



Course report 2023

National 5 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: 1,346

Number of resulted entries in 2023: 1,424

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

A	Number of candidates	415	Percentage	29.1	Cumulative percentage	29.1	Minimum mark required	70
B	Number of candidates	500	Percentage	35.1	Cumulative percentage	64.3	Minimum mark required	59
C	Number of candidates	334	Percentage	23.5	Cumulative percentage	87.7	Minimum mark required	49
D	Number of candidates	137	Percentage	9.6	Cumulative percentage	97.3	Minimum mark required	38
No award	Number of candidates	38	Percentage	2.7	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

Most candidates responded well to the demands of the question paper, and it performed in line with expectations. It contained a wide range of suitably challenging excerpts of music, was positively received by centres, and was fair and accessible for candidates. Many candidates understood what was required and completed the paper in the allocated time.

Assignment

Most candidates responded well to the demands of the assignment. Many candidates submitted creative material of a good standard, including radio broadcasts, multi-track recordings, live recordings of a small group performance, sound design and Foley for film, sound design for a computer game, and audiobooks. Many candidates opted to use the SQA recorded stems for the radio broadcast task, while the candidates of some centres submitted their own broadcast recordings.

Some candidates, however, were not able to access the full range of marks for particular stages, as they did not include all of the mandatory skills listed in the course specification in either one or both of their chosen productions.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Generally, candidates were well prepared for the following questions and responded successfully:

- ◆ Questions 1(a), (b), (c), (d)(i), and (d)(ii): Candidates were assessed on styles of music and related concepts.
- ◆ Question 2(a): Candidates were asked to identify a prominent effect, control or process applied to a track.
- ◆ Question 2(b): Candidates were asked to identify a prominent music concept.
- ◆ Questions 2(d)(i) and 2(d)(ii): Candidates were asked to select a type of microphone and polarity for recording an acoustic guitar.
- ◆ Questions 3(a) and (c): Candidates were assessed on a range of technological and musical concepts.
- ◆ Question 4(a)(ii): Candidates were asked to identify a concept, describing the structure/form.
- ◆ Question 4(b): Candidates were asked to identify two music or production features.
- ◆ Question 4(c): Candidates were asked to identify a feature of a figure of eight polar pattern.
- ◆ Question 4(d): Candidates were asked to identify two ways of preventing popping and blasting.
- ◆ Question 4(e): Candidates were asked to identify the prominent effect, control or process applied to a track.
- ◆ Question 5: Candidates were asked to identify instruments or voices and to link these to controls and effects.
- ◆ Question 6(a): Candidates were asked to link an instrument or voice with an effect, and another instrument and voice with panning on two versions of one song.
- ◆ Question 6(b): Candidates were asked to identify the tonality of a piece of music.

Assignment

Generally, candidates completed the assignment successfully. Centres used a variety of assignment briefs for both tasks.

For the assignment brief, most candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of:

- ◆ Stage 1: planning the production
- ◆ Stage 2(a): implementing the production — audio capture (not assessed for task 1)
- ◆ Stage 2(b): implementing the production — mixing skills
- ◆ Stage 2(c): creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music

Most candidates were well prepared and had a good knowledge of music software programmes and capturing; manipulating sound and applying suitable effects; and processes and controls.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

- ◆ Question 2(c): Many candidates had difficulty describing two production features typical of a musical.
- ◆ Question 2(d)(iii): Most candidates had difficulty describing the microphone placement of an acoustic guitar.
- ◆ Question 3(d): Most candidates had difficulty describing the prominent solo instrument.
- ◆ Question 4(a)(i): Most candidates had difficulty describing a type of musical scale.

Assignment

Most candidates completed stage 1: planning the production to a good standard. However, for the radio broadcast task, some candidates did not mention the use of SQA or their own recorded stems. For the second task, some candidates did not include details of microphone placement, distance and the existing sound map and intended sound map for film Foley briefs. For both tasks, some candidates did not mention which controls, effects and processes they intended to use.

Most candidates completed stage 2(a): implementing the production — audio capture to a good standard. However, some did not record using two live microphones or included less than the five required tracks.

Most candidates completed stage 2(b): mixing skills to a good standard. However, some did not add the required effects, controls and processes, including the two mandatory time domain effects.

Some candidates had difficulty with stage 3: evaluating the production. In some cases, candidates wrote lengthy evaluations with little or no reasoned information or justification. In some cases, candidates did not write evaluative comments in their report or evaluate all the different sections of the project.

The candidates' logbooks, which provide supporting documentation for stages 1, 2 and 3, should be clear and succinct. Some candidates submitted logbooks with key information missing, such as reports on audio recording and mixing sections including screenshots.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

To prepare for the question paper, teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are familiar with the full range of music concepts, different effects, controllers, and processes applied to a section of music, and musical and technology features applied to different genres.

To prepare for the question paper, teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are familiar with mic'ing techniques, including distance and placement. Candidates must be able to distinguish between acoustic and electric guitars, use the concept drum kit rather than drums, and distinguish between lead and backing vocals when describing panning.

To prepare them for the question paper, teachers and lecturers should give candidates listening activities, with correctly positioned stereo speakers. This gives candidates practice in identifying different types of panning (left, right or centre).

Assignment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates have a full experience of mic'ing other instruments in different situations before completing the assignment.

Teachers and lecturers should make candidates aware of the requirements of the assignment before they undertake it. They should remind candidates to check and implement the mandatory list of technical skills listed in each assignment brief. Candidates must use at least five tracks at National 5 and work with two microphones.

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the marking instructions for the assignment to ensure that candidates are fully prepared to complete the supporting documentation. Candidates' supporting documentation for stages 1, 2 and 3 should show evidence of formal planning, progress reporting and evaluating to access the full range of marks available.

When preparing files for submission, teachers and lecturers should check that files are accessible and that they have transferred correctly. If SQA appointees cannot access files, marking is problematic.

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](#).