



Course report 2022

Subject	Music
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

Number of resulted entries in 2022	4935
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Statistical information: performance of candidates

Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

A	Percentage	62.7	Cumulative percentage	62.7	Number of candidates	3095	Minimum mark required	70
B	Percentage	21.0	Cumulative percentage	83.7	Number of candidates	1035	Minimum mark required	60
C	Percentage	10.6	Cumulative percentage	94.3	Number of candidates	525	Minimum mark required	50
D	Percentage	3.8	Cumulative percentage	98.1	Number of candidates	185	Minimum mark required	40
No award	Percentage	1.9	Cumulative percentage	N/A	Number of candidates	95	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](https://sqa.my/).

Section 1: comments on the assessment

Question paper

The question paper performed as expected. Marker feedback and statistical analysis indicate that it was a fair paper with wide coverage of concepts at an appropriate level of demand. Most candidates attempted all questions. Some questions were accessible to all candidates, while others were more challenging.

Assignment

The requirement to complete the assignment was removed for session 2021–22.

Performance

Most candidates were well prepared for the performance and, as in previous years, most candidates demonstrated a very good level of skills in this area.

Section 2: comments on candidate performance

Areas that candidates performed well in

Question paper

Most candidates demonstrated familiarity and knowledge of question types and displayed appropriate exam technique.

Most candidates answered the following questions very well:

- ◆ Question 2 part 3 — about a change in tonality
- ◆ Question 3(c) — about identifying jazz funk
- ◆ Question 3(d) — about identifying musique concrète

Most candidates answered the following questions well:

- ◆ Question 3(a) — about identifying irregular time signatures
- ◆ Question 4(b) — about inserting a note an interval of a 5th higher than the previous note

Many candidates answered the following question well:

- ◆ Question 1 — a multiple-choice question

Many candidates answered the following questions quite well:

- ◆ Question 2 part 2 — about lower string technique
- ◆ Question 5(a) — a multiple-choice question
- ◆ Question 7 — about identifying the most prominent concepts

Performance

Most candidates were well prepared, and many performances were of a high standard.

Personalisation and choice were evident in most candidates' programmes, and they presented a wide variety of instruments in a range of musical styles.

Some candidates opted to perform pieces above the minimum requirements and performed very well.

Most candidates performing on drum kit used the drum kit style bank.

Candidates performing vocal programmes mainly performed from memory, choosing songs appropriate for their musical and technical skills.

Areas that candidates found demanding

Question paper

Most candidates found the following questions very challenging:

- ◆ Question 4(a) — inserting a 12/8 time signature in a music literacy question
- ◆ Question 4(c) — identifying chords in a music literacy question
- ◆ Question 4(e) — inserting missing notes in a music literacy question
- ◆ Question 5(b) — identifying augmentation

Many candidates found the following questions challenging:

- ◆ Question 2 part 5 — identifying a diminished 7th chord
- ◆ Question 3(b) — identifying an added 6th chord
- ◆ Question 5(c) — identifying an interrupted cadence

Some candidates did not always read the stem of the question carefully. An example of this was in question 2 part 4, which asked candidates to identify a tuned percussion instrument. Some candidates offered a woodwind or string instrument. Another example was in question 5(b) where candidates were asked to identify the rhythmic device used at the end of the excerpt. Many candidates incorrectly offered an instrument.

Performance

A few programmes did not meet the minimum time requirements of one instrument, although the overall performance time was appropriate. A few programmes did not meet the minimum time requirement of 10 minutes overall.

Where judicious cuts had been made to accommodate timings, a few candidates were playing sections of music below the minimum requirements (Grade 4).

A few candidates who played chordal guitar or chordal ukulele programmes played the pieces without providing a melody line to allow the performance to be heard in context.

A few chordal guitar or chordal ukulele candidates did not demonstrate the 18 chords required.

A few drum kit programmes did not meet the minimum required number of fills. A few drum kit candidates did not select their four styles from the drum kit style bank and did not demonstrate four-way independence in every style.

A few candidates performed keyboard programmes without left-hand chords.

Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

Question paper

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the specimen question paper and recent past papers for examples of the question styles and marking instructions.

The following advice may help to prepare candidates for the question paper:

- ◆ In multiple choice questions, candidates should listen carefully to the excerpt and consider the musical context to avoid choosing concepts that are clearly unrelated.
- ◆ Questions requiring short answers (one, two or three words) specifically examine concepts at Higher level. This does not apply to the sequential listening question (question 2 in the 2022 Higher question paper).
- ◆ In music literacy questions, we do not accept a time signature written as a fraction.
- ◆ When writing dotted notes in music literacy questions, centres should remind candidates that the dot must be to the right of the note head.
- ◆ Centres should encourage candidates to read the stem of the question carefully.
- ◆ Teachers and lecturers should give candidates regular opportunities to listen to performances using scores, where possible, to promote music literacy skills and develop aural perception and discrimination. Giving candidates the opportunity to relate what they hear to what they see will directly benefit their attainment in these types of questions.

If centres are submitting exceptional circumstance evidence for the question paper, the assessment papers used for prelim-type events should replicate the question type and mark allocation from the course assessment. Centres should also submit a full copy of the marking instructions, even if questions are drawn from SQA specimen or past question papers. When preparing prelim and listening assessments, centres must consider the following information:

- ◆ A past paper or specimen question paper in its entirety cannot be the only evidence submitted for exceptional circumstances. These papers are accessible on the SQA website and therefore candidates may be familiar with the content before the assessment.
- ◆ Class tests, or other forms of evidence, must demonstrate that candidates have knowledge and understanding of concepts appropriate to the course assessment.
- ◆ Some questions from older past papers may not provide the appropriate scope, coverage or balance, and may need to be amended.
- ◆ The marking instructions used for centre-devised assessments should reflect the marking instructions used in the final exam. Half marks are not used. You can find examples of marking instructions for past papers on the SQA website.

Performance

The following advice may help to prepare candidates for the performance components:

- ◆ Centres should ensure that the overall programme is of the appropriate length. For session 2022–23, a Higher programme should last a minimum of 10 minutes between the two instruments. The maximum time is 11 minutes. The performance time on either of the two selected instruments, or instrument and voice, must be a minimum of 3 minutes within the overall 10-minute programme. Centres must ensure that candidates adhere to the minimum and maximum time limits. Centres should also ensure that the music to be played is at the appropriate level (Grade 4 or above).
- ◆ Carefully timed cuts may be appropriate to keep within the time limit, as long as they do not lower the technical demands. Centres should also consider the length of individual pieces after any cuts have been made. If significant cuts are made to a piece of music, it can become challenging for a candidate to access all the marks available.
- ◆ For guitar and ukulele programmes, centres should specify if the candidate is performing a 'chordal', 'melodic' or 'mixed' programme. Chords can be included in a melodic guitar or melodic ukulele programme but are not counted if it is not a chordal programme.
- ◆ Chordal guitar and chordal ukulele programmes must:
 - include 18 chords
 - be in standard notation — this could simply be a copy of the melodic line that the guitar or ukulele is accompanying, with the chord names printed above or below the stave; TAB alone is not sufficient for assessment purposes, and neither is a lyric sheet with only chord names and no music notation
 - have a melody for candidates to play along with (played, sung or from a backing track) — this is essential to provide a context for the performance of the chords
- ◆ Drum kit programmes should specify each style performed and style bank number. For session 2022–23, a programme must include four different styles, with four different fills within each style. Teachers and lecturers should refer to SQA's style bank for a list of acceptable styles. Drum kit programmes must exhibit four-way independence in every piece. For notated music, the minimum requirement is four bars of the groove and four fills with a performance plan or map.
- ◆ Keyboard programmes must include both the right and left hand in performance. Candidates playing only a right-hand melody are awarded 0 marks for that piece.

To help visiting assessment run smoothly:

- ◆ Candidate mark sheets issued by SQA must be completed in pen (not pencil) by centre staff and be available to the visiting assessor (VA) at the start of each assessment session (morning or afternoon). The candidate mark sheet is the formal record of the assessment event and it is very important that it is completed accurately.
- ◆ Centre staff should give the VA a running order with approximate timings at the start of each session.
- ◆ To avoid unexpected candidate absence disrupting the planned running order, centre staff should have the next two candidates ready to perform. This ensures the maximum use of the VA's time.
- ◆ Timetabling should take account of the candidates' chosen performance time on each instrument. It is helpful if centres consider the time allocated for each candidate performance to make the best use of the VA's time in each centre.

- ◆ Details of the instruments, or instrument and voice used, the pieces to be performed, and all timings of pieces should be clearly indicated on the candidate mark sheet. The total length of time for each instrument or voice should also be indicated.
- ◆ Each drum kit style should be clearly named on the candidate mark sheet, irrespective of the title of the piece, for example 'Download' — rock, bank 1.

If a candidate is absent for the performance exam for health reasons or other unexpected circumstances, SQA will try to arrange an alternative date for them to sit the exam. If this is not possible, centres must submit evidence of the candidate's attainment in performance. Centre staff should submit an audio or video recording of as much of the candidate's programme as possible, along with copies of the music and the marks awarded for all the pieces performed. Many centres routinely make audio or video recordings of prelim exams for this eventuality. If centres do not have an audio or video recording of the candidate's performance programme, they should submit alternative evidence to show that the candidate has demonstrated attainment at Higher level. Other supplementary evidence may include a certificate from a graded examination at an appropriate level.

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](#).