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To: SQA Co-ordinators
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Cc: LEA Contacts, SQA Business Development Managers, CfE Liaison Team

National Qualifications - Dance

Please pass this to the member of staff responsible for Dance.

This is an update on new National Qualifications in Dance and contains important information for session 2013-2014 to help you prepare for the 2014 examination of both the current Higher Dance Practice and the new National 5 Dance qualification. The focus of this update is key dates and external assessment (Visiting Assessment).

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Please pass on this information to your Dance teaching staff. If you would like to discuss any of the contents of this update with us, please contact Daniel Beadle (contact details above) or myself on 0345 213 6811 or email mary.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk



Mary McDonald
Qualifications Manager
Humanities, Arts and Business

1. Dance Assessment Year Planner

October 2013	1 October centres receive notification of National 5 Dance selections for Verification for Round 1
November 2013	4 November uplift date for National 5 Dance Round 1 Verification materials 2013 External Assessment (Principal Assessor) Reports published
December 2013	2 December centres receive notification of National 5 Dance selections for Verification for Round 2
January 2014	15 January uplift date for National 5 Dance Round 2 Verification materials 2014 Visiting Assessment preparation for National 5 starts: <i>Instructions to Centres</i> document and Candidate Mark Sheets are issued to centres
February 2014	Visiting Assessors contact centres to arrange visits for National 5 Performance and Choreography External Assessments 2014 Visiting Assessment period starts for National 5 Dance on 17 February . Verification of Higher Dance Units starts (Centres are informed in advance if they have been selected)
March 2014	2014 Visiting Assessment preparation for Higher Dance Practice starts: <i>Instructions to Centres</i> document and Candidate Mark Sheets are issued to centres Visiting Assessors contact centres to arrange visits for Higher Dance Practice External Assessments Verification of Higher Dance Units period ends
April 2014	1 – 30 April is the Visiting Assessment period for Higher Dance Practice.
May 2014	2 May National 5 Dance Visiting Assessment period ends.

2. National 5 Dance – Visiting Assessment of Performance and Choreography

The external assessment of Performance and Choreography in N5 Dance will be subject to Visiting Assessment and the following questions and answers have been compiled to provide a guide to this.

What is the assessment model for the N5 Dance Performance and Choreography exam?

This is the same Visiting Assessment model as the current Higher Dance Practice, where the Visiting Assessor (VA) will assess a sample of 12 candidates (or in centres where there are less than 12 candidates, the VA will assess all candidates) This is the assessment model where SQA's VA and the centre assessor* mark live performances simultaneously and collaboratively.

* the Dance teacher who acts as the centre assessor (it is up to centres to decide on which member of staff carries out this role)

How much time is allocated to this assessment visit and when will it take place?

The N5 Dance Visiting Assessment period is from 17 February 2014 - 2 May 2014 and one day is allocated to each centre. This is a very wide window and you will be able to negotiate your one day visit with your VA, at a time which suits you and your candidates best.

Is this is same as Verification?

No, this assessment model is quite different from Verification. Verification is about Units and confirming the internal assessment decisions made by centres: in common with all subjects, Verification for N5 Dance now takes place in three rounds during the year. Visiting Assessment is for the external components of a Course; in the case of N5 Dance, the Performance and the Choreography. Marks are assigned to each of these components and this counts towards the overall mark and grade for a Course.

Who selects the sample of 12 candidates?

The centre selects the sample and the advice is to aim for a range of candidates within the sample. Being in control of the sample selection means that you can plan in a practical way and it means that you have up until the day of the Visiting Assessment to finalise the sample and substitute other candidates in the run up to the day.

How does the process work?

An SQA-appointed Visiting Assessor (VA) will be allocated to your school for one day (regardless of how many candidates you have). The process starts with the initial phone conversation with your VA to set up the assessment date. You can discuss the potential sample with the VA then and planning can start. On the day, the VA and the centre assessor will mark the sample of 12 collaboratively and the VA will guide the centre staff to the national standard. The agreed marks will stand for the sample of 12, and these marks are final.

Please note that the **Choreography Review** is also part of the assessment day. Candidates in the sample will complete the work for their Choreography Review in advance of the VA visit, and then the VA and the centre assessor will mark this collaboratively and marks will be agreed.

What happens to the candidates who are not in the sample?

As soon as possible after the VA visit, the centre assessor will assess all the other candidates in the group according to the national standards endorsed by the VA and in line with the assessment decisions made and the marks allocated to the sample of 12. The timing of this is up to each centre, but best practice would be to do this as soon as possible after the VA visit while it is fresh in your mind and so that no candidate is either advantaged or disadvantaged by time passing, eg you could choose to assess the rest of the group the following day or within the week. However, all assessments for all candidates must take place within 2 weeks (and no later than 2 weeks after the VA visit).

What if a candidate is absent during that two week period?

If the candidate has continued to be absent because of eg, a medical condition and your 2 week period for assessment has passed, you would enter into the new Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service. This new service will run before results are published and you would submit evidence for that candidate. For full details see the document *Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Guidance for Centres* (published October 2013) publication code: FA6673

When will there be more information about this?

In preparation for annual Visiting Assessment, SQA publishes the document *Instructions to Centres* and this contains comprehensive instructions and guidance about documentation, processes and timescales. You will receive this in early 2014.

In summary, what are the advantages of this way of working in external assessment for N5 Dance?

- The model of assessing a sample of 12 candidates has operated successfully in Higher Dance and in some other subjects for years. Teachers find this supportive and developmental; national standards are shared and understood. It is a collaborative marking model where SQA works with and supports teachers.
- This type of Visiting Assessment means that for N5 Dance every centre is visited each year: this is different from Verification which samples centres from year to year.
- The timing of the Visiting Assessment visit can be negotiated to suit each centre (February-May)
- The centre selects the candidates for the sample and this will give additional flexibility in terms of what is most practicable.

3. National Qualifications Support Teams (NQSTs)

SQA has been recruiting practitioners to join our National Qualifications Support Teams (NQSTs).

NQSTs are consultation groups that will provide feedback to SQA on internal and external assessment for National Qualifications including the new Courses developed to meet the needs of Curriculum for Excellence.

These groups will communicate primarily using dedicated and secure online discussion forums. This will allow SQA Qualifications Development staff to engage with practitioners on an immediate basis as issues arise.

Each NQST will also hold an annual meeting which will require members to be released from their centres. This release is not subject to compensation, although necessary travel expenses will be reimbursed. The first meetings will be held in autumn 2014.

If you are interested in applying to become a member of an NQST, please seek permission from your head of centre or employer then complete and submit the online Expression of Interest form. The closing date for applications is Friday 13th December.

For more information and to apply to join one of these teams, visit www.sqa.org.uk/nqst