. Most candidates identified the fault in both scenarios.

Question 3(b)(ii): Candidates give a solution to a fault. Many candidates gave the correct solution.

Question 4(a): Candidates identify settings on a graphic EQ. Many candidates answered correctly and included a valid justification with their answer.

Question 4(b): Candidates identify an effect applied to a guitar track. Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 5(a): Candidates identify two features of the excerpt. Many candidates achieved both marks.

Question 6 (part 2): Candidates identify two effects applied. Some candidates identified both effects correctly.

Question 6 (part 6): Candidates identify the texture of the vocals. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 7: Candidates identify 5 production features from a list of 10. Most candidates performed well in this 5-mark question.

Assignment

Stage 1a: planning sound design. Many candidates submitted evidence of planning, which was an improvement on previous years. Many centres are using structured templates to support candidates to provide the required information succinctly.

Stage 2a: implementing the production — audio capture. More candidates demonstrated a range of microphone techniques within more complex multi-tracks. More candidates also demonstrated using multiple inputs by mic'ing a drum kit with four microphones on the bass drum, snare and two overheads. This also has the advantage of demonstrating stereo mic'ing.

Stage 2b: implementing the production — processing skills. Most candidates demonstrated the requirements of this stage and included all the requirements as detailed in the assignment assessment task document.

Stage 2c: implementing the production — applying effects. Most candidates demonstrated the requirements of this stage. Candidates provided evidence of applying time domain and other effects, including at least two from: delay, echo, reverb, chorus, phase and flange.

Stage 2e: implementing the production — creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music. Candidates demonstrated their creativity in a wide range of ways, with some excellent examples of jingle creation and other content within radio shows, and complex sound design for film with Foley.

Stage 3: evaluating the production. Some candidates were able to evaluate their work effectively as they made comments linked to each stage of their work.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 1(b): Candidates describe two features of a genre. Recognising two features proved to be challenging.

Question 3(a)(ii): Candidates give a solution to a fault. Many candidates did not give enough detail. 'Turn the volume up' was a common response, without an indication of what channel should be adjusted. Turning the volume up on the master mix would not solve the problem.

Question 5(b): Candidates answer questions on mic'ing a set of bagpipes. Candidates found it challenging to identify all three of the details required to access the full range of marks (a correct mic type or array, a correct distance and a justification). A few candidates did not identify that two microphones are required for a stereo technique.

Question 5(c): Candidates identify a musical scale. This question was demanding for most candidates.

Question 6 (part 1): Candidates identify the correct filter used. Most candidates found this question demanding.

Question 6 (part 3): Candidates identify the manipulated control on a noise gate. Many candidates found this question challenging.

Question 6 (part 4): Candidates identify the manipulated control on a delay effect. Most candidates found this question demanding.

Question 6 (part 5): Candidates identify that a harmoniser has been added to the lead vocal. Most candidates found this question demanding.

Assignment

Stage 1a: planning sound design. When a candidate wishes to demonstrate sound for film within their assignment, they should be encouraged to consider how suitable their footage is. As an example, some candidates chose fast-moving car chases which required a lot of complex layered sound design to make the result believable. This in turn led to a lot of planning that was beyond the requirements of the course. If the final sound heard does not match the footage in a believable way, this could also influence marks awarded for creativity at stage 2e.

Stage 1b: planning the recording, creating, editing and mixing. Some candidates did not give reasons for their choices at this stage.

Stage 2a: implementing the production — audio capture. Some candidates did not give information about each capture made, as detailed in the technical skills listed in the assignment coursework task document. Use of photos to demonstrate microphone placement and technique can help here.

Stage 2b: implementing the production — processing skills. Some candidates only used each process once, which limited their ability to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of processing skills and technical awareness. Some candidates did not access the full range of marks as they did not edit a minimum of three takes into a single take.

Stage 2c: implementing the production — applying effects. Some candidates were only able to demonstrate knowledge of effects to a minimal standard, as they simply applied two effects on isolated sounds then omitted to discuss their use in detail in their logbook. As detailed in the technical skills of the assignment coursework task document, two different effects need to be demonstrated from the following list: delay, echo, reverb, chorus, phase and flange. Some candidates did not access the full range of marks as they only demonstrated one effect.

Stage 2d: implementing the production — mixing and sequencing skills. Some candidates were not able to access the full range of marks as they did not demonstrate send and insert effects and grouping/bussing.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

This course will return to full assessment requirements from session 2023–24 onwards, and future question papers will include questions about intellectual property and technological development. Examples of this can be found at questions 5 and 7 of the 2019 past paper and the specimen question paper.

Assignment

Assignments from session 2023–24 onwards must include multi-tracked electronically produced sounds and/or music. Please remember to include detailed planning for this at stage 1. Information in candidate logs should include:

- ◆ Stage 2a: selecting and using virtual and/or MIDI instruments to create electronic sound and/or music
- ◆ Stage 2c: manipulating the controls of virtual and/or MIDI instruments (for example ADSR envelopes, LFO, filter)

If centres choose to supply a template for the planning and logbook, the template should allow candidates to document everything that is required. Candidates should include screenshots of their final edit and mix windows, which can enhance their progress record.

For further clarification on course requirements, please access the Music Technology subject pages on SQA's website, which include a common questions document, the audio presentation detailing changes to the course assessment valid from 2018–19, and the Higher Music Technology webinar.

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](#).