



Advanced Higher  
Coursework  
Assessment Task



# Advanced Higher Music Technology Project Assessment task

This document provides information for teachers and lecturers about the coursework component of this course in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

**Valid for session 2021-2022 only.**

The Advanced Higher Music Technology Project Assessment Tasks valid from session 2019-20 are available this session on SQA's secure website for reference. SQA co-ordinators can arrange access.

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# Introduction

This document contains instructions for teachers and lecturers and instructions for candidates for the Advanced Higher Music Technology project for session 2021-22.

The structure of the project for session 2021-22 is a combination of the research and production projects introduced in session 2019-20.

## Project – session 2021-22

This project has 130 marks. This is 100% of the overall mark for the course assessment.

This project will:

- ◆ allow candidates to demonstrate practical skills in project planning, independent thinking, research, and critical listening. Candidates investigate and analyse, experiment with, and synthesise music technology skills, techniques, and processes, and present their findings in a suitable format
- ◆ assess the practical application of knowledge and skills from the course, and those gained through independent research. Candidates plan, implement, and evaluate a large-scale creative production using music technology

This project has six stages:

Project stage	Mark allocation
<b>Stage 1:</b> identifying an appropriate topic in a music technology context, and produce an outline specification	5 marks
<b>Stage 2a:</b> investigating and analysing technology skills, techniques, and processes, and relevant musical analysis as appropriate	10 marks
<b>Stage 2b:</b> experimenting with music technology skills, techniques, and processes	10 marks
<b>Stage 2c:</b> synthesising investigation, analysis, experimentation, and drawing conclusions	10 marks
<b>Stage 3:</b> planning the production	10 marks
<b>Stage 4a:</b> implementing the production – audio capture	10 marks
<b>Stage 4b:</b> implementing the production – processing skills	10 marks
<b>Stage 4c:</b> implementing the production – applying effects	10 marks
<b>Stage 4d:</b> implementing the production – mixing and sequencing skills	10 marks
<b>Stage 4e:</b> implementing the production – creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music	10 marks
<b>Stage 5a:</b> mastering the production – analysis and critical listening skills	10 marks
<b>Stage 5b:</b> mastering the production – finalising and mastering techniques	10 marks
<b>Stage 6a:</b> evaluating and reflecting	10 marks
<b>Stage 6b:</b> organising and presenting, including using information from a range of sources	5 marks
<b>Total</b>	<b>130 marks</b>

Teachers or lecturers should provide candidates with the ‘instructions for candidates’ in this document.

# Instructions for teachers and lecturers

## Task requirements

Candidates can choose their project topic from any appropriate music technology context that provides sufficient scope to demonstrate all of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment, such as:

- ◆ advanced sound production techniques in modern rock music
- ◆ advanced Foley and sound design for film, animation or computer gaming
- ◆ advanced mixing techniques in 21st century pop music
- ◆ advanced mic'ing and recording techniques in contemporary classical production
- ◆ mastering techniques

Candidates must link the research and production stages of the project by context.

Candidates should avoid contexts that are too broad or do not provide sufficient scope for the research aspects of the project.

An example of a research context that is too broad is 'multi-tracked production techniques'. Candidates may struggle to identify particular skills, techniques, and processes, as there are so many possible sub contexts within this very broad area.

A context that does not provide enough scope is 'kick drum processing techniques', as there is a finite number of skills, techniques, and processes candidates could research and use in their projects.

Candidates must agree their chosen context with you, to ensure it meets all of the assessment task requirements. The project topic must allow candidates to demonstrate all of the required research and technical skills listed below:

### Investigation and research skills in the context of music technology

- ◆ identifying an appropriate research topic in a music technology context
- ◆ using information from a range of text and/or digital sources
- ◆ investigating and analysing music technology skills, techniques, and processes
- ◆ experimenting with music technology skills, techniques, and processes
- ◆ synthesising investigation and analysis, and experimentation, and drawing conclusions
- ◆ organising and presenting

### Critical listening skills

- ◆ analysing audio recordings and production techniques, including relevant musical analysis where appropriate

## Audio capture

- ◆ experimenting with microphone and capture techniques (for example, using multi-mic'ing and ambient or room mic'ing)
- ◆ selecting and making appropriate and justified use of at least two types of microphone and two polar patterns, with:
  - placement appropriate to the sound source
  - use of at least one stereo recording technique
- ◆ selecting and making appropriate and justified use of at least one source that requires a direct line input
- ◆ setting appropriate input gain and monitoring levels, with no distortion
- ◆ selecting and using virtual and/or MIDI instruments to create electronic sound and/or music where appropriate to the candidate's project
- ◆ successfully designing and safely constructing the signal path for multiple inputs
- ◆ overdubbing at least one track

## Processing

- ◆ applying extensive creative and corrective equalisation that is appropriate to the material. The candidate must provide reasons and justify their choices in their progress record in at least six instances
- ◆ applying extensive dynamics processing, including the use of compression and/or side-chain compression and/or limiting, and/or noise gate. The candidate must provide reasons and justify their choices in their progress record in at least six instances
- ◆ extensive editing of tracks, including editing a minimum of three takes into a single take (comping) **where possible**, and accurate topping and tailing

## Applying effects

- ◆ in at least six instances, extensive application of time domain and other effects, including at least three from:
  - delay, echo, reverb, chorus, phase, and flange. The candidate must give reasons and justify their choices in their progress record
- ◆ if appropriate to the candidate project, in at least six instances:
  - extensive manipulation of the controls of virtual and/or MIDI instruments (for example, ADSR envelopes, LFO, and filter). The candidate must give reasons and justify their choices in their progress record

## Mixing and sequencing skills

- ◆ applying an extensive range of mixing techniques, including using volume, panning, automation, send and insert effects, and grouping/bussing to achieve a balanced and creative mix
- ◆ accurate synchronisation and/or sequencing in complex scenarios involving multiple takes and/or simultaneous events
- ◆ mixing down to an audio pre-master in an appropriate file format

## **Mastering**

- ◆ reference recordings (commercial masters in the same genre or context, that the candidate used to compare with their own mastering)
- ◆ candidate analysis and critical listening commentary, including detailed comparisons with reference recordings and proposed mastering decisions
- ◆ a detailed description of the mastering chain, with detailed evidence of A-B'ing against reference recordings as the mastering session progresses
- ◆ detailed use of creative and corrective equalisation at an appropriate point or points in the mastering chain
- ◆ detailed use of compression at an appropriate point or points in the mastering chain, both as a level enhancing tool and to control dynamic range, including the use of multi-band compression where appropriate
- ◆ use of stereo imaging and enhancement tools (such as, valve and tape emulators, preamp modelling and saturation plug-ins), mid/side processing and dithering as appropriate
- ◆ topping and tailing and final DAW editing as appropriate
- ◆ limiting, finalising, and bouncing down to an audio master in an appropriate file format

## **Autonomous working and independent thinking skills**

- ◆ working without guidance and supervision
- ◆ rephrasing, refining, and improving responses independently
- ◆ integrating
- ◆ analysing
- ◆ synthesising
- ◆ evaluating

## **Project management skills**

- ◆ producing an outline project specification
- ◆ defining timelines
- ◆ managing resources
- ◆ projecting outcomes
- ◆ tracking progress
- ◆ evaluating project outcomes

# Marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Advanced Higher Music Technology project are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

## General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b For each of the stages, select the band descriptor that most closely describes the evidence presented. Once the best fit has been selected:
  - where the evidence almost matches the level above, award the higher mark from the range
  - where the evidence just meets the standard described, award the lower mark from the range
  - where the evidence completely matches the highest level band descriptor for any stage, award full marks for that stage

## Detailed marking instructions

For defining a project brief:

- ◆ If a candidate does not provide an outline specification, award 0 marks for stage 1 – identifying an appropriate topic in a music technology context, and produce an outline specification.

For planning:

- ◆ If a candidate does not provide plans, award 0 marks for stage 3 – planning.

For implementing the completed audio pre-master and the record of progress:

- ◆ If a candidate does not provide an audio pre-master, award 0 marks for stages 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d.
- ◆ If a candidate does not provide a record of progress, award appropriate marks from the lower bands. For example, for stage 4a, award a mark from the 3-4 range, as there is no evidence.
- ◆ If the record of progress does not demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant technical concepts, technological developments and, if appropriate, relevant music concepts, styles and genres, award appropriate marks from the lower bands. For example, for stage 4a, candidates can only 'demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of audio capture techniques' and access the full range of marks if they use relevant technical concepts in their log to describe and justify their choices.

- ◆ If a candidate uses presets in stages 4b, 4c, 4d and 5b, award appropriate marks from the lower bands. For example, for stage 4b award a mark from the 5-6 range, as they are only ‘demonstrating some knowledge of processing skills’ if they are using presets.

Award marks for mastering based on the completed audio master and the record of progress:

- ◆ If a candidate does not provide an audio master, award 0 marks for stages 5a and 5b mastering.
- ◆ If a candidate does not provide analysis and critical listening commentary, award 0 marks for stage 5a.
- ◆ If a candidate does not provide reference recordings, award 0 marks for stage 5a.
- ◆ If a candidate’s analysis and critical listening commentary for stage 5a and the record of progress for stage 5b do not demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant technical concepts, technological developments and, if appropriate, relevant music concepts, styles and genres, award appropriate marks from the lower bands. For example, for stage 5b, candidates can only ‘demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of mastering skills and technical awareness’, and access the full range of marks if they use relevant technical concepts in their log to describe and justify their choices.

Award marks for evaluating based on the evaluation report, which must relate to the audio master provided. If a candidate does not provide an audio master, award 0 marks for stage 6 – evaluating.

## Stage 1: identifying an appropriate topic in a music technology context, and produce an outline specification

The candidate must:

- ◆ identify a music technology context with sufficient scope for investigation and analysis, experimentation, synthesis and production and produce a meaningful and appropriately demanding project specification
- ◆ produce an outline project specification that clearly justifies why they chose their topic, and gives an overview of the project, a timeline, proposed resources, and projected outcomes, as well as details of the new skills, techniques, and processes they intend to use in their production

Candidates must link the research and production stages of the project by context.

Criteria for stage 1	Mark
The topic is highly appropriate and relevant, and allows for a high degree of scope for investigation and analysis, experimentation, synthesis and production. The project specification is highly appropriate, and provides clear justification of topic selection and a comprehensive overview of the project.	5
The topic is appropriate and relevant, and allows for a good degree of scope for investigation and analysis, experimentation, synthesis and production. The project specification is appropriate and provides justification of topic selection and a good overview of the project.	4
The topic is mostly appropriate and relevant, and allows for a reasonable degree of scope for investigation and analysis, experimentation, synthesis and production. The project specification is mostly appropriate, and provides some justification of topic selection and a reasonable overview of the project.	3
The topic and project specification are inconsistent, with limited scope for analysis, exploration, synthesis and production.	2
Incomplete	1
No evidence	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks, the candidate should clearly identify and justify a topic that is highly appropriate and relevant.

The candidate should provide a sufficiently detailed outline specification that gives them a framework to develop and implement the project, and includes:

- ◆ an overview of their intentions
- ◆ a timeline, detailing realistic timescales for completing project tasks and logistic concerns
- ◆ proposed resources, including reference materials, hardware, and software
- ◆ the projected outcomes

## Stage 2a: investigating and analysing technology skills, techniques, and processes, and relevant musical analysis as appropriate

The candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ a clear identification of investigated and analysed skills, techniques, and processes
- ◆ an in-depth investigation and analysis of identified skills, techniques, and processes
- ◆ media files they have investigated and analysed

Criteria for stage 2a	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating a comprehensive and detailed investigation and analysis of identified music technology skills, techniques, and processes, including relevant musical analysis as appropriate	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating a detailed investigation and analysis of identified music technology skills, techniques, and processes, including relevant musical analysis as appropriate	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some investigation and analysis of identified music technology skills, techniques, and processes, including relevant musical analysis as appropriate	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard, with little or no investigation and analysis of identified music technology skills, techniques, and processes, including relevant musical analysis as appropriate	3-4
Incomplete	1-2
No evidence of investigation and analysis	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks, the candidate must include an insightful and detailed investigation and analysis of the music technology skills, techniques, and processes that are used in their chosen topic. The candidate should clearly annotate where in the piece of audio or music the techniques, skills or processes they are investigating and analysing is used. They should include relevant musical analysis as appropriate and use concepts and language from the music and/or technology tables, and other technical language (for example, describing controls and settings on effects and processors).

## Criteria for stage 2b: experimenting with music technology skills, techniques, and processes

The candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ short media files and detailed descriptions, demonstrating experimentation with identified skills, techniques and processes

Criteria for stage 2b	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating comprehensive experimentation with identified music technology skills, techniques, and processes	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating wide-ranging experimentation with identified music technology skills, techniques, and processes	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some experimentation with identified music technology skills, techniques, and processes	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard, demonstrating little experimentation with identified music technology skills, techniques, and processes	3-4
Incomplete	1-2

### Additional guidance

To award high marks, the candidate's work should closely reflect what they discovered through their investigation and analysis. The candidate should provide short examples of where they have experimented with skills, techniques and processes, and note any adaptations they made to accommodate different hardware and software.

## Stage 2c: synthesising investigation, analysis, experimentation, and drawing conclusions

The candidate must provide:

- ◆ a summary, linking investigation and analysis, and experimentation, making recommendations and drawing conclusions based on evidence, detailing the impact on their own practice

Criteria for stage 2c	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating a comprehensive synthesis of investigation, analysis, and experimentation, drawing robust conclusions based on clear and effective evidence	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating a wide-ranging synthesis of investigation, analysis and experimentation, drawing convincing conclusions based on effective evidence	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some synthesis of investigation, analysis, and experimentation, drawing sound conclusions based on relevant evidence	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard, with little or no synthesis of investigation, analysis, and experimentation, drawing one or two conclusions based on limited evidence	3-4
Incomplete	1-2
No evidence of synthesis	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks, the candidate should have developed comprehensive links between their investigation and analysis, and their experimentation with skills, techniques, and processes. They should draw robust conclusions based on their findings, with a reflective narrative detailing the impact their findings had on their own practice.

For example, a candidate could investigate and analyse both minimal and large-scale drum mic'ing techniques using the provided media files as part of stage 2a. After conducting their own experimentation, they could:

- ◆ develop arguments for and against each practice
- ◆ provide conclusions based on the impact their findings had on their own practice
- ◆ make recommendations on the appropriateness of each approach in different contexts

## Stage 3: planning the production

The candidate must provide the evidence most relevant to their specification from the list below:

- ◆ a detailed performance plan for the musical elements of the production, if appropriate to their selected context
- ◆ a production plan that describes how each sound element will be recorded and/or created, including microphone types, pattern, and placements, and the reasons for choices
- ◆ a mixing plan, including intended use of effects, processes, and automation, and the reasons for choices
- ◆ a detailed sound design map containing each element of the soundtrack (for example, sound design, Foley, dialogue, and/or music), if appropriate to their selected context
- ◆ a detailed production plan itemising each piece of sound design, Foley, or dialogue, including planning of microphone type, pattern and placement, EQ, effects, processing, and automation, if appropriate to their selected context
- ◆ an outline of the music required (in Foley and sound design projects, if appropriate)
- ◆ an updated record of progress, documenting the planning process for this stage

Criteria for stage 3	Mark range
Fully informative, detailed, and complete evidence of planning	9-10
Informative and complete evidence of planning	7-8
Evidence of planning that is mostly complete and appropriate, but lacking in detail in some areas	5-6
Inconsistent or incomplete evidence of planning	3-4
Little evidence of planning	1-2
No evidence of planning	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks, the candidate should include the items from the list above that are most relevant to their project brief. The candidate's planning should be highly detailed and provide them with structure and a list of project tasks to be completed.

For example, in a large-scale multi-tracked project, a candidate should provide a detailed recording plan that includes:

- ◆ a schedule of dates for intended sessions
- ◆ details of when particular instruments will be recorded
- ◆ justifications of the reasons why they are being recorded in this order

In this example, the candidate should indicate microphone types, polarity, and potential placements, which may change as the candidate experiments for the best results.

## Stage 4a: implementing the production – audio capture

The candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ experimenting with microphone and capture techniques (for example, using multi-mic'ing and ambient or room mic'ing)
- ◆ selecting and making appropriate and justified use of at least two types of microphone and two polar patterns, with:
  - placement appropriate to the sound source
  - use of at least one stereo recording technique
- ◆ selecting and making appropriate and justified use of at least one source that requires a direct line input
- ◆ setting appropriate input gain and monitoring levels, with no distortion
- ◆ selecting and using virtual and/or MIDI instruments to create electronic sound and/or music where appropriate to the candidate's project
- ◆ successfully designing and safely constructing the signal path for multiple inputs
- ◆ overdubbing at least one track

Criteria for stage 4a	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of audio capture techniques, fully justified and documented in the progress record	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating a good knowledge of audio capture techniques, justified and documented in the progress record	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some knowledge of audio capture techniques, partially justified and documented in the progress record	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard or with little or no evidence in the progress record	3-4
Incomplete	1-2
No evidence of audio capture	0

### **Additional guidance**

To award high marks for audio capture, the candidate should include a comprehensive range of audio capture techniques. For example:

- ◆ multi-mic'ing a drum kit **and**
- ◆ stereo mic'ing acoustic guitar **and**
- ◆ multiple close mics and distance mics on guitar cabinets **and**
- ◆ DI'ing and mic'ing bass guitar cabinets **and**
- ◆ auditioning multiple microphones on singers and other sources, using appropriate microphone types, polar patterns, and placement

The candidate should give detailed justifications and reasons for using all of the above in their progress record.

In a Foley and/or sound design context, the candidate should perform accurately synchronised Foley to picture, rehearsing, and re-taking as required. They should explore more advanced stereo and/or multi-mic'ing capture techniques, if appropriate. Multiple passes are needed to capture each separate element of the sound design in more complex sequences.

## Stage 4b: implementing the production – processing skills

The candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ applying extensive creative and corrective equalisation that is appropriate to the material. They must provide reasons and justify their choices in their progress record in at least six instances
- ◆ applying extensive dynamics processing, including the use of compression and/or side-chain compression and/or limiting, and/or noise gate. They must provide reasons and justify their choices in their progress record in at least six instances
- ◆ extensive editing of tracks, including editing a minimum of three takes into a single take (comping) **where possible**, and accurate topping and tailing

**Candidates must not use presets when applying processes.**

Criteria for stage 4b	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of processing skills and technical awareness, fully justified and documented in the progress record	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating a good knowledge of processing skills and technical awareness, justified and documented in the progress record	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some knowledge of processing skills and technical awareness, partially justified and documented in the progress record	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard or with little or no evidence in the progress record	3-4
Incomplete	1-2
No evidence of processing skills	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks for processing skills, the candidate should include multiple instances of equalisation and dynamics processors. The candidate should show awareness of plug-in gain staging and demonstrate their knowledge of typical settings for the sound source.

The candidate should provide evidence of detailed manipulation of a processor's controls and must not use presets. They should annotate in their progress record detailed justifications and reasons for their technical and creative decisions.

## Stage 4c: implementing the production – applying effects

The candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ in at least six instances, extensive application of time domain and other effects, including at least three from:
  - delay, echo, reverb, chorus, phase, and flange. The candidate must give reasons and justify their choices in their progress record
- ◆ if appropriate to the candidate project, in at least six instances:
  - extensive manipulation of the controls of virtual and/or MIDI instruments (for example, ADSR envelopes, LFO, and filter). The candidate must give reasons and justify their choices in their progress record

**Candidates must not use presets when applying time domain and other effects.**

Criteria for stage 4c	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of effects, fully justified and documented in the progress record	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating a good knowledge of effects, justified and documented in the progress record	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some knowledge of effects, partially justified and documented in the progress record	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard or with little or no evidence in the progress record	3-4
Incomplete	1-2
No evidence of applying effects	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks for applying effects, the candidate should include multiple instances of effects, both as inserts and sends. The candidate should show awareness of plug-in gain staging and demonstrate their knowledge of typical settings for the sound source. They should demonstrate detailed manipulation of an effect's controls. The candidate should annotate in their progress record detailed justifications and reasons for their technical and creative decisions.

## Stage 4d: implementing the production – mixing and sequencing skills

The candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ reference recordings (commercial mixes in the same genre or context they used to compare with their own mixing)
- ◆ applying an extensive range of mixing techniques, including using volume, panning, automation, send and insert effects, and grouping/bussing to achieve a balanced and creative mix
- ◆ accurate synchronisation and/or sequencing in complex scenarios involving multiple takes and/or simultaneous events
- ◆ mixing down to an audio pre-master in appropriate file format(s)

**Candidates must not use presets when applying send and insert effects.**

Criteria for stage 4d	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of mixing and sequencing skills and technical awareness, fully justified and documented in the progress record	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating a good knowledge of mixing and sequencing skills and technical awareness, justified and documented in the progress record	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some knowledge of mixing and sequencing skills and technical awareness, partially justified and documented in the progress record	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard or with little or no evidence in the progress record	3-4
Incomplete	1-2
No evidence of mixing and sequencing skills	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks for mixing and sequencing skills, the candidate should include extensive use of the mixing techniques listed above, ensuring that channel and master fader gain staging allows adequate headroom for the mastering stage.

For example, a candidate could use grouping/bussing of drum mic tracks. Extensive automation of volume, panning, and individual plug-in parameters could also be used.

The candidate should annotate in their progress record evidence of mixing and sequencing skills and techniques, and give detailed justifications and reasons for technical and creative decisions.

## Stage 4e: implementing the production – creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music

Criteria for stage 4e	Mark range
Implementation includes significant creative use of appropriate sounds and/or music, and fully justified and documented in the progress record	9-10
Implementation includes wide-ranging creative use of appropriate sounds and/or music, justified and documented in the progress record	7-8
Implementation includes some creative use of appropriate sounds and/or music, and partially justified and documented in the progress record	5-6
Implementation includes inconsistent creative use of appropriate sounds and/or music, and with little or no evidence in the progress record	3-4
Implementation shows little evidence of appropriate choices of sound and/or music or with no evidence in the progress record	1-2
No evidence of creative and appropriate use of appropriate sounds and/or music	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks for creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music, the candidate should include significant creative use of effects, techniques, and processes.

In multi-track projects, the candidate could use different effects settings in different parts of production. For example, short delays and small room reverbs in a verse section, then longer delays and larger reverbs in chorus sections.

## Stage 5a: mastering the production – analysis and critical listening skills

The candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ reference recordings (commercial masters in the same genre or context, that the candidate used to compare with their own mastering)
- ◆ candidate analysis and critical listening commentary, including detailed comparisons with reference recordings and proposed mastering decisions

Criteria for stage 5a	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating highly developed listening and analysis skills, fully documented in the progress record	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating well developed listening and analysis skills, and documented in the progress record	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some development of listening and analysis skills and partially documented in the progress record	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard or with little or no evidence in the progress record	3-4
Incomplete	1-2
No evidence of analysis and critical listening skills	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks for analysis and critical listening skills, the candidate should include extensive critical evaluation of their pre-mastered production against reference recordings. They should give details of their comparative analysis of equalisation curves, dynamic range and/or loudness, stereo image, automation and mixing techniques, and mid/side balance.

## Stage 5b: mastering the production – finalising and mastering techniques

The candidate must provide:

- ◆ a detailed description of the mastering chain, with detailed evidence of A-B'ing against reference recordings as the mastering session progresses
- ◆ detailed use of creative and corrective equalisation at an appropriate point or points in the mastering chain
- ◆ detailed use of compression at an appropriate point or points in the mastering chain, both as a level enhancing tool and to control dynamic range, including the use of multi-band compression, where appropriate
- ◆ use of stereo imaging and enhancement tools (such as valve and tape emulators, preamp modelling and saturation plug-ins), mid/side processing and dithering as appropriate
- ◆ topping and tailing and final DAW editing as appropriate
- ◆ limiting, finalising, and bouncing down to an audio master in an appropriate file format

**Candidates must not use presets in their mastering chain.**

Criteria for stage 5b	Mark range
Completed to a high standard, demonstrating a comprehensive knowledge of mastering skills and technical awareness, fully justified and documented in the progress record	9-10
Completed to a good standard, demonstrating knowledge of a range of mastering skills and technical awareness, justified and documented in the progress record	7-8
Completed to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some knowledge of mastering skills and technical awareness, partially justified and documented in the progress record	5-6
Completed to an inconsistent standard or with little or no evidence in the progress record	3-4
Incomplete	1-2
No evidence of mastering skills	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks for finalising and mastering techniques, the candidate should include detailed use of equalisation and dynamics processors, stereo image manipulation, mid/side processing, enhancement tools, and limiters in response to their analysis report.

The candidate should provide evidence of their own detailed manipulation of each processor's controls. They should annotate this in their progress record detailing justifications and reasons for their technical decisions.

## Stage 6a: evaluating and reflecting

The candidate report must include evaluation of:

- ◆ work that they have produced, and their experience of undertaking the project
- ◆ their project specification
- ◆ planning
- ◆ recording and creating
- ◆ editing and processing
- ◆ mastering
- ◆ final mix, including:
  - justification of significant technical and creative decisions
- ◆ suggestions for improvements, and information about how these suggestions could be achieved, in both the development and production processes

Criteria for stage 6a	Mark range
Evaluation report is consistent, detailed, and relevant, and with clear, valid evaluation against clearly stated criteria	9-10
Evaluation report is consistent and relevant, and with clear, reasoned evaluation	7-8
Evaluation report is mostly consistent and relevant, with some evaluative comments	5-6
Evaluation report is complete, but lacking in evaluative comments	3-4
Evaluation report is incomplete, unclear or inconsistent	1-2
No evidence of evaluation	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks, the candidate's evaluation report should be well-structured, consistent, detailed, and relevant, with clear and valid evaluations. The candidate should include an overarching critical reflection on the work they have produced and their experience of undertaking the project. They must evaluate each stage and should describe the use of skills, techniques, and processes, using appropriate technical terminology. The candidate should give details of how they were used, what their intention was and whether this was successful or otherwise.

The candidate can evaluate as they progress through the project stages and clearly document this in their evaluation. They are encouraged to reflect on their practice, and they should document this in their evaluation.

## Stage 6b: organising and presenting, including using information from a range of sources

The candidate must provide evidence of:

- ◆ the completed report, containing material produced in stage 1 and stage 2, organised and presented in a suitable and appropriate format, including suitable references to sources of information

Criteria for stage 6b	Mark
The project is well-structured and is presented to a high standard, demonstrating a high level of awareness of appropriate structure. A wide range and variety of relevant and reliable sources are referenced, comprehensively supporting candidate investigation and analysis, experimentation and synthesis.	5
The project is well-structured and is presented to a good standard, demonstrating a good awareness of appropriate structure. A range of relevant sources is referenced, supporting most aspects of candidate investigation and analysis, experimentation and synthesis.	4
The project is structured and is presented to a reasonable standard, demonstrating some awareness of appropriate structure. A number of sources are referenced, supporting some aspects of candidate investigation and analysis, experimentation and synthesis	3
The project is poorly structured and is presented to an inconsistent standard, demonstrating little awareness of appropriate structure. A minimal number of sources are referenced, providing little support to candidate investigation and analysis, experimentation and synthesis.	2
The project is incomplete, or poorly presented. Sources are not referenced or are unreliable.	1
No evidence	0

### Additional guidance

To award high marks, the candidate's project should:

- ◆ be well-structured
- ◆ maintain focus on their specified project outcomes
- ◆ develop in a logical and convincing manner

They should clearly annotate references to all sources and present them in an appropriate format, for example, Harvard.

For example, the candidate could document the project through a video presentation, using screen capture software with voice-over to help describe the exploration of evolving advanced synthesis techniques (as this may be difficult to document and/or describe in sufficient detail in a written format). In this example, referencing could be provided as a separate list, although the volume should be the equivalent of 2,500 to 3,000 words for the research aspect of the project.

# Instructions for candidates

This assessment applies to the project for Advanced Higher Music Technology.

This project is worth 130 marks. This is 100% of the overall mark for the course assessment.

It assesses the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ investigation and research skills in the context of music technology
- ◆ critical listening skills
- ◆ knowledge of music technology hardware
- ◆ knowledge of the features and functions of music technology software
- ◆ using music technology hardware and software to capture, manipulate, mix and master audio
- ◆ applying music technology in creative ways, informed by investigation and research
- ◆ evaluating and critically reflecting on own work and the work of others
- ◆ project management skills
- ◆ autonomous working and independent thinking skills

This project has six stages, which cover research and production aspects.

Project stage	Mark allocation
<b>Stage 1:</b> identifying an appropriate topic in a music technology context, and produce an outline specification	5 marks
<b>Stage 2a:</b> investigating and analysing technology skills, techniques, and processes, and relevant musical analysis as appropriate	10 marks
<b>Stage 2b:</b> experimenting with music technology skills, techniques, and processes	10 marks
<b>Stage 2c:</b> synthesising investigation, analysis, experimentation, and drawing conclusions	10 marks
<b>Stage 3:</b> planning the production	10 marks
<b>Stage 4a:</b> implementing the production – audio capture	10 marks
<b>Stage 4b:</b> implementing the production – processing skills	10 marks
<b>Stage 4c:</b> implementing the production – applying effects	10 marks
<b>Stage 4d:</b> implementing the production – mixing and sequencing skills	10 marks
<b>Stage 4e:</b> implementing the production – creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music	10 marks
<b>Stage 5a:</b> mastering the production – analysis and critical listening skills	10 marks

Project stage	Mark allocation
<b>Stage 5b:</b> mastering the production – finalising and mastering techniques	10 marks
<b>Stage 6a:</b> evaluating and reflecting	10 marks
<b>Stage 6b:</b> organising and presenting, including using information from a range of sources	5 marks
<b>Total</b>	130 marks

Your teacher or lecturer will let you know if there are any specific conditions for doing this assessment.

In this assessment, you have to produce a report on a topic drawn from a music technology context of your choice. You should use independent thinking, research and critical listening skills to investigate and analyse, experiment with, and synthesise music technology skills, techniques, and processes. You should present your findings in a suitable format. Suitable formats include a report with audio and/or video samples, podcast, web page, presentation, or screencast.

Your report for the research aspect should have approximately 2,500 to 3,000 words. If you choose to submit your project in another format, it should be the equivalent volume of evidence.

You must also plan, implement and evaluate a large-scale creative production using music technology. You can choose any appropriate context such as (but not limited to):

- ◆ advanced sound production techniques in modern rock music
- ◆ advanced Foley and sound design for film, animation or computer gaming
- ◆ advanced mixing techniques in 21st century pop music
- ◆ advanced mic'ing and recording techniques in contemporary classical production
- ◆ mastering techniques

The context you choose must have sufficient scope to demonstrate all of the required skills, knowledge and understanding you have gained from the course; as well as the new skills, techniques, and processes you have gained through your own research.

You must link the research and production aspects within your chosen context.

Throughout the project, you must keep a detailed record of progress, such as an electronic log or diary.

You should update your record of progress after each stage. It should explain what you have done, why you have done it, reference all relevant sources, and include any evidence you have produced (printouts, sketches, photographs, and sound files).

After each stage, ask your teacher or lecturer to check your work.

## Before you begin

You should discuss the project with your teacher or lecturer before you begin, to ensure that your research allows you to demonstrate all of the following technical skills.

### Investigation and research skills in the context of music technology

- ◆ identifying an appropriate research topic in a music technology context
- ◆ using information from a range of text and/or digital sources
- ◆ investigating and analysing music technology skills, techniques, and processes
- ◆ experimenting with music technology skills, techniques, and processes
- ◆ synthesising your investigation and analysis and experimentation, and drawing conclusions
- ◆ organising and presenting

### Critical listening skills

- ◆ analysing audio recordings and production techniques, including relevant musical analysis where appropriate

### Audio capture

- ◆ experimenting with microphone and capture techniques (for example, using multi-mic'ing and ambient or room mic'ing)
- ◆ selecting and making appropriate and justified use of at least two types of microphone and two polar patterns, with:
  - placement appropriate to the sound source
  - use of at least one stereo recording technique
- ◆ selecting and making appropriate and justified use of at least one source that requires a direct line input
- ◆ setting appropriate input gain and monitoring levels, with no distortion
- ◆ selecting and using virtual and/or MIDI instruments to create electronic sound and/or music where appropriate to your project
- ◆ successfully designing and safely constructing the signal path for multiple inputs
- ◆ overdubbing at least one track

### Processing

When applying processing skills you must not use presets and must provide evidence of:

- ◆ applying extensive creative and corrective equalisation appropriate to the material. You must provide reasons and justify your choices in your progress record in at least six instances
- ◆ applying extensive dynamics processing, including the use of compression, and/or side-chain compression, and/or limiting, and/or noise gate. You must provide reasons and justify your choices in your progress record in at least six instances
- ◆ extensive editing of tracks, including editing a minimum of three takes into a single take (comping) **where possible**, and accurate topping and tailing

## **Applying effects**

When applying time domain and other effects, you must not use presets. You must provide evidence of:

- ◆ in at least six instances, extensive application of time domain and other effects, including at least three from:
  - delay, echo, reverb, chorus, phase, and flange. You must give reasons and justify your choices in your progress record
- ◆ if appropriate to your project, in at least six instances:
  - extensive manipulation of the controls of virtual and/or MIDI instruments (for example, ADSR envelopes, LFO, and filter). You must give reasons and justify your choices in your progress record

## **Mixing and sequencing skills**

When applying send and insert effects, you must not use presets. You must provide evidence of:

- ◆ reference recordings (commercial mixes in the same genre or context you used to compare with your own mixing)
- ◆ applying an extensive range of mixing techniques, including using volume, panning, automation, send and insert effects, and grouping/bussing to achieve a balanced and creative mix
- ◆ accurate synchronisation and/or sequencing in complex scenarios involving multiple takes and/or simultaneous events
- ◆ mixing down to an audio pre-master in appropriate file format(s)

## **Mastering**

When applying mastering skills you must not use presets. You must provide evidence of:

- ◆ reference recordings (commercial masters in the same genre or context, that you used to compare with your own mastering)
- ◆ your analysis and critical listening commentary, including detailed comparisons with reference recordings and proposed mastering decisions
- ◆ a detailed description of the mastering chain, with detailed evidence of A-B'ing against reference recordings as the mastering session progresses
- ◆ detailed use of creative and corrective equalisation at an appropriate point or points in the mastering chain
- ◆ detailed use of compression at an appropriate point or points in the mastering chain, both as a level enhancing tool and to control dynamic range, including the use of multi-band compression, where appropriate
- ◆ use of stereo imaging, enhancement tools (such as valve and tape emulators, preamp modelling and saturation plug-ins), mid/side processing and dithering as appropriate
- ◆ topping and tailing and final DAW editing as appropriate
- ◆ limiting, finalising, and bouncing down to an audio master in an appropriate file format

### **Autonomous working and independent thinking skills**

- ◆ working without guidance and supervision
- ◆ rephrasing, refining, and improving responses independently
- ◆ integrating
- ◆ analysing
- ◆ synthesising
- ◆ evaluating

### **Project management skills**

- ◆ producing an outline project specification
- ◆ defining timelines
- ◆ managing resources
- ◆ projecting outcomes
- ◆ tracking progress
- ◆ evaluating project outcomes

If you are sure that your production allows you to demonstrate all of the above technical skills (as appropriate to your chosen context), and have confirmed this with your teacher or lecturer, you are ready to begin your project.

### **Stage 1: identifying an appropriate topic in a music technology context, and produce an outline specification (5 marks)**

You must:

- ◆ identify a music technology context with sufficient scope for investigation and analysis, experimentation, and synthesis
- ◆ produce an outline project specification that clearly justifies why you chose your topic, and gives an overview of the project, a timeline, proposed resources, and projected outcomes

To achieve high marks you should clearly identify and justify a topic that is highly appropriate and relevant.

You should provide a sufficiently detailed outline specification that gives you a framework to develop and implement the project, and includes:

- ◆ an overview of your intentions
- ◆ a timeline detailing realistic timescales for completing project tasks, as well as logistic concerns
- ◆ proposed resources, including reference materials, hardware, and software
- ◆ the projected outcomes

## **Stage 2: investigating and analysing, experimenting, and synthesising (30 marks)**

You must provide the following in a suitable format:

- ◆ an in-depth investigation and analysis and experimentation, with clearly identified skills, techniques, and processes
- ◆ short media files that you have investigated and analysed
- ◆ a high-level summary (synthesis) that:
  - links your investigation and analysis with your experimentation
  - makes recommendations and draws conclusions based on your evidence
  - details the impact on your own practice within music technology

### **Stage 2a: investigating and analysing technology skills, techniques, and processes, and relevant musical analysis as appropriate**

To achieve high marks for **stage 2a** (investigating and analysing) you must include an insightful and detailed investigation and analysis of the music technology skills, techniques, and processes that are used in your chosen topic. You should clearly annotate where in the piece of audio or music the technique(s), skill(s) or process(es) you are investigating and analysing is used. You should include relevant musical analysis as appropriate and use concepts and language from the music and/or technology tables, and other technical language (for example, describing controls and settings on effects and processors).

### **2b: experimenting with music technology skills, techniques and processes**

To achieve high marks for **stage 2b** (experimenting) your work should closely reflect what you discovered through your investigation and analysis. You should provide short examples of where you have experimented with skills, techniques, and processes, and note any adaptations you made to accommodate different hardware and software.

For example, you could experiment with single point stereo mic'ing techniques that are used in contemporary classical recording to capture ensembles in sympathetic acoustic spaces. You should use the contemporary practices, skills and techniques you investigated and analysed in stage 2a. To demonstrate a comprehensive range of experimentation in this example, you could make use of stereo arrays such as X/Y, ORTF, NOS, M/S, A/B, Blumlein, Faulkner Phased Array, and Decca Tree. You should consider room acoustics, ensemble, placement, and contemporary practices.

### **2c: synthesising investigation and analysis, experimentation and drawing conclusions**

Synthesis is the process of combining two or more elements or sources to form a new whole and draw conclusions.

To achieve high marks for **stage 2c** (synthesis) you should develop comprehensive links between your investigation and analysis, and your experimentation with skills, techniques, and processes. You should draw robust conclusions based on your findings, with a reflective narrative detailing the impact your findings had on your own practice.

For example, you could investigate and analyse both minimal and large-scale drum mic'ing techniques as part of stage 2a. After you have conducted your own experimentation, you could:

- ◆ develop arguments for and against each practice
- ◆ provide conclusions based on the impact your findings had on your own practice
- ◆ make recommendations on the appropriateness of each approach in different contexts

### **Stage 3: planning the production (10 marks)**

You must provide the evidence that is **most** relevant to your brief from the list below:

- ◆ a detailed performance plan for the musical elements of the production, if appropriate to your selected context
- ◆ a production plan that describes how you will record and/or create each sound element, including microphone types, pattern, and placements, and the reasons for your choices
- ◆ a mixing plan, including intended use of effects, processes, and automation, and the reasons for your choices
- ◆ a detailed sound design map containing each element of the soundtrack (for example, sound design, Foley, dialogue, and/or music), if appropriate to your selected context
- ◆ a detailed production plan itemising each piece of sound design, Foley, or dialogue, including planning of microphone type, pattern and placement, EQ, effects, processing, and automation, if appropriate to your selected context
- ◆ an outline of the music required (in Foley and sound design projects, if appropriate)
- ◆ an updated record of progress, documenting the planning process for this stage

To achieve high marks for **stage 3** you should include the items from the list above that are most relevant to your brief. Your planning should be highly detailed and provide you with structure and a list of project tasks to be completed.

For example, in a large-scale multi-tracked project, you should provide a detailed recording plan that includes:

- ◆ a schedule of dates for intended sessions
- ◆ details of when particular instruments will be recorded
- ◆ justifications of the reasons why they are being recorded in this order

In this example, you should indicate microphone types, polarity, and potential placements, which may change as you experiment for the best results.

### **Stage 4: implementing the production (50 marks)**

You must provide the following:

- ◆ reference recordings
- ◆ a completed creative production, bounced to an appropriate pre-mastered audio format (or video file format, with embedded audio)

- ◆ an updated record of progress, documenting and justifying the techniques used in the creative production

To achieve high marks for **stage 4a** (audio capture) you should include a comprehensive range of audio capture techniques. For example:

- ◆ multi-mic'ing a drum kit **and**
- ◆ stereo mic'ing acoustic guitar **and**
- ◆ multiple close mics and distance mics on guitar cabinets **and**
- ◆ DI'ing and mic'ing bass guitar cabinets **and**
- ◆ auditioning multiple microphones on singers and other sources, using appropriate microphone types, polar patterns, and placement

You should give detailed justifications and reasons for use for all of the above in your progress record.

For example, in a Foley and/or sound design context, you should perform accurately synchronised Foley to picture, rehearsing and re-taking as required. You should explore more advanced stereo and/or multi-mic'ing capture techniques, if appropriate. You need multiple passes to capture each separate element of the sound design in more complex sequences.

To achieve high marks for **stage 4b** (processing skills) you should include multiple instances of equalisation and dynamics processors. You should show an awareness of plug-in gain staging, and demonstrate your knowledge of typical settings for the sound source.

You should provide evidence of detailed manipulation of a processor's controls. You must not use presets. You should annotate in your progress record detailed justifications and reasons for your technical and creative decisions.

To achieve high marks for **stage 4c** (applying effects) you should include multiple instances of effects, both as inserts and sends. You should show an awareness of plug-in gain staging, and demonstrate your knowledge of typical settings for the sound source. You should demonstrate detailed manipulation of an effect's controls. You must not use presets. You should annotate in your progress record detailed justifications and reasons for your technical and creative decisions.

To achieve high marks for **stage 4d** (mixing and sequencing skills) you should include extensive use of mixing techniques, ensuring that channel and master fader gain staging allows adequate headroom for the mastering stage.

For example, you could use grouping/bussing of drum mic tracks. You could also use extensive automation of volume, panning, and individual plug-in parameters.

You should annotate in your progress record evidence of mixing and sequencing skills and techniques, and give detailed justifications and reasons for technical and creative decisions.

To achieve high marks for **stage 4e** (creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music) you should include significant creative use of effects, techniques, and processes.

For example, in Foley and/or sound design, you should produce your own sound effects creatively. You should layer sounds to achieve the final effect, and avoid using pre-existing effects. You should make significant use of reverbs and automated equalisation to evoke a sense of distance or space that is appropriate to the visual content.

In multi-track projects, you could use different effects settings in different parts of the production. For example, short delays and small room reverbs in a verse section, then longer delays and larger reverbs in chorus sections.

## **Stage 5: mastering the production (20 marks)**

You must provide evidence of:

- ◆ reference recordings
- ◆ a mastered version of your production, bounced to an appropriate audio format (or video file format, with embedded audio)
- ◆ an updated record of progress, documenting your analysis and critical listening commentary and the techniques used during the mastering production

To achieve high marks for **stage 5a** (analysis and critical listening skills) you should include extensive critical evaluation of your pre-mastered production against reference recordings. You should give details of your comparative analysis of equalisation curves, dynamic range and/or loudness, stereo image, automation and mixing techniques, and mid/side balance.

To achieve high marks for **stage 5b** (finalising and mastering techniques), you should include detailed use of equalisation and dynamics processors, stereo image manipulation, mid/side processing, enhancement tools, and limiters in response to your analysis report.

You should provide evidence of your own detailed manipulation of each processor's controls. You must not use presets. You should annotate in your progress record detailed justifications and reasons for your technical decisions.

## **Stage 6a: evaluating and reflecting (10 marks)**

Your report must include a critical reflection on the work you have produced, and your experience of undertaking the project and evaluate your:

- ◆ project specification
- ◆ planning
- ◆ recording and creating
- ◆ editing and processing
- ◆ mastering
- ◆ final mix, including:
  - justification for significant technical and creative decisions
- ◆ suggestions for improvements, and information about how these suggestions could be achieved, in both the development and production processes

To achieve high marks for **stage 6a**, your evaluation report should be well-structured, consistent, detailed and relevant, with clear and valid evaluations. You should include an overarching critical reflection on the work you have produced, and your experience of undertaking the project. You must evaluate each stage and should describe the use of skills, techniques and processes, using appropriate technical terminology. You should give details of how you used them, what your intention was and whether this was successful or otherwise.

You can evaluate your work as you progress through the project stages, and clearly document this in your evaluation. You are encouraged to reflect on your practice, and you should document this in your evaluation.

### **Stage 6b: organising and presenting, including using information from a range of sources (5 marks)**

You must provide evidence of the following:

- ◆ the completed report, containing material produced in stage 1 and stage 2, organised and presented in a suitable and appropriate format, including suitable references to sources of information

To achieve high marks for **stage 6b**, your project should:

- ◆ be well-structured
- ◆ maintain focus on your specified project outcomes
- ◆ develop in a logical and convincing manner

You should clearly annotate references to all sources and present them in an appropriate format, for example, Harvard.

You could document the project in a report including audio and/or video samples, podcast, webpage, presentation, or screencast.

For example, you could document the project through a video presentation, using screen capture software with voice-over to help describe the exploration of evolving advanced synthesis techniques (as this may be difficult to document and/or describe in sufficient detail in a written format). In this example, you could provide referencing as a separate list, although the volume should be the equivalent of 2,500 to 3,000 words.

### **Final checks**

Check your work to make sure you have completed all stages of the project. The following evidence is required:

- ◆ your identification and justification of a suitable research topic and indication of scope for investigation, within a music technology context
- ◆ your outline project specification
- ◆ a report on your investigation and analysis, experimentation, and synthesis
- ◆ relevant media files that demonstrate your experimentation
- ◆ a formal plan for the project

- ◆ the completed audio pre-master (and, for Foley or computer game productions, the relevant video or game sequence)
- ◆ reference recordings used during the mixing stages
- ◆ the mastered audio (and, for Foley or computer game productions, the relevant video or games sequence)
- ◆ reference recordings used during the mastering stages
- ◆ a detailed record of progress
- ◆ a critical reflection and evaluation report

Let your teacher or lecturer know when you have completed the project.

# Administrative information

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## History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: you are advised to check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.

## Security and confidentiality

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