Course report 2022

Subject	Music Technology
Level	Advanced Higher

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report 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.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any appeals.

Grade boundary and statistical information

Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2022	60

Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	20.7	Cumulative percentage	20.7	Number of candidates	10	Minimum mark required	86
B	Percentage	25.9	Cumulative percentage	46.6	Number of candidates	15	Minimum mark required	73
C	Percentage	27.5	Cumulative percentage	74.1	Number of candidates	20	Minimum mark required	60
D	Percentage	17.3	Cumulative percentage	91.4	Number of candidates	10	Minimum mark required	47
No award	Percentage	8.6	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	5	Minimum mark required	N/A

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in appendix 1 of this report.

In this report:

♦ 'most' means greater than 70%
♦ 'many' means 50% to 69%
♦ 'some' means 25% to 49%
♦ 'a few' means less than 25%

You can find more statistical reports on the statistics page of SQA's website.

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Project

This is the first year of SQA marking this course since it was implemented in session 2019–20. The course assessment performed as intended.

Candidates this year were generally well prepared for the project, with many candidates demonstrating strong mixing skills.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Project

In general terms, candidates performed best in the production element of the project. Candidate performance in the research element of the project was mixed.

In stage 1: identifying an appropriate topic in a music technology context, and producing an outline specification:

♦ Some candidates chose contexts that were too broad or did not provide sufficient scope for the research aspects of the project.
♦ Some candidates did not provide evidence for the production element of the project, frequently omitting a timeline, proposed resources and/or projected outcomes.

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

♦ Candidates often completed in-depth investigation of identified skills, techniques and processes, but did not complete any analysis.
♦ Candidates often omitted media files they have investigated and analysed.

In stage 2b: experimenting with music technology skills, techniques and processes, candidates generally performed well, providing the required evidence.

In stage 2c: synthesising investigation, analysis, experimentation and drawing conclusions, candidates often drew conclusions and completed synthesis based on their experimentation only, and did not fully detail the impact on their own practice.

In stage 3: planning the production:

♦ Some candidates demonstrated a lack of technical understanding of core concepts such as microphone types and polar patterns.

In stage 4: implementing the production, candidates performed strongest, although some candidates provided evidence of using plugin presets. In the project assessment task document, it clearly states that candidates must not use presets for stages 4b, c and d.

In stage 5a: mastering the production — analysis and critical listening skills:

♦ Some candidates provided only one reference recording.
♦ Some candidates did not complete a sufficiently robust analysis and critical listening commentary, including detailed comparisons with reference recordings and proposed mastering decisions.

Stage 5b: mastering the production — finalising and mastering techniques was completed reasonably well, although there was evidence of a lack of understanding of the mastering process from some candidates. Some candidates provided evidence of using plugin presets.

In the project assessment task document, it clearly states that candidates must not use presets in their mastering chain.

For stage 6a: evaluating and reflecting, candidates often completed the evaluation report but lacked evaluative comments.

Stage 6b: organising and presenting, including using information from a range of sources, was completed well by the majority of candidates. Candidates often provided links to videos as citations for their investigation but did not annotate precise timings.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Project

Currently, some logbooks are submitted in a chronological diary format, leading to the inclusion of information that does not attract marks.

Using the list of technical skills detailed in the project assessment task document is recommended, to help make sure candidates include all the required evidence in their log. Doing this also helps candidates meet mandatory requirements and clearly signpost where they have demonstrated each skill.

Candidates should ensure that their logs are clear and concise, to the point where another person could recreate their production using the information they provide.

Stage 1

Candidates must include an outline specification for both the research and the production elements of the project.

Candidates should avoid selecting contexts that lack scope, such as Foley mic'ing techniques. This context would limit the candidate's ability to investigate and analyse, experiment, and synthesise in the research element of the project.

Similarly, candidates should avoid contexts that do not allow them to research technology skills, techniques, and processes. An example of this could be manipulation of Foley props.

Stage 2

Candidates should ensure that they both investigate and analyse in stage 2a, and that they have clearly identified investigated and analysed skills, techniques, and processes. Candidates should also provide the media files they have investigated and analysed.

In stage 2b, candidates should focus on the clearly identified skills, techniques and processes they investigated and analysed in stage 2a.

For stage 2c, candidates should ensure they synthesise their investigation and analysis, and experimentation, and that the conclusions they draw are based on evidence generated in both stage 2a and stage 2b. They should also detail the impact on their own practice.

Stage 3

Candidates should ensure they have provided all the evidence required for this stage, in particular, when it comes to evidencing their mixing plan (for the production element) and the production plan (for Foley/sound design contexts). Where required, candidates must provide reasons for their choices.

Stage 4

For stage 4a, candidates should ensure they are experimenting with microphone and capture techniques (for example, using multi-mic'ing and ambient or room mic'ing) and documenting these under the audio capture section of their logs.

For stages 4b, c and d, candidates must not use presets.

Stage 5
As mastering is a new skill for most candidates, teaching and learning should allow candidates opportunities to prepare for this stage of the project.

Teachers and lecturers should develop candidate analysis and critical listening ability in preparation for stage 5a, and guide candidates to provide all the evidence required of this stage.

Examples of model mastering chains may be useful to candidates for stage 5b, and once again, candidates must not use presets.

Stage 6
It is recommended that candidates use technical language throughout stage 6a to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the music technology skills, techniques and processes they employ in their project.

For stage 6b, teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to not only structure and present their work to the best of their ability, but to cite their sources throughout, and use an appropriate referencing system. Many candidates use video references, and if these sources are used, precise timings must be provided in candidate referencing.

Appendix 1: general commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim when setting grade boundaries is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

For most National Courses, SQA aims to set examinations and other external assessments and create marking instructions that allow:

♦ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional grade C boundary)
♦ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional grade A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level. Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting for each course to bring together all the information available (statistical and qualitative) and to make final decisions on grade boundaries based on this information. Members of SQA's Executive Management Team normally chair these meetings.

Principal assessors utilise their subject expertise to evaluate the performance of the assessment and propose suitable grade boundaries based on the full range of evidence. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the discussion at these meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more, or less, difficult than usual.

♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been more difficult than usual.
♦ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the question paper or other assessment has been less difficult than usual.
♦ Where levels of difficulty are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year on year. This is because the specific questions, and the mix of questions, are different and this has an impact on candidate performance.

This year, a package of support measures including assessment modifications and revision support, was introduced to support candidates as they returned to formal national exams and other forms of external assessment. This was designed to address the ongoing disruption to learning and teaching that young people have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, SQA adopted a more generous approach to grading for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses than it would do in a normal exam year, to help ensure fairness for candidates while maintaining standards. This is in recognition of the fact that those preparing for and sitting exams have done so in very different circumstances from those who sat exams in 2019.

The key difference this year is that decisions about where the grade boundaries have been set have also been influenced, where necessary and where appropriate, by the unique circumstances in 2022. On a course-by-course basis, SQA has determined grade boundaries in a way that is fair to candidates, taking into account how the assessment (exams and coursework) has functioned and the impact of assessment modifications and revision support.

The grade boundaries used in 2022 relate to the specific experience of this year's cohort and should not be used by centres if these assessments are used in the future for exam preparation.

For full details of the approach please refer to the National Qualifications 2022 Awarding — Methodology Report.