

NCFE Level 1 Technical Award in Music Technology (601/6777/4)
NCFE Level 2 Technical Award in Music Technology (601/6774/9)

Assessment window: 9 March 2020 - 13 March 2020

Assessment: Written

Paper Number: P000945

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	48	41	34	28	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 window was the fifth for this external assessment. The majority of learners had attempted to answer questions in both sections of the paper, although not all learners attempted every question.

Learner submissions in this session spanned the available range of grades.

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 evidence of planning for longer responses.

Learners who achieved well tended to be consistently able to apply knowledge of content from all units within the specification. This underlines the need for delivery of unit content to take place prior to learners sitting the assessment.

Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment

Malpractice

There have been some issues of malpractice raised in this assessment window. The Chief Examiner would like to take this opportunity to advise learners that instances of malpractice will affect the outcome on the assessment. It is imperative that centres and learners adhere to the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment to ensure the integrity of the qualification and that malpractice does not take place.

Maladministration

There were no reported instances of maladministration in this assessment session. The Chief Examiner would like to take this opportunity to thank centres for ensuring adherence to the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment. It is important that centres continue to maintain standards of external assessment administration in line with these regulatory requirements.

Responses of the tasks within the sections of the external assessment paper

Section 1

This section was comprised of 21 questions. The questions tested contextual knowledge of music technology across content from all four units within the qualification specification. This section used a variety of question types, including multiple choice, short answers and longer form responses, ranging in value from 1 to 8 marks.

Multiple Choice Questions

In Q1 the majority of learners were able to select at least one correct response with regards to connection of DAW hardware. Many learners were however less confident with regards to identifying appropriate MIDI data in Q2.

More able learners were able to correctly identify one or more musical features related to a specific genre of music in Q7, whilst the majority of learners were able to successfully identify Health and Safety risks in Q12.

Learners were often able to demonstrate knowledge of basic recording terms by identifying gain in Q14, and show some contextual awareness of sound creation by selecting the correct definition of foley in Q19.

Across the submissions MCQs were generally well handled, with more detailed knowledge of MIDI and musical features being identified as weaker areas for some learners.

Short Answer Questions

These questions ranged between 1 and 4 available marks and comprised the majority of questions in the paper.

The questions which carried multiple marks generally asked learners to produce an explanative response. Stronger learners were often more able to contextualise their responses, and so achieved more credit than learners who provided simple statements.

Many learners were able to correctly state the correct processing in Q3 and software instrument type in Q4. However, there were some more limited responses in which learners tended to confuse types of processing (for example, naming compression / EQ rather than gating) and not be aware of underlying software instrument types (with responses such as 'keyboard' and 'drums' rather than reference to sampling).

The majority of learners were able to creditably suggest why the electric guitar became popular in response to Q8, which showed some contextual knowledge of musical style. Learners generally appeared less comfortable in stating a musical term to describe the given major triad in Q10.

It was noted that some learners responded by stating the term 'chord' from question Q10. The Chief Examiner would like to note that learners are unlikely to gain credit by simply repeating elements of questions. Similarly a number of learners repeated equipment from the give list in Q13, which was not creditable as a response. The majority of learners were however able to state at least one creditable additional piece of equipment, which illustrated some contextual understanding of the recording process, as did many correct responses to Q15 with regards to the use of overdubs.

Learners' responses in Q16 were less confident in terms of how monitoring could be used in a studio, however, with few learners able to provide three coherent descriptions to gain all available marks. Some contextual misunderstanding of monitoring as a term was in evidence in a minority of responses, with learners referring to visual rather than audio monitoring, and in some cases describing the supposed importance of auditing and observation.

Responses to Q18 were generally well handled. Many learners were able to provide credible examples of how types of sound creation could be used in TV adverts and Video games. Learners were particularly knowledgeable with regards to sound creation in Video games as might be generally expected.

Q20 demonstrated some knowledge of digital sample manipulation in many responses, with learners able to correctly describe pitch shifting or similar audio processing. Learners who did not achieve in this question tended to consider less specific methods (for example 'distortion').

More confident learners were often able to explanatively extend their responses in Questions 5, 6, 9 and 17 to gain the full range of marks. In Q5 the majority of learners were able to identify a potential method for preventing output distortion, and more able learners were able to explain the underlying reasoning.

In Q6 the majority of learners were able to link quantisation to correctively placing notes in time, but fewer learners were able to extend this response and fewer still were able to consider other applications of quantisation (for example, creative use of swing).

Q9 allowed some learners to demonstrate useful knowledge of multiple ways to inform stylistic creation of music. Learners who achieved less well in this question tended to state one or more methods, rather than explain their use.

Not all learners appeared familiar with the use of High Pass Filters, which inhibited some responses to Q17. There tended to be some confusion between HPF and LPF, and in some cases confusion between filtering and gating. Learners who achieved well in this question were often able to provide an explanation of corrective and creative uses of this EQ type.

Long Answer Questions

As in previous sessions this paper featured two LAQ questions. The majority of learners who attempted to respond were able to gain some credit.

Q11 potentially provided 6 marks and a number of learners were able to achieve this. High scoring learners tended to be able to provide an evaluative response which conclusively reviewed both approaches to adding string parts using appropriate technical terms and considering a range of factors. Learners who achieved less well tended to only consider one approach, or a limited range of factors.

Learners were generally less confident in regards to gaining the 8 marks available in Q21. Learners who achieved well tended to consider reasonable problems and find solutions with reference to appropriate equipment. Learners who achieved less well tended to appear unfamiliar with logistical issues, and to a lesser extent music technology hardware.

Examiners were pleased to note that many learners had clearly considered exam technique in preparing a response to LAQs (with content and structural notes evident in learner responses).

Section 2

In this section learners were asked to respond to five mixed multiple choice and short response questions, based on aural analysis of provided audio examples. The range of available marks was between 1 and 3 per question with a total of 8 potential marks in this section.

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 in relation to the given examples.

The majority of learners were able to correctly identify the instrument as being a type of percussion in Q22. As elsewhere learners who did not achieve this had possibly ignored the timing reference given in the question. Learners should consider that questions are written to give learners enough information to achieve all available marks, and so all information should be used.

Some responses to Q26 (which was concerned with panning) suggested that learners were either wearing headphones on the incorrect ears or were not listening in stereo. The Chief Examiner reminds learners and centres that equipment should be checked to ensure accurate playback. Learners who achieved both available marks were able to use accurate listening skills and select the correct responses.

In Q23 not all learners were confident in counting the correct number of repeats. It was noted that some successful learners had tallied the repeats on the paper, which seemed a potentially useful approach.

Q24 and Q25 showed aural discrimination in some learner responses. The majority of learners were able to correctly identify 1 or 2 effects applied to the audio in Q24, with fewer learners able to recognise all 3. Some learners were able to identify that audio had been reversed in Q25, however a surprisingly large number of responses tended to incorrectly ascribe more complex processing. This suggested that some learners were not confident in their own ability to listen analytically.

Examiners were pleased to note that there continues to be a steady improvement in the number of learners attempting to answer all questions in this section.

Chief Examiner: G J Lees

Date: May 2020