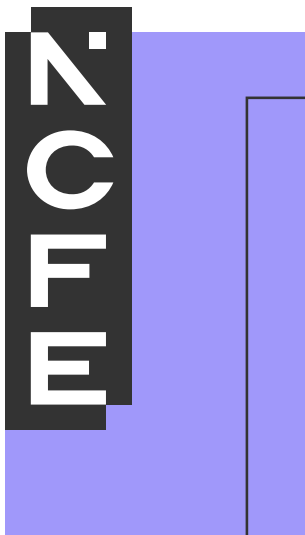




Chief Examiner and Chief Moderator Report

**NCFE Level 1/2 Technical Award in Music
Technology
603/7008/7**

Series: Summer 2024

NCFE Level 1/2 Technical Award in Music Technology (603/7008/7)

Paper numbers: P002457, P002457, P002458

This report contains information in relation to the examined assessment (EA) from the chief examiner and non-exam assessment (NEA) from the chief moderator, with an emphasis on the standard of learner work within this assessment series.

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

Key points:

- grade boundary information
- administering the EA and NEA
- evidence creation
- standard of learner work
- responses to the tasks
- regulations for the conduct of EA and the NEA

The qualification is linear, meaning both assessments must be taken in the same assessment series and cannot be combined across different assessment series. Learners are allowed one attempt at each assessment, and there are no resit opportunities.

Grade boundary and achievement information (V Certs)

This qualification consists of two assessments: the examined assessment (EA) and the non-examined assessment (NEA).

After both assessments are completed and marked or moderated, the marks are combined to give a final mark for each learner. Where the raw marks do not reflect the required weighting of the assessment, a scaling factor is applied. For further information on grading information and scaling factors, please see the Qualification Specification.

Qualification scaled mark boundaries in this series are:

	Overall	Notional Boundaries*	
		EA	NEA
Scaling factor		1	1
Max	200	80	120
Level 2 Distinction*	176	70	106
Level 2 Distinction	153	60	93
Level 2 Merit	125	49	75
Level 2 Pass	97	39	58
Level 1 Distinction	77	31	46
Level 1 Merit	57	23	34
Level 1 Pass	37	15	22

* The grade boundaries given for each assessment are known as 'notional grade boundaries', as they are for illustrative purposes only. Grade boundaries are the lowest mark with which a grade is achieved.

Administering the EA and NEA

The EA is invigilated and must be conducted in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#) document.

Learners must be given the resources to carry out the tasks and these are highlighted within the [Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery \(QSID\)](#) document. Learners require additional pre-release material in order to complete the tasks within the paper. These must be provided to learners in line with our guidance and regulations.

The NEA must be conducted in line with the regulations outlined in the [Tutor Guidance document](#).

Evidence creation

EA

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

Where assessments are completed online, centres must ensure they are familiar with the Surpass platform and have completed all testing and preparation before the assessment, to ensure learners are unaffected by technological issues.

NEA

Learners should approach all tasks in the NEA with reference to time requirements and control conditions which can be located within the QSID document pages 94 to 101. Learners should produce evidence to meet each task independently and with no feedback or guidance from tutors during the assessment.

Learner evidence requirements are stated per task and give mandatory outcomes which can often be evidenced in a variety of ways to best meet the needs of the learner, unless otherwise stated.

Learner evidence submissions in this session often included a range of word-processed documents, PowerPoint presentations and audio files.

It was noted that not all learners provided separate audio files for task 3 and task 4 as required by the assessment evidence in the tutor guide – pages 28 and 42. The chief moderator (CM) advises that provision of separate audio files for these tasks potentially allows for greater differentiation and accurate application of assessment and that this requirement should be adhered to in future sessions.

Moderators were pleased to note that the majority of learners had included visual evidence which reinforced written commentary in most cases. The CM suggests that screengrabs and photographs should be subject to annotation to maximise the value of the evidence. A minority

of learners had produced screencast / video evidence with spoken commentary which was useful in providing evaluative evidence in some cases, to reinforce or take the place of written commentary.

Centres are reminded that template documents, word frames and other supporting documents should not be supplied to the learner for the purposes of generating evidence against this assessment. Use of such materials to generate assessment evidence could potentially be considered malpractice.

Standard of learner work

EA

This was the first EA for the qualification. The question paper consisted of a mix of MCQs, short-answer questions (SAQs) and extended-response questions. A range of questions within the paper related to supplied audio examples which necessitated learners listening to the material to provide responses.

The paper was structured across four sections to an available total of 80 marks. In this assessment learner outcomes were achieved across the available range of awarded marks, which suggested that the learners entered for the assessment had engaged with the paper and that it provided differentiation between outcomes.

Learners who achieved higher marks tended to be able to provide responses which indicated confidence in knowledge across the span of the qualification specification content areas, with reference to answers across all question types, and able to engage with the command verbs within questions, meeting the higher band marks where available. Some learner responses suggested sophisticated skills of evaluation, particularly with regard to aural skills and extended writing.

Learners who were awarded marks at the lower end of the range tended to formulate responses which were more limited in terms of accuracy, use of technical language, and application of knowledge in context. In addition, learners who provided brief, superficial responses were limited in the marks that could be awarded. Responses from some learners suggested that a narrower range of knowledge across content areas was in evidence. Generally, learners who achieved less well were able to accrue marks in some MCQ, but were less confident in providing more descriptive, explanative or extended responses, limiting the marks they received on the higher tariff questions.

It was noted that some learners did not attempt to answer all questions within the paper and that in particular there was some evidence of more limited responses and/or omitted responses as the paper progressed, which led to less availability of credit. The Chief Examiner suggests that this may be a function of some learners running out of time to fully address the assessment, and should ensure that learners also work on exam technique alongside the subject specific knowledge, to ensure they have the opportunity to achieve marks across all questions on the paper.

NEA

This was the first NEA for the qualification. The assessment consisted of six tasks to be completed by learners over 17 hours. The assessment was marked, and quality assured internally by centres, with a sample of work externally moderated by NCFE.

A total of 120 marks were available across the assessment. Each task was allocated a range of marks placed against stated assessment objectives (AOs) linked to task focus. In this assessment, AOs 1 to 5 were assessed via levels of response mark grids aligned to each task. Weightings per task varied to reflect the nature of the qualification outcomes.

Learner outcomes were achieved across the available range of awarded grades in this assessment, which was suggestive of learner engagement and useful differentiation of assessment. The majority of learners had attempted all tasks within the assessment, producing appropriate evidence in most cases to accrue marks against AO's. A minority of learners registered for the assessment had not submitted any evidence or had not gained any credit for evidence produced. Some learners had not attempted all tasks within the assessment, which led to a reduction in the available credit. It was notable that some learners produced less evidence for task 4 compared to other tasks. The CM considers that this could potentially be a function of fatigue or lack of focus reaching the end of the assessment period.

Generally, learner evidence was appropriately structured, and evidence was placed explicitly against tasks. The majority of learners had undertaken tasks in a logical manner demonstrating understanding of key areas of the qualification content.

Holistic outcomes were varied in achievement. However, the structure of the assessment did allow learners to accrue marks in areas in which they were most confident which, to some extent, counterbalanced areas where fewer marks were obtained.

The majority of learners had produced credible musical outcomes which indicated application of skills in using a DAW. Outcomes generally reflected the stylistic demands of the brief and in some cases showed accomplishment and imagination. Learners who achieved well in practical outcomes tended to be able to demonstrate not only creativity in composition, but attention to detail in recording, use of editing and application of mixing. Some range of variability was noted within elements marked against AO4. For example, some learners had achieved well in production of the piece for task 3 but had exhibited less confidence in refining this via the mix process in task 4.

Responses to creation of a proposal, planning for production, process evidence and evaluation were more varied in breadth and depth. Learners generally tended to achieve more marks for AO1 and AO2 than AO3 and AO5. Learners who achieved well, tended to present evidence which was more balanced in outcome at AO and level in terms of accrual of marks.

It was noted by moderators that summative assessor feedback to learners was generally useful and positive. However, assessor feedback did not always include marks and commentary at AO level within tasks which on occasion made assessor decisions unclear for both the purposes of accuracy of feedback to learners and external moderation.

Evidence upload for moderation was generally well handled by centres, although it was noted that some uploads did not initially include all submitted learner evidence and, in some cases, did not include assessment documents. This potentially led to some delays in moderation of learner work. Centres must use the learner evidence upload checklists which are available with the live assessment materials.

Responses to the assessments

EA

Question 1

The majority of learners attempted this MCQ and were able to select the correct response, suggesting confidence in recall of information related to computer hardware in the context of application to DAW use amongst learners.

Question 2

In response to this MCQ most learners selected the correct response, suggesting that learners were able to recall music technology specific to types of control surface based on the given description of application. No significant patterns of incorrect responses were noted.

Question 3

Responses to this MCQ indicated lower confidence in recall of information regarding file formats. However, most learners were still able to select the correct response.

Question 4

Awardable responses were given by the majority of learners in response to this SAQ, although a small minority of learners did not attempt this question. Correct responses indicated understanding of technical terminology as applied to delay effects, with some learners suggesting credible alternatives. Some learners suggested reverb as a response, which was not correct in the context of the given question and demonstrated some potentially limited knowledge of effects.

Question 5

Most learners engaged with this SAQ and were able to achieve a mark for naming a structural section found in popular music. Where learners had responded but were not awarded marks included instances of repeating the name of the section given in the question, suggesting some lack of care in question comprehension. Learners who scored well in this question were able to expand upon the name of section with a plausible, and sometimes exemplified, description of the section's use.

Question 6

The majority of learners were able to access one or more marks in response to this SAQ.

Learners who achieved one mark had correctly applied terminology in identifying and naming the threshold control shown in the given pictorial representation of a compressor. Learners who had achieved full marks were able to expand their response to suggest how the control may be used to achieve the required result.

Some lack of recall of technical terms was in evidence amongst learners who did not accrue marks, with responses sometimes suggesting related but incorrect terms, and a minority of learners had not attempted this question.

Question 7

Many learners were able to correctly state one or more track types used in a DAW.

Where no marks were given learners had often omitted to respond to the SAQ.

It was noted that a minority of learners had responded with the same track type multiple times, which did not yield further marks.

The majority of learners who received marks had stated audio and software instrument tracks, which indicated basic knowledge. Some learners were able to expand their response to explain the function of stated track types. Learners who achieved well were able to gain credit for explanation of function which differentiated across track types.

Question 8

Responses to this SAQ may indicate that some learners found application of aural skills in picking out musical characteristics challenging.

Learners who achieved well were able to suggest one or more audible features with reference to style and expand their responses in the context of the question, often via a comparative approach. Learners who achieved less well were less confident in suggesting specific musical elements drawn from the given example, and often did not expand explanatively upon any features stated.

Question 9

This MCQ provided some challenges for learners, with a minority able to identify the correct response from the majority who responded.

No significant patterns of incorrect responses were noted, which suggested some lack of confidence amongst learners when considering potentially less familiar time signatures.

Question 10

The majority of learners had attempted this MCQ and were able to select the correct response. This suggested some confidence in recall of basic instrument properties.

Question 11

Responses to this MCQ suggested that many learners were not confident in recall of musical forms based on labelling of musical units. No significant patterns of incorrect responses were noted, however the majority of learners had attempted this question.

Question 12

The majority of learners were not able to provide a creditable response to this SAQ.

Some learners did not attempt the question and some responses indicated a significant misunderstanding of this specification content, indicating an area for future development within learner preparation ahead of any future exam series.

Question 13

Many learners were able to identify panning of a particular element in the given SAQ audio example, which suggested some aural skills.

However fewer learners were able to expand upon their response to gain full credit.

Question 14

In response to this SAQ the majority of learners were able to name one or more physical media formats. Learners who did not achieve tended to identify digital file types only.

Learners who achieved well were able to gain marks for responses which described advantages of each of the stated media. A minority of learners had not considered features in terms of 'advantage' in their response as required by the question, which limited marks that could be awarded and, in some cases, suggested a lack of full attention to reading the question.

Question 15

The majority of learners were able to gain some marks to this SAQ. Learners had generally been able to identify one or more live-streaming platforms, which suggested useful underpinning knowledge and engagement. Learners who did not receive marks in this question often omitted to respond, or had identified a platform (or platforms) which did not support live streaming.

Question 16

The majority of learners engaged well with this SAQ to identify potential health and safety issues, and most responses suggested confidence in this application of the area of content.

Where learners did not receive marks their responses had either been omitted or not suitably expanded to give a plausible outcome.

Question 17

In response to this MCQ the majority of learners had selected the correct response, suggesting confidence in recall of the properties of media types amongst learners undertaking the assessment.

Question 18

The majority of learners were able to select the correct response to this MCQ. This outcome suggested confidence amongst learners in knowledge of roles and responsibilities associated with the music business. No significant patterns of incorrect responses were noted, although a number of learners did not attempt this question.

Question 19

The outcome of this MCQ suggested that majority of learners had attempted the question and were able to select the correct response.

Incorrect responses suggested some misunderstanding of LPF with the most common incorrect response pointing to the definition of HPF.

Question 20

In this SAQ most learners had provided some form of awardable response.

It was noted that a number of learners had chosen not to respond to this question. Most learners who had responded were able to state the type of power supply required for a condenser microphone, which suggested familiarity with basic operation of this equipment among those with the confidence to respond.

Question 21

Learners were somewhat less confident in stating two types of studio monitor speakers. A number of learners had chosen not to respond to this SAQ. However, many learners were able to gain credit for identification of one or more types of speaker.

Some responses suggested a lack of familiarity with studio monitoring or provided responses that offered no technical terms required to receive marks at this level. A minority of learners had responded by including the speaker type given in the question, which was not awardable, and suggested a lack of question engagement and comprehension before responding.

Question 22

The majority of learners had provided responses to this SAQ which suggested some comprehension of the production process in context.

Learners who achieved higher marks were able to suggest multiple appropriate questions and expand on these to explain the purpose of each.

Learners who achieved fewer marks generally provided fewer contextually appropriate questions and/or did not expand their response to include an explanation. Some learners did not attempt to respond, and a minority of learners produced responses which were not contextually plausible, or simply incorrect, meaning no marks could be awarded.

Question 23

Learner answers to this SAQ suggested that the learners who had responded were somewhat confident in methods of organising a DAW project, but overall achievement on this question suggests that it is not an area of full familiarity and confidence across the cohort.

Not all learners had expanded upon their suggestion for organisation to gain full credit, but learners who had achieved higher marks tended to be able to coherently rationalise the activity in context.

Question 24

Responses to this audio SAQ suggested that many learners found aural discrimination and description of the application within the audio file more challenging.

Learners who achieved well were able to identify one of the ways in which bussing had been applied and expand their response explanatively.

Learners who did not achieve had tended to omit to respond or had identified a feature in the audio file which was not creditable. In a minority of responses learners had commented on musical features without logical reference to the question, which were not awarded marks.

Question 25

The majority of learners had made some attempt to respond to this SAQ. Learners who achieved higher marks were able to identify an item of DJ technology and provide one or more descriptions of use in the given context.

Learners who achieved fewer or no marks tended to be less secure in stating appropriate technology or finding correct terms for items. However, it was noted that generally learners seemed confident discussing DJ-specific items and related terminology.

Question 26

In this question learners who achieved well often considered a range of historical, technical and creative developments to analyse the impact of MIDI on music production in the 1980s.

Some learners were able to demonstrate detailed knowledge of how MIDI impacted the work of artists and producers in the context of the given timeframe with references to key concepts and developments leading to thoughtful conclusions.

Learners who achieved fewer marks tended to focus on a narrower range of ideas and technology, sometimes with more limited contextual knowledge presented and more limited consideration of application and analysis.

Not all learners had attempted this extended-response question, and many gave brief, superficial responses which failed to address the higher level requirements for the higher mark bands, however across the cohort it was positive to see some learners gave responses which were able to be awarded full marks.

Question 27

Learners who achieved higher marks tended to be able to directly reference to given audio material to evaluate potential areas which could be changed and provide detailed and specific suggestions both in terms of musical features and sound creation.

Learners who achieved lower or no marks often provided more generic responses which touched on a more limited range of AO1 areas only. Learners may have started to expand their responses to include some suggestions to include more specific musical ideas, but these were often not considered in detail with reference to their intention of effect.

As in the previous question, not all learners had attempted this extended-response question, but learners who achieved well were in some cases able to accrue full marks.

Learners must ensure that they do not fail to answer the extended response questions, as they are worth a comparatively high number of marks. Learners who ran out of time, or failed to provide any awardable response for the higher value questions, were limiting the overall marks available to them on the paper.

NEA

Task 1

In this task learners were required to create a proposal for the piece with reference to the requirements of the brief. Task evidence was defined as a word-processed document.

The majority of learners engaged with the task to produce a proposal which commented on musical and sound creation elements of their proposed piece. Evidence of research undertaken during this task, and in the preparation and research time proceeding it was notable in the majority of responses.

Learners who achieved well in this task tended to be able to present a coherent and concise proposal which covered all musical and sound creation elements with specific reference to the stylistic demands of the brief. Research often informed responses by analysis of works in the reggae style to ascertain key musical and production characteristics.

Some learners were able to present application of knowledge that was highly comprehensive by virtue of specific musical ideas that the learners proposed to incorporate against each music element to form a stylistic outcome. Learners working at this level were able to assimilate all demands of the brief into their proposal and make clear reference to these in commentary. Sounds creation aspects of the brief were considered well by some learners, who recognised the requirements of the brief and had started to propose solutions in terms of audio recording and the use of software instruments creatively.

Learners who achieved lower marks in this task tended to have provided more limited coverage of musical elements in context often providing inconsistent levels of detail, or in some cases completely omitting reference to some elements. This tended to limit available marks for AO1 and AO2. Generally, references to melodic and harmonic elements were noticeably weaker, suggesting some lack of understanding of chord progressions and melodic structures amongst learners operating at this level. More limited commentary in terms of sound creation resources was often in evidence, with references to recording of audio substantially more limited than consideration of software instruments. This was suggestive of some lack of knowledge in regard to audio capture from some learners.

Some learner responses focussed on the development of reggae from a historical and social perspective. Whilst this provided useful background in many cases, it added little value to the response and was undertaken at the expense of more focussed judgements and the development of a coherent proposal. A minority of learners had produced minimal work in response to the task or had in some cases only duplicated research sources without further synthesis. It was noted that there was uncredited / unreferenced research which was repeated. This could be considered plagiarism and should be handled as such during assessment.

Coherent judgements and formulated approaches at this stage tended to allow the learners to gain marks for AO3 and move more confidently onto task 2.

Task 2

Task 2 required learners to develop a plan to produce their piece of music. The evidence format of the task was not specified although the majority of learners approached this through written commentary which in some cases included appropriate planning tools (for example: timeline tables, diagrams and Gantt charts) which tended to add some clarity and structure to the response.

Learners who achieved well in this task tended to be able to recognise the time available to them to complete the project and assign realistic schedules to a range of activities. Coverage of task requirements within the plan was generally considered at this level and made reference to all required elements to meet AO2.

At higher levels learners were often able to realistically consider the hardware and software available to them in the context of the brief and their own proposal. Learners who were able to produce a coherent timeline were also at this stage able to recognise the scheduling needs for resources and consider, for example, the availability of additional musicians for the purposes of audio capture. Ongoing evaluation of skills, processes, tools and techniques required by the plan was often in evidence, alongside detailed consideration of health and safety.

Learners who achieved less well tended to produce a more minimally detailed plan, often with unrealistic time expectations. Task requirements were sometimes not fully addressed, or some areas were inconsistently in detail. Often available hardware and software were identified, but not placed well in the context of applying the plan which led to more limited evaluation.

Audio materials were generally less well-considered at this level and often relied on the use of pre-recorded sources / loops rather than audio captured by the learner. Health and safety considerations were generally more strongly referenced, although not always specific in terms of considering specific issues which would be commonly encountered in completing a music technology project. Some learners had produced an evaluation as a summative measure distinct from planning, which in some cases had led to more diffuse and limited commentary which tended to yield fewer marks against AO5.

It is noted that learners should not be provided with template structures for planning from which to produce assessment evidence, including blank timeline tables and risk assessment documents.

Coherent and concise planning of task 2, which took into creative and technical aspects often allowed learners to move into task 3 with confidence. A minority of learners had not attempted this task or had produced evidence which was not distinct from task 1 (and / or task 3 responses). This tended to limit available marks and did not produce a useful basis to proceed to task 3.

Task 3

This task carried a high weighting of AO4 marks, and a substantial percentage of time given to the NEA in recognition of the skills and demands inherent in producing a piece of music.

Evidence of the audio outcome at this stage alongside evaluative commentary concerning the production process was required by the task.

The majority of learners had produced a stereo mixdown in an appropriate format, alongside written evidence which demonstrated processes undertaken in creation of the piece. It was noted that some learners had not produced a mixdown at this stage which was distinct from that produced in response to task 4. A minority of learners had produced a mixture of written and screencast / spoken commentary which was often usefully evidential in the accrual of marks.

Learners who achieved higher marks in this task tended to have demonstrated a range of creative and technical skills to produce a stylistically appropriate piece of music, which fulfilled the requirements of the brief. The audio outcome was often well supported by process evidence which included ongoing evaluative commentary leading to coherent decision making.

A range of interpretive compositional processes were in evidence, with the most successful usually well supported by work in tasks 1 and 2 as starting points. Pleasingly structured and well-conceived musical outcomes which were recognisably and consistently stylistically were produced by some learners. Compositions which made use of all musical elements to produce a convincing outcome tended to gain marks against AO4 elements. Learners working at this level tended to have considered use of audio and MIDI consistently to best develop their piece.

Sympathetic application of DAW tools for MIDI programming and editing was in place in the work of some learners, with for example musical application of velocity and quantisation. The range of audio usage undertaken was varied, with learners working at higher levels often able to undertake some pleasing capture of live instruments via microphones and DI. In some cases, for example, learners had ambitiously captured live drum kits via a multi-mic approach. More extensive audio capture had often allowed learners to demonstrate some sophistication in the application of audio tools for corrective and creative purposes. Learners working at this level were often able to demonstrate logically laid out process evidence which included ongoing evaluative commentary coupled with usefully annotated screenshots feeding into higher AO5 marks. It is noted however that in some cases the quality of audio outcomes was not consistently supported by commentary, which tended to diminish available marks.

Learners who achieved less marks tended to have produced less effective compositional outcomes, often with less consideration of all musical elements or in some cases limited reference to the required style. Learners were sometimes able to gain credit via useful commentary in these cases, but often evaluation and demonstration of skills related to the use of hardware and software (particularly in terms of audio elements) was more limited. A minority of learners had produced no response to this task which severely limited available credit.

Task 4

This task required learners to produce a mixed version of the task 3 outcome alongside evidence of processes undertaken. As in task 3, a higher percentage of AO4 marks was available alongside substantial time weighting in recognition of the application of skills and time taken to create a mix.

Most learners had produced a stereo mix in response to this task, although some learners had only presented one mix. The majority of these mixes evidenced application of mixing in line with

commentary and so presented assessable evidence. As in task 3 a minority of learners had produced useful screencast / video evidence with commentary to provide evidence of process.

Coherent outcomes from task 3 usually presented learners with the best opportunity to build pleasing mixes. However, it was notable that in some cases less sophisticated task 3 outcomes were substantially lifted by application of creative and corrective skills at mixdown.

Learners who achieved well in this task tended to have produced coherent mixes which developed outcomes from task 3 stylistically and technically via application of appropriate tools and techniques to gain credit in AO4 elements. At this level learners were often able to present evidence of process showing clear understanding of balance, EQ, effects and dynamics processing. Some more sophisticated techniques including the creative use of automation and, in a minority of cases, application of hardware was in evidence. Evaluative commentary tended to reinforce creative decisions made during the mixing process which assisted in accrual of marks against AO5.

Some learners had produced sonically developed outcomes but had not supported this with commentary which somewhat diminished marks.

Learners who achieved less marks in this task tended to have provided more limited evidence of application of mixing skills. In some cases, only very basic balancing was undertaken, and process evidence was limited to screenshots only without any commentary, which limited available credit.

A minority of learners had not undertaken this task or had not produced evidence which was creditable.

Task 5

Task 5 required learners to produce a summative evaluation which included commentary on the use of skills, processes, tools and techniques alongside suggestions for improvement and alternate approaches to the brief.

This task did not always result in substantive outcomes, with a minority of learners producing no evidence in response.

Learners who were able to produce a considered evaluation with reference to their work and link this back to the demands of the brief were often able to achieve well. In some cases, a range of specific and creative suggestions for improvements and alternate approaches were provided by learners working at this level.

Learners who achieved less well tended to have produced more minimal evaluations which in some cases did not address all aspects of the task. Learners working at this level sometimes moved to a 'What went well' and an 'Even better if' (WWW / EBI) approach, which in some cases constrained commentary. Suggestions for improvement tended to be more limited and broad in nature, often referring to the learners' wider skills than cohesive and specific comments in regard to the outcome.

Often a pattern was notable in that learners who had not achieved well in the earlier tasks tended not to accrue marks as successfully in response to task 5.