

Online Comhaltas Competitions (OCC's) Frequently Asked Questions



This is a document covering 10 questions you may have regarding the OCC's and answers to help you. The topics listed includes:

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What are the OCC's?

The online Comhaltas competitions are a range of regional competitions organised by the regions of Comhaltas in Britain in collaboration with the Province of Britain and the staff of the Province for the benefit of our members and the wider community with the hope of running up to 4 regional competitions and a national Province wide final in June.

Why is the point in doing these Online Competitions?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our regional and Provincial Fleadhanna have been cancelled for the second year running. Our yearly fleadh season takes the form of competitions, but the real goal each year is about education and focus. The competitions give our members the opportunity to work towards an event, receive feedback on their performance and are often given tips and hints which stand them in great stead going forward. Having missed out on the opportunity to receive that feedback in 2020, we were keen to ensure that didn't carry over 2021 too and as such we devised the OCC's to fill this gap.

Are the rules the same as for regular Fleadhanna?

The rules are based largely on those which are used for usual Comhaltas fleadh competitions – the Rialacha Fleadhanna Cheoil. Certainly, in spirit they are very much the 'same' however due to the nature of these competitions taking place online and against the backdrop of lockdowns and social distancing, there are some fundamental differences. Competitors record themselves performing via video and submit that as part of their entry form, this video is adjudicated as a complete competition alongside all other entries in the same category, the adjudicator completes an adjudication sheet for each competitor and picks a top 3 in each competition. The number of tunes (and categories of tunes) are the same, and with exception to slow airs and singing competitions where competitors submit a list of tunes/songs) the performance would be exactly as it would in a regular fleadh. For this competition slow air and singing competitions, no list is required, you just have to play/sing the appropriate number of tunes/songs as you usually would perform – all your own choice! (it is recommended for singers to perform a mix of slow and fast songs). If you are competing in the ceili band drums, duets, trios, accompaniment and you have to play alongside a melody player, you can play along with someone from your household, or... you can play along with a recording which has been produced specifically for the purposes of you to play along with (i.e. get a friend to play a few tunes for you to play along with.... Just don't play along with a CD!) Also please see the next question for details on the beginner's competitions

What are the Beginners competitions?

For musicians who have yet to compete in any Comhaltas competitions in either tin-whistle or fiddle (i.e. if you started to play since the fleadh season in 2019) you are eligible to compete in the 'beginners competitions' as opposed to the standard fiddle and tin-whistle competitions. Entrants in the beginners competitions are only asked to play 1 tune in their video and you cannot enter both the 'beginner' and 'standard' competition in a given instrument (i.e. you cannot compete in beginner tin-whistle and the tin-whistle competition).

What provisions have you made regarding safeguarding and GDPR?

The safety and wellbeing of everyone in Comhaltas is of paramount importance at all times. We have designed these competitions in a way where your videos are stored in a correct way (using password protected, encrypted cloud storage) and only the organisers of the event, and the adjudicator have access to the submitted content. The adjudicators themselves are unable to 'download' the videos to their own devices, however they have access to 'view' the folder containing each competition's videos for the purposes of adjudicating. Should your entry be chosen as a winner in a competition, your video (in whole or in part) may be broadcast by Comhaltas as part of the official OCC broadcast in each region. Should you be placed 1st, 2nd, 3rd in a competition, you may qualify for participation in the Provincial OCC in June. Your entry video will be automatically moved forward to this next round of competition and the same rules apply regarding potentially being chosen as winner and featuring in a Provincial OCC broadcast. For those videos which have been broadcast as winners, the broadcast video containing these entries will be retained for archival purposes, however all original submitted videos will be deleted in a GDPR compliant way within a period of 1 year. By entering the competition you are agreeing to these terms which are also stated on the application form.

What does it cost to enter?

The entry fee has been set at £4 per competitor, per competition however, there is a maximum for an individual of £12 or a household maximum of £25. So if you have a household of 5 people each entering 5 competitions, it's only £1 each! The entry fee goes towards the cost of hiring adjudicators and contributes towards the running costs of the online competitions. Some participants have expressed a wish to donate more than the stated fee for entering, whilst this is welcomed from those who wish to do so, we have deliberately kept the fee accessible to as many people as possible whilst also ensuring we do not create a large financial burden on the organisation particularly in these difficult times.

How do I pay my fee for entry?

Entry fees are paid using PayPal, and the link to the appropriate account to pay will be displayed on the last page of the entry form after you have clicked submit. Once you click the link you will be presented with a page asking how much you would like to pay. Enter your amount (which would be the fee of £4 per comp, £12 per person max or £25 family max – or fee including donation if you so wish). You will also see a box asking to 'add note' – in this box, enter the competition code and competitor names (e.g. 12A Joe Bloggs) for all the entries being covered by your fee (if you are entering 5 different competitions, it makes more sense to just visit PayPal once and list the competitions together). PayPal will also ask you if the money you are paying is for 'Goods & Services' or for 'Friends and Family'. The percentage of the fee taken by PayPal is significantly reduced for payments for 'Friends and Family' and we would appreciate if you chose to select your payment from this category.

What are the rules regarding 'group' competitions?

The OCC's are open to solo entries, and also duet and trio entries providing that all participants in duet and trio competitions reside within the one household. We are not facilitating Ceili Band, Grupai Cheoil, or Ceili Dance competitions due to these having more competitors in each group. If you are taking part in ceili band drums, bodhran, and accompaniment competitions, please see the question on rules above relating to being able to play along with a musician in your household or along with a recording.

Will I get a medal or trophy?

Of course medals are big part of our normal Fleadhanna, for the OCC's we are not providing medals or trophies for the regional rounds of the OCC's however due to the changing nature of restrictions, this may be possible come the time of the Provincial OCC. Taking the place of medals will be certificates stating the competition placing and the competitors name which will be delivered to winners digitally.

Do I have to be a member of Comhaltas to enter the OCC's?

No you do not. For usual Fleadhanna competitions 'non-members' are charged a higher fee to enter competitions than those who are members of branches. This does not apply this year for the OCC's in large part down to the spirit and philosophy behind the competitions. It has been a hugely challenging time for many of our members and branches across Britain and for one reason or another, some members haven't been in a position to renew their membership in the current year, for others who have yet to join a branch, the hope would be that with the positive experience they have from taking part in the OCC's, they may become inspired to seek out and join their local branch, in turn helping branches to move forward as they navigate their way post COVID-19

Why do I need a Gmail account to enter?

You may have seen on the entry form that you require to be logged in to a Gmail (google) email account in order to complete the entry form. *Please note on our website there is an instructional video showing you how to create an account If you don't have one, and it literally takes less than 2 minutes!* The reason for requiring a Gmail account is that Comhaltas in Britain uses googles suite of apps 'Gsuite' to operate the OCC's. Without requiring a Gmail account, we would be unable to facilitate the competitions in the way that we are, at the small fee we have charged. Quite simply, by using this method, we've been able to make it as affordable to participants as possible. It should also be noted however, once you have logged in to your Gmail account, for the field on the entry form asking for 'email address' – make sure to use the address which you want adjudication sheets to be delivered to, as that is what this field is used for. You do not have to use the same email address here as you have for logging in to complete the form!

I've read through this but I'm still needing help?!

If you are still requiring help with something which hasn't been clarified in this guide, please email Comhaltas in Britain Project Officer Paddy Callaghan (paddy@comhaltas.co.uk) who is overseeing the logistics behind the OCC's and he will try and assist you in any way he can!