



## Course Report 2016

Subject	Music
Level	Advanced Higher

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future assessment. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

# Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

## Component 1: Performance or Portfolio

### Performance

The Performance component is assessed by an SQA visiting assessor. Candidates perform live a programme of music totalling 18 minutes between two instruments, or one instrument and voice. Each piece is marked out of 10, using clear performance criteria. Marks are then aggregated to award each candidate a mark out of 30 for each instrument. Candidates, therefore, receive a mark out of 60 for this component.

All visiting assessors attend a training event at which performance standards over a range of instrumental categories and levels (including National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher) are exemplified. All visiting assessors also take part in a standardisation exercise to ensure consistency in the application of the assessment criteria.

The assessment of the Performance component has remained remarkably consistent over the last few years.

### Portfolio

The Portfolio component is externally marked and quality assured by SQA. Candidates submit an audio folio of 12 minutes of music, which includes a minimum of two contrasting pieces, together with supporting evidence of the compositional process. Each composition is marked out of 20 in line with the General Marking Principles and the Detailed Marking Instructions for this assessment. Marks are then aggregated to award each candidate a mark out of 60 for this component.

In this first year of the new Advanced Higher Music there was a relatively low uptake for the new Portfolio (Composing) option. Advanced Higher Understanding Standards events will exemplify standards and promote approaches to this component of course assessment.

## Component 2: Question paper

The question paper, worth 40 marks, is a one and a quarter hour examination based on recorded excerpts of music. The paper is structured in the same way as the specimen question paper (SQP) and the exemplar question paper (EQP), and incorporates a mixture of multiple choice, short response, literacy and extended/analytical questions.

The question paper performed in line with expectations; feedback from the marking team was that it was a fair and balanced paper, appropriate for this level, which provided opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their subject knowledge and theory/notation skills.

Markers for the question paper attended a full day training meeting, at which standards were clearly exemplified through reference to candidates' responses. As the question paper was marked online, markers were also required to work through a number of practice scripts and

qualification scripts before proceeding to live e-marking. Markers were also well supported and monitored throughout the marking process by the Senior Team Leader and the Principal Assessor. This meant that the quality assurance was robust.

## **Section 2: Comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas in which candidates performed well**

#### **Component 1: Performance or Portfolio**

##### **Performance**

The overall standard of performances was very high and there were many outstanding performances. Many candidates played pieces well above the minimum requirements. Centres were well organised with completed candidate Mark Sheets, and a copy of the music was ready for the visiting assessor.

##### **Portfolio**

There was a relatively low uptake for the new Portfolio (composing) option. However, even with a small uptake, it was clear that there was a wide variety of genres and styles, including pieces created using music technology.

Some candidates displayed considerable skill and creativity in their pieces, writing coherently and stylistically for their chosen instrument(s). Many candidates provided good evidence to support the compositional process with informative and illuminating programme notes, session logs and performance plans/scores.

#### **Component 2: Question paper**

Most candidates approached the paper appropriately and appear to have been generally well prepared for the requirements and layout of this new question paper. This suggests that centres made good use of the specimen question paper and exemplar question paper.

Questions 1(a) and 2(a), both multiple choice questions, were answered well, with very few candidates providing additional answers/ticks.

In Question 2(e) the rhythm identification was answered well.

Question 3(a) part 4, the cadence identification was answered well by the majority of candidates, while Question 3(b) was answered very well.

Question 5(b) inserting the missing rests was also generally answered well.

While some candidates found Question 6 (a new type of question) challenging, most answered well in 6(a)(i) and 6(a)(ii). Some candidates were able to give very insightful and analytical answers to 6(b)(i) and 6(b)(ii).

## **Areas which candidates found demanding**

### **Component 1: Performance or Portfolio**

#### **Performance**

Some candidates' Performance programmes were under or over the required time allocation. The minimum requirement is 18 minutes between the two instruments (the maximum being 20).

The minimum time on one instrument is 6 minutes and the maximum is 12 minutes. Other combinations are acceptable, for example 9 and 9, 7 and 11, 8 and 10.

Some vocal candidates chose songs which did not suit their vocal technique and range.

#### **Portfolio**

In the Portfolio marks are awarded for developing and refining musical ideas in music that is original to the candidate, as well as for the creative and assured use of compositional methods and music concepts including melody, harmony, rhythm, structure and timbre. Some candidates found this challenging, particularly with regard to harmony and timbre.

Some programme notes did not provide a relevant explanation of the piece of music, preferring instead just to list concepts used. Candidates should seek to utilise their analytical skills developed in other parts of the course and apply these skills of critical reflection to their own compositions when constructing a programme note.

### **Component 2: Question paper**

While most candidates appeared to be well prepared for the question paper, there were still some questions that proved to be quite challenging.

Question 2(c) and 2(d) appeared to be challenging for some candidates, with some not correctly identifying the tonality or the rhythmic concept.

In Question 3(c) some candidates had difficulty correctly identifying the time signature.

Question 4, which was largely a literacy question, elicited variable responses. Question 4(a) appeared to be challenging for candidates, many of whom were not able to correctly complete all bars of the rhythm. Question 4(b) identifying the triad proved to be difficult for some candidates, as did 4(c) inserting the notes in the bass stave. Question 4(d)(ii) writing the enharmonic equivalent on the stave was generally not answered well. Question 4(e)(i) chord identification also appeared to be challenging for some candidates; in contrast 4(e)(ii) was answered well by most candidates.

Question 5, while eliciting a large number of good responses in part (b), proved to be challenging for many candidates in part (d) where missing notes had to be inserted.

In parts (a) and (b)(i) of Question 6, some candidates identified concepts or provided similarities/differences which were not relevant to the stated categories, ie some chose to

write about rhythm which was not one of the categories. This may have meant that they were able to devote less time to focusing on the given categories.

Some candidates found Question 6 part (b)(ii) quite challenging with some providing contradictory information.

## **Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates**

### **Component 1: Performance or Portfolio**

#### **Performance**

Chordal guitarists did not always meet the requirements in that some did not incorporate a melody along with chordal accompaniment in at least one piece. In programmes which combine melodic and chordal guitar, centres are reminded that the full number of chords (18) should be demonstrated.

Some centres offered the visiting assessor tablature for guitar programmes. This alone is not sufficient for examination purposes. Standard notation must be provided, whether or not the candidate is playing from tablature. Centres must provide a copy of the melodic line which the chordal guitar is accompanying. This provides a context for the chords.

Some bagpipe candidates chose to play sections of a piobaireachd and some chose to play an entire piobaireachd. Either option is acceptable as long as the centre ensures that the sections chosen are of the appropriate task level.

Some candidates did not play the required number of drumkit styles. Six styles with four fills within each style are required at Advanced Higher level; two styles may be incorporated in one piece only, in which case, double the requisite fills is not a requirement. Centres should refer to the drumkit style bank for guidance.

Centres are reminded that for keyboard, at this level, full finger chords are mandatory.

It is recommended that singers perform from memory to allow a convincing interpretation and presentation, but performing from memory is not a mandatory requirement.

#### **Portfolio**

Candidates should be aware that marks are awarded for:

- ◆ the development and refinement of musical ideas
- ◆ creative and assured use of compositional methods
- ◆ selecting and applying music concepts in a sophisticated way: melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, timbre
- ◆ creating music that is original to the learner

Candidates should throughout the process of composition reflect on whether and how they have developed and refined their material; some of the most successful and creative compositions showed considerable development and refinement of musical ideas while not necessarily using a large number of instruments. Other successful compositions demonstrated a sophisticated and assured use of harmony and timbre, but there were some where more focus could have been given to creating successful harmonic progressions and/or writing stylistically for the chosen instruments.

Centres who are preparing candidates for this component should ensure that they are familiar with the material contained in the Music: Portfolio General Assessment Information document, including the General and Detailed Marking Instructions and the summary statements. This can be found on the Coursework information section of the SQA Advanced Higher Music web page: <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/48450.html>.

Programme notes should provide a relevant explanation of the music, and not just be a list of concepts used. Candidates should seek to utilise their analytical skills developed in other parts of the course and apply these skills of critical reflection to their own compositions when constructing a programme note.

Candidates who submit an arrangement as part of the portfolio must include a copy of the source materials used, and must clarify the details of their own input in the accompanying programme note. There must always be clear evidence of specific content that is created by the candidate rather than a basic transcription from an available score.

## **Component 2: Question paper**

To help candidates to achieve the requirements of this course assessment, teachers, lecturers and assessors are encouraged to consider the following examples of good practice and strategies:

- ◆ In music literacy questions, candidates should take great care to ensure that any responses involving music notation are clear and unambiguous (eg filling in and placing of note heads, accurate placing of accidentals, placing dots in the correct place after notes and making sure that rests are clear). Using a pen, rather than a pencil, may help to make responses clearer. With the advent of e-marking, markers are now marking from scanned images of candidates' responses. It is particularly important, therefore, that candidates make all written responses as clear as possible.
- ◆ Candidates should have regular opportunities to listen to performances using scores where possible, as following a score can promote literacy skills and improve aural perception and discrimination.
- ◆ Short answers (one or two words, or a phrase) will continue to specifically examine concepts introduced at Higher or Advanced Higher level. This does not apply to the 'map' question (Question 3(a) in the 2016 AH QP).
- ◆ In questions involving the identification of chords candidates should write either the chord name **or** number and, where appropriate, first or second inversion. There is no need to write the chord name and number.

- ◆ The marking instructions for the 2016 AH Music Question Paper and additional guidance in the marking instructions are very comprehensive. Centres are advised to take careful note of them as they clearly indicate the type (and range) of acceptable answers. Centres might also find it useful to consider this exemplification when devising prelim type events or class assessment marking instructions.
- ◆ In Question 6 parts (a) and (b)(i) candidates should be encouraged to focus specifically on identifying concepts or similarities/differences under the given headings. For example, rhythm was not a stated category in the 2016 AH question paper, yet some candidates spent time writing about rhythmic concepts or similarities/differences.
- ◆ Centres should be aware that these categories may vary from year to year depending on the particular excerpts of music. For example, Rhythm/Tempo might be a category, or there might be a combination of categories as there was with Timbre and Texture in the Specimen Question Paper.
- ◆ It was clear that some candidates found Question 6 — and in particular part (b)(ii) — quite challenging. When preparing students for this question centres might wish to consider a variety of strategies to address this including:
  - 1 Highlighting to candidates that the activities undertaken in the Understanding and Analysing Music Unit lead directly to the skills required to undertake Question 6. The ability to recognise and distinguish between a range of music concepts and styles, and to analyse the information available before drawing conclusions is an ability which is required for both the Understanding and Analysing Music Unit and for Question 6.
  - 2 An individual or group exercise asking students, using their own or teacher's choice of music and the format of Question 6, to make up and then answer/discuss their questions and marking instructions.
  - 3 Encouraging students to 'fingerprint' styles of music. For example, asking the question 'what are the fingerprints of neo-classical music? How does that style differ from impressionism?'

In Question 6(a) there were instances where long lists of unrelated concepts are being provided in questions where candidates are asked to identify the prominent features in the music; this is neither the purpose of, nor in the spirit of, this type of question.

Candidate responses should contain the prominent concepts under each category relating to the music heard. From 2017 onwards, lists of concepts unrelated to the music and/or extensive lists of contradictory concepts will result in a loss of marks.

### **Example 1**

The excerpt is in 4/4 time throughout, the candidate correctly identifies this and is awarded 1 mark. If the candidate then goes on to list, eg 3/4, 6/8, 12/8 and 5/4 and these are not present in the music, the candidate loses the original mark awarded for this part of the question.

### **Example 2**

The candidate correctly identifies the style of the excerpt as Impressionist and is awarded 1 mark. If the candidate goes on to list, eg Baroque and Classical and Minimalist and these are not applicable to the music heard, the candidate loses the original mark for this part of the question.

It is anticipated that some of the areas highlighted in this report will be addressed at the forthcoming Understanding Standards events later in the year. These events will focus on the standards required for course assessment at Advanced Higher. The events will be led by the Qualifications Development staff and are intended for subject specialists from SQA centres.

Attendance at any of these events can be used to contribute to Continued Professional Development (CPD) and CPD certificates will be available on the Events Booking System shortly after each event. Please book through SQAs [online Events Management Booking System](#).

## Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	0
------------------------------------	---

Number of resulted entries in 2016	1675
------------------------------------	------

### Statistical information: Performance of candidates

#### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark -				
A	61.7%	61.7%	1034	70
B	22.9%	84.7%	384	60
C	9.9%	94.5%	165	50
D	2.3%	96.8%	39	45
No award	3.2%	-	53	0

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year, SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related, as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.