

SGCNZ VUW REGIONAL SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL 2026

in association with Ministry of Education, Wellington City Council,
Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, Raye Freedman
Trust, Sheilah Maureen Winn Trust Trinity College London, KPMG,
Vega Works,

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT ~ REGIONAL FESTIVALS PARTICIPANTS

If you are reading this, we assume you are going to participate in one of our Regional and maybe the National SGCNZ VUW Shakespeare Festival. That's great! Here is the SharePoint link for more information: [35SGCNZRegFestivals2026](#)

To give you an idea of what the Assessors are looking for, we are sharing the information from their Guidelines, so that you are literally on the same page! There is a considerable sense of responsibility felt on their part to make fair and consistent judgements.

We do stress it is a 'Festival', not a 'Competition'. However, most groups are very eager to be selected to be in the National Festival!

The chance to come to Wellington and perform on the prestigious St James Theatre stage, do Workshops with leading practitioners, visit tertiary institutes, other attractions and performances, enhances this, along with knowing that selection to SGCNZ VUW National Shakespeare Schools production is a wonderful experience, with the possibility of being one of 24 chosen from the initial 4000+ to be a member of SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company. With this opportunity to be trained, rehearsed and perform at the Globe being the pinnacle, often after it has been 'in their sights' throughout their time at secondary school (or equivalent level Homeschool or Community Youth Drama Group).

Please do read carefully and adhere to the Guidelines and Criteria as outlined.

SELECTION

**Select: One 5 Minute Scene for the SGCNZ VUW National Shakespeare Festival (SGCNZ NSF)
One 15 Minute Scene for the SGCNZ VUW National SF
1 Student for Direct Entry to SGCNZ VUW National Shakespeare Schools Production (NSSP) who is
NOT in a group chosen to attend the National SF and is 15 years or older on 1 March 2026**

in a group chosen to attend the National SF and is 15 years or older on 1 March 2026 If there is no student deemed to be suitable for selection of Direct Entry to NSSP, Assessors do not have to choose anyone. This means that, in addition to the 22 chosen from the National UOSWSF, there will be another space for a student to be selected from that.

The groups chosen for SGCNZ's VUW National Shakespeare Festival participate in all the various aspects, including Workshops, tours, talks, attend performances and perform their scenes in Wellington over King's Birthday weekend from 29 May – 2 June 2026

SGCNZ National SF Attendance:

• SGCNZ National SF Attendance:

Selected groups must be willing and available to attend the whole National Festival – if they are not, another group must be selected. (However, the Scene Assessors' and NSSP Selectors' Feedback Session on Monday 2 June is optional for the students as, for some, travel home has to start early.) It is necessary to have a back-up in each category, (5 and 15 minute scenes), should the selected group not be able to attend, and a reserve choice for SGCNZ NSSP Direct Entry be advised to the Regional Representative, should the selected person have to withdraw. Selected groups must be willing and available to attend the whole National Festival – if they are not, another group must be selected. (However, the Scene Assessors' and NSSP Selectors' Feedback Session on Monday 2 June is optional for the students as, for some, travel home has to start early.)

Chair Paul Foster-Bell

Chief Executive, SGCNZ Trustee, Member Shakespeare's Globe Council, London Dawn Sanders ONZM, QSM M 027 283 6016 E dawn@sgcnz.org.nz

Board Aaron Hape | Professor Sarah Ross | Neil Strom | Bronwyn Turei |

Globe Associate Stella Kanu | Youth Associate Darius Martin Baker Youth Observer Hune Edwards | Chlöe Miller | Murcie M'Lago Morris

Patrons Vice-Regal Patron Her Excellency The Right Honourable Dame Cindy Kiro, GNZM, QSO, Governor-General of New Zealand

Sir Sam Neill KNZM, OBE | Robyn Malcolm MNZM

Arts Event & Administration Manager Position Open | Financial Advisor Jan Bergquist | Accent on Shakespeare Editor Leigh Bredenkamp

- We do advise anyone in a selected group, who happens to be cast in a local production over that weekend, to let the Understudy have a chance to perform in their place, so that the person selected for the National Festival can be here. Full attendance is compulsory by all.
- Groups not selected, who pay to attend the National Festival, naturally get extremely upset when they see people chosen to attend it, come and go as they choose. The weekend is designed to be a fulsome, enriching package.
- Please read the attached SGCNZ Board's Policy paper to see the list of rules which have been developed and tweaked to address various aspects and issues over the years. This includes exactly how many groups you may select, depending on numbers of schools/Homeschool/Community Drama groups and participants in the Regional Festival, and the strict eligibility of the NSSP applicants.
- **Larger Regional Festivals:**
Greater representation at the National Festival is permitted from very large regions.
- **Policy:**
If there are either **300 or more individuals** participating, or more than **15 different Schools/ Homeschool Clusters/Community Drama groups**, or **50 or more scenes** in a Regional Festival the Assessors are permitted to select 3 groups to attend the National Festival. *These may not all be from the same school.*
The additional scene may be either a 5-minute or a 15-minute scene.
Two groups may be selected from the same category, (ie 5- minute or 15-minute scenes), only if the numbers, as stated above, comply with the Board Policies.
- **Small Regional Festivals:**
Conversely, a limit is placed on very small Regional Festivals.
- **Policy:**
In regions in which only **2 schools/Homeschool groups** are participating with **less than a total of 15 scenes**, only one group may be selected to perform at the National Festival. This may be either a 5- minute or a 15-minute scene.

All schools registering for the Festival are sent the Board Policies, which are also on the SGCNZ website, <https://www.sgcnz.org.nz/programmes/sgcnz>, which you have to accept as having read, before submitting your Entry information and so you should have read and become familiar with these rulings.

PERFORMANCE SELECTION CRITERIA

Adherence to the following Criteria is essential:

- All scenes - including if Shakespeare's poems or sonnets - must be performed by two or more speaking actors
- **Time – from: curtain opening to closing or, if curtains are open or there are none, walking onto and off the stage, or a definitive beginning and ending.** This includes music/dance introduction/finale if applicable. **Duration must be between:**

4 minutes minimum - 5 minutes maximum – **5 Minute Student-Directed Scenes**
10 minutes minimum - 15 minutes maximum – **15 Student- or Adult-directed Scenes**

ANY SCENES OVER THE MAXIMUM OR UNDER THE MINIMUM LENGTHS MUST NOT BE SELECTED BY REGIONAL ASSESSORS TO PARTICIPATE AT THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL

(This is both for fairness sake and because of overall time constraints)

Any group which runs over or under time at their Regional Festival or at the National Festival is ineligible for any awards. ie These groups will not receive Scene Awards, and Student Directors and Cast of them may not receive specific awards for individuals either, but may be selected for SGCNZ NSSP, if eligible, by being 15 or over on 1 March 2026.

- **Timekeeper:**
The Timekeeper records the lengths of the scenes throughout the Festival so that the Assessors know which groups are in or out of contention.
- A group does not have to be selected from both categories if there is not one up to a suitable standard – however, this is rare. Rather than being exceptional, a highly innovative or well-conceived performance in a different language could be chosen.

Two groups may be selected from the same category, only if the numbers, as stated above, comply with the Board Policies.

- **15-minute Scenes** may be adult- or student-directed (including by non-teachers)
- **5-minute Scenes** must be directed **only** by students
- **One Play or Poem:**

As per the criteria in the Guidelines, content for each performance must be from **ONE play or poem only**. This includes words from the text put to music.

- Scenes enacted from one poem or up to five sonnets are allowed, if performed as a scene with speaking parts by more than one person on stage at the same time.
- **Monologues** may only be performed within a scene and with other speaking characters in the rest of the scene.
- **Translations of Shakespeare's text into other languages**
This is strongly encouraged. However, the Regional Representative must be advised in advance and the translated script sent in at least 2 weeks in advance to be checked for accuracy by a native speaker or other appropriate person.

School Year & Age Limits:

In response to many enquiries, we have officially opened up the Festivals to students from Year 7 - 13, ages 11 - under 20 years old and still in secondary schooling. For eligibility to be selected for the National Festival, groups including Year 7s and 8s may have no more than 20% Year 7s and 8s in the cast.

Variety of Schools:

- We strongly encourage involvement of Kura Kaupapa Māori Schools as well as of Pacific Island and other ethnicities
- Homeschoolers from another ever-increasing sector, with clusters of them able to enter groups.
- Community Groups, with the same age and Year criteria as above, may participate as a group in their own right.
- Some schools may choose to collaborate and present joint performances (up to 4 different schools).

Although it is acknowledged that some schools are very strong, our funders and audiences would like to see as wide a representation of schools/homeschool clusters/community groups as possible in the Regional and National Festivals. Whilst there is no actual Policy regarding this in the Regional selections, the Board is keen for Assessors to try to select groups from different schools. We do not want to put off other schools from participating, which happens if the same ones get through in both categories every year. Note that there is a maximum of 12 entries per school in the Regional Festival now.

Various aspects are therefore considered when selecting, which can include 'raw talent' and 'bravery' or with different ethnic inclusions. Avoid creating gimmicky or 'over the top' presentations. If there are definitely obvious choices from the same school, they are still eligible to be chosen.

SGCNZ NSSP DIRECT ENTRY

This category is to enable a student who may be the best actor or excels in their Regional Festival but is NOT in a group selected to perform at the National Festival, to have Direct Entry to SGCNZ's National Shakespeare Schools Production (NSSP). NSSP is a residential intensive 9-day course of workshops, rehearsals and culminating performances, which is being held this year from 20 -28 September 2026 at St Pat's College, Silverstream in Hutt Valley, Wellington.

Eligibility for NSSP Direct Entry:

- **Students must be 15 years or more on 1 March 2026**
- **The student must NOT be in a scene being performed at the National Festival**

Re Age: The course is very rigorous and demanding. When younger students used to be permitted to be selected, they found it more difficult to cope in every way...and took the places from students with only one or two more years of schooling left, who could benefit more. If a younger student is excellent, they will have another opportunity to be chosen to attend – whereas older students will not.

The Assessor/s will be given the list of NSSP eligible applicants, as entered on the SGCNZ RSF Registration platform – noting that their date of birth must be prior to 2 March 2010.

It should also be noted that students may not attend the SGCNZ YSC course at Shakespeare's Globe if under the age of 16 – as per The Globe's regulations.

- If there is no outstanding student who is not already in a group going to the National Festival, an NSSP Direct Entry selection does not have to be made – instead it will be announced publicly that it gives more chance to the ones at the National Festival to be chosen, as it will make an extra place available for one of them.
- Students may be selected to attend SGCNZ NSSP for a second (or occasionally third!) time.
- However, students who have been members of SGCNZ Young Shakespeare Company (YSC) previously, and are still in secondary schooling, may not be selected for SGCNZ NSSP again. (They may be, and often are, in scenes or direct them, which they are welcome to do, and share their experience and newfound skills!)

ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER

The Assessors will evaluate:

- **Understanding and delivery of the text - ONLY Shakespeare's words are to be used, from one play, one poem or up to 5 Sonnets**

- Understanding of Shakespeare's text and of what is being conveyed
- Knowledge of the whole play and faithfulness to the intent of it
- Intelligent and empathic editing of the text (from one play only, poem or up to 5 Sonnets) to create a cohesive and appealing performance
- Clear diction, retaining natural voices (no RP), unless the role or presentation of the play dictates an accent
- Audibility and clarity
- use of the voice with dynamic effect, remembering to project well and appreciation that shouting seldom creates the most powerful effect
- Appropriate portrayal of the characters and thoughtfully developed interaction with other cast members
- Inclusion of the audience
- breaking down of the '4th wall' ie more 'Globeseque'

- **Staging**

- any context, ethnicity, period, place or style may be used, while retaining integrity and empathy with the play/poem
- other arts forms may be included:
 - * live music, rather than recorded, is ideal
 - * putting Shakespeare's words from the play being performed, to music or song, is permitted
 - * use of original and royalty-free music is preferred
 - * if APRA royalty fee applies, it is the responsibility of the group to gain permission and pay to use the music if necessary – proof must be supplied to the Regional Representative
 - * dance elements may be incorporated in any style or culture, where and as appropriate
- preference will not be given to thematic, gimmicky or 'over-the-top' productions

- **Interpretation and presentation of characters and their interaction within the play**

- consideration of how characters relate to the context, period or place, and unity binding these elements
- sincerity of interaction and connection between the actors

- **Connection with the audience**

- embracing and inclusion of the audience, whether it can be seen or not
- performers may be placed in or move through the audience
- NB safety is paramount
- adherence to Health and Safety briefing specifications is essential
- lights should be brought up to some extent if actors are moving in the auditorium

- **Vitality and integrity of performance**

- the vitality, freshness, dynamics and physicality of the performers
- embodiment of and engagement with the characters

- **Sincerity of presentation**

- this includes how truthfully the scene/s is/are performed and whether the style could be sustained in a production of the whole play

- **Design and use of the space**

- as there is only a 2-minute set up and strike time, any physical set must be minimal
- design of the production is about use of the space and maximising it to create effective delivery of the text
- effective groupings and varying physical levels are taken into account
- the Stage Manager must be advised of any objects being thrown on stage or into the wings there are strict guidelines re no naked flames, liquids - water, fake blood use, paint... (includes water-soluble body paint which must be cleaned off the stage immediately after the performance if necessary)
- props must be constructed and used safely, and vetted if necessary by the Stage Manager

- **Overall impression** – the quality and impact of the performance, and whether it will linger in the audience's memory

- **Selection Form**

To ensure no errors are made in the selection and communication as to which groups have been selected for the National Festival, including the specific scene they performed, and the SGCNZ National Shakespeare Schools Production Direct Entry student who has been selected, a form will be completed by the Assessors and given to your Regional Representative when the announcements have been made at the Award and Certificate Presentation Ceremony at the conclusion of your Festival.

The Assessors will also advise the Regional Representative of the runner-up groups and Direct Entry individual, should any withdraw.

- **Awards & Presentations**

If applicable, Regional Representatives may have secured some local awards to be assessed as well. The Regional Representative will arrange for an Assessor/s, and /or a local dignitary, to present the Participation Certificates to a representative of each School/Homeschool Cluster/Community Drama Group and all the Student Directors, and Award Certificates to recipients of these (if there are any).

While previous SGCNZ YSC members may not be selected for NSSP again, they may receive awards and be in or have directed scenes selected for the National Festival.

At the National Festival, there are no 'winners' - various areas of excellence and expertise are acknowledged through a variety of awards.

- **Feed-back**

Assessors will share writing the reports, so there is one on each performance. These will be sent to you by your Regional Representative within a month following the conclusion of the Regional Festival. This means those selected for the National Festival will receive them prior to King's Birthday, in time for them to take note of any advice given. Constructive criticism, as well as positive endorsement, will be provided.

Assessors **may** choose to discuss the performances with the students and/or teachers if they wish. Permission for contact with the Assessors will be advised, if they agree, through each Regional Representative or the CEO, as is applicable.

The Assessor/s' ultimate recommendations and decisions are binding.

SGCNZ's Vision and Objectives

VISION:

To transform lives by mentoring potential through experiencing Shakespeare

OBJECTIVES:

Hauora - to build resilience and wellbeing

Atawhai - to cultivate empathetic communication

Mana - to enhance confidence with gravitas

Whanau - to connect people, regionally, nationally, and globally

Tautoko - to include and unite people from diverse backgrounds

Pūkenga - to develop life skills

Manaaki - to provide opportunities for personal and professional development

Mahi hou - to inspire creativity and innovation

FAQs

Please note there is an FAQ section on our website – sgcnz.org.nz/FAQs. Do read all of this in advance to ensure you have all the same information that the Assessors do!

SGCNZ's Vision and Objectives

Please absorb the following notes for your information when speaking to the media, individuals or from the stage (errors and misconceptions are frequently made in relation to these):

- The Festivals were initiated 34 years ago by, and have always been a corner-stone activity of, Shakespeare Globe Centre New Zealand
- The first Regional Festivals were called the SGCNZ Secondary School Shakespeare Festivals
- The late Sheilah Winn, through one of her Trusts, was a sponsor of the first National SGCNZ Festival. In her honour, we named it, at that time in 1992, the SGCNZ Sheilah Winn Festival of Shakespeare in Schools – but never 'the Sheilah Winn' – rather the 'SGCNZ Shakespeare Festival'
Whilst we have been given some funding from this source ever since, the amount does fluctuate and in 2024 was only \$5000 out of the \$300,000 needed to run the Festivals so makes up a very small percentage of the funding we require each year
- At the Sheilah Winn Trust's request, its grant is used towards assisting with some of the Regional Festival funding which SGCNZ offers as 'seeding money' to each of the 24 Regional Representatives, who 'micro-manage' their Regional Festival to the blueprint sent out to them by the CEO, who does the macro-management
- The University of Otago 18 years ago generously came on board as a considerably more significant funder, and requested the shared naming rights – hence 'SGCNZ University of Otago Sheilah Winn Shakespeare Festival'. Sadly that ended at the end of 2024 owing to their own financial pressures
- As a result, the name of the Festivals have been changed to: SGCNZ VUW Regional &/ National Shakespeare Festivals - SGCNZ RSF or SGCNZ NSF or SGCNZ R&NSF – until such time as a new major sponsor or catchy name emerges
- A large number of other funders are urgently being sought by SGCNZ in order to continue to facilitate the Festivals
- We are delighted that the Ministry of Education funding includes this year – though as this is the last from the 3 year grant, we will be making a new tender imminently and seeking feedback to include in it.
- The Ministry of Youth Development funding is reliant on participating students and young adults (aged 12 – 24) completing the MYD survey. There is a QR code on our website, on Sharepoint and visibly at the event. Please encourage all to complete it. The Reg Reps have the Survey details; they are also in the programme and on the SGCNZ website
- It is vital that all participants in the Regional and National Festivals aged between 12 and 24, in whatever capacity, complete the very short MYD Survey (takes 3 mins) about their participation in the Festivals. This also encompasses the younger directors post-school age, and crew, front of house and volunteers.
- It would be helpful if you can push the above and the fact that we **always need financial support** – sponsors, donors, 1000 Club members (\$1000 once or annually), donors by regular Automatic Payments, Payroll Givers,...
- Note that all the administration is done by SGCNZ – which has only 2 modestly paid staff - the CEO and a new Arts Administrator - plus, thankfully, the 24 wonderful Regional Representatives, volunteers, interns, and those willing to drop their prices to be Assessors regionally to help encourage and mentor the enthusiastic and talented youth of NZ!!

- SGCNZ brands itself as mentoring potential through experiencing Shakespeare and enhancing life skills
- Note that all the administration is done by SGCNZ – which has only 2 modestly paid staff - the CEO and a new Arts Administrator - plus, thankfully, the 24 wonderful Regional Representatives, volunteers, interns, and those willing to drop their prices to be Assessors regionally to help encourage and mentor the enthusiastic and talented youth of NZ!!
- We have an express objective to provide opportunities to students from low socio-economic sectors. We do not charge students to participate, eliminating barriers to them and to ensure inclusivity of all gender, ethnicities, migrants, refugees and all sectors
- Many Alumni do become stage and screen arts practitioners of various genre including roles 'behind the scenes', while others enter un-directly-related professions, and are excelling in a wide variety of positions – including Hon Chris Bishop MP (Leader of the House) and former Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, lawyers, teachers, doctors, journalists, presenters, and many other occupations, benefitting from the communication, self- presentation and so many qualities
- Then there are those who contribute to the workforce in myriad other different ways, benefitting from the transferable skills learnt through SGCNZ and its programmes, events and activities.

Wishing you an inspiring and enjoyable time!

Dawn Sanders ONZM, QSM

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4.12.25