Common questions about National 5 and Higher Music Technology

General questions

What Understanding Standards materials are available for Music Technology?

SQA are publishing examples of candidate evidence with commentaries as part of the Understanding Standards programme. These materials are for teachers and lecturers to help them develop their understanding of standards required for assessment. As these materials become available, they are being published in the following locations:

♦ SQA's secure website — materials relating to the Music Technology assignments. Teachers and lecturers can arrange access to these materials through their SQA co-ordinator.

♦ [Understanding Standards website](#) — materials relating to the Music Technology question papers.

Find out more about the Understanding Standards programme at www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards.

Can I submit candidates' evidence collectively on a memory stick with a folder for each candidate?

Before the uplift dates for the Music Technology assignments, SQA will issue packets for evidence to be submitted, along with Ex6 forms that list the candidates for each centre. Each Ex6 form lists up to 10 candidates in alphabetical order, by surname.

You can use one CD or memory stick for each group of up to 10 candidates.

Can candidates use headphones during the question paper?

Candidates can use headphones during the National 5 and Higher Music Technology question papers.

Some centres have languages labs or studios, which have the facility to play one CD to multiple sets of headphones. If your centre does not have these facilities, then our advice is that you play the question paper CD through stereo speakers and seat candidates centrally between the speakers.

How does SQA calculate scaled marks for National 5 and Higher Music Technology?

We scale marks for the assignment and question paper at both levels. For more information, and to support centre estimates, please refer to the scaling tables in Appendix 1 and 2 of this document.

National 5 course assessment — assignment

How many contexts do candidates have to cover for the assignment?

At National 5 level, candidates are required to complete **two** pieces of work, each one in a different context.

Six example briefs are included in the [Assessment tasks and sample briefs](#) document, which is available on the [National 5 Music Technology webpage](#).

Candidates may choose any two of these contexts.

Can a candidate choose audiobook and gaming, or are they too similar? Are there any combinations of briefs that candidates cannot choose?

Candidates may choose any two briefs that cover all of the requirements stated in the course specification. However, the briefs they choose must cover two different contexts.

Can I adapt the assignment briefs to suit my centre?

You can adapt assignment briefs provided they present an equal challenge to the candidate.

There are a number of options for design brief formats, but you should use the amount of detail in the instructions for candidates in the sample briefs as a guide if you are devising your own briefs, or adapting the sample briefs.

For National 5, examples of acceptable briefs could also include:

♦ a dramatic script with sound clips, samples and musical accompaniment to enhance the script
♦ an advertisement for a fictional film with voiceover, sound effects and music

Both could be treated as sound recordings, with no video, and would include multi-track recording, along with production and editing features to produce a final master.

Does the assignment still require a minimum of five tracks, two recorded with microphones?

Yes. Each of the two tasks must include at least five tracks, two of which must be recorded using microphones.

Does the requirement 'at least two microphones' refer to two different tracks captured by a microphone, or to two different types of microphone?

This refers to the number of tracks recorded using a microphone; the same microphone could be used for each of the two tracks. However, as candidates need to know about all the polar patterns listed in the concept tables, it is helpful to give them opportunities to use a range of microphones during learning and teaching.

What is the allowed length of the completed assignments?

The permitted production length is included in the first paragraph of the instructions for candidates. Candidates should make sure that their finished production meets that requirement. For the Foley, computer gaming, radio broadcast and audiobook tasks, the maximum length is 2 minutes. For the live and multi-track recording tasks, it is 3 minutes.

Can candidates include a vlog for the assignment?

We have no plans to develop a vlogging assignment brief. However, an assignment based on vlogging might be acceptable in the future, if it met all the requirements set out in the course specification and had the same degree of difficulty as existing tasks.

Can candidates submit their progress record and evaluation as an audio track or vlog?

Yes, candidates can submit their progress record and evaluation report in any written, electronic and/or recorded oral form. They are assessed for content rather than how they are presented.

National 5 course assessment — question paper

Will the 'case study' question (question 6 in the specimen paper) always cover intellectual property or will it also cover other aspects of the music industry?

It is useful for candidates to learn about the music industry to understand the development of different genres, styles and technologies. However, question 6 of the question paper will always focus on understanding intellectual property.

Will technological developments be covered in the question paper?

The list of technological developments (for example, player pianos) appears in the course support notes. Knowledge of specific items in the list is not mandatory and will not be assessed in the question paper. However, an awareness of how technology has developed over time (for example the quality of reel-to-reel compared to a digital recording) may help candidates to identify genres.

Higher course assessment — assignment

Scope of the assignment

How can I use the marking instructions to help my candidates access the full range of marks?

The marking instructions are published in the *Higher Music Technology Course Specification* and clarify exactly what is expected of candidates at each stage of the assessment:

♦ stage 1 — planning
♦ stage 2 — implementing
♦ stage 3 — evaluating

Each stage has sub-stages that detail the bands in which candidates can achieve marks. Each band for each sub-stage has a list of 'musts' that candidates have to include in their assignment to access the full range of marks. For example, in the implementing stages the 'musts' are a list of the technical skills that candidates must demonstrate in their assignment.

In the context of the assignment, what does the term 'electronically produced' mean?

Anything that is not an acoustically produced sound, for example hardware synthesisers, virtual instruments and/or MIDI instruments.

Do candidates need to include a minimum of two different genres or styles in their assignment?

This is not a requirement for the Higher Music Technology assignment from session 2018–19.

Is dialogue mandatory for a sound design Foley for film context?

No, dialogue is not mandatory.

How are candidates' logs marked?

To access the full range of marks, candidates need to provide detailed evidence in their log of how they arrived at the evidence they have submitted, and how they have covered all of the skills. Please refer to the detailed marking instructions for stage 2 a–e. A detailed log allows candidates to access the higher mark bands.

Can an assignment that fulfils the minimum requirements achieve full marks?

Yes, as long as the candidate has demonstrated all of the required skills, they will access the full range of marks.

Will candidates be penalised if their recording exceeds 7 minutes?

No automatic penalties are applied. However, candidates should stick to the duration of 4 to 7 minutes. They need to plan the content they are going to include and document it in their log. Recordings of longer than 7 minutes are more challenging and time-consuming for candidates to plan and document.

Stage 1 — planning

What are the two stages of planning?

- Stage 1 a — planning the sound design. This element is the main context, for example Foley, radio broadcast or audio book.
- Stage 1 b — planning multi-track recordings is for both the electronic and audio multi-tracks.

The two stages for planning should be separate and clearly documented.

Do candidates need to include a copy of the music they have recorded or can they simply name the song and the instruments used?

Candidates must provide a detailed performance plan for the musical elements of the production. Please refer to the marking instructions to ensure that candidates are providing everything required.

What is the difference between a part and a track?

A part is, for example, an electric guitar part or a lead vocal part, or a piano part. The electric guitar part may have two microphone tracks and a DI (direct injection) track within it, but would still count as one part. The lead vocal part may have been double-tracked and sent to an effects group or bus but it is still one part. The piano part may have been mic'ed in stereo, but still counts as one part even though there are two tracks used.

How many multi-track recordings should candidates include in their assignment?

A Foley project will have multiple tracks of Foley and sound design, but candidates are also required to electronically produce sound and/or music as a multi-track and audio that has been multi-tracked.

What is the minimum number of tracks for a multi-track recording?

The minimum part count is 10 for the assignment. There is no minimum number of tracks for a multi-track recording. However, candidates must demonstrate all of the required skills in their assignment to access the full range of marks.

How many multi-tracks are required?

There are three multi-tracks required.

The assignment has a context, for example radio broadcast, which would be multi-tracked. Within this, you will have multi-tracked audio recordings and multi-tracked electronic recordings. Therefore, both multi-tracked audio and electronically produced sound and/or music are required within the assignment. Multi-tracked audio could be a rock song used within the radio broadcast and the electronically produced sound and/or music could be a piece of dance music used within the radio broadcast.

Does using multiple mics to record a drum kit count as individual tracks? If a drum kit is grouped to allow processes to be applied does this count as one track on a multi-track recording?

Multiple mics on a drum kit count as individual tracks, but a drum kit is counted as one part.

If your candidates group drum kit tracks, these tracks still count as individual tracks, for example if a candidate recorded four tracks of drums they would still count as four individual tracks, even though they have been grouped or bussed.

Can the multi-track recording include MIDI and electronic elements, or does each element need to be separate to fulfil the requirements of the assignment?

To ensure candidates are demonstrating the required skills, please refer to the marking instructions for stages 2 a, 2 b, 2 c and 2 d. It may be better for candidates to demonstrate these skills separately, although this is not a mandatory requirement.

If a candidate has bounced down a multi-track of five tracks and put this into the final session, does this count as one part?

No, in this example it would still count as five tracks. If a multi-track contains a stereo acoustic guitar, mono vocal and stereo piano it has five tracks but three parts.

Stage 2 a

A candidate has a space of approximately 15 seconds at the end of their Foley/sound design production, can they play their multi-tracked sound and/or music over the credits of their film to demonstrate the requirements of stages 2 a, 2 b, 2 c and 2 d?

Yes, candidates can use this time to demonstrate the required skills for stages 2 a, 2 b, 2 c and 2 d.

For microphone techniques should candidates use a range of microphone and polar patterns?

As detailed in the assignment marking instructions, for stage 2 a (audio capture), candidates must provide evidence of selecting and making appropriate use of at least two types of microphone and two polar patterns, with placement appropriate to the sound source and using at least one stereo microphone technique.

Stage 2 c

Do candidates have to compose electronic music for the MIDI or virtual instrument element?

There is no requirement for candidates to compose music as long as they are demonstrating the required skills and they are manipulating the electronically produced music. Refer to the marking instructions for stage 2 c.

Do candidates need to demonstrate a certain number of effects or processes to achieve full marks?

Candidates must use noise gate, compression and/or limiting to demonstrate the required processing skills. As part of the evidence required for applying effects, candidates must manipulate the controls of virtual and/or MIDI instruments and ADSR, LFO and filter are examples of how candidates can achieve this.

Is grouping/bussing the process of combining a set amount of tracks together to make it easier for track automation and control over the overall final mix?

Grouping and bussing could involve, for example, a candidate bussing all their drum kit tracks to one fader that they then apply processes to, or pull up or pull down, to control the overall level of the group of tracks.

Do candidates have to create a stereo mix and demonstrate sensitive use of panning to create a sound stage?

Yes, candidates must work in stereo as they are required to provide evidence of 'applying a range of mixing techniques, including using volume, panning, automation, send and insert effects and grouping/bussing to achieve a balanced and creative mix'.

Is it acceptable for candidates to have three separate digital audio workstation (DAW) sessions, for example one radio show, one multi-track and one electronic multi-track where the multi-tracks would then be bounced down and imported into the overall radio show (as long as there are still at least 10 tracks in the final assignment)?

Yes. Having separate DAW sessions and then using the bounce downs in the final overall context may well be the best way for candidates to work.

Can a candidate 'stem' their project, for example include one Foley project that may be five tracks, one dialogue project that may be four tracks and one music project that may be four tracks, and then create a final project with the final three stems?

If candidates find it useful to work with stems in their final mix then this is acceptable, provided they are covering electronically produced sound and/or music as well as an audio multi-track.

Higher course assessment — question paper

How will the question paper assess candidates' knowledge of technological developments?

The question paper will assess knowledge of technological developments in a similar way that the specimen question paper assesses knowledge of key innovators.

Is there a published list of the key innovators that could feature in the question paper?

No, there is not a published list. Please refer to the specimen question paper marking instructions for examples of the type of key innovators that candidates could study to prepare for this topic.

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Appendix 1 — National 5 Music Technology scaling table

Mark	Scaled mark 40–30 (QP)	Scaled mark 100–70 (assignment)	Mark	Scaled mark 40–30 (QP)	Scaled mark 100–70 (assignment)	Mark	Scaled mark 100–70 (assignment)	Mark	Scaled mark 100–70 (assignment)
1	1	1	26	20	18	51	36	76	53
2	2	1	27	20	19	52	36	77	54
3	2	2	28	21	20	53	37	78	55
4	3	3	29	22	20	54	38	79	55
5	4	4	30	23	21	55	39	80	56
6	5	4	31	23	22	56	39	81	57
7	5	5	32	24	22	57	40	82	57
8	6	6	33	25	23	58	41	83	58
9	7	6	34	26	24	59	41	84	59
10	8	7	35	26	25	60	42	85	60
11	8	8	36	27	25	61	43	86	60
12	9	8	37	28	26	62	43	87	61
13	10	9	38	29	27	63	44	88	62
14	11	10	39	29	27	64	45	89	62
15	11	11	40	30	28	65	46	90	63
16	12	11	41		29	66	46	91	64
17	13	12	42		29	67	47	92	64
18	14	13	43		30	68	48	93	65
19	14	13	44		31	69	48	94	66
20	15	14	45		32	70	49	95	67
21	16	15	46		32	71	50	96	67
22	17	15	47		33	72	50	97	68
23	17	16	48		34	73	51	98	69
24	18	17	49		34	74	52	99	69
25	19	18	50		35	75	53	100	70

Appendix 2 — Higher Music Technology scaling table

Mark	Scaled mark 40–30 (QP)	Scaled mark 80–70 (assignment)	Mark	Scaled mark 40–30 (QP)	Scaled mark 80–70 (assignment)	Mark	Scaled mark 80–70 (assignment)	Mark	Scaled mark 80–70 (assignment)
1	1	1	21	16	18	41	36	61	53
2	2	2	22	17	19	42	37	62	54
3	2	3	23	17	20	43	38	63	55
4	3	4	24	18	21	44	39	64	56
5	4	4	25	19	22	45	39	65	57
6	5	5	26	20	23	46	40	66	58
7	5	6	27	20	24	47	41	67	59
8	6	7	28	21	25	48	42	68	60
9	7	8	29	22	25	49	43	69	60
10	8	9	30	23	26	50	44	70	61
11	8	10	31	23	27	51	45	71	62
12	9	11	32	24	28	52	46	72	63
13	10	11	33	25	29	53	46	73	64
14	11	12	34	26	30	54	47	74	65
15	11	13	35	26	31	55	48	75	66
16	12	14	36	27	32	56	49	76	67
17	13	15	37	28	32	57	50	77	67
18	14	16	38	29	33	58	51	78	68
19	14	17	39	29	34	59	52	79	69
20	15	18	40	30	35	60	53	80	70