# Course report 2024

## Music Technology National 5

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. You should read the report with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

We compiled the statistics in this report before we completed the 2024 appeals process.

# Grade boundary and statistical information

## Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2023:            1,424

Number of resulted entries in 2024:            1,483

## Statistical information: performance of candidates

### Distribution of course awards including minimum mark to achieve each grade

| A | Number of candidates | 449 | Percentage | 30.3 | Cumulative percentage | 30.3 | Minimum mark required | 70 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | Number of candidates | 489 | Percentage | 33.0 | Cumulative percentage | 63.3 | Minimum mark required | 60 |
| C | Number of candidates | 352 | Percentage | 23.7 | Cumulative percentage | 87.0 | Minimum mark required | 50 |
| D | Number of candidates | 138 | Percentage | 9.3 | Cumulative percentage | 96.3 | Minimum mark required | 40 |
| **No award** | Number of candidates | 55 | Percentage | 3.7 | Cumulative percentage | 100 | Minimum mark required | N/A |

We have not applied rounding to these statistics.

You can read the general commentary on grade boundaries in the appendix.

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 statistical reports on the statistics and information page of our website.

2

# Section 1: comments on the assessment

## Question paper

Many candidates responded well to the demands of the question paper, and it performed in line with expectations. It contained a wide range of suitably challenging excerpts of music and was fair and accessible for candidates.

The intellectual case study question was re-introduced this session.

## Assignment

Many candidates responded well to the demands of the assignment. Candidates submitted creative material of a good standard, including multi-track recordings, live recordings of a small group performance, radio broadcasts, sound design and Foley for film, sound design for a computer game, and audio books.

Some candidates, however, were not able to access the full range of marks for particular stages, as they did not include all of the mandatory skills listed in the course specification in either one or both of their chosen productions.

# Section 2: comments on candidate performance

## Areas that candidates performed well in

### Question paper

Generally, candidates were well prepared for the following questions and responded successfully:

♦ Questions 1(a), (b), (c), (d), (e) (i) and (ii), (f), and (g): Candidates were assessed on styles of music and related concepts.
♦ Question 2(a): identification of a fault with audio capture.
♦ Question 2(c): identification of the prominent effect applied to the synthesiser track.
♦ Question 3(a): identification of the genre/style of the music.
♦ Question 3(d): identification of the solo instrument.
♦ Question 4(a)(i): identification of the tonality.
♦ Question 4(a)(ii): identification of time signature.
♦ Question 4(b): identification of two music or production features.
♦ Questions 4(c)(i) and (ii): selection of a type of microphone and polarity for recording a snare drum.
♦ Question 4(d): identification of a vocal style.
♦ Question 5: identification of instruments or voices and to link these to controls and effects.
♦ Questions 6(a) and (c): Candidates were given an intellectual property case study and asked to answer three questions from the text provided.
♦ Question 7(a): Candidates were asked to link an instrument or voice with an effect, and another instrument and voice with panning on two versions of one song.
♦ Question 7(b): identification of the tonality.

### Assignment

Generally, candidates completed the assignment successfully. Centres used a variety of briefs for both tasks.

For each task, many candidates demonstrated a secure knowledge of:

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

Many candidates were well prepared and had a good knowledge of music software programmes and capturing; manipulating sound and applying suitable effects; and processes and controls.

4

# Areas that candidates found demanding

## Question paper

Many candidates found the following questions difficult:

♦ Question 2(b): describing a type of scale.
♦ Question 3(b): describing two production features typical of hip hop.
♦ Question 6(b): explaining why intellectual property was important in the case study provided.

Most candidates found the following questions challenging:

♦ Question 3(c): identifying the two main processors in a vocal enhancer.
♦ Question 4(c)(iii): describing the microphone placement of a snare drum.

## Assignment

Many candidates completed stage 1: planning the production to a good standard. However, some candidates did not include microphone placement, distance and/or existing sound map or intended sound map for film Foley briefs. For both tasks, some candidates did not mention which controls, effects and processes they intended to use.

Most candidates completed stage 2(a): implementing the production — audio capture to a good standard. However, some did not record using two live microphones or included fewer than the five required parts.

Most candidates completed stage 2(b): mixing skills to a good standard. However, some did not add the required effects, controls and processes, including the two mandatory time domain effects.

Some candidates had difficulty with stage 3: evaluating the production. In some cases, candidates wrote lengthy evaluations with little or no reasoned information or justification. In some cases, candidates did not write evaluative comments in their report or evaluate all the different sections of the project.

The candidates' logbooks, which provide supporting documentation for stages 1, 2 and 3, should be clear and succinct. Some candidates submitted logbooks with key information missing, such as reports on audio recording and mixing sections including screen shots.

5

# Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

## Question paper

To prepare for the question paper, teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are familiar with the full range of music concepts, different effects, controllers, and processes applied to a section of music, and technology features applied to different genres.

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates are familiar with mic'ing techniques, including distance and placement. Candidates must be able to distinguish between acoustic and electric guitars, use the concept drum kit rather than drums, and distinguish between lead and backing vocals when describing panning.

Candidates should be familiar with intellectual property cases.

Teachers and lecturers should give candidates listening activities, with correctly positioned stereo speakers. This gives candidates practice identifying different types of panning (left, right or centre).

## Assignment

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates have a full experience of mic'ing a range of instruments in different situations before they complete the assignment.

Teachers and lecturers should make candidates aware of the requirements of the assignment before they do it. They should remind candidates to check and implement the mandatory list of technical skills. Candidates must use at least five parts at National 5 and work with two microphones.

Some candidates submitted logbooks in a chronological diary format, including information that does not attract marks. 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.

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the marking instructions for the assignment to ensure that candidates are fully prepared to complete the supporting documentation. Candidates' supporting documentation for stages 1, 2 and 3 should show evidence of formal planning, progress reporting and evaluating to access the full range of marks available.

Most centres opted to submit audio and logbooks electronically through the SQA portal as Word documents or PowerPoint presentations. When preparing files for submission, teachers and lecturers should check that files are accessible and that they have transferred correctly. If SQA appointees cannot access files, marking is problematic. Centres should make sure flyleafs are completed to inform markers and ensure candidates have implemented the list of mandatory skills.

# Appendix: 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.

Every year, we evaluate the performance of our assessments in a fair way, while ensuring standards are maintained so that our qualifications remain credible. To do this, we measure evidence of candidates' knowledge and skills against the national standard.

During the pandemic, we modified National Qualifications course assessments, for example we removed elements of coursework. We kept these modifications in place until the 2022–23 session. The education community agreed that retaining the modifications for longer than this could have a detrimental impact on learning and progression to the next stage of education, employment or training. After discussions with candidates, teachers, lecturers, parents, carers and others, we returned to full course assessment for the 2023–24 session.

SQA's approach to awarding was announced in March 2024 and explained that any impact on candidates completing coursework for the first time, as part of their SQA assessments, would be considered in our grading decisions and incorporated into our well-established

7

grading processes. This provides fairness and safeguards for candidates and helps to provide assurances across the wider education community as we return to established awarding.

Our approach to awarding is broadly aligned to other nations of the UK that have returned to normal grading arrangements.

For full details of the approach, please refer to the National Qualifications 2024 Awarding — Methodology Report.