

Qualification Title and Code

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

Paper number: P001405 (Written)

Assessment Date/Window

Assessment window: 21 February 2022 – 11 March 2022

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:

- Grade Boundary 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.

NYA	Level 1 Pass	Level 1 Merit	Level 1 Distinction	Level 2 Pass	Level 2 Merit	Level 2 Distinction
0-17	18-22	23-27	28-32	33-39	40-47	48-60

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*	Level 1 Pass	Level 1 Merit	Level 1 Distinction	Level 2 Pass	Level 2 Merit	Level 2 Distinction
400	80	120	160	240	280	320

** 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

This was the seventh external assessment window for the qualification, and the first following the pandemic.

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.

Evidence creation

Learners should use the space provided to answer questions. Where answers are typed or additional pages included, the learners name, centre number, centre name and task number must be clearly visible. The additional paper must then be securely attached to the workbook.

Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment

Malpractice

There were no 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

No instances of maladministration were 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 document in this respect.

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 identify at least one feature of an audio interface based on the given diagram. Learners were similarly confident with regards to troubleshooting DAW settings in Q2.

Most learners were able to correctly identify two instrumental elements associated with Hip Hop in Q7, but not all learners were confident in regards to the function of a DI box in Q12.

Many learners were able to demonstrate knowledge of forms of media and methods of sound creation in Q15 and Q16 respectively.

Across the submissions MCQs were generally well handled, with more detailed knowledge of recording hardware and musical features being identified as slightly 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 terminology as MIDI Controller in Q3, although some learners repeated elements of the question and so did not achieve. The Chief Examiner would like to note that learners are unlikely to gain credit by simply repeating elements of questions. Q4 tended to challenge learners, but learners who achieved well tended to be able to both identify appropriate types of filter and their audible effect.

The majority of learners were able to give at least one typical feature of a verse in the context of composition in Q6 and most learners were able to describe a disadvantage of MIDI v audio recording in Q8. Less able learners were sometimes confused in understanding the context of live recording, which suggested some lack of practical experience.

Many learners were able to give a creditable response with regards to defining '4 to the floor' in Q9, although in some responses musical terminology was not used accurately (for example, some learners were confused by bars and beats as terms).

Responses to Q10 varied considerably in depth and confidence, which was demonstrated in the range of awarded marks between 1 and 4. Most learners however were able to demonstrate some conceptual understanding of developments in musical technology, and in the case of higher achieving learners, how this impacts on the creative process.

Not all learners were confident in identifying specific types of audio connector in Q11, but the majority of learners were able to identify at least one input or output. Examiners applied positive marking in this question with regard to crediting descriptions of connectors, in place of accurate terminology. A minority of learners inaccurately identified MIDI connectors, showing some confusion between audio and MIDI.

The majority of learners were able to give a creditable response in regards to measures to avoid eyestrain in Q13, which suggests that Health and Safety is well understood by learners in the context of the recording studio.

Many learners were able to provide a useful description of how a DAW might be used to make music dramatic in the context of sound creation in Q17, but some learners produced very general responses which did not relate to DAW tools.

Learners were generally confident in describing why multiple takes may be useful in Q18, but were less familiar with how Foley may be applied in Q19. Learners who achieved well in Q19 tended to be able to both define how Foley is used, and expand their response to give a specific way in which this enhances the production.

In Q20 many learners made the assumption that radio broadcasts are always live productions, which sometimes confused their responses. However, many learners were able to give one creditable reason why creating ambience for a radio production may be more difficult than for a movie. Learners who achieved well were generally able to expand upon their responses to make them explanative, rather than descriptive.

The majority of learners recognised a disadvantage of using sounds from an effects library in Q21, but some learners were confused in regards to copyright / royalties and misunderstandings in this regard limited achievement in some cases.

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.

Q5 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 approaches to adding reverb. 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 Q14. Learners who achieved well tended to consider issues related to headphones (for example, in terms of bandwidth, imaging and fatigue) and further consider alternate methods of monitoring. Learners who achieved less well tended to provide more general responses, which referred to the 'quality' of headphones and often did not show awareness of technical aspects.

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. It was noted that some learners answered LAQs using bullet points. Whilst these responses were often creditable they did not always allow learners to construct an detailed and evaluative response.

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.

Many learners were able to correctly identify the use of a fade in Q22, although some learners confused the tools used to achieve this effect.

The majority of learners were able to identify one or more musical feature in Q23, with learners who achieved well demonstrating some stylistic knowledge. Learners were less confident in identifying woodwind in Q24 as an multiple choice question.

The majority of learners were able to describe panning in Q25, although it was apparent that some learners were listening with right / left channels reversed. The Chief Examiner reminds learners and centres that equipment should be checked to ensure accurate playback.

Q26 provided a challenge for many learners. It was apparent that the majority of learners were unable to discern a time signature change, or unable to accurately describe a compound signature. A minority of learners however were able to accurately apply aural skills and terminology to provide a creditable response.

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.
