



## Alternative Certification Model 2020–21: National QA Exercise Key Messages

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Music</b>
<b>Level</b>	<b>Advanced Higher</b>

This report provides information on themes emerging from the national quality assurance exercise, which is part of the Alternative Certification Model for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

A sample of candidates' assessed work from selected centres was reviewed to determine whether assessment was in line with the national standard. The evidence submitted may have been partial or incomplete and is unlikely to have represented all of the evidence that will be gathered to allow the centre to determine a provisional result.

The centres selected for review in this subject and at this level have been provided with specific feedback on the evidence that they submitted. The comments below highlight key points about the assessment approaches and instruments used and the sampled centres' assessment judgements, for all centres delivering the subject at this level to reflect upon and make any appropriate adjustments.

## Section 1: Comments on approach to assessment

The majority of centres from the sample submitted both performing and question paper evidence. Most centres had adopted a valid approach to the performance component and the majority of centres had adopted a valid approach to assessing the question paper.

### Question paper

The majority of centres submitted partial question paper evidence and some centres indicated their plans for adding further evidence, including using the SQA 2020–21 question paper. Some centres submitted the full 2020–21 question paper, while other centres had used some of the questions from this assessment.

Most centres combined SQA past papers to make up an assessment. This included questions from the specimen paper, past papers from 2016–19 and their associated marking instructions. Centres had followed the guidance regarding structure of papers, question types and mark ranges reflected in the [subject-specific guidance on gathering key evidence in session 2020–21](#) document.

The key issues were:

- ◆ A minority of centres did not include a variety of musical literacy questions that totalled the suggested number of marks in the guidance document.
- ◆ Some centres tested National 5 concepts for short answer questions. Centres are reminded that short answer questions must test Higher and Advanced Higher concepts.
- ◆ In questions where candidates are asked to add three bass line notes to given chords, 1 mark should be allocated. This question should not receive 3 separate marks.

Candidates do not need to produce all evidence for listening on a single occasion. Centres can set short assessment tasks for candidates that replicate, for example, one or a small number of questions at the appropriate standard.

### Performance

The majority of centres submitted video recordings of candidate performances along with sheet music and completed assessment records. Some centres chose to submit audio recordings. Centres used SQA marking grids and summary statements for the performance component. Centres used ticks in the assessment grids and marker comments were added. Centres are to be commended on the level of detail in comments which helped to explain how assessment decisions were reached.

Most centres submitted incomplete performing evidence with a range of pieces submitted per candidate. Some candidates chose to perform on two instruments and others submitted evidence for one instrument, as detailed in the requirements for session 2020–21 in [Information for Teachers and Lecturers — National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Music — Performance Assessment 2020-21](#).

Most candidates chose to perform with recorded or live accompaniment and a small number of candidates performed unaccompanied. As detailed in the document above, accompaniment of performances was not mandatory in this session.

The approach taken for the performance assessment was valid in most centres.

The key issues were:

- ◆ Although most pieces chosen were the correct level, some candidates performed pieces which were not Advanced Higher level. In a minority of centres, keyboard and ukulele pieces were below Advanced Higher level. Centres are encouraged to ensure that pieces are of the correct difficulty level.
- ◆ If there are no dynamic markings on the sheet music, dynamics should not be marked. This applies even if the candidate performs contrasting dynamic levels in a piece.

## Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

### Question paper

The majority of assessment judgements made by centres were in line with national standards. There was clear evidence of careful marking, with most centres paying attention to the additional guidance in the marking instructions.

The key issues were:

- ◆ There was some incorrect marking across the question paper because alternative answers had not been noted in the additional guidance sections of the question paper marking instructions. Additional guidance provides clear advice on acceptable alternative answers.
- ◆ Marks were given incorrectly in musical literacy questions where accidentals were not clearly placed before notes and were not in the correct place on the staff.
- ◆ A minority of centres awarded half marks. No half marks should be awarded in the question paper.
- ◆ In question 6, a minority of centres awarded marks for concepts that were outside the categories that were asked for in the stem of the question. The marking of question 6 requires particular care in the application of the marking instructions. Detailed additional guidance is provided for this question. Centres should note that, where no extended answer is provided, that is simply a list, a maximum of 2 marks can be awarded for question 6(b)(i).

Inaccuracies in question paper marking were generally picked up through centre and local authority moderation activities.

### Performance

The majority of centres marked in line with national standards. Some centres' performance judgements, however, were partially valid, and some centres were lenient in their marking.

The key issues were:

- ◆ Some candidates performed pieces at incorrect tempi. This affected the marking of tempo and flow. In some cases, this also affected the marking of mood and character.
- ◆ It is important that the sheet music matches what candidates perform. Some sheet music was provided which did not sufficiently indicate what the candidate was performing.
- ◆ Most centres correctly marked the performing component out of 60 which is required for session 2020–21. If candidates have chosen to perform on two instruments, or one instrument and voice, centres must not mark each instrument or voice out of 30 marks.

Centres should refer to the [\*Information for Teachers and Lecturers — National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher — Performance Assessment 2020–21\*](#) document published in January 2021. This includes the scaling table which should be used for session 2020–21.

## General comments

Centres should be commended on the collation and presentation of evidence for candidates for session 2020–21. There is clear evidence from the sample of centres that teachers and lecturers are working hard, while under COVID-19 restrictions, to develop and encourage the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for this course.

Centres submitting clearly-labelled files with background information on their approach and details of what they submitted greatly assisted the quality assurance procedure.

Detailed comments on performances and the effective use of candidate assessment records provided clear evidence of how assessment judgements had been made. Most centres correctly focused on the summary statements for each performance aspect.

There was a very good level of moderation adopted by centres, including local authority activities. Some centres included detailed moderation policies and processes. There was evidence of pre-assessment agreement of assessment instruments, standardisation activities and sampling of candidates' work in order to make sure that national standards were being applied consistently. There was very useful work on collating question papers from past SQA papers and centres creating their own assessments which will provide useful resources in future years.

There is a variety of additional SQA resources available to support centres:

- ◆ The SQA Academy course: [NQ Music Performance Assessment 2020–21](#) which supports teachers and lecturers with the assessment of performance (the enrolment key is: 'music21').
- ◆ The repertoire lists in the [National Qualifications in Music: Performing](#) document indicate the standard of music required for instruments and voice at all levels of National Qualifications in Music.
- ◆ The [Assessment Resources for NQ Music](#) document details and provides links to the range of documents available for session 2020–21.

Centres and candidates are commended for the ways in which they have adapted their assessment approaches and strategies throughout this challenging year. Collaborative working and internal and local authority moderation activities are evident from this sample of centres. The unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 have resulted in a resilient approach which has enabled the majority of candidates to produce evidence for Advanced Higher Music.