



Course report 2022

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| Subject | Music Technology |
| Level | 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

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of resulted entries in 2022 | 925 |
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

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|-----------------|------------|------|-----------------------|------|----------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| A | Percentage | 29.3 | Cumulative percentage | 29.3 | Number of candidates | 270 | Minimum mark required | 69 |
| B | Percentage | 31.1 | Cumulative percentage | 60.4 | Number of candidates | 290 | Minimum mark required | 59 |
| C | Percentage | 20.6 | Cumulative percentage | 81.0 | Number of candidates | 190 | Minimum mark required | 49 |
| D | Percentage | 14.3 | Cumulative percentage | 95.3 | Number of candidates | 130 | Minimum mark required | 39 |
| No award | Percentage | 4.7 | Cumulative percentage | N/A | Number of candidates | 45 | 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

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected this year. Candidates demonstrated their musical and technological knowledge through questioning styles that were similar to those used in previous years.

For session 2021–22, modifications were made as detailed in the National Course modification summary:

- ◆ The intellectual property and technological development questions were removed resulting in the paper being marked out of 32 which was then scaled to 30.

A revision support document was also published, which detailed specific genres and a recording technique that would feature in the paper.

All questions proved to be accessible, with some providing more challenge for candidates.

Assignment

Most assignments were completed successfully, with many candidates submitting high-quality and creative work. Most submissions were multi-track recordings within a radio broadcast or multi-track recordings within a film project.

There was an increased number of instances where multi-track recordings only included one or two instruments, leading to candidates not demonstrating an extensive knowledge of audio capture or mixing skills. Some centres are still providing hardware and software that limits candidates' abilities to demonstrate all the requirements of the course.

Some candidates are still submitting extensive logbooks containing superfluous information. The documentation should demonstrate understanding of all the mandatory technical skills as listed in the assignment assessment task document.

This session, the assignment was modified to remove the requirement to demonstrate multi-tracked electronically produced sounds and/or music.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Question 1(a): Candidates identify a genre and associated concept. Most candidates did well in this question, which was expected as specific genres had been given in the revision support document.

Question 1(b): Candidates describe two features of a genre. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 2(a): Candidates identify a genre and give musical features. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 2(b): Candidates identify a feature of the excerpt. Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 4(b): Candidates identify an effect applied to a guitar track. Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 5(a): Candidates identify two features of the excerpt. Most candidates achieved 2 marks.

Question 5(b): Candidates answer questions on mic'ing. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 5(c): Candidates identify a string playing technique. Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 6 (part 2): Candidates identify a guitar playing technique. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 6 (part 4): Candidates identify processes and controls applied. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 6 (part 6): Candidates identify a music feature. Many candidates answered correctly.

Question 7: Candidates identify five production features from a list of ten. Many candidates performed well in this 5-mark question.

Assignment

Stage 1a: planning sound design. Many candidates submitted evidence of planning, which was improved compared with previous years. More centres are using structured templates to support candidates to provide the required information succinctly.

Stage 2b: implementing the production — processing skills. Most candidates demonstrated the requirements of this stage and included all the requirements as detailed in the assignment assessment task document.

Stage 2c: implementing the production — applying effects. Most candidates demonstrated the requirements of this stage. Candidates provided evidence of applying time domain and other effects, including at least two from: delay, echo, reverb, chorus, phase and flange.

Stage 2e: implementing the production — creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music. Candidates demonstrated their creativity in a wide range of ways, with some excellent examples of jingle creation and other content within radio shows, and complex sound design for film with Foley.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Questions 3(a)(i) and (ii), and 3(b)(i) and (ii): Candidates identify a fault present in the recording and give a solution. This proved to be a demanding question for candidates. The fault question is designed to be typical of real-world issues that can occur within music technology professions.

Question 4(a): Candidates identify settings on a compressor. This proved to be a challenging question for candidates.

Question 6 (part 1): Candidates identify the manipulated control on a synthesiser. Most candidates found this question fairly demanding.

Question 6 (part 3): Candidates identify the manipulated control on a synthesiser. This proved to be a challenging question for candidates.

Question 6 (part 5): Candidates identify a filter. Many candidates found this question demanding.

Assignment

Stage 1b: planning the recording, creating, editing and mixing. Some candidates were not able to access the full range of marks as they did not give reasons for their choices at this stage. Some candidates also gave ambiguous information about microphone placement, including repeating wide ranges of distances for every capture. Many candidates plan to consider EQ during their editing stage but do not suggest specific bands or frequencies that could enhance or improve the sound.

Stage 2a: implementing the production — audio capture. Some candidates were not able to access the full range of marks for this stage as they did not demonstrate a range of audio capture techniques and chose to capture a multi-track made up of just two instruments. It is recommended that candidates use more than two instruments with varied capture techniques, which will also help demonstrate a more comprehensive knowledge of mixing skills at stage 2d.

Within the logbook, candidates should give information about each capture made, as detailed in the technical skills listed in the assignment coursework task document.

Stage 2b: implementing the production — processing skills. Some candidates only used each process once, which limited their ability to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of processing skills and technical awareness. Having a more complex multi-track could give the candidates more opportunity to show their understanding.

Stage 2c: implementing the production — applying effects. Some candidates were only able to demonstrate some knowledge of effects to a minimal standard as they simply applied two effects on isolated sounds then omitted to discuss their use in detail in their logbook.

As detailed in the technical skills of the assignment coursework task document, two different effects need to be demonstrated from the following list: delay, echo, reverb, chorus, phase and flange. Some candidates did not access the full range of marks as only one effect was demonstrated. Please note that using different types of reverb is still considered as demonstrating just one effect.

Stage 2d: implementing the production — mixing and sequencing skills. Some candidates were still not able to access the full range of marks as they did not demonstrate send and insert effects and grouping/bussing. Some centres are still using software that does not include this feature. It should be noted that alternative 'work around' methods to achieve a similar result (such as bouncing tracks down) demonstrates a different skill.

Candidates should include screenshots of their final edit and mix windows, which can enhance their progress record.

Stage 3: evaluating the production. Many candidates did not access the full range of marks as they did not evaluate each stage of the project as described in the assignment assessment task document. It is recommended that candidates split their evaluation into sections using the headings on this page where they focus on the evaluation of their plan, then evaluate their recording and creating, etc.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

In preparing candidates for the question paper, centres should ensure that candidates are well prepared for the range of questioning and that they have an understanding of all the concepts listed on pages 9 to 12 of the [Higher Course Specification](#) document. Based on the 2022 question paper, candidates could be more prepared for questions about the controls on all processors and effects as well as ADSR (attack, decay, sustain, release) controls on an effect or synthesiser.

Assignment

The complexity of each context within an assignment should be considered. Currently, some submissions only include a very basic multi-track recording of two instruments. This limitation can have an influence on awarding marks for stage 2a as the candidate should be trying to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of a range of audio capture techniques, and it can also have an influence on stage 2d as it could be harder to demonstrate mixing skills in a complex scenario. Candidates could also consider using a multi-microphone technique to record a drum kit within their multi-track, which could help demonstrate a more comprehensive audio capture using multiple inputs.

Teachers and lecturers are reminded that 1a and 1b are two separate stages that should be planned independently of one another and submitted as two distinct documents or pages.

- ◆ Stage 1a is the planning of the main context; for example, sound design for film or radio broadcast. As an example, if candidates are working on a radio broadcast, stage 1a would include the script for the radio show and information about the other elements it contains (such as adverts, weather and links) plus all the technical information about how these elements will be created.
- ◆ Stage 1b is the focused planning of the multi-track recordings within the assignment. It should include:
 - a performance plan detailing information about musical elements of the production (which could include a score or lead sheet with an analysis of the instrumentation within each section)
 - 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

In stage 2e: implementing the production — creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music, candidates should be creative with their music technology skills, such as layering of a range of edited sounds or real-time manipulation of effects and processes.

Logbooks

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

Centres should consider reviewing any centre-devised templates for candidate logs and it is recommended that they use the list of technical skills detailed in the assignment assessment task document to guide candidates to include all of the required evidence. Doing this also helps candidates meet mandatory requirements and clearly signpost where each skill has been demonstrated.

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.

For example:

Stage 2a

| Requirement | Details to include in logbook |
|---|--|
| Selecting and making appropriate use of at least two types of microphone and two polar patterns, with placement appropriate to the sound source | Candidate documents all microphone use here to show understanding of capture in different scenarios using different microphones. |
| Using at least one stereo recording technique | Candidate documents all stereo capture here. |
| Using at least one source that requires a direct line input | Candidate documents all use of direct line input here. |
| Choosing and setting appropriate input gain and monitoring levels, with no distortion | Candidate details how they set input gains and monitoring levels. |
| Successfully designing and safely constructing the signal path for multiple inputs | Candidate details how they captured audio from more than one input at a time. Information included here often details a multi-mic capture of a drum kit. |
| Overdubbing at least one track | Candidate details where they overdubbed at least one track to show understanding of what overdubbing is. |

For further guidance, teachers and lecturers should refer to the audio presentation and associated evidence published in March 2022 for Higher Music Technology. This is available in the NQ Understanding Standards course assessment materials section for Music Technology on SQA's secure website.

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](#).