

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

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

Assessment window: 11 March 2019 - 15 March 2019

Assessment: Written

Paper Number: P000731

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
60	48	42	36	24	18	12	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 Assessment. 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

Learner responses in this third written assessment session for the qualification spanned the full range of available grades. The majority of learners had attempted to answer questions in both sections of the paper, although not all learners attempted every question. A minority of external assessments suggested that learners had run out of time in completing the paper, which indicated some time management issues. It is suggested that learners consider the length of the exam and times suggested by each section as a guide to how much time is spent on each response in order to complete the entire paper in the given time.

Examiners noted that increased awareness of examination technique was in evidence in some learners work 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 no 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 to the Tasks within the Sections of the external assessment paper

Section 1

In this section learners were asked to respond to a series of 21 questions based on knowledge of music technology drawn from content across all units within the qualification specification. A variety of question types including multiple choice, short answers and longer form responses ranging in value from 1 to 8 marks were used.

Questions 1 and 2 were generally well answered, showing a familiarity with basic DAW editing tools and connections. Many learners were able to identify functions from the given choices.

The majority of learners were able to gain one or more marks in Q12, suggesting general awareness of the properties of microphones.

Some responses to Q15 suggested a limited knowledge of headphone monitoring in a recording environment, with many learners unable to accurately explain an advantage in musicians wearing headphones. As in other questions which ask specifically for an advantage or disadvantage learners who were able to consider their responses in context tended to achieve well.

In contrast, the majority of learners were able to provide creditable responses to Q19 in identifying equipment for a vocal recording session. A minority of learners did not achieve due to answers focusing on software or personnel, as opposed to the hardware equipment requested in the question.

Learners who achieved well throughout the paper tended to be able to provide consistent explanative responses to gain credit in 2 mark questions which required a more expanded response. Learners who achieved 1 mark in these questions typically provided more simple statements. The range of learner responses was particularly evident in Q4 and Q6. Examiners noted that learners could identify the basic function of pitch bend and quantisation but were not always able to explain how this would be used.

Questions 10 and 11 asked learners to consider advantages and / or disadvantages in context. In Q10 many learners were able to state a disadvantage of vinyl of a consumer format, although this was not always expanded upon. A minority of learners however appeared to have little awareness of the format (in some cases confusing vinyl with magnetic tape or CD) which tended to limit available credit.

In Q11 many learners correctly related audio file types to context, although some learners had confused WAV files with lossy compressed formats. Examiners noted that where learners demonstrated limited knowledge with regards to properties of audio file formats answers to Q5 also tended to lack creditable detail.

The majority of learners were able to select correct responses in Q17 and 18, demonstrating awareness of terminology. Similarly many learners were able to provide credible reasons for the use of environmental sounds in context in responses to Q20.

The paper featured two long answer response questions with 6 and 8 marks assigned (Q16 and Q21 respectively). The full available mark range for these questions was seen by examiners in this session.

The Chief Examiner notes that, in general, learners appeared comfortable in responses related to Unit 4 content throughout the assessment. In Q21 many learners who achieved well were able to identify some key themes with regards to sound creation and produce and extended evaluative response. However, as

in previous assessments, some learners struggled to articulate answers fully or with a logical structure.

The more variable knowledge of recording demonstrated by learners in Q15 was to some extent mirrored in learner responses to Q16. Learners who achieved well tended to consider technical and logistical aspects of set up, recording and processing (for example, some learners were able to usefully demonstrate detail in terms of microphone choice and placement). Learners who achieved less well tended to be limited to consideration of only one aspect of planning a session. A minority of learners had confused an electronic drum kit with a drum machine, and a very few learners appeared unfamiliar with acoustic drums, which tended to hinder responses.

Description of safety measures were creditable in many learners responses to Q14. Learners who did not achieve in this question tended to be able to identify a hazard, but not an appropriate solution to minimise risk.

Questions 3, 13a and 13b were typically less well answered. In some cases learner response selections in Q3 suggested a flawed understanding of dynamic processing (see also Q26). Terminology was sometimes confused in responses to Q13a, with many references to 'altering of pitch'. Some learners were unable to state ways in which EQ can be used to modify sounds, which suggests a lack of basic awareness of fundamental tools. A number of learners were able to provide exemplification of EQ usage, which were often creditable. In Q13b some learners had confused the function of HPF and LPF (and a minority of learners had confused EQ with compression), although learners who achieved well generally provided a concise statement demonstrating knowledge.

Many responses to Questions 7, 8 and 9 demonstrated knowledge of musical terminology. The majority of learners were able to the structural function of a verse in Q9, and in most cases were able to identify one of more stylistic rhythmic features in Q8. Learners who achieved less well in Q9 tended to be able to demonstrate a limited knowledge of Reggae as a style, or have misread the question and referred to melodic, harmonic or instrumental features.

Responses to Q7 varied, with some learner selections from the multiple choices suggesting a lack of knowledge in regards to compound time, and perhaps representation of time signatures more generally. It is suggested that learners seek to consolidate knowledge of basic musical components such as time signature in their practical work, to reinforce more theoretical understanding.

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.

Many learners were able to identify the processed vocal sound in Q22, although not all learners were able to suggest that a sampling software instrument would have been used to create the particular effect.

The majority of learners were able to identify one or more instruments heard in the clip for Q23. Some learners identified instruments stated in the question, which had entered at an earlier point, and so did not gain credit. Successful responses demonstrated that learners have knowledge of commonly heard instruments and were able to deploy aural skills to identify them.

In Q24 many learners were able to select the appropriate answer from multiple choices. Learners who did not achieve in this question tended to have not identified the repeated A section in the structure of the given example.

Although many learners were able to identify the correct stereo placement of the part in Q25 some learners gave more general responses (for example, 'panned') which was not sufficient to gain credit. A minority of learners misidentified the placement of the sound as being panned to the extreme left rather than extreme right, which suggested that the equipment that they were listening back to the audio examples on was not set up correctly. The Chief Examiner advises that centres and learners should check that audio playback equipment is set up correctly (for example, by checking that headphones are worn on the appropriate ears) prior to undertaking the assessment.

Q26 proved challenging for many learners. Some learners were able to recognise the application of reverb on the tom-tom sound, but the question particular focused on dynamics processing (in this instance on the application of a noise gate to create a gated reverb effect) which many learners did not appear to be able to correctly identify. As noted with regard to Q3 learners in this session did not appear confident with regards to dynamics processing, suggesting some lack of familiarity in knowledge.

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

Chief Examiner: Graham Lees
Date: 29 April 2019