

Course report 2026

National 5 Music Technology, SCQF level 5

We've written this report for teachers and lecturers. We recommend you read this with the published course assessment documents and marking instructions.

The report:

- provides a summary of how each course component performed
- highlights areas of the question paper and coursework where candidates performed well and areas where they did not perform well
- has advice you might find useful when preparing candidates for assessment

We collect and prepare the statistics in course reports before we complete the appeals process.

Statistical and grade boundary information

Course entries

Number of resulted entries in 2025: 1,422

Number of resulted entries in 2026: 1,570

Distribution of course awards (including minimum mark to achieve each grade)

Course award	Number of candidates	Percentage	Cumulative percentage	Minimum mark required
A	451	28.7	28.7	70
B	551	35.1	63.8	60
C	398	25.4	89.2	50
D	129	8.2	97.4	40
No award	41	2.6	100	Not applicable

We've not applied rounding to these statistics.

In this report:

- 'Most' means greater than or equal to 70%.
- 'Many' means 50% to 69%.
- 'Some' means 25% to 49%.
- 'Few' or 'a few' means less than 25%.

You can find [statistical reports](#) on our website.

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's 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 make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Senior Qualifications Scotland staff normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors use 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.

- We can adjust the grade boundaries downwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
- We can adjust the grade boundaries upwards if there's evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
- If levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, we maintain similar grade boundaries.

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](#).

How the course assessment performed

Question paper

The question paper performed in line with expectations. It contained a wide range of suitably challenging excerpts of music, and was fair and accessible.

Assignment

Centres used a variety of assignment briefs for both tasks.

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 audio books.

More centres than last year uploaded coursework through the digital coursework submission portal. However, some centres still opted to submit material saved on memory sticks or CDs. A few centres submitted logbooks in paper form.

How candidates performed

Areas where candidates performed well

Question paper

Most candidates answered the following questions well:

- Question 1(a) — identifying the decade of the excerpt
- Question 1(d)(i) — identifying the genre/style of the excerpt and giving a reason for their answer
- Question 2(a) — identifying effects applied to a synthesiser and vocal
- Question 2(d)(ii) — describing the polar pattern for recording the bass guitar
- Question 3(a) — identifying the genre/style of the music
- Question 3(d) — identifying the prominent effect on the lead electric guitar
- Question 4(b) — identifying two music or production features
- Question 4(e) — identifying the prominent effect/process applied to a snare drum
- Question 6(a) and (c) — answering questions on a given intellectual property case

Many candidates answered the following questions well:

- Question 1(b), (c) and (d)(ii) — identifying styles of music and related concepts
- Question 2(b) — identifying the concept they could hear in a multiple-choice question
- Question 2(c) — describing features of country music
- Question 3(b) — identifying two technological features of synth pop
- Question 3(c) — identifying a genre/style of music and describing the texture of the backing vocals
- Question 4(a)(i) — identifying the tonality of a piece of music
- Question 5 — identifying controls and effects applied to instruments
- Question 7(a) — linking an instrument or voice with an effect, and another instrument and voice with panning, from two excerpts in the same genre/style of music
- Question 7(b) — identifying the concept they could hear in a multiple-choice question

Assignment

Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge in:

- 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
- processes and controls

Areas where candidates did not perform well

Question paper

Most candidates did not answer the following questions well:

- Question 2(d)(iii) — describing the microphone placement for recording the bass guitar
- Question 4(a)(ii) — identifying the structure/form of the song
- Question 4(c) — identifying two main controls on a compressor
- Question 4(d) — describing two solutions for correcting a MIDI brass track playing out of time
- Question 6(b) — identifying why intellectual property protection was important in the case study

Many candidates did not answer the following question well:

- Question 2(d)(i) — identifying the type of microphone required to record the bass guitar

Assignment

Some candidates did not access the full range of marks for certain stages, as they did not include all the mandatory skills listed in the coursework assessment task

document (available on the [subject page](#) of our website) in either one or both of their chosen productions.

Although many candidates completed stage 1: planning the production to a good standard, for both assignments, some candidates did not mention which controls, effects and processes they intended to use.

Most 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.

Most 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 did not complete stage 3: evaluating the production well. 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.

Some evaluation templates did not correctly guide candidates on how to complete the evaluation section.

Some candidates completing the Foley brief selected overly complex or long clips to work with and synchronise sounds. These candidates would have benefited from shorter, more focused productions. A typical film clip for this task should be around 1 to 2 minutes in length.

Preparing candidates for assessment

Question paper

You should:

- Ensure that candidates are familiar with the full range of music concepts, different effects, controllers and processes applied to excerpts of music in different genres.
- Ensure that candidates are familiar with mic'ing techniques, including distance and placement. They 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.
- Give candidates listening activities, with correctly positioned stereo speakers. This gives candidates practice in identifying different types of panning (left, right and centre).
- Ensure that candidates are familiar with intellectual property cases.

Assignment

You should:

- Ensure that candidates get full experience of mic'ing other instruments in different situations before completing the assignment.
- Make candidates aware of the requirements of the assignment before they start it. Remind them to check and implement the mandatory list of technical skills listed in the coursework assessment document.
- Ensure candidates use at least five parts at National 5 and work with two microphones. A single part may contain two or more microphone tracks, but we consider this to be one part. 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.
- 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.

- Encourage candidates to choose their own productions. While it's acceptable for all candidates from a centre to record the same multi-track or use the same video for film Foley, this does not allow for much candidate personalisation or choice.
- Remind candidates that their logbooks must be clear and concise, to the point where another person could recreate their production using the information they provide. They should include key information such as details on audio recording and screen shots for mixing sections.
- When preparing files for submission, check that they are accessible and have been transferred correctly. It makes the marking process more difficult if we cannot access files.
- Ensure that candidates complete flyleaves.
- Review previous course reports and refer to Understanding Standards examples to help prepare candidates. The examples of candidate evidence are accompanied by a commentary written by a senior examiner, explaining why we awarded marks. For the assignment, examples are available from the Understanding Standards section of the [Qualifications Scotland secure site](#).