



Common questions about National 3, National 4 and National 5 Music

Course assessment

How may we use the National 5 Music specimen question paper?

The specimen question paper may be used for formative assessment events in school.

However, please remember that if you are entering into exceptional circumstances consideration for any candidate, SQA will consider a wide range of candidate evidence to support this request. Please see page 10 of the document *Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Guidance for Centres*, which states: 'a past paper in its entirety (either SQA or commercial) will not be accepted as support for an exceptional circumstances consideration. These papers and associated marking instructions are in the public domain and can be accessed by candidates.'

This indicates that for exceptional circumstances consideration, evidence should be drawn from a number of different sources. Use the specimen question paper as a template in terms of duration, format, types of questions and Course coverage. Additional sources of questions could be, eg past Standard Grade Credit type questions or Intermediate 2 type questions or centre-devised questions of a similar standard, bearing in mind the new concepts lists.

What are the new timings for the external Course assessment of performing?

| Level | Associated Board equivalent (minimum standard) | Total programme duration | Maximum time on one instrument | Minimum time on other instrument | Other possible combinations of minutes |
|------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| National 4 | Grade 2 | 8 minutes | 6 minutes | 2 minutes | 4 and 4 5 and 3 |
| National 5 | Grade 3 | 8 minutes | 6 minutes | 2 minutes | 4 and 4 5 and 3 |

Please note that the timing for the external Course assessment of performing remains the same for current qualifications (Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher) in 2014.

Will the sampling of performing programmes continue in the new qualifications?

No. From the first National 5 exam in 2014, SQA's Visiting Assessors will hear and assess complete pieces and programmes. Please note that sampling will continue for the current qualifications (Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher) in 2014.

Will the approval of music service continue for the new qualifications?

The SQA approval of music service will continue for one more session: May–October 2014 and this will be for the current qualifications only, ie Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, current Higher and current Advanced Higher.

The approval of music for external Performing exams in Music has been in operation for nearly 10 years, and centres and SQA have worked in partnership to collate large libraries of validated/approved materials on a centre-by-centre basis.

For the new external Performing exams in Music, starting with National 5 in 2014, this system will change and there will be no further requirement to send music to SQA for pre-approval. You will be able draw on the following as sources of material for external assessment:

- ◆ music already approved by SQA for the current qualifications
- ◆ lists of exemplified pieces contained in [National Qualifications Music: Performing](#) document, published October 2005
- ◆ pieces from a range of external Music examination syllabuses

If you want to present pieces which are not from any of the sources listed above, you can do so but must ensure that the material meets the standard for any particular level. There is a new flexibility here in that centres are now free to collaborate and share materials. This could take place on a neighbourhood, consortia or local authority basis and you will be able to continue to build up exam repertoire in this way.

National4 Added Value Unit

For Music: Performance (Added Value) Unit are the two instruments considered separately?

For the Added Value Unit at National 4, basic competence must be reached on both instruments in order to pass this Unit.

For the performance in the Added Value Unit at National 4, do all pieces have to be recorded by the centre?

Yes. Centres must record all pieces for both instruments/voice. This is part of the Evidence Requirements for this Unit.

For the performance in the Added Value Unit at National 4, can the assessment of the two instruments/voice be split over a period of time?

The procedure for Music: Performance Added Value Unit at National 4 and National 5 Course assessment should operate on similar lines, ie the National 4 Performance should replicate as far as possible the external assessment conditions for National 5. The two instruments should be performed within a reasonable timeframe. For a variety of reasons, it may not be possible to perform both instruments back to back; the advice is that both instruments should be completed within an assessment session and this is the advice for National 5 also. This session could be within a day, ie it might be possible to perform on Instrument one in the morning and Instrument two in the afternoon.

Another example: for National 5 Course assessment it would be acceptable to present the two instruments within the time that the Visiting Assessor is in the school and this could be termed the assessment session. However, it is not acceptable for the National 4 Added Value Unit or the National 5 Course assessment for the two instruments to be presented separately over an extended period of time, eg weeks apart.

Performing

What are the requirements for fingered/single-fingered chords and number of registration changes for keyboard performing at National 4 and 5?

Single fingered chords are acceptable at both levels, although candidates may use fingered chords.

SQA doesn't quantify the number of registration changes etc for keyboards. Candidates should be able to demonstrate sufficient changes of registration to show their flair and style and facility at the keyboard. It is not possible to quantify as it may be different for each piece/genre/style.

Do performers need to use touch-sensitive keyboards?

Although candidates may have access to touch-sensitive keyboards, it is not a requirement. The requirements of the National 4 and 5 Courses, in this respect, are the same as those of the Intermediate 1 and 2 Courses.

Does the National 5 styles bank for drum kits, contained in the June 2013 Music update letter, also apply to the existing qualifications?

For the 2014 exam year, the styles bank will apply to National 5 only.

Centres are asked to use the styles bank as their guide to compiling a contrasting programme of pieces for external assessment. This doesn't apply to existing National Qualifications: Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, existing Higher and existing Advanced Higher.

If a candidate has selected drum kit as one of their instruments at National 5, do they still have to perform four styles with four fills if they opt to do two minutes of playing time?

Yes, this is the case. However, we would advise you to consider carefully the two minute option and have given the following advice in the [June 2013 Update letter](#):

The programme time for each instrument should be carefully considered to ensure that each candidate has the opportunity to demonstrate appropriate musical and technical skills at the required level. The new flexibility of the balance of the number of minutes for each instrument will require consideration: careful selection of pieces for each individual candidate; careful adaptation of material, where appropriate. It is important to ensure that every candidate has the opportunity to perform to their full potential and it may be that, eg playing the minimum number of minutes on an instrument doesn't help them achieve this.

We have been using the SQA drum kit pack for our candidates in the past and we are now using this for National 5. However, three pieces at National 5 can exceed the new time limit. How can this be adjusted?

The advice is to adapt these pieces by cutting or fading at a judicious point. By doing this you are not 'sampling' as such, but presenting a complete piece which has been deliberately cut or faded to fit the time requirement. You would mark this clearly on the music for the Visiting Assessor. We anticipate that this will be the case for, eg singers also.

Do we have to start at the beginning of a piece and fade out, or could we start in verse four of a five-verse song?

Centres should start at the beginning of a piece and fade out (in the example above) after a few verses of the song.

What if a candidate's programme exceeds eight minutes? Is there a maximum time?

We ask centres to try to time programmes to come to as near eight minutes as possible and try not to exceed eight and a half minutes. Candidates should bear in mind that playing for an unduly long time in an exam may well become self-penalising, should they run out of stamina.

Music: Composing Skills

Do centres need to gather evidence of a complete piece of music for the Music: Composing Skills Unit?

Evidence for the Music: Composing Skills Unit may be, but need not be, a complete piece(s) of music. The key focus of this Unit is the ongoing acquisition of composing skills and this can be evidenced in short sections of music. Centres should refer carefully to the Assessment Standards for this Unit and align assessment decisions with these.

When using the SQA-produced Unit Assessment Support packs, Appendix 1 sets out the context for the assessment. The context (genre/style) of the music can be changed without being prior verified by SQA. For example, for National 5 Music: Composing Skills the context used in Unit Assessment Support pack 1 is 1970s rock music. This could be substituted for another genre/style without the assessment having to be prior verified by SQA.

Music: Performing Skills

For the Music: Performing Skills Unit can centres gather recordings (audio and/or video) as evidence for Unit assessment?

Yes. Audio/video evidence is totally acceptable and may well be the most naturally occurring (and practicable) way of gathering evidence; to record candidates unobtrusively as they show evidence of their ongoing acquisition of performing skills. The only proviso would be, for verification purposes, to submit a copy of the music (notation or similar) which goes with the recording.

SQA documents for the Music: Performing Skills Units do not specify in which form the evidence should be presented and this is to allow centres flexibility in Unit delivery and gathering evidence. SQA will accept a range of forms of evidence to support the assessment decisions which have been made internally in centres.

Particularly in the Performing Skills and Composing Skills Units, if centres didn't audio/video record they would need to support the evidence submitted with a detailed form of words to explain how and why they arrived at their assessment decisions and, even then, this may not fully inform the verification process.

General questions

Is it possible to enter candidates for only the Understanding Music Unit or only the Performing Skills Unit?

Yes, it is possible in all subjects to enter candidates for Unit(s) which are component Units of a Course. In the case of the new Music qualifications, this would be the *Performing Skills*, *Composing Skills* and *Understanding Music Units*.

If the Music: Performing Skills Unit at National 3, 4 or 5 is taken as a free-standing Unit, do candidates still have to perform on two instruments?

The component Unit of the new National 3, 4 or 5 Music Courses, *Music: Performing Skills*, may be offered as a free-standing Unit. If this is the case, it should still include performing skills on **two** instruments, as the Unit Specification states.

The Unit which requires only one instrument to be played is the *Performing Music on One Instrument or Voice Unit* (which is coded F3F4) Access 3 to Advanced Higher. Please note that this Unit cannot contribute to a Course award at any time. The *Performing Music on One Instrument or Voice* Units will continue to be offered alongside the new Music Courses and Units as alternative provision.

Are free-standing Units assessed internally?

All free-standing Units are internally assessed. Centres retain the evidence to support their assessment decisions and they may be selected for verification by SQA.

General Curriculum for Excellence questions and answers can be found on the [frequently asked questions section](#) of SQA's website.