



Common questions about National 5 and Higher Dance

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Visiting assessment

What is the assessment model for National 5 and Higher Dance performance and choreography?

Dance is externally assessed by the visiting assessment model, where a 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 acts as the centre assessor (it is up to centres to decide on which member of staff carries out this role).

This VA day is the external examination for Dance and so it is important for centres to set exam conditions for the duration of the VA visit. This will ensure no distraction for candidates during and in preparation for their performances.

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

The Dance visiting assessment period is from February to May each year 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. If you present at both National 5 and Higher, you will be allocated one day per level.

How long is the visiting assessment day likely to take?

If the centre is presenting a full sample of 12 candidates, this will take a full school day. Centres should be prepared to assess any remaining candidates on another day, in the following two-week period.

Is the visiting assessment process the 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.

Visiting assessment is for the external Components of a Course; in the case of National 5 Dance, the performance and the choreography. Marks are assigned to each of these Components. This counts towards the overall mark and grade for the Course.

How does the process work?

An SQA-appointed Visiting Assessor (VA) will be allocated to your centre for one day per level (regardless of how many candidates you have). The process starts with an 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 candidates 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.

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.

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 two working weeks (and no later than two working weeks after the VA visit).

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

If a candidate has continued to be absent because of, for example, a medical condition and your two-week period for assessment has passed, you must contact SQA's Assessment Arrangements team.

Should the candidate performance be filmed during the visiting assessment day?

To allow Dance candidates to enter into the full marking review process, centres may opt to record the external performing exams in Dance on the day of the VA visit. Please note this is not mandatory and is entirely optional for centres. For more information, please refer to: [Post Results Services: Recordings for Music, Drama and Dance Performing Exams](#).

Does each candidate perform both their Technical Solo and Choreography consecutively?

No. The solos should be grouped together according to genre. Following all solo performances, the candidates will return to introduce and present their choreography.

Is the candidate required to be present for the choreography Component of the Course assessment?

Yes. For the choreography Component, the candidate is required to introduce their own choreography, give a brief description of the theme and introduce the dancers who are going to be involved in the choreography. At National 5, the dance should last between one-and-a-half and two minutes and should be choreographed for two

dancers (excluding self). At Higher, the dance should last between two and three minutes, for a minimum of three dancers.

The Choreography Review can be presented in a variety of formats. These could include oral presentations, written reports, videos, or a combination of such approaches.

Time should be allocated for the VA and the centre's lead assessor to mark written evidence, mood boards or watch DVDs. Candidates should be present to answer the VA's questions about their choreography. Questions regarding research, structure, motif development, theatre arts and relationships with dancers may be asked by the VA to encourage candidate engagement and allow the candidate to reinforce their choreographic intention.

What should the candidates wear for their solo performances on the visiting assessment day?

We have to be able to clearly see candidates' bodies so that correct alignment and posture is visible.

In summary, what are the advantages of the visiting assessment model in Dance?

- ◆ The model of assessing a sample of 12 candidates has operated successfully in Higher Dance Practice 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 National 5 and Higher Dance every centre will be visited each year: this is different from verification which samples centres from year to year.
- ◆ The timing of the VA's visit can be negotiated to suit each centre (February to May).
- ◆ The centre selects the candidates for the sample and this will give additional flexibility in terms of what is most practicable.

Course content

For the performance Component, is the technical solo to be choreographed by the tutor?

Yes, the technical solo is to be choreographed by the tutor for both National 5 and Higher.

For National 5, the performance will be of a tutor-choreographed technical solo in a selected dance genre. It will last one-and-a-half to two minutes.

For Higher, the candidate will perform two contrasting tutor-choreographed technical solos, which are both between one-and-a-half to two minutes long.

The solos will assess their technical and performance skills.

For the technical solo, what content is required in terms of steps and movements?

The solos should contain steps which can be found in the appendix of the Course and Unit Support Notes. This document is located on SQA's website.

Is there a written evaluation assessment?

There is no separate evaluation as part of the Dance Courses. There are two Components, described below.

Performance: for National 5, the candidate will perform a solo in one dance genre which will last one-and-a-half to two minutes. For Higher, the candidate will perform two contrasting tutor-choreographed technical solos, which are both between one-and-a-half to two minutes long.

Practical activity: this has two parts, the Choreography and Choreography Review, as described previously. At National 5, the dance should last between one-and-a-half and two minutes and should be choreographed for two dancers (excluding self). At Higher, the dance should last between two and three minutes, for a minimum of three dancers.

Centres are not required to send in Choreography Reviews to SQA prior to the Visiting Assessment day. The Visiting Assessor will mark this on the day of the candidate performance.

For Course assessment, can a candidate use work previously internally assessed in the Dance: Choreography and Dance: Technical Skills Units?

For Course assessment, candidates plan, develop and present a short choreography and this should be informed by the choreography produced for Unit assessment, and with further development and refinement.

The performance solos, as described above, should be choreographed by the tutor and in a dance genre that has already been studied in the Dance: Technical Skills Unit. Although the dance may be informed by and developed from the dance performed for the Unit assessment, comparably this should be more technically directed and sophisticated for Course assessment.

General questions

Is there a means of recognising positive achievement for a candidate who may not achieve the National 5 Dance Course?

As there is not a National 4 Dance Course; there is no alternative as such for a National 5 Dance candidate. However, if the centre feels that the candidate is not going to meet the standard for the National 5 Dance external assessment, then the National Progression Award in Dance at SCQF level 4 may be an appropriate option. More information about this qualification can be found [here](#).

When is the next SQA event for Understanding Standards?

The next Understanding Standards event for Higher Dance is on Friday 20 November in Stirling. More information on the event and how to book a place is available on the [events section](#) of SQA's website.

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