

Frequently asked questions

For the new music technology suite of qualifications

We have listed answers to our most frequently asked questions about the new qualifications:

General

- **When is the external assessment?**

There are 2 specific assessment dates for each external assessment. Centres should check the V Cert Qualifications External Assessment Windows document for the specific dates.

- **Will there be an opportunity to resit the external assessment?**

Learners are entitled to 1 resit for each of the external assessment components, which will be chargeable. This means that learners can have a total of 2 attempts at each of the external assessments.

- **What is the external quality assurance (EQA) process?**

The EQA process will be the same as the current processes for V Cert qualifications.

- ☐ Centres will be entitled to 2 external quality assurance visits for the qualification. All internally assessed units will need to be internally assessed and internally quality assured. Grades will then need to be submitted on completion of the unit and these will be banked or rejected at the external quality assurance visit. These visits are used to discuss processes, school systems and the requirements of the qualification. Support will be provided on how to understand the units, learning outcomes and assessment points as well as supporting centres to develop their schemes of work.
- ☐ Centres will be required to register learners on to the qualification and at the time of registration, they'll be asked to enter the learners for an external assessment window.
- ☐ A new EQA team will be in place for the recently developed qualifications, they will be trained in all aspects of the grading model and qualification specifications.

- **Will the paperwork requirements change?**

The current NCFE Portal is being reviewed, with further information to follow. This will support centres and external contractors with paperwork requirements.

- **Will the qualifications have performance points?**

Yes. Please see the V Cert qualifications with Performance Points page on our website for further information.

- **What support materials are available?**

We offer a number of free downloadable resources that will help you deliver our V Cert qualifications. All support materials for these qualifications can be found under the Support Material tab on the qualification page on our website.

- **How is grading mapped?**

The grading structure for all V Cert qualifications is Not Yet Achieved, Pass, Merit, Distinction and Distinction*. Please see Section 4 of the qualification specification for details.

For information on how V Cert qualifications are aligned with GCSE grades please see our Changes to GCSE grades page

- **Do you have a scheme of work or delivery plan available?**

We plan to produce a Delivery Guide which will be available in September.

- **How do I deliver the qualification?**

This will be split between the teaching and the assessment of the units. Ideally you will need to provide assessment briefs for learners to be able to respond to the learning outcomes.

Further guidance can be found in the document Internal assessment writing and delivery: Guidance for centres. Delivery guides are also available on the qualification page to support with mapping out the delivery of the qualification.

- **What are the types of glossary used in the qualification specification?**

The unit glossary is useful as this provides information on the terms used within the learning outcomes and provides further clarity.

We've also provided a grading criteria glossary of terms to help you grade learners' assessments.

- **Why are you changing the qualifications?**

We want to ensure V Cert qualifications continue to meet the needs of our centres as well as meeting the new DfE requirements and Ofqual's requirement for validity.

The new approach to V Certs addresses user feedback, following first cohort completion. Based on this feedback, we have made the following improvements:

- ☐ updating the content to bring it in line with current industry practice
- ☐ future-proofing the qualifications
- ☐ align the qualification to a Level 1 qualification to allow for co-teaching
- ☐ modifying the external assessment to make it more manageable
- ☐ applying a new compensatory grading approach
- ☐ providing a Level 3 qualification for progression post-16.

- **Who can I speak to about these qualifications?**

If you'd like to speak to a member of the team about any of these qualifications, please give us a call on 0191 239 8000.

If you're an existing centre, please call the Customer Support team on 0191 239 8000 or email customersupport@ncfe.org.uk.

Level 1 and 2 Music Technology qualifications

- **Can centres transfer learners to a lower level if needed? Is this easy to do?**

Yes, centres will be able to transfer learners from the Level 2 to the Level 1 qualification if they need to. The external assessment result will still stand so learners won't have to repeat the external assessment. The internal assessments will need to be remarked and grades submitted as normal through the Portal.

If a learner has undertaken the majority of the Level 2 qualification, but is not able to fully achieve it, centres can transfer the learner to the corresponding Level 1 qualification and map prior learning from the Level 2 qualification. For more information please contact the External Quality Assurance team.

- **Why are the performance points different from previous years?**

Performance points are changing to align with the new grading for GCSE 9-1 scale. This also allows DfE to calculate Progress 8 and Attainment 8 scores. This will be true of all qualifications, GCSEs and Technical Awards.

- **When will the NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Creative Studies: Music Technology (600/6904/1) expire?**

This qualification will expire on 31 August 2017 and appear for the last time in the 2017 performance tables. This is the last date we can accept learner registrations. The last date we can process learner certificates is 31 August 2019. Centres must also ensure that learners have been entered for and sat their external assessment before this date, to ensure they have enough time to receive results and claim certificates.

- **How does the external assessment work as part of the new qualification?**

We have developed external assessments to cover both Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications which will be marked and graded accordingly.

The external assessments will be split in to:

- ☐ Paper 1 - written assessment (2 hours) – short-answer questions and listening questions.
- ☐ Paper 2 - practical assessment (2 hours) – creative and technical manipulation of musical material to a given brief.

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The external assessment will no longer be marked with grading descriptors. There is an examiner owned mark scheme that will be applied instead. This will allow for more flexibility and learners will no longer need to answer every question in order to gain a Pass in the external assessment.

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The external assessment will draw content from across all units and will take place at **the end of the qualification**, after all units have been taught.

Level 3 Music Technology qualification

- **Is this qualification equivalent to an A Level?**

This Applied General qualification is the same size as an A Level. It is aimed at post-16 year olds studying a Key Stage 5 curriculum, with an interest in creative music production and performance. The qualification has been designed to sit within the Study Programme, alongside A Levels and other qualifications.

- **What are the UCAS points?**

The NCFE Level 3 Applied General Certificate in Music Technology (601/6779/8) will appear in the UCAS tariff for Higher Education entry in 2017 and is supported by several Higher Education institutions.

Unit content

- **What space or facilities do I need for the studio recording unit?**

Learner should ideally have access to a purpose designed recording studio. However, NCFE appreciate not all centres will have this resource available, therefore the recording session should be planned with the available resources in mind, both in terms of space and the ensemble to be recorded.

For example, without the use of a live room recording a drum kit will prove to be potentially difficult so the nature of the performance should match what can be feasibly achieved with the available space.

The recording could be undertaken by using a portable system (eg a laptop and a suitable audio interface) in an available space, for example.

Please see our video on Level 1 and 2 Technical Award qualifications for further information.

- **In unit 01, the qualification specification states learners must produce 'original audio and MIDI material'. Does it have to be the learner's own musical composition?**

The 'musical' material could be original work or a cover/arrangement, but at Level 2 the 'recorded' material should be produced by the learner. The word 'original' is not necessarily meant to imply that the musical material has to be the learners own composition - rather that the learners have to create the material (eg through played in MIDI, step time input and recorded audio) rather than relying on pre-existing loops or MIDI files throughout.

There is no reason why the actual musical outcome shouldn't be a cover version, as long as learners sing/play/program the audio and MIDI in.

It should be noted that this learning outcome could be tied to unit 02, learning outcome 2 in which the learners have to create their own compositions, so in this instance musical material should be the learners own.

- **For unit 03, do all the learners need to record different songs or can they collectively record the multi-tracks and then manipulate/edit the tracks individually?**

The learners can work in groups to record. We would suggest small groups where possible, to ensure that learners have sufficient time to cover the required content in the qualification specification. It might be useful for each small group to work on a different song to give a sense of ownership and provide interest.

- **For unit 03, could the recording be completed using DAW software and a laptop, allowing learners to use the audio interface and the features in software to complete the mix down, or do they have to use a recording studio set-up?**

Yes, the recording can be recorded using a portable DAW setup. Learners should be able to plan the recording session, so you need to be mindful that they should be able to access microphones etc. Setting up a session in a suitable, but non studio environment, might provide learners with the opportunity to provide interesting commentary on the challenges faced.

- **For unit 04, will NCFE be providing any video clips for us to use for the composition task or is this something we have to create? How are we covered within copyright legislation?**

NCFE will not be providing video clips. This is so you can best place the assignment brief within your learners' interests and needs. For the purposes of educational usage most video clips are exempt from copyright, but if you are concerned you could make use of material which is copyright exempt.

- **Can I still create music in the style of dance?**

The skills from the current unit 06 'Producing dance music' have been subsumed in to the new unit 02 'Creating music'. Learners should be aware of dance music styles and learners can still focus on creating dance music in unit 02 'Creating music' if they choose.

However, the new qualification is a useful opportunity to expose learners to a variety of music which will allow them to make their own stylistic choices. Learners should be aware of key musical styles to give breadth to these choices. The Unit glossary gives some suggested examples of styles for study.

Please see our video on Level 1 and 2 Technical Award qualifications for further information.

- **Why are the DJ skills and live sound units not included in the Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications?**

The decision to not include these units was based on the demands this would place on centres in terms of equipment and resources for large groups of learners. In the development of these qualifications, it was agreed by subject experts that these specialist skills are better addressed at higher levels, so the opportunities to perform as a DJ and work with live sound are included in the NCFE Level 3 Applied General Certificate in Music Technology. Elements of DJ performance can potentially be used in unit 02 and unit 03 of the Level 1 and Level 2 Technical Award qualifications, as part of the composition and recording process, according to the interest of learners.

Please see our video on Level 1 and 2 Technical Award qualifications for further information.