

Guidelines for judges – NPS competitions

General.

Placings in competitions are at the absolute discretion of the judges on the day (subject to the rules being followed) but the following guidance is offered if required. Judges will naturally have their own ideas regarding appropriate style and repertoire, but an emphasis on Northumbrian repertoire should be rewarded.

Competitors generally value balanced and constructive comments, and suggestions for improvement in technique and style are often welcomed.

The use of music should be discouraged in all classes, though obviously this is less of a problem at Novice level than (for example) Advanced.

Judges are not bound to award the first prize if they feel the standard of playing is not adequate. Competitors should however, be placed.

Novice / Junior / Beginners

Encouragement should be the keynote of comments, though major problems with tuning and pressure should be addressed, perhaps privately, to the competitor. Timing (in the sense of appropriate rhythm), and ability to 'keep going' is more important than total accuracy of notes (spirit of the music rather than the letter)

Intermediate

Give consideration to the submitted programme of four pieces and their keys. Whenever possible pick the slow air as one of the options to be played.

Advanced

Appropriate tune set construction, and the way the player relates to the 'audience' are the main considerations, the development of performance skills being seen as important to aspiring solo pipers.

Open

The programme should be varied and well balanced, with the requirement for a tune with variations, and a key change, being tastefully incorporated. Musicality is equally as important as technique.

Border Pipes

Favour the Border style of playing rather than 'Highland' style.

Duets /Ensemble

Always look for some unison playing in the tunes – this is a good test of the players' togetherness. Interesting arrangements by the competitors should be encouraged, and in the case of an ensemble, the 'lead' being taken by more than one of the players, to give a group feel, should be encouraged.