



Common questions about National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Drama

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National 5 Course assessment

Performance

What is the assessment model for the National 5 Drama Performance?

Drama is externally assessed by the visiting assessment model. A maximum of 12 candidates are collaboratively assessed by an SQA appointed Visiting Assessor (VA) and the centre's designated centre assessor, during the VA visit. Where there are more than 12 candidates, the remaining candidates are assessed by the designated centre assessor within two weeks of the visit. In most cases the Drama teacher is the designated centre assessor; however 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 National 5 Drama visiting assessment period is from February to April each year, and one day is allocated to each centre for the visit. Centre staff can negotiate the one day visit with the VA, at a time which best suits centres and their candidates.

Who selects the sample of 12 candidates for the visit?

Centre staff select the sample. The sample should show a range of ability, and a possible range of production roles. Being in control of the sample selection means that staff can plan in a practical way, and they have up until the day of visiting assessment to finalise the sample and to substitute other candidates if necessary.

How does the process work?

An SQA appointed VA is allocated to your centre for one day, regardless of how many candidates you have. The process starts with an initial phone conversation between centre staff and the VA to set up the assessment date. The designated centre assessor discusses the potential sample with the VA, allowing for planning to start.

On the day of visiting assessment, the VA and the designated centre assessor collaboratively mark the sample of 12 candidates. The agreed marks for the sample are final.

Preparation for performance is also assessed as part of the VA visit. Candidates who are part of the sample must have their preparation for performance provisionally marked by the designated centre assessor before the VA visit. The VA requires a quiet space to initially review the pre-marked preparation for performances on their own, and then has a collaborative discussion with the designated centre assessor to agree the final marks. The National 5 preparation for performance should be approximately 400 words.

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

As soon as possible after the VA's visit, the designated centre assessor must assess all the remaining candidates according to the national standards endorsed by the VA, and in line with the assessment decisions made for 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 so that no candidate is either advantaged or disadvantaged by time passing. Assessments of all remaining candidates must take place **within two weeks** of the VA's visit and the designated centre assessor must submit their marks to SQA immediately.

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

If the candidate has continued to be absent because of, for example, a medical condition and your two-week period for assessment has passed, centre staff must contact SQA's Assessment Arrangements team for advice at aarequests@sqa.org.uk. Centre staff may be required to submit alternative evidence, for example recorded evidence of the performance for that candidate.

For the visiting assessment of National 5 Drama, what are the requirements for the following areas?

Preparation for performance

Preparation for performance responses should be approximately 400 words. These should be carried out in open-book conditions and must be completed and marked by the designated centre assessor before the VA visit. Centres should make available a quiet and private space for the VA to read the preparation for performance responses, and for the VA and designated centre assessor to discuss national marking standards and decisions. This space should be for the sole use of the VA and centre assessor.

Acting candidates

Candidates should perform as a group with a minimum of two and a maximum of ten actors. The minimum time is 10 minutes and the maximum time is 45 minutes, which would be enough to assess up to 10 actors. Duologues should not be used for all candidates. Acting candidates should be cast in only one role.

Technical candidates

Technical candidates must demonstrate their chosen production role with the use of actors. During the VA visit, the VA looks at technical candidates' plans, drawings, designs, plot sheets and mood boards. Before the performance, the VA and the designated centre assessor watches technical candidates' pre-show checks.

Costume

Candidates must have a design and a costume for all actors in the performance, so that the VA can mark the effectiveness of the costumes in performance. They must also have made or

altered **one costume** in line with their design. There should only be one costume candidate for each performance on the day of assessment.

Lighting

Candidates must have **eight lanterns**. A minimum of **seven lighting cues** and **five states** must be designed. Candidates must:

- ◆ produce a detailed lighting plot and create a lighting cue sheet
- ◆ rig, or instruct the rigging of, the required lanterns, and focus the required lanterns with correct gels (or appropriately program colour if using LED lanterns)
- ◆ carry out pre-show checks and operate the equipment on cue and at the levels specified in the lighting cue sheets during the performance

Make-up and hair

Candidates must apply make-up and hair design to all actors. The VA observes make-up and hair designers applying **one** full make-up and hair design on the day of assessment. All other actors must have make-up and hair design applied for the production; as the VA marks the effectiveness of the make-up and hair design and their application in performance. Make-up and hair candidates are expected to use theatrical make-up. They must have carried out a patch test at least 24 hours before application to determine if the model is allergic to the products. For hygiene purposes, lipstick and mascara must be applied with disposable applicators or the model's own can be used.

Theatrical make-up can be supplemented with cosmetic make-up when a candidate wishes to achieve a particular effect and they have taken into account the performance space and lighting conditions they are designing for.

Props

Candidates must have a **minimum of eight different props** from two of the three areas of personal, pre-set or hand props. Candidates must:

- ◆ design and create **one fully functional prop** to use in the performance
- ◆ produce a master props list
- ◆ label and store props effectively
- ◆ organise the props table for the performance

Set design

Candidates must have working designs and plans for the set, including an **elevation**. Detailed **ground plans** must be produced. The final set must reflect the candidate's own creative design as well as being functional in performance.

Sound

Candidates must have a **minimum of six different sound effects and eight sound cues**.
Candidates must:

- ◆ source and edit music and effects, and provide a back-up plan
- ◆ produce a sound cue sheet detailing volume, duration and type and carry out pre-show checks
- ◆ operate the equipment during the performance in accordance with the sound cue sheet

Could a script with 11 actors be used?

No. Groups should contain a minimum of two and a maximum of ten actors. If a script has 11 actors or more, centre staff could cut one of the characters or cut the play into two performances. Otherwise another script should be chosen.

Can more than one candidate do the same technical skill in a performance?

No. Candidates work in a group to demonstrate their technical skill through a performance with actors on a chosen text. However, two lighting candidates cannot design and apply their lighting skills during the same performance, as the technical skills need to be examined in performance. This applies to all technical skills.

Higher Course assessment

Question paper

What is the definition of an acting concept?

An acting concept refers to an actor's use of voice and movement to communicate an idea and meaning.

At Higher level the description of these concepts should be detailed, coherent and clearly justified.

It could refer to the following:

- ◆ characterisation
- ◆ acting techniques
- ◆ acting style
- ◆ rehearsal techniques
- ◆ voice
- ◆ movement

- ◆ stage proxemics
- ◆ interaction between characters and any other relevant features

An example of 'other relevant features' could be how the actor would make use of a prop at a particular moment to communicate an idea.'

Are candidates able to use the same acting concept more than once in section 1?

Yes. If the candidate is describing detailed acting concepts related to their textual analysis points, they are describing integrated aspects of an actor's use of, for example, movement, voice and/or space.

It is likely that candidates describe and justify many aspects of the actor's use of movement and candidates should be encouraged to vary these aspects. For example, it is unlikely that a detailed acting concept could be communicated through facial expression alone.

Should quotes be used in section 2?

Quotes are not required, but clear reference to the selected text **is** required in order to provide context.

Should theatre terminology be used in section 2?

Appropriate theatre terminology and appropriate adjectives should be used throughout.

Should there be a correlation between section 1 and section 2 of the question paper?

Not necessarily. The questions in section 2 enables candidates to show further breadth and development of their understanding of their selected text through the application of skills inherent with acting and/or directing and/or designing. Responses must, however be on the **same** selected text for section 1 and section 2.

Will candidates answer from the role of a designer and director every year in section 2 as in the Specimen Question Paper?

No. The question will vary each year from acting, directing and/or design.

Can ground plans or designs with annotation be accepted as part of section 2 responses?

Only the written responses are marked. However, if candidates feel that their ground plans, designs, annotations help to support their answer, then that is acceptable; but these will not be marked.

What aspects might section 3 performance analysis questions focus on, and what are the possible performance areas to select from?

Candidates may be asked to focus on the following aspects of a recently-seen production. They must choose two from the following four production areas:

- ◆ choice and use of the performance space
- ◆ director's intentions and effectiveness
- ◆ acting and development of characters
- ◆ design concepts and their effectiveness. (Candidates can refer to one, or more than one, design concept in their response.)

Are there any plans to increase the two-year limit on productions and the ability to use a streaming facility for Section 3 performance analysis?

There are no immediate plans to review the two-year limit on productions. This part of the course is intended for candidates to be engaged in a live theatre experience, its immediacy, power and impact.

Recordings of live streaming of performances, recorded within two years from the start of the academic year in which the assessment takes place, are acceptable. For example, in the 2020 Higher Drama exam, any performance from May 2017 onwards can be used.

The National Theatre Live streams current productions to local cinemas and the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) broadcasts current productions free to schools who have registered with them. The RSC also provide extensive educational support including a BSL supported version, and live questions and answers sessions with actors from the company. Schools can also access a free resource from National Theatre: On Demand in Schools.

Are quotes required in the performance analysis essay?

Quotes are not required, but clear reference to the performance text **is** required, (for example, what happened on stage). It may be useful for candidates to look at a play text, if available, to gain an understanding of directorial decisions made.

What constitutes a suitable amateur production for performance analysis?

A published play text is suitable. This can be presented with production values appropriate at Higher level, and gives as much scope for analysis as a professional production.

A good example of a suitable performance is a college HND production — with acting students working alongside theatre production students.

Performance

Is there a guide to choosing texts for Higher?

SQA has published an extensive list of recommended texts which offers a great deal of choice, breadth and scope. This list is based on centre choices that have been deemed appropriate for Higher level. If teachers have any doubts about appropriate texts when making choices for their candidates, they should use the SQA recommended texts list to ensure that candidates meet the standards expected at this level. The recommended texts list can be found in appendix 3 of the *Higher Course Specification*.

What is the recommended length for Higher acting pieces?

It is recommended that no more than four candidates are assessed in each acting piece. Lengthy pieces with more candidates should not be used, as they may not provide opportunities for individual candidates to demonstrate detailed interaction at Higher Level.

- ◆ If two candidates are being assessed, the performance of each extract should last approximately 7–10 minutes provided the piece is sustained and has equal weighting of challenge.
- ◆ If three candidates are being assessed, the performance of each extract should last approximately 10–12 minutes provided the piece is sustained and has equal weighting of challenge.
- ◆ If four candidates are being assessed, the performance of each extract should last approximately 12–16 minutes provided the piece is sustained and has equal weighting of challenge.

At National 5, part of the marking is the contribution as an ensemble, as they get marks for remembering lines and cues; however the allocation of marks is different at Higher level. The performance focus is the credibility of a performance of a character appropriate to Higher level.

What is the weighting of the marking for preparation for performance?

The preparation for performance is marked holistically out of 10 marks. The preparation for performance for Higher Drama should be approximately 500 words.

What constitutes a full and detailed account of research findings on the chosen text with thorough insight into the social and historical context?

For preparation for performance, candidates should give a relevant and concise account of their research and how this has informed the development of their role. At Higher level, approximately 250 words are allocated to each role.

For example, with *Men Should Weep*, it is appropriate for candidates to give relevant historical research. For *Gilt*, the social context of consumerism or the individual issue relating to the character being portrayed is relevant.

Are there examples of preparation for performance?

Examples of candidate's preparation for performance can be found on the Understanding Standards pages of SQA's secure website along with the performance commentary.

The preparation for performance should be a clear and concise summary. Candidates give details of key parts of their research of their chosen text, and the process, development and progression of acting, directing or design concepts.

Should we include rehearsal techniques used to develop roles such as character cards or hot-seating in the preparation for performance?

There is no requirement for detailing such characterisation techniques.

What are the definitions of a 'made costume' and a 'made prop'?

A 'made costume' is made to meet the demands of the text in terms of the practicalities, interpretation of key design concepts for example style or period of the play, and must be made to fit an actor or mannequin to demonstrate its functionality. The costume can be sewn or held together with fabric glue as the method of 'making' is not prescribed.

A 'made prop' must be fully functional and fit for purpose to be used on stage. It must demonstrate the design concepts, in terms of the practicalities and interpretation of the style of set and period. The prop can be personal or set a set prop. It could be created entirely from craft materials or it could be created using other objects.

If a candidate selects props, is this set dressing also?

Candidates design props for the whole play and this could include set dressing.

For sound, can candidates use a recording app on a smartphone?

If candidates can accurately communicate their sound concepts, this is an acceptable approach.

For the visiting assessment of Higher Drama, what are the requirements for the following areas?

Preparation for performance

Preparation for performance responses must be completed in advance of the VA visit and should be approximately 500 words. The VA requires a private and quiet space to review and mark the completed preparation for performances.

Acting candidates

Candidates perform two interactive roles, each from a different play. Each candidate is involved in an acting contribution of approximately 7–10 minutes for each role, depending on the number

of candidates being assessed. Higher acting candidates must be assessed on both acting pieces on the same day.

The specific roles undertaken by each candidate must be completed on the Acting Mark Sheet.

Design candidates

Candidates demonstrate their overall set design concept for their chosen play and an additional production role. They demonstrate the application of skills in the additional production role. Their presentation should last approximately 20–30 minutes, including the demonstration of their additional production role.

Candidates must design set for the whole play text and their presentation must refer to each act or scene and any significant change of setting. All acts or changes of location or setting must have a ground plan and elevation (end-on drawing), and the candidate must create a coherent concept. The set does not need to be realised practically.

For their additional design role candidates must also design for the whole play, and there should be coherence with the set design.

Lighting — candidates plan the lighting for the whole play. They design and use a minimum of five lighting states and seven lighting cues. Candidates describe and demonstrate what they consider to be the key moments or scenes and the lighting states and cues. These could be the opening or ending of acts or key moments within a scene. To demonstrate their concepts, candidates must have cue sheets for the whole play. It is permissible to use LED lighting.

Sound — candidates plan the sound for the whole play. They design and use a minimum of six different sound effects and eight sound cues. Candidates describe and demonstrate what they consider to be the key or important moments or scenes and the sound effects and sound cues. These could be the opening or ending of acts or key moments within a scene. To demonstrate their concepts, candidates must have cue sheets for the whole play. It is permissible to use any format of music or effects.

Props — candidates design props for the whole play, and select key props to describe. The number of designs cannot be prescribed, as the number of props within a play could vary. Candidates describe and demonstrate what they consider to be the key or important moments or scenes and the use of props. These could be the opening or ending of acts or key moments within a scene. Candidates must create one fully functional prop that is fit for purpose and can be used on stage. To demonstrate their concepts, candidates produce a props list for the whole play. It is permissible to use personal and/or set props.

Costume — candidates design costume for the whole play. Candidates create designs for all major characters, which must include any changes to situations or status. Generic designs are suitable for minor characters. The number of designs cannot be prescribed, as the number of characters within a play could vary. Candidates make one costume that meets the demands of the text in terms of practicalities. The costume can be sewn or held together with fabric glue as the method of ‘making’ is not prescribed, but it must be modelled on a mannequin or actor.

Make-up and hair — candidates design the make-up and hair for the whole play. Candidates create designs for all major characters, which must include any changes to situations or status. Generic designs are suitable for minor characters. The number of designs cannot be prescribed, as characters within a play could vary.

Before their presentation, candidates apply one full make-up and hair application to a model on the day of the assessment. Candidates present this full make-up and hair application to the VA and explain the techniques used, describe the products used and the effect they wished to achieve.

Make-up and hair candidates are expected to use theatrical make-up. They must have carried out a patch test at least 24 hours before application to determine if the model is allergic to the products. For hygiene purposes, lipstick and mascara must be applied with disposable applicators or the model's own can be used.

Theatrical make-up can be supplemented with cosmetic make-up when a candidate wishes to achieve a particular effect and they have taken into account the performance space and lighting conditions they are designing for.

Directing candidates

Candidates prepare approximately eight consecutive pages from their chosen text. On the day of the performance, the VA selects approximately two pages for the candidate to direct in a rehearsal lasting 30 minutes. Candidates have at least 30 minutes to prepare for their assessment. Candidates should not direct actors who are performing the same scene for their own assessment.

Advanced Higher Course assessment

Project–dissertation

Can candidates look at musicals or dance as part of their dissertation topic?

No. The project–dissertation should not be about an aspect of ballet, opera, film or musicals. The performance issue identified must be about an influential theatre practitioner and their impact on professional theatre practice; or professional theatre (contemporary or historic) theories, processes and practices within the context of their identified performance issue.

How long should the project–dissertation be?

The project–dissertation should be 2,500 to 3,000 words. Candidates should; acknowledge sources and include visual evidence as appropriate. The word count must be submitted with the project–dissertation. If the word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty will be applied.

Do candidates need to reference an historic practitioner in their project–dissertation?

No. It is not necessary for candidates to reference an historic practitioner in the project–dissertation unless it is relevant to the performance issue they are discussing.

Assignment

Can candidates devise their own question for the assignment?

SQA provide a choice of two performance analysis questions. Candidates analyse a professional theatrical production, as well as the work of at least one theatre practitioner from actor, director and/or designer involved in the production. The assignment is based on their choice of question.

Can candidates write about the same theatrical production or theatre practitioner as they did for the project–dissertation?

No. The assignment is a performance analysis and candidates must study a different theatrical production and theatre practitioner than they studied for the project–dissertation. A list of influential practitioners is given in appendix 2 of the *Advanced Higher Drama Course Specification*.

How does the assignment differ from the project–dissertation?

The assignment is an analysis of a live performance, a live-streamed performance, a recorded 'live' theatrical performance or a historical performance. The performance must be a play: it must not be a musical, pantomime, ballet or opera.

The assignment gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding within a performance analysis context:

- ◆ research and investigate their chosen question within the context of the performance, using sources of information
- ◆ research a minimum of one theatre practitioner involved in the production from an actor, director, and/or designer
- ◆ demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theatre practice and their chosen practitioner in relation to the performance
- ◆ analyse a professional theatrical production in response to the chosen question
- ◆ structure information and present a well-reasoned argument and conclusion, supported by evidence

What are the assessment conditions for the assignment?

Candidates choose one of the two questions, published by SQA, which allows them to analyse and evaluate a theatrical production. The research stage is designed to be completed over a notional period of 8 hours. The candidate organises the summary of their findings and any key references by using the Drama resource sheet.

The assignment is written within 1 hour and 30 minutes in one sitting under a high degree of supervision and control. This means that candidates must:

- ◆ be in direct sight of the teacher or lecturer or other responsible person during the period of assessment
- ◆ not communicate with each other

The assignment must be submitted to SQA for external marking. The Drama resource sheet is sent along with the assignment. If a candidate does not submit a resource sheet, a penalty of 4 marks out of the total of 20 marks is applied.

There is no word count for the assignment, however the Drama resource sheet should be one side of A4 paper and no more than 250 words.

Performance

Is there a guide to choosing texts for Advanced Higher?

There is no prescribed list of texts; however SQA have published a list of recommended texts for the interactive and the monologue that offer a great deal of choice, breadth and scope. This list also serves to reassure Drama teachers of the choice of texts that we consider to be of Advanced Higher level. Please see appendix 3 of the *Advanced Higher Drama Course Specification* for a list of recommended texts.

For the monologue, can other actors be on stage with the candidate?

No, for the monologue the candidate must appear on stage alone.

Can stand-alone audition pieces be used for the monologue?

No, monologues should be taken from full-length play texts. The Marking Instructions detail where reference is made to the understanding of the character in the context of the textual and sub-textual clues.

For the visiting assessment of Advanced Higher Drama, what are the requirements for the following areas?

Acting

Each candidate performs two acting roles, one of which is interactive and one of which is a monologue. Each candidate is involved in an acting contribution of approximately 20 minutes in total, with approximately three minutes for the monologue.

Design

Candidates produce a scale model set design for a play, which must allow for one significant set change. The design interpretation is to be for a contemporary audience. The set has to relate to an identified acting space.

In addition, candidates must create design concepts for two other areas of design chosen from: lighting, sound, multimedia, props, costume, make-up and hair. Ideas must be supported with evidence, for example designs, cue sheets, artefacts.

On the day of the examination, the designer presents their model of the set, ideas and concepts to a VA. The total time for the presentation is approximately 20–25 minutes.

Directing

Candidates prepare a substantial extract, for example an act, from their chosen text. On the day of the performance the VA selects approximately three consecutive pages for the candidate to direct. Each candidate directs for approximately 35 minutes.

General questions

Is there a glossary of Drama terms available?

The National 5 Drama lexicon can be found in Appendix 2 (pages 29 and 30) of the [National 5 Drama](#) Course Specification document on SQA's website.

The Higher Drama lexicon can be found in Appendix 2 (pages 41 – 43) of the [Higher Drama Course](#) Specification document on SQA's website.

Can the candidate performance be recorded?

To allow candidates the opportunity to enter into the post-results marking review process for the performance, you can record their performance on the day of the VA's visit. This is not mandatory. However, SQA recommends recording to centres in order for them to engage fully with the review process.

You should make sure candidates feel comfortable being recorded. You can decide which performances to record. Recording should be as unobtrusive as possible and must not delay or disrupt the visiting assessment process. Centre staff are in the best position to carry out the recording because they are familiar with their recording equipment and the candidates.

You must not ask VAs to operate recording equipment under any circumstances. The centre is responsible for ensuring that their equipment is working.

You must securely store any recordings made of the performances. Recordings are for the sole purpose of entering into the post-results marking review process. You must not share the contents of the recording with anyone. You must **only** submit these recordings to SQA if you request a marking review for any candidate(s) after certification.

For more information about recording performances, please refer to [Post Results Services: Recording for Music, Drama and Dance Performing Exams](#) document on the Drama subject pages of SQA's website.

If being filmed for National 5, technical candidates need to be recorded doing their pre-show checks. Higher and Advanced Higher design candidates need to be recorded demonstrating their additional production role.

Centres that choose not to record the Performance assessment may still request a review of the Question Paper for National 5 and Higher or the Project: Dissertation or Assignment for Advanced Higher.

Unit assessment

Please note: unit assessment is no longer mandatory for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher national courses. However, all units are still available as freestanding units.

In the Drama unit assessment support (UAS) packs for National 4 and SCQF level 5 there is a set of stimuli. Are these stimuli suggestions or do they need to be used explicitly?

The UAS packages 2 and 3 provide specific stimuli. Alternatively, you can use UAS package 1 to work with your own stimuli.

The judging evidence tables for both packs are very similar and it may be useful to refer to UAS pack 2 to see how the specific stimuli are used for evidence. If you are choosing your own stimuli you should use UAS pack 1.

The stimuli in the UAS packs are exemplars, so you can change the context. If you plan to make considerable changes to the assessment, you should enter into the prior verification process. This is only necessary if you make changes to the nature or the level of demand of the task.

Your SQA Co-ordinator has access to support materials on SQA's secure site.

If you wish to submit a prior verification request, please visit the [prior verification section](#) of SQA's website for more details.

At the end of each unit assessment, candidates have to complete an evaluation. Does this have to be completed in controlled conditions?

No. The gathering of this evidence is very flexible and can come in many forms. If for example, the assessment involves an extended response in the form of an evaluation, candidates do not need to complete their evaluation in controlled conditions.

Can the National 4 Added Value Unit performance be a scripted play?

The performance content is agreed between the candidate and you, and may be devised or scripted. This offers flexibility, as candidates can now do improvisation or work from text.

SCQF level 6

What are the expectations of 'complex production skills'?

The progression for production skills is seen through candidate responses; in their exploration of concepts and application of skills to challenging stimuli/play text and contexts for study. It is up to you to offer increasingly complex materials and stimuli to explore. This could be in terms of thematic content, language, imagery, technical demands of text etc. The descriptive language

used in the external performance mark sheets for Acting may be useful to help inform assessment judgements.

For the unit assessment, however, the director would only be applying their skills to a particular extract and may not have knowledge of the whole text to communicate overall concepts.

With design for production skills you would only be looking for candidates to develop concepts and/or ideas for one production role that relates to an extract. It is good practice to get candidates to create a ground plan and elevation to contextualise their ideas to help to inform their understanding of overall concepts. However, this is not required evidence for a unit pass in one production skill.

SCQF level 7

What are the freestanding units at SCQF level 7

There are two units: *Drama Skills* and *Drama: Production Skills*. In the *Drama Skills* unit the candidate devises a drama that is informed by practices and methodologies of one or more practitioners. In the *Drama: Production Skills* unit, the candidate develops and applies selected production skills as an actor or director or designer, that is informed by research of one or more practitioners.