



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

Subject	Drama
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

Most assessment approaches were acceptable and valid. There were some good examples of moderation activity across the centres selected. Many centres gave detailed commentaries to support their assessment judgements. Quality assurance processes were often highlighted and there was evidence that moderation activity occurred in a variety of ways, for example, within school departments, local authorities and sometimes at a national level. After moderation had taken place, most centres submitted an agreed summative assessment judgement.

Some centres referenced the use of SQA Understanding Standards materials to support their assessment judgements and the moderation process.

Some centres that were selected for national quality assurance submitted evidence for all components; however, the majority of centres submitted partial evidence for their selected candidates.

Partial evidence included sections of the question paper, as well as recorded performances that were either rehearsals or final performances. Some centres included the preparation for performance, but almost all of the submissions were in draft form.

All the centres made effective use of a range of sources, such as the SQA question paper for 2021 and candidate mark sheets for the performance components. Some centres submitted commercially produced question papers, and others submitted centre-devised and local-authority-devised question papers.

Almost all centres provided evidence for the acting specialism in the performance component, with one candidate specialising in design. No directing candidates were included in the centres that were selected.

Some centres either exceeded or fell short of the recommended duration of the performance assessment in the acting. Centres should adhere to the recommended timings to ensure candidates can access the full range of marks.

Occasionally the choice of text was not appropriate for the breadth and challenge of Higher, and there were examples of one-act plays being used.

Section 2: Comments on assessment judgements

Performance

For performance components, centres provided video evidence of both acting and design candidates. It was clear that each centre providing video evidence had supported their candidates creatively and had made supportive risk mitigations or assessments in line with public health advice.

A number of centres had given detailed notes about their rationale for deciding the allocation of marks for the performance assessment.

The formative comments given on the preparation for performance by the teacher and/or moderator were useful to gain an insight into the way provisional marks were arrived at. On the whole, the marks allocated to the preparation for performance were in line with the national standard. This practice is to be commended, as it supports candidates through the process.

Assessment judgements for performance were mostly accurate and consistent with national standards. All centres referenced the marking instructions and provided comments to clearly show the basis on which they had made their assessment judgements.

Drama teachers and lecturers applied their professional judgement credibly within challenging performance conditions to arrive at their assessment judgements.

Question paper

Many centres provided candidate evidence that covered all three sections of the question paper.

Assessment judgements for the question paper were mainly in line with national standards and commentary from teachers and lecturers provided a rationale to support their assessment decisions.

When the assessment judgments for a question paper were not in line with the national standard, this was often due to the application of the A/A1 and B/B1 marks. Where candidate responses were marked leniently, candidates were incorrectly given credit for narrative type-responses and, occasionally, not answering the question asked.

Some centre-devised or commercially-produced questions were too challenging for Higher. On occasions, marking instructions for these question papers were not in line with national standards, which resulted in candidates being credited for responses that were not accurate.

Section 1: theatre production — text in context

A number of plays were used for this section, such as *The Crucible*, *The Birthday Party* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. The application of marks was, at times, not consistent. For example, some centres awarded a B mark for the production concept when the preceding A point had not been credited. Similarly, centres awarded a B1 mark for a continuation of the production concept. In order to award the A1 and B1 mark there must be an insightful development of the point being made by the candidate.

Section 2: theatre production — application

Generally, centres marked this section in line with national standards. It was pleasing to see from the centres selected, a greater use of appropriate drama terminology for the production roles being assessed.

Section 3: performance analysis

It was pleasing to see candidates enthusiastically engaging with theatre over the duration of the course. Similarly, it was pleasing to see many centres followed the 'what', 'how' and 'why' structure, as this allowed them to accurately award marks for these responses. Some centres occasionally credited responses for the analysis questions ('why') that were weak. Moreover, some centres credited a narrative approach that did not meet the challenge of the task. Candidates who could use appropriate drama terminology in their description of a moment within their chosen performance tended to avoid falling into narrative patterns in their responses.