



National Units, Higher National and Graded Units

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2018

Music

Introduction

External verification activity took place in Music across National Units, Higher National Units and graded units. Based on the sample selected for this session's verification visits, the standard is improving, with the initial outcome of almost all visits being successful.

Almost all centres delivering the Higher National (HN) Music and National Qualifications (NQ) in Music are well-resourced, giving candidates access to appropriate facilities and significant industry expertise while undertaking their qualification. Across all centres verified there were robust recruitment and support measures in place, with staff going to considerable lengths to ensure that the course is suitable for candidates, and then providing support for candidates while undertaking the qualifications. In almost all centres visited for verification, internal assessment and verification is being implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment. In almost all centres visited valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair assessments are being used, and candidates' work is being judged consistently against SQA's requirements. In all centres, evidence is being retained in line with SQA requirements, and the outcome of the verification visits are being disseminated to staff to inform future assessment practice. A diverse range of good practice was found on the visits, detailed in this report.

The units verified this session were:

F58M 12	Appreciation of Music
F58F 12	Creative Project (SCQF level 6)
DJ28 33	Keyboard Skills for Music Production
F58J 12	Music: An Introduction to the UK Music Industry
F58L 11	Music: Aural Skills
F508 34	Music Graded Unit 1
DR33 35	Music Graded Unit 2
F603 34	Music First Study 1: Instrument
F5EA 11	Music: Literacy
F58K 11	Music: Live Performance
F5E5 12	Music: Live Performance
DJ2A 34	Music: Live Performance Skills 1
DR2L 35	Music: Live Performance Skills 2
F5E6 13	Music: Organising a Community-based Musical Activity
DR18 34	Music Second Study 2: Composition
F5EB 12	Music: Songwriting
H1M9 34	Music History 1
H1M7 34	Music Theory 1
H1LV 34	Professional Practice for Musicians
DJ35 34	Songwriting 1
FN18 34	Vocal Ensemble Singing: An Introduction

Category 2: Resources

Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

In the verification sample, in all centres, there were effective initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials. This was reflected in the excellent range of facilities available to candidates undertaking NQ and HN Music. It was further reflected in engaging assessment tasks and a wide range of resources available to candidates. Centres used a range of review methods, with most employing regular, minuted meetings to discuss resources for assessment. There were no actions or recommendations relating to resources.

Category 3: Candidate support

Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.

Across all centres verified, candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) were matched against the requirements of the award. All centres verified consistently went beyond what was expected to ensure appropriate candidates were recruited for the award. Most centres took considerable time to both interview and audition candidates on their first (and sometimes second) instruments.

Good practice that was commonly observed on visits was the time allocated for candidate audition by specialist instrument tutors. Some centres chose to have continuing candidates audition again to provide them with a valuable experience and to ensure that the next level of study was suitable for them.

Criterion 3.3: Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.

In all centres in the verification sample, candidates had regular scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their plans accordingly. In some centres, feedback was thorough, precisely targeted to the requirements of the qualification and candidate development, and formalised. In all centres there was evidence of a range of suitable feedback to candidates, delivered orally and in writing, in person and online.

Good practice was observed in detailed, comprehensive, appropriate, written feedback that had been captured and retained. It was recommended that assessors capture written evidence of mentoring in both Music Graded Unit 1 and Graded Unit 2 by photocopy or in a digital format.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

Criterion 4.2: Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.

In almost all centres, assessors and verifiers were implementing their centre procedures to ensure standardisation of assessment. In all cases where assessors and verifiers were fully implementing their centre assessment and verification procedures there were no issues identified on the verification visit. It is worth reminding centres that robust internal verification usually results in successful initial outcomes from external verification.

There were more than a few instances of good practice observed in the implementation of internal assessment and verification. Good practice was observed in the Music graded units with evidence being cross marked to ensure that marking and grading was consistent.

There were more than a few recommendations on internal assessment and verification. One recommendation was for pre-delivery internal verification and sampling to be carried out on all the units being externally verified, in addition to the internal verification cycle. Another recommendation was for centres that have more than one stream, where it could benefit consistency to have the same internal verifier sample both streams.

It is worth reminding centres that evidence of pre-delivery internal verification and sampling is required on an external verification visit, and also that candidate work presented should be marked so that there is evidence of assessment judgements — although there were very few verification visits where this had not been done.

Criterion 4.3: Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.

On almost all visits, centres demonstrated the effective selection and use of assessment methods and instruments to ensure validity, equitability and fairness in assessment.

In almost all of the verification sample, where SQA-devised assessment support packs (ASPs) are in place, these were being used effectively, ensuring that national standards were being met. In cases where there were no SQA-devised assessment materials available, in almost all of the sample for verification, suitable centre-devised materials had been created. Across the units sampled, a diverse range of engaging assessment materials had been devised to create opportunities for musical performance, recording sessions, candidate collaboration, directed research, candidate presentations and problem solving, in addition to appropriate assessment materials and reports.

There were more than a few recommendations relating to assessment instruments and methods, and their selection and use. In Music Graded Units 1 and 2 there were recommendations to adhere more closely to the marking allocations in the SQA-devised ASP, and to focus on job briefs that best reflect musical skills from the mandatory units — being careful that the briefs created are not skewed towards music business or sound production roles.

There were further recommendations to revisit centre-devised marking guidelines and check these are aligned with the unit specification, although again, there were very few visits in the verification sample that required this recommendation. Ensuring appropriate assessment criteria are in place for all units being delivered will further contribute to successful initial outcomes in verification and standardisation of assessment across all candidates.

Criterion 4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.

In all centres verified, the centre processes and procedures for ensuring authenticity were being observed. In all of the verification sample, assessors and verifiers were proactively taking steps to ensure the authenticity of candidate evidence presented. Centres requiring a candidate declaration for independently generated work and using plagiarism detection software had the most robust checks in place. Much of the evidence contributing to the qualification is highly personal to the candidate, and further, is often generated while being mentored by the assessor, so it is straightforward to ensure that this work is the candidate's own. An example of this will be video footage of the candidate's final musical performance — evidence that clearly shows the candidate.

There were more than a few recommendations relating to authenticity on verification visits but these recommendations centred on just two pieces of advice. The first was that if candidate declarations are used, this actively encourages the candidate to consider the authenticity of their work and take responsibility. The second was that, although performing internet searches can detect issues with authenticity, plagiarism detection software can detect similarities between class groups or across year groups — this is much more effective and less time-consuming for assessors.

Criterion 4.6: Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.

On almost all verification visits, centres were found to have made accurate and consistent assessment judgements, ensuring the integrity of the qualification. In addition to candidates' work being accurately marked and judged against SQA's requirements, some of the work being created is of a very high standard. This was observed in Music History 1 (H1M9 34) and in the standard of performance for Live Performance Skills 1 (DJ2A 34) — both in the standard of performances being given by the candidates themselves, and in the capturing and assessment of these performances. Further high quality work was also observed in some of the Music Graded Unit 1 and Graded Unit 2 verification visits. It is clear that the work being produced in support of the qualification, especially in the graded units, is also developing candidate skills and materials to help access higher education and employment.

There were further instances of good practice observed on Music Graded Unit 1 external verification visits, where the graded units had been cross marked to ensure consistency.

In Music Graded Unit 1 and 2 there were recommendations to adhere more closely to the marking allocations in the SQA-devised ASP, although overall grades were still accurate. There

were very few cases of indicative pass marks being used for Music Theory 1. In all cases the candidates had met the necessary evidence requirements, but it was recommended not to use these marks as they may not be identical to SQA requirements and may confuse the assessor and/or the candidate.

There were specific recommendations for the Music: Songwriting (F5EB 12) unit that quality of recordings should be consistently clear and audible, and, where possible, of high quality, so that candidates can use the recordings as part of portfolios and online profiles to enhance their career. There were a few isolated cases of a loose application of the concept of melody in songwriting and it is useful advice for all centres to consistently ensure that it is clear the candidate has a melody (rather than accompaniment) for the songs created.

It is worth reiterating the advice to centres from criterion 4.3 that candidate work presented for external verification should be assessed in advance so that there is evidence of assessment judgements — although there were very few verification visits where this had not been done.

Criterion 4.7: Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.

On all verification visits, centres had retained candidate work and all requested evidence in line with SQA requirements. On almost all visits, evidence was well-organised, clearly laid out and easy to navigate — this clearly reflected the organised approach to delivery and assessment, and it is recognised that additional work is required by centres to logically present work for external verification. There were no recommendations relating to this.

Criterion 4.9: Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.

In all centres in the verification sample, centres were effectively disseminating the feedback from qualification verifiers to affirm what is being done well and to address any issues or highlight areas to be improved. All centres had clear processes for this, and on most visits it was possible to observe that previous recommendations had been acted upon.

There were some areas of good practice identified within this category. One area of good practice that was observed was documented meetings related to SQA external verification visit reports, so that staff could understand, discuss and if necessary respond to actions and recommendations.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following good practice was reported during session 2017–18:

- ◆ High quality resources and industry experienced staff in most centres
- ◆ Significant time devoted by staff to candidate recruitment and audition
- ◆ Some cases of detailed, highly-accurate, targeted candidate feedback
- ◆ Some strong implementations of internal verification processes and tracking of professional dialogue
- ◆ Cross marking of Music Graded Unit 1 and 2 to ensure consistency
- ◆ Many examples of highly engaging assessment materials and activity
- ◆ Very high quality candidate work in some instances of Music Graded Unit 1 and 2 and other units
- ◆ Documented meetings and centre forms capturing and disseminating results of external verification visits

Specific areas for development

The following areas for development were reported during session 2017–18:

- ◆ Consistency of feedback to candidates and tracking of feedback
- ◆ Ensuring all necessary internal verification evidence is presented on the visits
- ◆ Closer adherence to Music Graded Unit 1 and 2 marking allocations from the ASP
- ◆ Consistent use of assessment guidelines — SQA published ASPs for the new HN qualification will support this
- ◆ Greater focus on musicality and ensuring all briefs in Music Graded Unit 1 and 2 allow the candidates maximum opportunity to display these skills
- ◆ Use of plagiarism detection software and candidate declarations for independent work
- ◆ Improving audio quality of student songwriting (and performance) evidence