

NCFE Level 3 Applied General Certificate in Music Technology (601/6779/8)

Assessment window: 13th March 2019

Assessment: Written

Paper Number: P000764

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	Distinction	Merit	Pass	NYA
80	62	47	32	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.

Maximum UMS Score*	Distinction	Merit	Pass	NYA
150	97.5	82.5	67.5	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 for Delivery (QSID).

Standard of Learner Work

This assessment window was the third for the qualification for this session and a relatively small number of learners were entered into the assessment.

The majority of learners had attempted all questions and many had provided creditable responses.

Some areas of knowledge and technical vocabulary were not consistently demonstrated in learner responses. Generally learners appeared able to respond positively to questions which concerned the use of DAW tools and technique. Questions that considered musical language and application of music technology in live and studio environments were less consistently well answered.

The majority of learners demonstrated knowledge of digital music business, although a few learners appeared to lack confidence with basic concepts in this area.

Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments

Malpractice

There were no reported instances of malpractice in this external 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 of the external assessment.

Maladministration

No instances of maladministration were reported in this external assessment window. The Chief Examiner would like to highlight the importance of adhering to the Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessments and the Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery (QSID) in this respect.

Responses of the Tasks within the Sections of the External Assessment Paper

Section 1

This section comprised of 6 questions, which referred to a supplied short audio example. All learners had

successfully accessed the given audio file. The majority of learners responded to all questions in this section.

Learners who performed well in this section tended to be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of DAW hardware and software.

Q1 highlighted a lack of knowledge regarding the function of ADAT as a connection type, with few learners able to provide a creditable response. The responses suggested that this area of content was not one with which learners were familiar.

In Q2 many learners were able to identify the correct multiple choice response and therefore show knowledge of basic audio editing.

Some lack of ability to explain envelope shaping in subtractive synthesis was demonstrated by learner responses to Q3. Few learners were able to respond beyond a basic description.

Learner responses to Q5 demonstrated some knowledge of the use of MIDI data to control a hardware synthesiser, although not all learners were able to provide a detailed description.

In Q4 and Q6 some learners had successfully applied aural skills to identify application of tools in the given examples. Many learners were able to identify the aural outcome of amplitude modulation in Q4, but fewer were able to consider how this was achieved using relevant technical language. The majority of learners were able to identify that filtering had been used in Q6, but there was some confusion regarding hi-pass/lo-pass filters. Not all learners were able to identify which parts had been grouped or had not considered the given timing reference in their response.

Section 2

This section comprised of 5 questions, which referred to a supplied short audio example. All learners had successfully accessed the given audio file. The majority of learners responded to all questions in this section.

Learners who performed well in this section were generally able to demonstrate knowledge of musical and technical terminology based on application of listening skills. The majority of learners were able to recognise at least one of the instrumental groups in Q10 and correctly identify the time signature in Q7.

Some lack of confidence in more detailed music language was evident in responses to Q8 and Q9. Few learners were able to accurately identify the chord shown graphically in Q9, with some learners making an inaccurate assumption regarding the chord inversion, or misidentifying the component notes.

Knowledge of modes in learner responses to Q8 was limited, with very few learners able to identify any mode and fewer able to correctly identify the particularly mode. The majority of responses suggested that this area of content was not familiar to many learners.

Responses to Q11 were generally creditable, with the majority of learners able to access marks. Many learners were able to provide features of drum machines, with some learners able to link this specifically to the effect upon production. Responses suggested that most learners were able to demonstrate some

underlying knowledge of technological developments in instrument technology.

Section 3

This section comprised of 6 questions, which referred to a supplied short audio example. All learners had successfully accessed the given audio file. The majority of learners responded to all questions in this section.

Learners who performed well in this section tended to be able to demonstrate knowledge with regards to multi-track recording, mixing and mastering.

Many learners were able to identify the correct response in Q12 from multiple choices. This suggested that learners are generally familiar with the function of DI devices.

The majority of learners were able to identify one effect applied to the audio file in response to Q15, with some learners able to aurally identify both effects.

Some learners in response to Q13 identified logistical disadvantages to vinyl as a medium, rather than sonic disadvantages as required by the question, which limited available credit. Similarly some learners misread the question and supplied an advantage and a disadvantage. The majority of learners were able to identify at least one disadvantage, and in some cases provide relevant explanation.

Microphone placement in Q14 was identified correctly by some learners, with fewer able to consider an appropriate advantage of using an AB stereo pair. Learners who did not achieve well in this question tended to have mistaken the configuration for an XY placement, or had commented on features unrelated to the microphone configuration.

Q16 allowed learners to demonstrate knowledge of gain stages, with many learners able to describe the issue based on consideration of the supplied audio file.

Not all learners were able to accurately consider the appropriateness of the signal level shown in Q17. Learners who achieved well were able to evaluate the limited headroom available to a mastering engineer in relation to application of additional mastering tools.

Section 4

This section comprised of 6 questions, which referred to a supplied short audio example. All learners had successfully accessed the given audio file. The majority of learners responded to all questions in this section.

Learners who performed well in this section were able to demonstrate knowledge of sampling, synthesis and measurement of sound with reference to audio examples. Not all learners were confident with regards to the harmonic series in Q19, and learners provided a wide range of suggested frequencies.

Q18 elicited correct responses selected from multiple choices in some learner submissions. This suggests that learners were able to successfully apply aural discrimination in this question, although this was not universal.

In Q21 few learners were able to consider how accurately weighting might be useful in terms of sound pressure level measurement. It appeared that some learners were unfamiliar with the notion of weighting which led to limited accuracy of response.

In questions 20, 22 and 23, some learners demonstrated knowledge of sampling theory and application. Learners who achieved less well in these questions demonstrated a more limited knowledge of sampling, particularly with reference to understanding of mapping in Q22. Many learners were able to identify that lower sample rates and bit depths make less memory demands, but were not always confident using technical language to consider disadvantages of the same in Q23.

Section 5

This section comprised of 5 questions. The majority of learners responded to all questions in this section.

Learners who achieved well in this section were generally able to demonstrate knowledge of health and safety, roles, technology and planning, in relation to live performance.

The majority of learners were able to correctly identify the answer from multiple choices in Q24, which suggested familiarity with roles in live performance. Many learners were able to identify methods of minimising hazards in response to Q27, with some learners expanding responses creditably.

Q25 allowed some learners to demonstrate technical knowledge of monitor equipment choice, with the majority of learners able to give one or more creditable response.

Learners demonstrated some consideration of planning and terminology in response to Q26, with the majority of learners able to identify a problem. This suggests that learners have absorbed knowledge in regards to the logistics of live performance events.

Extended responses to Q27 varied in terms of detail and depth. Some learners were able to produce a structured response, which showed assessment based on underlying knowledge of hardware and software, with reference to live performance applications. Other learners however were less able to identify relevant features and did not always respond in detail, which limited available credit.

Section 6

This section comprised of 5 questions. The majority of learners responded to all questions in this section.

Learners who performed well in this section tended to be able to demonstrate knowledge of the digital music business. The majority of learners were able to correctly identify the appropriate file format in Q29 and many learners were able to successfully use given figures to analyse break-even points in Q30.

Not all learners were confident with regards to the function of PRS for Music as an organisation, and were not able to relate this successfully to Q31. However, learners who appeared familiar with the organisation were often able to provide an explanative response.

The use of video as a promotional tool was generally well understood by learners, with many responses to Q32 correctly relating to the use of social media and video sharing services.

Q33 was the second long answer question of the paper and was generally well handled by learners. Many learners were able to construct evaluative responses which showed some detailed knowledge of planning a digital release. Learners who achieved less well in this question did not always recognise the role of an aggregator or were unable to consider finer detail in terms of pros and cons, leading to a more limited response.

Chief Examiner: Graham Lees
Date: 19th April 2019
