



National Units, Higher National, and Graded Units

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2018

Music Technology

Introduction

External verification activity took place in the academic session 2017–18 in Music Technology across National Units, Higher National, and graded units. Based on the sample selected for this session’s verification visits, we can conclude that the standard is improving, with the initial outcome of most visits being successful. Where issues were identified, these were addressed for the return visit. Graded Units 1 & 2 were viewed across a wide range of centres and the initial outcome of almost all visits were successful. Across the graded units, the standard has improved.

Almost all centres delivering the Higher National (HN) in Sound Production and National Qualifications (NQ) are well resourced, give access to industry-standard studio facilities and equipment, and offer courses delivered by experienced practitioners. 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 supporting candidates as they undertook the qualifications.

In most centres visited for verification, internal assessment and verification was implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment. In almost all centres visited, valid, reliable, practicable and fair assessments were in place and candidates’ work was judged consistently against SQA’s requirements. In all centres, evidence was retained in line with SQA requirements, and the outcome of the verification visits was disseminated to staff to inform future assessment practice.

In almost all centres visited, the work presented was well organised and easy to view, reflecting a level of organisation found throughout the delivery and assessment process. In addition, candidates were gaining a range of experience in sound production-related activity — recording sessions, multi-track mixing, sound for live events, programming music — and in many cases were working alongside candidates undertaking qualifications in Music and Music Business.

The units verified this session were:

DJ1W 35	Acoustics 1
H1M3 34	Audio Post Production: An Introduction
H1M4 34	Digital Audio Workstations 1
DR0P 35	Digital Audio Workstations 2
DJ2E 34	Sound Production: Multi-track Mixing
DJ2F 34	Sound Production: Multi-track Recording
F5DV 12	Music: MIDI Sequencing
F5E1 12	Sound: Music Remixing
H7F9 46	Sound: Understanding the Signal Path
F58H 12	Sound Engineering and Production
F506 34	Sound Production: Graded Unit 1
DR2R 35	Sound Production: Graded Unit 2
DJ36 34	Sound Production Practice 1
H1M1 34	Sound Production Theory 1

H1M2 35 Sound Production Theory 2
H1M0 35 Sound Reinforcement 2

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 almost all centres in the verification sample, 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, recording equipment, workstations, software, materials and VLE resources available to candidates undertaking HN and NQ Sound Production. It was further reflected in engaging, realistic assessment tasks allowing candidates to gain experience in common sound production activities. Centres used a range of review methods, with most employing regular, minuted meetings to discuss resources for assessment. In some cases, there were processes in place to ensure that all staff members are actively engaged with the review process. In many cases, SMART targets had been created as part of the review process to enhance assessment.

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 were considered and their relevant prior achievements recognised in the context 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 interview candidates and, in some cases, to organise listening tests for them. Most centres used a scoring system for candidates' interviews to standardise recruitment.

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 most 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. Candidates undertaking the award receive regular scheduled contact with their Graded Unit 1 & 2 assessors, and this is formalised in a series of mentoring sessions. Some centres have allocated designated guidance tutors.

Good practice was observed in detailed, comprehensive, appropriate, written feedback that had been captured and retained. Further good practice was observed in one centre where the feedback that every candidate had received was not only detailed and targeted, but was also encouraging, directly addressing their own personal development as an audio engineer.

There were recommendations that direct, targeted feedback be retained for all candidates and that in Graded Unit 1 & 2, all candidates sign off their mentoring sheets. It was recommended that candidates access this feedback, to aid self-reflection and help them to accurately evaluate in their graded unit. Where centres were not fully implementing the mentoring system as specified in the SQA-devised assessment support pack (ASP), this was recommended. In a few cases, there were recommendations to standardise feedback across all candidates.

Category 4: Internal assessment and verification

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

In most 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. Visiting verifiers viewed evidence in the form of internal verification schedules, records of standardisation meetings and activities, pre-delivery and sampling.

Although some centres were cross marking graded units to ensure consistency, there were a few cases of inconsistencies between assessors. Some form of standardisation must take place to ensure that marking and grading is consistent across class groups, and internal verification should sample and identify such inconsistencies before an external verification visit.

Visiting verifiers recommended that centres ensure a consistent approach be taken in the completion of internal verification and assessment documentation.'

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 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 selected 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 recording sessions, mixing recordings, mixing sound for live events, programming and mixing music, candidate collaboration, directed research and problem solving — in addition to appropriate assessment materials and reports. Through assessment for Sound Production: Graded Unit 2, candidates could match their skills to a particular area of sound production, in preparation for employment.

There were more than a few recommendations relating to assessment instruments and methods, and their selection and use. In Sound Production Graded Unit 2, there was a recommendation to impose a cut-off time for the interview at around 25 minutes to give candidates 'real world' conditions. It was further recommended that a greater degree of standardisation could be achieved in the interview by using a pre-prepared pool of questions for each brief. There were further recommendations, in a few cases, to pay careful attention to the language in the unit specification when creating centre-devised assessments.

Centres are reminded that a log of tasks is still required in DJ36 34 Sound Production Practice 1, outcome 2.

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

In all centres verified, processes and procedures for ensuring authenticity were observed. In all of the verification sample, assessors and verifiers proactively took steps to ensure the authenticity of candidate evidence presented. Some centres had a robust range of measures in place for ensuring authenticity: from candidate declarations for independently generated work through to the use of online plagiarism-detection software. Much of the evidence contributing to the qualification is highly personal to the candidate; moreover, it is often generated while being mentored by the assessor, so it is straightforward to ensure that this work is the candidate's own.

It is recommended that, where possible, centres use plagiarism-detection software for independently generated work, as it is the most effective way of detecting plagiarism within the class group or across class groups.

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

On most verification visits, centres were found to have made accurate and consistent assessment judgements, ensuring the integrity of the qualification. It must be further noted that, across the delivery of the qualifications, there are many instances of high-quality work being produced by candidates; high-quality audio recordings and mixes, written responses, graded unit presentations and interviews and many unique approaches to tasks resulting in innovative work. Evidence presented for Sound Production: Graded Unit 2 had candidates displaying sophisticated application of skills and knowledge gained through undertaking the HN Sound Production group awards. It is clear that work being produced in support of the qualification is also developing candidate skills and materials to help access higher education and employment.

Good practice was observed in the opportunity created for peer review when preparing for assessment. Responding to feedback from peers allowed candidates to improve the quality of their work.

There were more than a few recommendations relating to the judgement of candidates' work. In Sound Production: Graded Unit 1 it was recommended that alternative methods of presentation of the portfolio be explored, with web-based candidate portfolios best reflecting industry practice. It was further recommended that candidates be directed to create a portfolio rather than upload graded unit artefacts to pre-prepared locations within a VLE.

It was recommended in DR0P 35 Digital Audio Workstations 2 that candidates work to a standardised system within the centre for file naming and folder structure. This recommendation would apply across all units where candidates must save files and folders of assets. There was also a recommendation that candidates use the note-taking facilities within digital audio

workstations as an alternative to paper track sheets for noting details of equipment used and relevant settings, in line with industry practice.

Centres are reminded that assessment judgements must be on candidate evidence prior to an external verification visit, to allow the SQA external verifier to provide feedback.

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 present work logically for external verification.

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. In a few cases this had been particularly thorough, with centre staff having to provide justification to their quality department if a recommendation was not to be acted on.

In a few cases where external verification had identified issues in the previous session, there was clear evidence that systemic actions addressing feedback from qualification verifiers in the previous session had resulted in a successful initial outcome this session.

Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers

The following areas of good practice were reported during session 2017–18:

- ◆ high-quality resources and industry-experienced staff in most centres
- ◆ significant time devoted by staff to candidate recruitment
- ◆ some cases of detailed, highly accurate, targeted candidate feedback which addresses personal development of candidates
- ◆ highly engaging assessment materials and activity
- ◆ high-quality candidate work across the qualification and in the graded units
- ◆ opportunities for peer review of work
- ◆ thorough and effective documentation of circulation of feedback from qualification verifiers

Specific areas for development

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

- ◆ consistent feedback to candidates and tracking of feedback
- ◆ consistent use of assessment guidelines — SQA-published ASPs for the new HN Qualification will support this
- ◆ use of plagiarism-detection software and candidate declarations for independent work
- ◆ further cross marking of graded units across campuses and class groups
- ◆ standardised pools of questions for the Graded Unit 2 interview
- ◆ consistent systems for storing and naming files by candidates
- ◆ greater move to candidate-driven, digital portfolios of work for the graded units