



Course report 2025

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 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: 1,483

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 1,422

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 | 482 | 33.9 | 33.9 | 70 |
| B | 490 | 34.5 | 68.4 | 60 |
| C | 319 | 22.4 | 90.8 | 50 |
| D | 79 | 5.6 | 96.3 | 40 |
| No award | 52 | 3.7 | 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

Many 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 and was fair and accessible for candidates.

Assignment

Many candidates responded well to the demands of the assignment.

Many candidates submitted creative material of a good standard, including multi-track recordings, live recordings of a small group performance, radio broadcasts, sound design and Foley for film, sound design for a computer game, and audiobooks.

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 (available on the [subject page](#) of our website) 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) and (d)(i): Candidates were assessed on styles of music and related concepts.
- Questions 2(a), (b), (c), (d)(i) and (d)(ii): Candidates were assessed on styles of music and related concepts, and were asked to select a type of microphone and polarity for recording a grand piano with one microphone.
- Question 3(a): Candidates were asked to identify the genre/style of the music.
- Question 3(b): Candidates were asked to identify two music features of Scottish music.
- Question 3(c): Candidates were asked to identify a genre/style of music and an instrument being used.
- Question 3(d): Candidates were asked to identify a solo instrument.
- Question 4(a)(i): Candidates were asked to identify the tonality.
- Question 4(a)(ii): Candidates were asked to identify the process used to create the audio.
- Question 4(b): Candidates were asked to identify two music or production features.
- Question 4(e): Candidates were asked to identify the control/effect applied to a synthesiser.
- Question 5: Candidates were asked to identify instruments or voices and link these to controls and effects.
- Questions 6(a), (b) and (c): Candidates were given an intellectual property case and asked to answer three questions from the text provided.

- Question 7(a): Candidates were asked to link an instrument or voice with an effect, and another instrument and voice with panning, on two songs by the same artist.

Assignment

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

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

- Stage 1: planning the production
- Stage 2a: implementing the production — audio capture
- Stage 2b: implementing the production — mixing skills
- Stage 2c: creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music

Many 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.

Most centres submitted media files and logbooks through the digital coursework submission portal as Word documents or PowerPoint presentations. However, a few centres still opted to submit material saved on memory sticks or CDs.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

- Question 1(d)(ii): Most candidates did not provide an accurate description of 60s pop.
- Question 2(d)(iii): Most candidates did not accurately describe the microphone placement for recording a piano.
- Question 4(c): Most candidates had difficulty listing controls used on reverb.
- Question 4(d): Many candidates were able to describe one way to reduce sibilance but did not describe another way.

- Question 7(b): Most candidates had difficulty identifying the tonality of a piece of music.

Assignment

Many candidates completed stage 1: planning the production to a good standard. For both productions, some candidates did not mention which controls, effects and processes they intended to use.

Many candidates completed stage 2a: implementing the production — audio capture to a good standard. However, some candidates' audio capture was poor, with popping and blasting present.

Many candidates completed stage 2b: 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.

A few candidates submitted logbooks in a chronological diary format, including information that does not attract marks. Some candidates submitted logbooks missing key information; for example, omitting screenshots and not reporting on audio recording and mixing sessions.

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 sections of music in different genres.

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.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are familiar with intellectual property cases.

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

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 start it. They should remind candidates to check and implement the mandatory list of technical skills.

Candidates must use at least five parts at National 5 and work with two microphones. A single part may contain two or more microphone tracks. Some

examples include a multi-mic'd drumkit part with two overhead microphones, a kick and snare, or an electric guitar part with two or more microphones.

Candidates should ensure that their logbooks are clear and concise, to the point where another person could recreate their production using the information they provide.

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. Although acceptable, to allow for personalisation and choice, centres should avoid whole cohorts recording the same multi-track or using the same video for film Foley.

When preparing files for submission, teachers and lecturers should check that all tracks can be heard and that they have transferred correctly. If SQA appointees cannot access files, it makes marking problematic. Centres should also ensure that flyleaves are completed.

Understanding Standards materials

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.

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](#).