Course Report 2016

Subject	Music Technology
Level	National 5

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Assignment

The Music Technology Assignment was successfully completed, with many centres and candidates submitting creative material of a very high standard. There was a wide variety of assignment briefs submitted including multi-track recordings, radio broadcasts, Foley for film, games design music and audio books. In most cases candidates followed the design briefs and effectively completed this component.

Component 2: Question paper

Most candidates responded well to the demands of the question paper. This component contained a wide range of music excerpts and provided suitable pace and challenge for National 5 level.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Assignment

Generally, the Music Technology Assignment was completed successfully. There was evidence of centres implementing a variety of different assignment briefs.

For the assignment most candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of:

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

Candidates seem to be well prepared and knowledgeable about software programmes and capturing and manipulating sound. There were some very interesting and creative projects submitted. Logbooks were submitted in paper form or electronically as Word documents or PowerPoints. There is evidence that centres have appropriate resources, and are well placed to provide a good level of support.

Component 2: Question paper

Question 1(a), (b), (c): Candidates are assessed on styles of music and related concepts. Most candidates were well prepared and able to identify the correct answers.

Question 2(c) Candidates are assessed on microphone selection, type of polarity and placement. Most candidates were well prepared and able to identify the correct answers.

Question 3(a), (b), (d): Candidates are assessed on a range of technology and music concepts. Most candidates were able to identify the correct answers.

Question 5: Candidates are assessed on identifying instruments/voices and linking these to controls and effects. Most candidates were able to identify the correct answers.

Question 6(a): Candidates are assessed by linking an instrument/voice with an effect and another instrument and voice with panning, on two versions of the one song. Most candidates were able to identify the correct answers.

Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Assignment

Some candidates had difficulty with Stage 3 — evaluating the production. In some cases, evaluations were poor with few, if any, constructive evaluative comments.

Component 2: Question paper

Question 1(d): Some candidates had difficulty identifying the correct music concept.

Question 3(c): Some candidates had difficulty commenting on two production features common to a musical. In some cases, candidates listed performance features instead.

Question 3(e): Some candidates had difficulty identifying a concept best describing the guitar part.

Question 4(a)(i) and 4(a)(ii): Some candidates had difficulty identifying the correct time signature and Italian string term.

Question 4(b): Some candidates had difficulty listing two settings on a reverb effects processor. In some cases, candidates listed types of reverb rather than a setting.

Question 6(b): Some candidates had difficulty answering the correct tonality of the song.

Section 3: Advice for the preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Assignment

Centres are reminded of the number of tracks which use a microphone. A minimum of five tracks is needed for National 5, including two microphones. This should be clearly documented and evidenced in the planning and progress report. Some candidates failed to use the required number of microphones in their assignment.

Most centres submitted recordings and logbooks electronically on CD and memory sticks. There were very few problems accessing assignments as file management was of a good standard.

Some candidates need to be better prepared when completing the supporting documentation for Stages 1 and 3 as, in some cases, candidates submitted little evidence of formal plan, progress report and evaluation, subsequently not accessing marks. Please refer to the marking instructions given in the Music Technology Assignment Assessment Task and sample briefs.

Component 2: Question paper

In preparing candidates for the question paper, centres should ensure that candidates have experience of identifying the full range of music concepts.

Centres should ensure that candidates have experience of identifying different effects, controllers and processes applied to a section of music and effects processor settings.

They should also encourage the experience of mic'ing other instruments in different situations. This should be covered during the Music Technology Skills Unit and reinforced in the completion of the Music Technology Assignment.

Candidates are required to distinguish between acoustic and electric guitars.

Candidates must use the concept 'drumkit' rather than drums.

Candidates are also required to distinguish between lead and backing vocals when describing panning.

As a matter of good practice, centres should ensure that speakers are tested for left and right balance before the question paper exam.

Grade Boundary and Statistical information:

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2015	498

Number of resulted entries in 2016	745

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	49.9%	19.9%	372	68
B	24.4%	74.4%	182	58
C	14.4%	88.7%	107	48
D	4.3%	93.0%	32	43
No award	7.0%	-	52	-

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.