Course report 2025

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 with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2025 appeals process.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2024: 84

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 73

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	14	19.2	19.2	94
B	25	34.2	53.4	80
C	19	26.0	79.5	67
D	7	9.6	89.0	53
No award	8	11.0	100%	Not applicable

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

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

In this report:

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

You can find statistical reports on the statistics and information page of our website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Project–research and project–production projects

This is the fourth year of SQA marking this course since it was implemented in session 2019–20. The course assessment performed as intended. The projects were split up as they were last year, and there were two uplifts, with the research project uplifted in March and the production project uplifted in May.

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

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Project–research

Candidate performance in the research element of the project was mixed, but broadly similar to last year, with candidates generally well prepared.

In stage 1: identifying an appropriate 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 project
- if candidates completed stage 1 well, this often helped them complete stage 2 more successfully

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

- candidates completed in-depth investigations of identified skills, techniques and processes, but a few did not complete any analysis
- a few candidates omitted media files they investigated and analysed
- candidates provided links to videos as citations for their investigation but a few did not annotate precise timings

In stage 2b: experimenting with music technology skills, techniques and processes, most 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.

Many candidates completed stage 3: organising and presenting, including using information from a range of sources well. Some candidates, however, included synthesis as part of stage 2b.

Project–production

In stage 1: defining a project brief:

- some candidates completed project briefs that were appropriate, including details of their intended use of new skills, techniques and processes
- some candidates did not provide an executive summary of their research

In stage 2: planning the production, candidates performed to a good standard.

In stage 3: implementing the production, candidates performed strongest out of all the stages. The practical application of audio capture and microphone techniques was generally completed well. However, some candidates provided evidence of using plug-in presets. In the course assessment task document, it is clearly stated that candidates must not use presets for stages 3b, c and d.

In stage 4a: 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 4b: mastering the production — finalising and mastering techniques was completed reasonably well, with centres providing candidates with the learning and teaching required to complete this effectively. Some candidates provided evidence of using plug-in presets. In the course assessment task document, it is clearly stated that 'candidates must not use presets in their mastering chain.'

For stage 5: evaluating and reflecting, some candidates completed the evaluation report but lacked evaluative comments.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Project–research

Stage 1

Candidates must include an outline specification for the research project that is sufficiently detailed and provides sufficient scope for the project.

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 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 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 candidates provide media files they have investigated and analysed.

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

For stage 2c, teachers and lecturers should ensure candidates are synthesising their investigation and analysis, and experimentation, that the conclusions they draw are

based on evidence generated in stage 2a and stage 2b, and that they are detailing the impact on their own practice.

For stage 3, teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to structure and present their work to the best of their ability. Candidates should cite their sources throughout, using an appropriate referencing system. Many candidates use video references, and those that do must provide precise timings in their referencing.

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

Project–production

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

Stage 2

Candidates should 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/sound design contexts). Candidates must provide reasons for their choices where required.

Stage 3

For stage 3a, 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 stage 3b, c and d, candidates must not use presets.

Stage 4

As mastering is a relatively new skill for most Advanced Higher candidates, teaching and learning should give 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 4a, and guide candidates in providing all the evidence required of this stage.

Examples of model mastering chains may be useful to candidates for stage 4b, and once again, candidates must not use presets.

Stage 5

For stage 5, 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.

Understanding Standards materials

There are examples of marked candidate projects for Advanced Higher Music Technology on the Understanding Standards section of the SQA secure website. These are accompanied by written commentaries by an SQA senior examiner that explain how many marks were awarded to each candidate and why. These materials provide useful information for teachers and lecturers.

Appendix: general commentary on grade boundaries

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

For most National Courses, we aim 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, we hold 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 our 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. We 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.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the [Awarding and Grading for National Courses Policy](#).