National Course modification summary: Music Technology

XSQA

National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher course assessment in session 2020–21

The Deputy First Minister has announced that National 5 exams will not take place in session 2020–21. SQA is working with stakeholders to develop an alternative certification model for National 5 that is based on teacher and lecturer estimates.

At present, Higher and Advanced Higher exams are still planned for 2021 and this will remain under review. We continue to work with stakeholders to put contingency plans in place to respond to any changes in public health advice, or local or national lockdowns, that may result in further changes to the 2021 exam diet — including changes to the timetable.

For up-to-date information on arrangements for National Courses in session 2020–21, including timetable information and guidance on estimates, please visit our website at www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021.

Modifications to assessment

Following our public consultation on proposed modifications to National 5 to Advanced Higher course assessment, which closed on 24 August 2020, we are making changes to course assessment for session 2020–21. The changes detailed on the following pages are intended to support the delivery of learning and teaching, while maintaining the validity, credibility and standard of the courses.

We have published a high-level report on the outcomes of the consultation, which is available from www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021. This includes details of the modifications to National 5 course assessment, which were planned prior to the 2021 National 5 exams being cancelled.

As a result of the modifications, we are exploring the implications for National 3 and National 4 courses in session 2020–21 and will provide further guidance in due course.

National 5 course assessment 2020–21

There will be no external assessment for National 5 courses in session 2020–21. **Candidates will not be required to sit exams and SQA will not assess coursework.** Instead, we are working with stakeholders to develop an alternative certification model for National 5 that is based on teacher and lecturer estimates.

Centres need to gather evidence of candidates' attainment and use this to determine estimate grades and bands. We have published separate guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates and there is an SQA Academy course available to support teachers and lecturers.

We are also developing subject-specific guidance for teachers and lecturers on gathering evidence and producing estimates. This will include how the previously-intended National 5

modifications could be used to support with gathering evidence and producing estimates in session 2020–21. This guidance will be published from the end of October.

Details of the modifications we had previously intended to make to National 5 course assessment in session 2020–21 are included in our high-level report on the outcomes of the consultation.

To view the high-level report, and to access the guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates, visit www.sqa.org.uk/nq2021.

Higher course assessment 2020–21

Component	Marks	Scaled mark	Modifications
Question paper	40	30	No changes.
Assignment	70	70	Audio capture will not be assessed in the assignment.

Advanced Higher course assessment 2020–21

Component	Marks	Modifications
Project	120	The discrete research and production projects have been combined into one project for session 2020–21. Audio capture and experimenting with capturing audio will not be assessed.

Removal of the assessment of audio capture in the assignment and project

Audio capture will not be assessed in the Higher and Advanced Higher Music Technology assignment and project in session 2020–21 for the following reasons:

♦ to reduce the volume of assessment to allow centres to focus their available learning and teaching time with candidates on the remaining elements of the assignment or project and the question paper (Higher)
♦ the current concerns in centres about sharing and cleaning equipment, such as microphones

If centres have the resources and facilities, candidates can capture their own audio, however marks will not be awarded for this.

Candidates must still plan their assignments and projects. Candidate planning should detail the source of their media files (SQA or their own). Their plans do not need to include details of how audio was captured or microphone placement.

Knowledge and understanding of audio capture will be assessed in the Higher question paper for session 2020–21. It may not be possible for candidates to experiment with audio capture, particularly when using microphones. Teachers and lecturers could consider demonstrating different audio capture techniques with their candidates. This will help to prepare candidates for questions about audio capture, such as question 6(b) in the Higher

specimen question paper. Aspects of audio capture may also be sampled as part of the fault and correction questions.

Foley, sound design for computing gaming, and audiobooks

Due to copyright restrictions, Foley, sound design for computer gaming contexts, and audiobooks will not be provided, although candidates may still work on assignments in these contexts. Centres should note that if candidates choose to do this, audio capture and the planning of audio capture will not be marked. If a candidate decides to submit a Foley, sound design for computing gaming, or audiobook assignment or project, then their plan should state the source of their media files.

Provision of media files and updated coursework assessment tasks

We will provide level-specific media files for candidates to use in their assignment or project. We will provide WAV files, packaged up for a range of contexts at each level.

For Higher Music Technology, we will not provide MIDI files. Candidates must create their own electronic multi-track to include in their assignment.

We will publish a 2020–21 version of the Music Technology coursework assessment tasks. These will include candidate briefs aligned specifically to the media files we are providing. We will publish these coursework assessment tasks in due course. We will make the media files available on SQA's secure website by late October.

These coursework assessment tasks and media files must only be used for final course assessment in session 2020–21. Candidates should start their assignment or project at an appropriate point in the course when they have developed the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding.

Teachers and lecturers should consider the best time for candidates to start the assignment or project, taking account of time needed to prepare for the assignment or project, which could include developing and practising required skills.

As the assignment and project are summative assessments, support and guidance during planning, implementation and evaluation stages should be limited to minimal prompts and questioning, referring the candidate to the instructions provided in the assessment tasks.

We will confirm the uplift dates for the assignment and project in due course.

Advanced Higher project

The revised structure of the project for session 2020–21 is a combination of the current research and production projects.

Project stage	Mark allocation
Stage 1: identifying an appropriate topic in a music technology context, and produce an outline specification	5 marks
Stage 2a: investigating and analysing technology skills, techniques, and processes, and relevant musical analysis as appropriate	10 marks
Stage 2b: experimenting with music technology skills, techniques, and processes	10 marks
Stage 2c: synthesising investigation, analysis, experimentation, and drawing conclusions	10 marks
Stage 3: planning the production	10 marks
Stage 4a: implementing the production — processing skills	10 marks
Stage 4b: implementing the production — applying effects	10 marks
Stage 4c: implementing the production — mixing and sequencing skills	10 marks
Stage 4d: implementing the production — creative and appropriate use of sound and/or music	10 marks
Stage 5a: mastering the production — analysis and critical listening skills	10 marks
Stage 5b: mastering the production — finalising and mastering techniques	10 marks
Stage 6a: evaluating and reflecting	10 marks
Stage 6b: organising and presenting, including using information from a range of sources	5 marks
Total	**120 marks**

Until we publish the Advanced Higher Music Technology Project Assessment Task for session 2020–21, centres can refer to the Advanced Higher Music Technology Course Specification and existing project assessment tasks for the requirements for each stage.

Advanced Higher contexts

We will publish three large-scale multi-tracks:

♦ two studio multi-tracks in differing styles
♦ one live multi-track

The multi-tracks will feature comprehensive mic'ing of each instrument to provide candidates with sufficient scope for research. The studio multi-tracks will include MIDI parts for candidates who choose to pursue advanced MIDI programming as part of their submission.

As no marks will be awarded for audio capture, candidates should focus on processing and mixing, or mastering contexts for the research stages of their project.

Suitable research topics include:

♦ Advanced drum kit processing:
  — We will provide centres with drum kit parts, which will be comprehensively mic'ed. This will allow candidates to explore different overhead and room mic options, as well as multiple microphones per drum and some deliberately lo-fi mic choices. Candidates can experiment with mixing short sections with different combinations of microphones, using techniques and processes they have explored as part of their research.

♦ Advanced rock guitar mixing techniques:
  — We will provide centres with multiple electric guitar parts, which will be re-amped through a number of different amplifiers and cabinets, with multiple microphones, ambient mic'ing and both live and dead rooms. Candidates can experiment with mixing short sections with different combinations of microphone, microphone placements, rooms and amplifiers using techniques and processes they have explored as part of their research.

♦ Advanced MIDI programming and virtual instrument processing:
  — We will provide centres with a multi-track containing a hybrid of audio tracks and MIDI tracks in a modern dance style. Candidates can experiment with advanced MIDI programming techniques used in modern pop and dance music based on techniques and processes they have explored as part of their research.

The multi-tracks we are providing for Advanced Higher Music Technology this session will not reflect the amount of material that candidates are expected to produce in subsequent years. The package of media files will be more comprehensive to allow for some personalisation and choice.

Higher contexts

We will publish a radio broadcast, with candidates able to select material from these media files to populate their assignment with a variety of segments, allowing an element of personalisation and choice.

Scaled versions of all three (two studio and one live) multi-tracks provided at Advanced Higher will be available for Higher candidates. This will allow candidates to evidence all the mandatory skills required for processing, applying effects, mixing and sequencing. Candidates will be able to select from a range of media files. Their final assignment must include a minimum of 10 parts.

If you have any questions about these changes, please email NQ2020@sqa.org.uk.