Course report 2025

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:   1,070

Number of resulted entries in 2025:   1,263

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	527	41.7	41.7	70
B	398	31.5	73.2	60
C	221	17.5	90.7	50
D	85	6.7	97.5	40
No award	32	2.5	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

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected this year. The questioning styles used were similar to those used in previous years, and enabled candidates to demonstrate their musical and technological knowledge.

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

Assignment

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

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

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

Question 1(b): Describing two features of a genre. Many candidates achieved at least 1 mark in this question.

Question 2(b): Identifying a feature of the excerpt. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 3(a)(ii): Identifying a solution to a fault present in the recording. Many candidates answered correctly.

Questions 3(b)(i) and (ii): Identifying a fault present in the recording and giving a solution. Most candidates did well here.

Question 5(a): Identifying a feature present linked to an intellectual property case. Many candidates answered correctly.

Questions 5(b) and (c): Showing understanding of copyright. Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 6(a): Identifying two features of an excerpt. Most candidates achieved 2 marks.

Question 7(a): Naming a key innovator and describing one example of their influence on a genre. Many candidates achieved at least 1 mark.

Question 8 (part 4): Identifying the change in tonality. Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 8 (part 5): Identifying two effects. Most candidates achieved 2 marks.

Question 8 (part 6): Identifying the threshold control on a noise gate. Many candidates achieved the mark here.

Question 9: Identifying five production features from a list of 10. Most candidates performed well in this 5-mark question.

Assignment

Well-structured templates are helping candidates, as paperwork (especially for planning) is more focused.

Stage 1: planning — Candidates included planning information for their electronic multi-track, choosing to demonstrate their knowledge of MIDI and soft synths either through a stand-alone feature of their assignment, or by including it as tracks within their main multi-track. Both approaches are acceptable.

Stage 2: implementing — Candidates included the capture, processing and mixing of a multi-mic'd drumkit, which helps demonstrate skills across all areas of this stage.

Stage 3: evaluation — Many candidates are now submitting evaluations that are consistent and relevant, with evaluative comments. While most logs include a separate section at the end of the candidate's work, some candidates prefer to evaluate each section as they go. Both are acceptable methods. Centres should encourage candidates to clearly label any comments if they choose to evaluate throughout their work.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Question 2(a): Identifying a genre as New Wave and giving features. Although some candidates did not recognise the genre, they were still able to achieve at least 1 mark by giving a music or technology feature.

Question 3(a)(i): Identifying that proximity effect had occurred because of a microphone being placed too close to the sound hole of an acoustic guitar. Candidates need to specify where the microphone is in relation to the instrument.

Question 4(a): Identifying the correct settings used on a reverb plug-in. Some candidates found this question demanding as they did not mention both the time and mix controls in their justification.

Question 4(b): Identifying two controls on a phaser effect. Many candidates found this question demanding.

Question 6(b): Describing a stereo mic'ing technique. Candidates found it challenging to provide all three of the details required to access the full range of marks (give a correct microphone type or array, a correct distance, and a justification). A few candidates did not identify that two microphones are required for a stereo technique. Justification continues to be a challenge for some candidates; examples of acceptable answers can be found in past papers.

Question 7(b): Naming a key innovator and describing one example of their influence on a technology. Some candidates found this question demanding.

Question 8 (part 1): Identifying pitch shift being gradually applied to a vocal take. Some candidates found this question demanding.

Question 8 (part 2): Identifying a high EQ boost applied to a vocal take. Many candidates found this question demanding.

Question 8 (part 3): identifying autopan being applied to a sound effect. Many candidates found this question demanding.

Assignment

Imported stems can be used (for example, to add a vocal line), however, a few candidates did not note this clearly in their logs. A few candidates did not mix imported stems to allow for the capture of other parts to be clearly heard.

Some candidates are still not fully meeting the requirements as they did not include at least two simultaneous MIDI tracks.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Centres are encouraged to review previous course reports and refer to [Understanding Standards](#) examples to further help prepare candidates. The examples of candidate evidence are accompanied by a written commentary from an SQA senior examiner explaining why marks were awarded. For the assignment, they are available from the Understanding Standards section of the SQA secure site.

Question paper

Using the marking instructions from past papers is a good way to prepare resources, especially when considering the features of genres and the information required to mic up instruments.

Teachers and lecturers should give candidates listening activities, with correctly positioned stereo speakers in an appropriate room and/or use headphones. This gives candidates practice in identifying different types of panning (left, right or centre).

Assignment

Any centre-devised templates should match the course requirements. Doing this saves a candidate from including superfluous information that will not gain marks.

Centres should remind candidates of the need to plan for and use at least two simultaneous MIDI tracks to meet the requirements of stage 1b (planning), 2a (selecting and using virtual and/or MIDI instruments) and 2c (manipulating the controls of virtual and/or MIDI instruments). This could be demonstrated in tracks within the multi-track (for example, a synth string or organ part) or within a separate item based on an imported MIDI file.

Please also note that at stage 2c the manipulation of controls should adjust the sound's generator, for example, the ADSR envelopes, an LFO or a filter within the device generating the sound and mixed in a way that still allows for the capture of other parts to be clearly heard.

Please note, stereo mic'ing electronic instruments (for example, electric pianos) does not demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of audio capture techniques as these instruments would be DI'd in real-life situations.

Centres are encouraged to merge all candidate paperwork into one complete document that contains the planning, log and evaluation.

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](#).