



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

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Unit assessment

Music: Composing Skills Unit

What are the main differences between Higher and Advanced Higher for the Music: Composing Skills Unit?

The Unit assessment support packs contain useful information on requirements for all levels and can be found on SQA's secure website. The significant differences between the requirements for Higher and Advanced Higher are in bold below.

Higher candidates are required to generate evidence which demonstrates that they have met minimum competency for each of the four Assessment Standards: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4.

Music: Composing Skills (Higher) Unit

- ◆ For Assessment Standard 1.1, candidates are expected to analyse two selected examples of music and demonstrate a clear understanding of the influences on composers' work and their specific approach to creating music.
- ◆ For Assessment Standard 1.2, candidates are required to experiment in creative ways and to use at least eight music concepts.
- ◆ For Assessment Standard 1.3, candidates are required to develop ideas and use at least eight music concepts.
- ◆ For Assessment Standard 1.4, candidates are required to critically reflect on their music and creative choices and identify any chosen approaches which were particularly successful in meeting their creative intentions and identify at least one area for improvement.

Music: Composing Skills (Advanced Higher) Unit

- ◆ For Assessment Standard 1.1, candidates are expected to analyse two selected examples of music and demonstrate a **high level understanding** of the influences on composers' work and their specific approach to creating music.
- ◆ For Assessment Standard 1.2, candidates are required to experiment in **sophisticated** and creative ways and to use at least 12 music concepts.
- ◆ For Assessment Standard 1.3, candidates are required to develop ideas and use least **12 music concepts**.
- ◆ For Assessment Standard 1.4, candidates are required to critically reflect on their music and the impact of their creative choices and identify any chosen approaches which were particularly successful in meeting their creative intentions, **identify two areas of strength and identify two areas for development** in the music.

Does a candidate have to compose an extended piece of music for the Composing Skills Unit?

For the Music: Composing Skills Unit at all levels, evidence for the 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.

Some candidates may benefit from a range of tasks to strengthen and further develop their composing skills, but for others one task may suffice.

Do the eight concepts required for the Composing Skills (Higher) Unit have to come from the Higher concept list and can they be taken from the literacy concepts?

The eight concepts need not all be at Higher level and can come from lower levels, but the way in which they are deployed should show the increased selection/discrimination, development and refinement through the levels, ie a step up from National 5 to Higher.

It is likely that literacy concepts will occur naturally in the course of the work of the Composing Skills Unit; however literacy concepts could be used as part of the (minimum) eight and should be deployed in a Higher level way and context. It is not recommended that the majority of the (minimum) eight concepts are literacy concepts as this would not provide enough breadth or scope at Higher level.

Understanding Music Unit

Is there a NAB for the Understanding Music (Higher) Unit?

There are no NABs for the Understanding Music (Higher) Unit, or for any of the Units of the new Music Courses. Please refer to the Unit assessment support packs on SQA's secure website for examples of assessment tasks for this Unit. There are also Understanding Standards materials available on SQA's secure website which may help you with your approach to Unit assessment at Higher.

For Understanding Music Assessment Standard 1.2 at both National 5 and Higher level, are candidates required to carry out these assessment tasks on two styles of music?

It is not a requirement to analyse two different styles and if adequate evidence is generated during one assessment task which focuses on one style of music, this would be acceptable. Candidates' responses at National 5 might refer, for example, to:

- ◆ the influence of the 'storytelling' traditional as seen in traditional folk music styles and in their lyrics, describing the lives of ordinary people and events that have personal meaning to them
- ◆ the impact of social influences of the time on the development of specific music styles, such as the history and development of jazz and blues music

Analysis skills at Higher level should be demonstrated by:

- ◆ identifying key features and significant components within the music
- ◆ establishing and describing the relative importance of components on the style of the music
- ◆ explaining the impact of specific social and cultural influences on the distinctive sounds and development of the musical style

Understanding and Analysing Music (Advanced Higher) Unit

Are there set periods or styles of music we should be using in the Understanding and Analysing Music Unit?

Music listened to and analysed can be drawn from any genre/period/style, but the music selected must be sufficiently contrasting to provide breadth and scope for Advanced Higher candidates.

How many pieces of music should be studied?

A minimum of two pieces should be studied. These may be from the same style or period but, again, should be sufficiently different to give breadth and scope.

Is there a set number of concepts that should be covered?

The context and content of the music provides the challenge at Advanced Higher. A set number of concepts are not stipulated and concepts may be drawn from a number of levels, eg it could be a lower level concept used in an Advanced Higher context.

Does the evidence for this Unit have to be presented in essay format and, if so, what is the word count?

The evidence may be presented in essay format, however, there is a range of ways of presenting the evidence, eg radio broadcast, PowerPoint presentation, video. If essay format is used, there is no specified word count. As this is a sideways step from the former Advanced Higher Listening Commentary, use this as a guide — approximately 1,500 words. Other forms of evidence, eg PowerPoint presentation, radio broadcast or video, should provide equivalences in that what you look for in an essay (main points and features).

How can the Unit be approached?

This Unit is all about personalisation, choice and opportunities for specialism. There are a number of creative ways to approach it. One way would be to listen to a number of contrasting pieces of music from different genres and styles. Then, according to the interests of the candidate, start to specialise.

One approach is to relate the pieces of music chosen for study to the instrument the candidate plays, eg a guitarist could look at two movements from different guitar concertos — one by Vivaldi and one by Rodrigo. There is also potential for integration with the Music: Performing Skills Unit in that the candidate could perform examples of music from these works and fulfil the Evidence Requirements of the Performing Skills Unit in that way. Another example: a candidate who is interested in vocal music could select two songs to study, eg Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* and The Beatles' *Eleanor Rigby*. These songs are from contrasting eras, genres/styles and lend themselves to exploration of social and cultural factors.

Music: Performing Skills Unit

What duration should a candidate's programme be for the Performing Skills Unit?

The Music: Performing Skills Unit does not specify how long each example of music should be in order for the candidate to meet Assessment Standard 1.1 on both instruments or instrument or voice.

Candidates need not perform complete pieces, however may choose to focus on the section(s) of a piece that demonstrate that the music is of the appropriate level.

This is different to the performance component of Course assessment, as detailed on page 9 of this document.

What are requirements for National 3 and 4 drum kit players for the Performing Skills Unit?

For the Music: Performing Skills Unit drum kit candidates have to play a minimum of two examples at the appropriate level (Grade 2 for National 4 and Grade 1 for National 3). The examples of music for National 4 candidates should include three different fills and demonstrate four-way independence. The examples of music for National 3 candidates should include two different fills and demonstrate three-way independence.

What guidance is available on levelling of pieces for voice?

Here is some general guidance to help you benchmark songs as new repertoire is becoming available all the time.

- ◆ National 3 — limited melodic range with no demanding leaps. Short phrases and very simple rhythmic patterns.
- ◆ National 4 — range of an octave or just over. Simple rhythms. No great demands regarding phrasing or vocal leaps.

National 4 Added Value Unit

What is the minimum and maximum time requirement on each instrument for the Added Value Unit?

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

For the Added Value Unit assessment are the two instruments considered separately?

For the Added Value Unit, basic competence must be reached on both instruments in order to pass this Unit. A holistic judgement should be made for each instrument when the assessment is being conducted. Assessors should take account of the quality of all of the evidence available for each instrument/voice across the full programme.

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

Yes. Centres must record all pieces for both instruments/voice. This forms 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 the National 4 Added Value Unit and the 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. 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 centre

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.

What are the drum kit requirements for the National 4 Added Value Unit?

Centres should be working from the new drum kit style bank. Players have to play in three styles, demonstrating four-way independence and include three appropriate and different fills within each style. The pieces should be of Grade 2 level.

What are the chordal guitar requirements for the National 4 Added Value Unit?

Chordal guitarists must demonstrate nine chords in a continuous accompanying style which could include arpeggiated chords.

Performing/instruments

For the external assessment of performing what are the minimum and maximum time requirements for each level?

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 5	Grade 3	8 minutes	6 minutes	2 minutes	4 and 4 5 and 3
Higher	Grade 4	12 minutes	8 minutes	4 minutes	6 and 6 7 and 5
Advanced Higher	Grade 5	18 minutes	12 minutes	6 minutes	9 and 9 10 and 8 11 and 7

Must pieces be accompanied?

In general, it is a requirement that performances (on all instruments) should be accompanied unless stylistically appropriate for there to be no accompaniment.

Normally keyboards are not accompanied by another instrument. Some classical guitar pieces may not have a published accompaniment.

If there are no dynamic markings in a piece of music, how is this performance aspect assessed?

If there are no dynamic markings in the music, this performance aspect is not assessed. The mood and character of the piece can be enhanced when candidates make dynamic contrasts even if they are not present in the score.

If repeats are included in the timing of a piece, must they be played?

If repeats are included in the timing of a programme, they must be played as Visiting Assessors are listening to entire programmes.

There could be differences in timings of the same pieces if some candidates choose not to play repeats and others do and also if judicious cuts have been made in order to fit the candidate's choice of time allocation for their programme.

What are the drum kit requirements?

For drum kit requirements, centres should be working from the new drum kit style bank.

National 5

Four styles are required with four-way independence evident in every style and with four appropriate and different fills. It is possible for one piece to include two different styles. In this case, double the number of required fills is not a requirement. Please note that if a candidate opts to play drum kit for the minimum time requirement, they are still required to demonstrate four styles for National 5.

Higher

Five styles are required with four-way independence evident in every style and with four appropriate and different fills. It is possible for one piece to include two different styles. In this case, double the number of required fills is not a requirement. Please note that if a candidate opts to play drum kit for the minimum time requirement, they are still required to demonstrate five styles for Higher with four appropriate and different fills within each style, within that timescale.

Advanced Higher

Six styles are required with four-way independence evident in every style and with four appropriate and different fills. It is possible for one piece to include two different styles. In this case, double the number of required fills is not a requirement. Please note that if a candidate opts to play drum kit for the minimum time requirement, they are still required to demonstrate six styles for Advanced Higher with four appropriate and different fills within each style, within that timescale.

What are the requirements for Advanced Higher bagpipes?

A programme at this level must include a piobaireachd, a march, Strathspey and a reel. It may not be possible to include all of a piobaireachd within the programme time, in which case, centres are advised that candidates should perform sections of the piobaireachd, making sure that the chosen sections are level-specific. Candidates may also opt to miss out repeats in the march, Strathspey and reel to accommodate their chosen time allocation on the instrument.

Is it possible to have bagpipes as one instrument and tin whistle as the other?

Since 2014, it is possible for candidates at all levels to study and present bagpipes as one instrument and tin whistle as the other instrument.

What are the guitar chords requirements for each level?

There are three different and separate approaches to presenting a guitar programme:

- ◆ a programme of pieces of chordal/rhythm guitar throughout
- ◆ a programme of pieces which is a mixture of lead/melodic guitar and chordal/rhythm guitar — in which case the full chordal requirements for each level must be in the programme
- ◆ a programme of pieces of lead/melodic guitar entirely

In the latter case, there is no requirement to include chords/chordal/rhythm guitar within the programme and the requirement for a set of number of chords does not apply.

Level	Minimum number of chords	Chordal guitar requirements
National 5	12	Chords should be played in a continuous accompanying style, which could include finger picking, arpeggiated chords, barre chords or more complex playing techniques appropriate to the styles of the music.
Higher	18	Chords should be played in a continuous accompanying style, which could include finger picking, arpeggiated chords, barre chords or more complex playing techniques appropriate to the styles of the music. Techniques might include alternating bass, runs, slurring, bending and harmonics.
Advanced Higher	18	Candidates must play single melodic lines at the appropriate standard and incorporate melody and accompaniment in at least one piece. Chords should be played in a continuous accompanying style or a more demanding arpeggiated style. Barre chords, varied textures and more complex playing techniques appropriate to the style of the music are expected. Techniques might include alternating bass, runs, slurring, bending and harmonics. Candidates may also incorporate pieces from the classical guitar repertoire in their programme.

Does a chordal guitar programme have to contain barre chords for National 5?

Chords should be played in a continuous accompanying style, which could include finger picking, arpeggiated chords, barre chords or more complex playing techniques appropriate to the styles of the music.

The language used to describe the requirements for chordal guitar has been refined, following queries about the requirements for chordal guitar. For National 5, as long as 12 chords are contained within the programme and a more complex playing technique is included (like arpeggiated chords) there would not be a requirement to include barre chords.

Are ukulele requirements the same as those for guitar?

Yes. Candidates can choose to perform a melodic or chordal programme on ukulele.

Is it mandatory for candidates to play a keyboard piece with a backing rhythm?

It is not a mandatory requirement for keyboard candidates to play with the rhythmic backing. It may enhance the candidate's performance if they choose to play with the rhythmic backing, however is not essential.

For some pieces it may be stylistically appropriate to play without the rhythmic accompaniment.

What guidance is available on levelling of pieces for voice?

Here is some general guidance to help you benchmark songs as new repertoire is becoming available all the time.

- ◆ National 5 — Range of over an octave with some leaps; more demanding rhythmically and in terms of breathing/phrasing, interpretation/characterisation demands.
- ◆ Higher — Range of over an octave with some demanding leaps; more demanding rhythmically and in terms of breathing/phrasing, interpretation/characterisation demands.
- ◆ Advanced Higher — Range of over an octave with demanding leaps; much more demanding rhythmically and in terms of breathing/phrasing, interpretation/characterisation demands.

Is rap acceptable as part of a vocal programme?

For external assessment purposes, all songs in a vocal programme (at any level) must contain a melody line as this is one of the key assessment criteria strands. Rap songs do not fulfil that requirement. If a song contains a rap section this would be acceptable as long as the melodic part of the song is of a suitable level.

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

The approval of music for external performing exams in Music has been in operation for more than 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 performing exams in Music, there is no longer a 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
- ◆ lists of exemplified pieces contained in [National Qualifications Music: Performing](#) document, published October 2005
- ◆ pieces from a range of external Music examination syllabi

If you would like to present pieces which are not from any of the sources listed above, you can do so but you 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.

Is it a requirement for centres to record the external performing exam on the day of the Visitor Assessor visit?

This is not mandatory and is entirely optional for centres. However, SQA would recommend this to any centre that wishes to engage fully with the marking review process. Centres who choose not to record the performing exam may still request a review of the Question Paper. For more information, please refer to: [Post Results Services: Recordings for Music, Drama and Dance Performing Exams](#).

Question paper

Which chords should candidates know?

At Higher level, the literacy content states that candidates should know chords I, IV, V, VI in major and minor keys. For National 5, the mandatory chords are C major, G major, F major and A minor.

Do candidates need to be familiar with cadences in each of the major and minor keys?

Yes, candidates could be required to identify cadences in either major or minor keys.

Can the final answer for Question 6 (Higher) and Question 8 (National 5) be written as bullet points?

Answers can be in the form of bullet points, short answers, sentences or continuous prose.

How should the answers for the final question in the Advanced Higher question paper be written?

Question 6 (a) parts i) and ii) can be answered in bullet points.

For Question 6 (b), the response should be written in continuous prose as this is a description of what you have heard. Please see the Marking Instructions in the Specimen Question Paper for further guidance.

General questions

There are a number of new concepts on the Advanced Higher concepts list. What guidance can you provide for these?

Electronic dance music

Electronic dance music is normally heard in dance clubs where the DJ combines tracks electronically into one smooth mix. Electronic dance music originally featured drum machines, synthesisers and sequencers but is currently now mostly produced using computers and software that contains sampling, effects, and multi-track recording features. Electronic music can encompass music of different genres including house music, dubstep, drum and bass.

Piano trio

A piano trio is a small chamber group consisting of a piano and two other instruments, normally a violin and cello.

Contemporary jazz

Contemporary jazz is an umbrella term for all kinds of jazz music being played now — as well as jazz music of the 80's, 90's, 00's and 10's — which can feature some or all of the following: sophisticated, highly chromatic harmonies (verging on impressionist or atonal); rhythmic experimentation (cross rhythms, changing time signatures); development of a groove based on just two or three chords; instruments used in experimental ways (melodic instruments used in percussive roles, harmonics and other virtuoso performing techniques); world music and avant garde influences and inclusion of instruments never used seriously in jazz before (flugelhorn, flute or oboe).

Can pupils be entered on a specific instrument within the freestanding Performing Units and which code should be used?

The Performing on One Instrument or Voice Units (F3F4) are still available and will continue to be offered alongside the new Music Courses and Units as alternative provision. These Units still have the same code, however they have been renamed: Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher have been removed from the title and replaced with the equivalent SCQF level.

[F3F4 09](#) — SCQF level 3

[F3F4 10](#) — SCQF level 4

[F3F4 11](#) — SCQF level 5

[F3F4 12](#) — SCQF level 6

[F3F4 13](#) — SCQF level 7

The content of the Units remain the same. There is nothing in the Unit titles or codes to differentiate which instrument or voice is being presented and it is not possible to enter a candidate for the same Unit and level twice. However, it is possible to enter for F3F4 at different levels, putting the better instrument at the upper level, eg F3F4 12 for SCQF level 6 and F3F4 11 for SCQF level 5.

Which National Progression Awards are still on offer for the coming years?

The table below provides a list of NPAs which will continue to be offered.

NPA title	Level
Contemporary Gaelic Songwriting and Production	5
Music for Wellbeing	6
Music Business	6
Music Performing	6
Musical Theatre	6
Scottish Bagpipes	2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
Scottish Pipe Band Drumming	3, 4, 5 and 6
Sound Production: Live	6
Sound Production: Recording	6

What is the process for candidates moving from National 5 to National 4?

Centres have always had to decide carefully which level is appropriate for each candidate. It has therefore always been advisable for centres to carefully monitor the pace of learning of each candidate in the early stages of the Course and not to leave it too late to decide to change level. If it is taking a long time to learn a National 5 piece, this would intimate that the challenge is too great and signal action to drop the level of difficulty of the pieces.

Are the UCAS points allocated to each subject the same for the new qualifications?

There is no change to the UCAS position in regard to new Higher Music, Higher Music Technology and Advanced Higher Music Courses.

Can you clarify the assessment methods and dates for the new Advanced Higher Music Course?

Advanced Higher Music (C750 77)

Course Component	Assessment method	Assessment date(s)
Question paper	Marked by SQA	Exam date: Friday 13 May 2016
Performance	All candidates assessed by an SQA Visiting Assessor	Visiting assessment period: 2 May to 20 May 2016

Advanced Higher Music: Portfolio (C778 77)

Course Component	Assessment method	Assessment date(s)
Question Paper	Marked by SQA	Exam date: Friday 13 May 2016
Portfolio	Marked centrally by SQA	Uplifted by SQA from centres: 13 May 2016

What Understanding Standards materials are available for Music?

SQA are publishing examples of candidate evidence with commentaries as part of the Understanding Standards programme. These materials are for teachers and lecturers to help them develop their understanding of standards required for assessment. As these materials become available, they are being published in the following locations:

- ◆ SQA's secure site — materials relating to Unit assessment and the externally-assessed performance Component. Teachers and lecturers can arrange access to these materials through their SQA Co-ordinator.
- ◆ Understanding Standards website — materials relating to the Music Question Papers.

More information on our Understanding Standards programme can be found on our [Understanding Standards](#) page.

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