



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

Subject	Dance
Level	Higher

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

We recognise that the delivery of practical subjects has been challenging this session, and that teachers and lecturers have had to adopt creative approaches to ensure candidates meet the course requirements. This resilience has allowed centres to gather meaningful evidence for provisional results for candidates. The evidence submitted for national quality assurance suggests that centres have worked tirelessly to make sure effective learning and teaching strategies were in place and candidates were supported in preparing for assessment in difficult circumstances.

Question paper

Centres made effective use of the SQA 2021 question paper. In some cases, centres had adapted this by changing aspects of the questions to meet the needs of their candidates.

When creating centre-devised assessments, centres must ensure question structure and mark allocation are comparable to the 2019 past paper, and the specimen question paper. This will ensure the level of demand remains similar. Centres must create their own marking instructions for adapted or centre-devised questions. This ensures that marking is consistent, accurate and in line with national standards.

Many centres provided the marking instructions and detailed comments to support the assessment judgements for each candidate. Some centres did not provide marking instructions for their centre-devised paper.

Practical activity

Centres took advantage of the course modifications that allowed candidates to choreograph a solo performance and perform in their own solo or group choreography. This modification was suggested to reduce the number of candidates working together.

Centres provided video evidence of either a group or solo choreography and written evidence for the choreography review. It is good practice to write additional comments on the candidate mark sheets to show how overall assessment judgements were determined.

Some centres did not provide either the candidate mark sheets or video evidence of the choreography.

Some centres provided excellent evidence of choreography reviews. The task structure within the course specification for choreography review should be carefully followed. This would allow candidates to access the full range of marks.

Both sections of the practical activity component must be marked using SQA marking instructions. The marking instructions for group choreography and choreography review are in the course specification, and the solo choreography marking instructions are in the *Guidance on Course Assessment: Higher Dance* document.

Performance

Most centres used the SQA performance coursework assessment task. They provided video evidence with supporting candidate mark sheets, exemplifying the candidates' performance in two contrasting technical solos. It is good practice to use the marking sheets provided within the coursework assessment task, so that additional comments can be added to explain overall assessment decisions.

Some centres did not provide either the candidate mark sheets or video evidence of the solo performance.

Tutor-choreographed solos were mostly of a good standard and provided an appropriate level of challenge to meet the requirements of the course. There were examples of solos that exceeded the recommended length of time. The length and intensity of these solos meant that candidates found it challenging to sustain technique and performance due to stamina levels. The level of demand contained in some of the solos lacked a range of complex technical steps appropriate to Higher level. Centres should ensure candidates can exemplify a wide range of style-specific steps within the time to allow candidates access to the full range of marks.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Question paper

The evidence submitted included either accurate or lenient assessment judgements for the question paper component when centres used the SQA 2021 question paper.

When centres were marking leniently, it was because they were not applying the marking instructions accurately. The marking instructions should be applied holistically. For example, in section 1 of the 2021 SQA question paper, to achieve 6 marks in question 1, the candidate must provide a clear and detailed response explaining the importance of warm-up and cool down in relation to the principles of safe dance practice. Six straightforward responses cannot get the candidate 6 marks — they would be awarded 1 mark maximum for a straightforward response relating to warm-up, and 1 mark maximum for their straightforward response relating to cool down. Candidates are expected to display a depth of knowledge within their response to achieve the top mark band for a clear and detailed answer.

Throughout the question paper responses, many candidates did not take cognisance of the command words in questions. Many candidates demonstrated their knowledge through their responses but were unable to apply this knowledge to the question asked, so they could not access the full range of marks. For example, in evaluate questions, candidates must make a judgement. Centres should ensure candidate responses are consistent with the command word.

Feedback on assessment judgements could not be given for many centre-devised question papers, because marking instructions had not been provided.

Practical activity

In the choreography review, the assessment judgements were generally in line with national standards. When centres were marking leniently, it was because they were not applying the marking instructions accurately. In task 1b, candidates must: describe a third piece of research, make clear and provide detailed links between their research and their choice of spatial element, and describe the relationship between the spatial element and the intentions of the choreography clearly and in detail, to achieve the top mark band descriptor. Some candidates are not using a third piece of research when completing this task.

Candidates that used headings in their choreography review, which aligned to the marking instructions, were able to access the full range of marks.

In the choreography (group and solo), assessment judgements relating to spatial elements, use of music and/or sound, and use of theatre arts, were generally in line with the national standards. Many centres were lenient in their assessment judgements in the group choreographies for: use of theme and/or stimulus to create and develop motif/movements to convey theme, use of complex choreographic structure, and use of complex devices. In the solo choreographies, centres were lenient in awarding marks for: use of theme and/or stimulus to create and select movements to convey theme, use of complex choreographic

structure, and use of motif development and complex choreographic devices. Marking instructions were not applied correctly, and often centres were not using all the marks available within a band descriptor. Centres tended to use the upper mark within the band descriptor, so the accumulation of marks inflated the overall mark.

Performance

Some centres' assessment judgements were valid, reliable and in line with national standards. They were clearly recorded against the marking criteria, and comments were provided to support the assessment decisions.

Some centres were lenient in their overall assessment judgements. Specifically, element 1: application of technique was marked leniently, marking instructions were not applied correctly, and often centres were not using all of the marks available within a band descriptor. Centres tended to use the upper mark within a band descriptor, so the accumulation of marks inflated the overall mark.

Centres should refer to the resources available on SQA's Understanding Standards website for all three components to ensure they are marking in line with the national standards.