

Chief Examiner Report

NCFE Level 1 Technical Award in Music Technology (601/6777/4)

NCFE Level 2 Technical Award in Music Technology (601/6774/9)

Assessment Window: 17 June 2019 – 21 June 2019

Assessment: Written

Paper Number: P000732

This report contains information in relation to the external assessment from the Chief Examiner, with an emphasis on the standard of learner work within this assessment window.

The aim is to highlight where learners generally perform well as well as any areas where further development may be required.

Key points:

- grading information
- administering the external assessment
- standard of learner work
- Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment
- referencing of external assessment tasks
- evidence creation
- interpretation of the tasks and associated assessment criteria
- planning in the external assessment.

It is important to note that learners should not sit the external assessment until they have taken part in the relevant teaching of the full qualification content.

Grade Boundary Information

Each learner's external assessment paper is marked by an Examiner and awarded a raw mark. During the awarding process, a combination of statistical analysis and professional judgement is used to establish the raw marks that represent the minimum required standard to achieve each grade. These raw marks are outlined in the table below.

Max Mark	Level 2 Distinction	Level 2 Merit	Level 2 Pass	Level 1 Distinction	Level 1 Merit	Level 1 Pass	NYA
60	47	41	35	29	23	18	0

Grade boundaries represent the minimum raw mark required to achieve a certain grade. For example, if the grade boundary for the Pass grade is 25, a minimum raw mark of 25 is required to achieve a Pass.

Max UMS Score	Level 2 Distinction	Level 2 Merit	Level 2 Pass	Level 1 Distinction	Level 1 Merit	Level 1 Pass	NYA
400	320	280	240	160	120	80	0

** In order to ensure that levels of achievement remain comparable for the same assessment across different assessment windows, all raw marks are converted to a points score based on a uniform mark scale (UMS). For more information about UMS and how it is used to determine overall qualification grades, please refer to the qualification specification.*

Administering the External Assessment

The external assessment is invigilated and must be conducted in line with our Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments. Learners may require additional pre-release material in order to complete the tasks within the paper. These must be provided to learners in line with our Regulations. Learners must be given the resources to carry out the tasks and these are highlighted within the Qualification Specific Instructions Document (QSID).

Standard of Learner Work

This was the fourth window for this external assessment. Learner responses in this session spanned the available range of grades. The majority of learners had attempted to answer questions in both sections of the paper, although not all learners attempted every question.

Generally learners had coped less well with extended response questions in this paper but responses elsewhere tended to be in line with previous sessions.

Examiners noted that increased awareness of examination technique was apparent in some scripts with, for example, indications of learners moving on from questions they were not sure of and devising written plans for long form responses.

Learners who achieved well tended to be able to consider all areas of the specification, which highlighted the need for delivery of unit content to take place prior to learners undertaking assessment.

Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment

Malpractice

There were no reported instances of malpractice in this assessment window. The Chief Examiner would like to take this opportunity to advise learners that instances of malpractice (for example, copying of work from another learner) will affect the outcome on the assessment.

Maladministration

There were instances of maladministration reported in this assessment window. The Chief Examiner would like to highlight the importance of adhering to the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment and the Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery documents in this respect.

Responses of the Tasks within the External Assessment Paper

Section 1

In this section learners were asked to respond to 21 questions, based on knowledge of music technology drawn from content across all units within the qualification specification. The paper included a variety of

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question types, including multiple choice, short answers and longer form responses, ranging in value from 1 to 8 marks.

Q1 was well answered with the majority of learners able to correctly identify two types of DAW. Similarly many learners selected the correct response in Q3 indicating some basic knowledge of DAW configuration.

Learners were less confident in considering potential benefits of MIDI v audio recording in Q11, with some limited understanding of MIDI in some responses.

The majority of learners were able to provide one feature of CD as consumer medium in Q8, which suggested some familiarity with the development of playback formats. In contrast fewer learners were able to correctly identify that a MIDI file (.mid) would not be a suitable format for stereo audio in Q18.

Description of safety measures were creditable in many learners' responses to Q12. Learners who did not achieve in this question tended to be able to identify a risk, but not an appropriate solution to the issue.

Some lack of more detailed knowledge of technical terms was evident in Questions 13 and 14, with some learners unable to provide overdubbing as a term or describe reducing gain to prevent distortion. In general learners appeared less comfortable with regards to elements of the specification drawn from unit 3.

Not all learners were able to correctly identify that condenser microphones require phantom power in response to Q2, with a notable number of learners confusing condenser and dynamic microphones.

In Q4 learners were asked to consider the requirements for a 'live' studio recording and although many learners were able to consider basic requirements (e.g. sufficient space or sufficient inputs), fewer were unable to go on to explain these in context. Limited depth of knowledge with regards to recording and microphones was to some extent mirrored in learner responses to Q15 with many learners unable to fully evaluate microphone properties in terms of suitability for recording a drum kit.

As in the last session, learners were generally confident in terms of responses to content drawn from unit 4 – particularly with regards to questions 16, 17, 20 and 21, demonstrating knowledge of terminology and practice with regards to sound creation in media.

It was notable that questions 5 and 19, which concerned synthesis and sampling, were generally much less well answered. Many learners seemed unfamiliar with sound creation in this respect and were unable to apply terminology to explain and evaluate this area of content.

Some responses to questions 6, 7, 9 and 10 demonstrated knowledge of musical terminology. The majority of learners were able to explain the structural function of a chorus in Q10 and in most cases were able to identify a stylistic feature in Q7.

Not all learners were comfortable with identification of basic terminology (simple and compound) for time signatures in Q6 and still fewer were able to correctly identify a 12 bar sequence in Q9.

Based on responses seen in this session it is suggested that learners seek to consolidate knowledge of basic musical components, such as time signatures in their practical work, to reinforce more theoretical understanding. Learners should also familiarise themselves with terminology and process in regards to synthesis and sampling as methods of sound creation and consider basic knowledge of microphones

and the recording process.

It is suggested that when approaching extended response questions, learners apply good examination technique and consider planning their responses and structuring their writing, to indicate evaluative thought.

Whilst the majority of learners responded to all questions in section 1 some learners did not, which potentially resulted in the loss of marks. The Chief Examiner suggests to learners that providing a response where at all possible is always preferable to not answering at all.

Section 2

In this section learners were asked to respond to a mixture of multiple choice and short response questions, based on aural analysis of provided audio examples. Five questions in total were set in this section with available marks ranging between 1 and 3.

Learners who achieved well in this section tended to be able to use effective listening skills and relate their responses using accurate musical and technical terms. Learners who achieved less well tended to demonstrate less sophisticated aural skills and written responses.

Not all learners were able to identify that quantisation had been applied in response to Q22, many learners had failed to indicate any identification of rhythmic change in their responses. Questions 23 and 26 asked learners to apply aural skills to identify the application of effects and synthesiser editing from the given multiple choices. Incorrect learner responses suggested some lack of confidence in application of more focused aural skills, or lack of knowledge of terminology.

The responses seen tended to consolidate the view that learners in this session were generally less comfortable with musical and technical terms, as well as listening skills.

Questions 24 and 25 were however generally well answered with most learners able to identify at least one instrument in Q24 and describe (often in basic terms) the pitching errors heard in Q25.

Examiners were pleased to note that, over the four completed assessment windows, there has been a steady improvement in the number of learners attempting to answer all questions in this section.

Chief Examiner: Graham Lees

Date: 11th August 2019
