

# Opinions of lecturers in music education department about assessment and evaluation of the violin and viola exams

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## Abstract

Trying to obtain reliable models for the assessment of instrumental performance in music education, which is a dimension of education, involves various challenges. The difficulties during the assessment become more complex, especially in instruments such as violin and viola, which require a large number of skills. The aim of this study is to determine how the assessment-evaluation process is carried out in violin and viola final exams in the Departments of Music Education in Turkiye. The research is a qualitative study designed with a case study design. The study group consists of 22 lecturers conducting violin and viola courses in music education departments in 16 different universities in Turkiye in the academic year 2022-2023. The data collected through a semi-structured interview form were analyzed using descriptive and content analysis techniques. As a result of the study, it was seen that the participants mostly evaluated the students in the final exams with a commission consisting of string instruments instructors, however, a considerable number of instructors evaluated the students only by themselves. Most of the participants stated that they evaluated the students in the final exams on criteria such as violin viola grip, bow grip, application of bowing techniques, playing monophonic etudes, playing works or parts of works, musicality, physical setup, scale playing and arpeggio playing. The results that proper physical setup, proper violin viola grip and bow grip prevent physical problems, improve technical skills, contribute to correct intonation and increase tone quality are predominantly noticeable. It has been determined that playing scales and arpeggios creates a preliminary preparation for the etudes and pieces to be played by the student, applying different bowing techniques shows the level of the student, playing monophonic etudes provides technical gains and playing duophonic etudes contributes to intonation. It was concluded that playing a piece or part of a piece contributes to musicality, and playing with piano accompaniment enables the piece to be played in intonation, tempo and integrity by recognising its original form. In addition to these evaluation criteria mentioned by the participants, it was stated that students should be evaluated in terms of performance during the semester, attitude towards the exam, vocalization of maqam melodies, attendance to the lesson and awareness of the repertoire played in the exam.

## Keywords

*assessment and evaluation, music education, music education curriculum, instrument education, viola exam, violin exam*

## Introduction

Human being is a social being and interacts with his/her environment throughout his/her life. With the development of self-knowledge and awareness of the individual from childhood, skills such as thinking, criticising, deciding and reaching conclusions about what is going on in the outside world develop. These skills will shed light on the individual's intuitions, determinations and decisions to distinguish between good and bad or right and wrong. Throughout our lives,

the urge to distinguish what is better or more qualified spontaneously reveals a constant comparison situation. Therefore, being able to identify what is good or qualified can be realised through the use of some measurement and evaluation practices. Generally measurement refers to the process in which the qualities or dimensions of some physical objects are determined, while evaluation is a process in which information is obtained according to some known goals or objectives.

As in all stages of education, low assessment quality in higher education is a problem with serious consequences for students, teachers, government and society (Leeuwenkamp et al., 2017). Therefore, it is of great importance to realise a qualified and universally acceptable assessment and evaluation process. Because assessment provides a framework for sharing educational goals with students and recording their progress. However, it can produce feedback information that can be used by students to improve learning and achievement. This feedback information can also help teachers to reorganise their teaching according to students' needs (Nicol and Dick 2004). According to Tabuena et al., (2021), high levels of measurement and assessment of learning, whether in music education or in other fields, can produce comprehensive and valid data on students' performance and provide insight into the effectiveness of teachers' practices. There is a similar situation in instrument education, which is an important sub-dimension of music education. The formation of common and qualified measurement and evaluation criteria in instrument exams conducted in institutions providing vocational music education can provide clearer results for students and teachers.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Evaluation is the act of making judgments about intended learning such as a knowledge or a skill test, and should show how well students have demonstrated their intended learning outcomes (Payne et al., 2019). Therefore, evaluating students' learning outcomes is a difficult and complex process for all the educators in higher education (Goss, 2022). According to Naomi & Boud (2022), student performance should be graded and documented according to appropriate standards and criteria in a reliable, valid and defensible manner during evaluation. While the evaluator performs the act of grading and commenting, he/she actually fulfils two different purposes. These are: grading and justification (taking past success into account) and providing

feedback information (to influence future success).

According to Giraldo (2019), trying to obtain reliable models for the assessment of music performance in music education, a dimension of education, can involve several challenges. First, there can be a high degree of subjectivity among music professionals. On the other hand, most assessments in music education may emphasize intonation and tempo while leaving aside other relevant aspects of musical interpretation such as timbre quality. These two aspects can therefore significantly complicate coherent assessment. Difficulties during assessment can be particularly complex on instruments such as the violin and viola, which require a multitude of skills.

The violin, which is a popular and well-known instrument, is the mainstay of symphony orchestras, and its position as a solo instrument is indisputable (Ross, 2013). Students who receive violin education in vocational and private music education institutions for amateurs all over the world are evaluated through exams. Among the basic knowledge and skills aimed at violin education, there are some subjects such as correct posture/holding, producing clean sound, knowing the structure and characteristics of the instrument, performing etudes and pieces at a certain level (Uslu, 2012). When looking at violin education from a technical point of view, the necessary elements start with the correct posture of the body, followed by basic behaviors such as holding the violin and bow correctly, positioning the arm, wrist, hand and fingers correctly, left hand and right hand techniques (Parasiz, 2009). In addition, according to Johansson (2015), technical behaviours in violin education enable the formation of a certain style in the student. The viola is the second member of the violin family and is not much different from the violin in appearance (Derican & Albuz, 2008). It can be said that violin and viola have similarities in terms of both posture and grip and playing techniques in practice (Yilmaz & Mustul 2019).

## Related Studies

When the literature on the evaluation of instrument performance in Türkiye is examined, different studies on assessment and evaluation have been found. Atak-Yayla (2021) examined the evaluation of instrumental music performance, and Çoban (2011) examined the views of the music teacher candidates about the individual instrument education course end-of-term exams. In the case of string instruments, Tebis (2004) examined the assessment and evaluation status of string instrument teaching in music teacher training programs from the *Musiki Muallim Mektebi* (Music Teacher Training School) to the present, Alpagut (2004), on the other hand, examined the standardization in the evaluation of violin exams held in front of the board in higher education institutions in Türkiye and stated that there should be a standard in the assessment of the violin education process. Nalbantoglu (2007) aimed to determine the musical performance assessment and evaluation practices of string instrument students and suggested a valid and reliable assessment and evaluation method. Dalkiran (2008), on the other hand, created a performance measurement tool to be used in violin exams in higher education and tested the usability of this tool.

In this context, the starting point of this research is the questions of how the instructors who teach violin and viola lessons in the Departments of Music Education in Türkiye follow the method of assessment and evaluation in the final exams and under which disciplines they evaluate students.

## Purpose of the Study

In many vocational music education institutions in our country, education for string instruments (violin/viola/violoncello/contrabass) is given. An important dimension of the education process is the measurement and evaluation phase. This study is considered to be important in terms of determining the assessment and evaluation criteria in the instrument exams held in these institutions

and providing an idea about how the relevant instructors will follow a measurement and evaluation method in violin and viola exams in the light of the results obtained from the research findings. In this context, the aim of the study is to determine how the measurement and evaluation process is carried out in the final exams of violin and viola in the Departments of Music Education in Türkiye. For this purpose, the problem statement and sub-problems of the study were formed as follows.

**Problem Statement:** How do the lecturers working in music education departments in Türkiye carry out violin and viola exams?

Sub-problems:

- How and under which disciplines do violin and viola instructors working in the Departments of Music Education evaluate students?
- Violin and viola instructors' views on violin and viola playing;
- What are their views on the preliminary preparation dimension?
- What are their views on the technical dimension?
- What are their views on the musical dimension?

## Method

### Research Model

This research is a qualitative study patterned with a case study. According to Yin (2017), case studies are used for three aspects. Firstly, when the research addresses a descriptive question (what is happening? and what happened?) or an explanatory question (how did something happen? and why did it happen?), secondly, they can be used to study a phenomenon in a real-world context, and thirdly they can be used for evaluation. In this type of research, the "Case" can vary from an individual to village people, or from an event to a series of processes such as the implementation of a certain program

(Glesne, 2015). In this study, how and through which disciplines the lecturers who teach violin and viola in the department of music education evaluate the students in the final exams is considered as a case. For this reason, the “case study design” was chosen in the study.

### Participants

Purposive sampling method was used to determine the study group of the research.

The purposeful sampling is preferred when one or more special cases that meet certain criteria or have certain characteristics are desired to be studied (Buyukozturk et al., 2019). The study group of the research consists of 22 instructors who teach violin and viola lessons in music education departments in 16 different universities in Turkiye. Demographic informations about the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic informations of participants

Teaching Staff	Title	University	Seniority
TS1	Prof. Dr.	Inonu	28
TS2	Prof. Dr.	Ondokuz Mayıs	24
TS3	Prof. Dr.	Pamukkale	30
TS4	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Ankara Music and Fine Arts	14
TS5	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Gazi	18
TS6	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Mugla Sitki Kocman	23
TS7	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Nigde Omer Halisdemir	19
TS8	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Pamukkale	21
TS9	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Gazi	12
TS10	Assoc. Prof. Dr.	Inonu	16
TS11	Asst. Prof. Dr.	Nigde Omer Halisdemir	18
TS12	Asst. Prof. Dr.	Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli	2
TS13	Asst. Prof. Dr.	Tokat Gaziosmanpasa	13
TS14	Asst. Prof. Dr.	Sivas Cumhuriyet	10
TS15	Instr.	Sivas Cumhuriyet	23
TS16	Instr.	Harran	10
TS17	Instr.	Pamukkale	25
TS18	Instr.	Sivas Cumhuriyet	14
TS19	Instr.	Kastamonu	5
TS20	Research Asst. Dr.	Bolu Abant Izzet Baysal	9
TS21	Research Asst.	Trabzon	5
TS22	Research Asst.	Ondokuz Mayıs	17

### Data Collection

In the study, interview technique was used to obtain the opinions of the lecturers. The semi-structured interview form created by the researchers was finalized by taking the expert opinions of one associate professor

and two doctoral faculty members working in music education departments. In the form consisting of two parts, the first part includes demographic information and the second part includes specific questions related to the research. The data of the

study were collected via Google Forms between September 20 and December 2022-2023 academic year. This method was used to give the participants time to answer the research questions. Ethical principles were observed during the research process and the principle of voluntariness was adhered to in the selection of academic staff. Necmettin Erbakan University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee was applied to after preparing the necessary documents for the approval of the ethics committee of the research, and Ethics Committee Approval was given to the research with the decision number 2022/187.

### Analysis of Data

In the study, descriptive and content analysis techniques were used together to analyze the qualitative data collected through a semi-structured interview form. The data obtained in the descriptive analysis are summarized and interpreted according to the previously determined themes, and direct quotations are frequently included in order to reflect the views of the interviewed and observed individuals in a striking way (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). In content analysis, printed, visual, etc. materials are systematically scanned and analyzed thematically in terms of certain categories (Saban, 2009). In the analysis process, the data on Google Forms were first transferred to the computer environment by the authors, then coded, classified according to sub-themes and themes, and placed in tables (Creswell & Klark, 2015). After the interpretation of the tables, direct quotations were made from

the views of the participants, and the names of the participants whose opinions were quoted were kept confidential and given as Teaching Staff-1 (TS1) Teaching Staff-2 (TS2) and so on.

### Validity and Reliability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), some strategies can be suggested to improve the quality of qualitative research. These are the concepts of transferability, consistency and confirmability rather than validity and reliability in quantitative research. In this study, in order to ensure transferability, the research data were described in detail, direct quotations were frequently used, how the sample selection was made and the characteristics of the participants were clearly stated in the study. In order to ensure consistency and confirmability, attention was paid to data collection, consistency between data, collection of data in similar processes, and detailed reporting of their analysis. Three lecturers with general knowledge of qualitative research were consulted for their analysis (assignment to codes and themes) and for their general review of the research. In order to ensure internal consistency in coding, the data were calculated simultaneously by three faculty members using the Miles and Huberman formula with a reliability coefficient (Baltaci, 2017). The coding internal consistency coefficient in the study was 90.25%.

### Findings

#### Findings on How and Under Which Disciplines the Participants Evaluate Students

Table 2. How teaching staff perform violin and viola exams

Opinion	<i>f</i>	%
We listen and evaluate the student with a commission consisting of string instruments instructors.	12	54,54
Only I listen and evaluate the student.	8	36,36
We listen and evaluate the student with a commission consisting of instructors of different instruments.	2	9,09

As it can be seen in Table 2, 54.54% (n=12) of the teaching staff evaluate the student with a commission consisting of string instruments teaching staff, 36.36% (n=8) of them evaluate only himself/herself, 9.09% (n=2) stated that they listen and evaluate students with a commission consisting of teaching staff of different instruments.

**Table 3.** Evaluation criteria of violin and viola teaching staff

Criteria	f	%
Holding the violin/viola	22	100
Holding the bow	22	100
Bow techniques	20	90.90
Playing an etude	20	90.90
Playing a piece or part of a piece	20	90.90
Musicality	19	86.36
Physical preparation	17	77.27
Playing a scale	16	72.72
Playing an arpeggio	13	59.09
Playing a double stops etude	6	27.27
Playing a duet	5	22.72

As it can be seen in Table 3, it was determined that all of the teaching staff (100%, n=22) placed the student's violin/viola holding and bow holding in the first place as an evaluation criteria in the exams. They are followed by respectively; bow techniques (90.90%, n=20), playing an etude (90.90%, n=20), playing a piece or part of a piece (90.90%, n=20), musicality (86.36%, n=19), physical preparation (77.27%, n=17), playing a scale (72.72%, n=16), playing an arpeggio (59.09%, n=13), playing a double stops etude (27.27%, n=6) and playing a duet (22.72%, n=5).

**Table 4.** The order of importance of the criteria in the violin and viola exams according to the educators

Criteria	Order of importance										
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
	f										
Physical preparation	12	2		1	1		2	1	2	1	
Holding the violin/viola	3	14	2	2				1			
Holding the bow	1	2	15	2	1			1			
Playing a scale	1	1		8	2	4	4		2		
Playing an arpeggio		1	1		5	2	4	4	2	1	2
Bow techniques			3	6	3	6	2	1	1		
Playing an etude		1	1	3	5	2	3	4	3		
Playing a double stops etude		1					2	3	1	11	4
Playing a duet									5	4	13
Playing a piece or part of a piece	2				3	2	2	3	4	3	3
Musicality	3				2	6	3	4	2	2	



In Table 4, the order of importance regarding the violin and viola playing is given according to the instructors of different disciplines. The instructors considered the criteria of physical preparation in the first place, holding the violin and viola in the second

place, and holding the bow in the third place as important. According to the majority of the instructors, playing a duet (11th line) and playing a double stops etude (10th line) have very low importance.

Table 5. Different evaluation criteria suggested by teaching staff

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Participants
Different evaluation criteria	Proposed evaluation criteria	Performance during the semester	TS4
		Attitude towards the exam	TS2
		Playing modal melodies	TS12
		Attendance to the lessons	TS1
		Awareness of the program played (Form, period, style features, composer, etc.)	TS10

As it can be seen in Table 5, teaching staff, apart from the evaluation disciplines presented to them through the semi-structured interview form, stated that the student should also be evaluated from criteria such as performance during the semester, attitude towards the exam, playing the modal melodies, attendance to the lessons and awareness of the program (form, period, style features, composer, etc.). Some examples of the views of the teaching staff are presented below.

“I also consider the performance of the students during the semester.” TS4

“The attitude and seriousness of the students towards the exam is important to me.” TS2

**Findings Related to Participants’ Opinions on the Dimension of Preliminary Preparation in the Violin/Viola Playing Process**

Table 6. Participant views on the dimension of preliminary preparation

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	f
Pre-Preparation	Appropriate/correct physical preparation	Eliminates physical problems	6
		Increases musicality	3
		Improves sound quality	3
		Provides a balanced stance	2
		Provides correct intonation	2
		Is not important	1
	Appropriate/correct violin/viola holding	Improves technical skill	9
		Provides correct intonation	6
		Eliminates physical problems	4
		Increases musicality	4
		Ensures comfortable playing	3
		Provides an aesthetic appearance	1
		Provides focus	1

Pre-Preparation	Appropriate/correct bow holding	Develops technical skill	8
		Improves tone quality	6
		Increases musicality	3
		Provides necessary bow pressure	2
		Allows natural and comfortable playing	2
		Uses parts of the bow correctly	2
		Ensures using an aesthetic appearance	2
		Is not important	1

As it can be seen in Table 6, the opinions of the teaching staff regarding the pre-preparation dimension for playing violin/viola, which is among the exam evaluation criteria, are grouped into three sub-themes including “Appropriate/Correct Physical preparation”, “Appropriate/Correct violin/viola holding” and “Appropriate/Correct bow holding”. Instructors stated that appropriate/correct physical preparation will eliminate physical problems, improve sound quality, increase musicality, provide a balanced stance and provide correct intonation. One of the participants stated that the appropriate/correct physical preparation is not important as an evaluation criterion in exams. Teaching staff stated that appropriate/correct violin/viola holding will improve technical skills, provide correct intonation, eliminate physical problems, increase musicality, ensure comfortable playing, provide aesthetic appearance and provide focus. Finally, it was stated that the appropriate/correct bow holding will improve technical skill, improve tone quality, increase musicality, provide the necessary bow pressure, ensure natural

and comfortable playing, ensure using the bow parts correctly and provide an aesthetic appearance. One of the participants, on the other hand, stated that appropriate/correct bow holding is not an important criterion in exams. Some examples of the views of the teaching staff are presented below.

“A person who does not have a correct posture will have weak instrument dominance, and it will not be possible to obtain a quality tone from his/her instrument.” TS20

“Appropriate physical preparation is important for the physical health of the student, especially when it comes to hours of work.” TS18

“It is very important for a student who plays a string instrument to hold the bow correctly in order to perform all the bow techniques correctly.” TS12

### Findings Related to Participants’ Opinions on the Technical Dimension in the Violin/ Viola Playing Process

Table 7. Participant views on the technical dimension

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	f
Technical Dimension	Playing a Scale	Provides correct intonation	10
		Creates a pre-preparation for the etude and piece to be played.	8
		Provides instrument dominance	6
		Forms the basis of left-hand behaviours	3
		Improves bow techniques	2
		Provides muscle development and muscle memory	2
		Is not important	1



Technical Dimension	Playing an Arpeggio	Scales and arpeggios should be evaluated together.	8
		Is not important	6
		Creates a pre-preparation for the etude and piece to be played.	4
		Provides correct intonation	3
		Develops technical skills in the right and left hand	2
	Ability to apply different bow techniques	Shows the student's level	7
		Must be able to apply basic bow techniques	4
		Prepares the ground for advanced bow techniques	4
		Contributes to the richness of the repertoire	2
		Forms the basis of musical expression	2
	Playing an etude	Is not important	2
		Provides technical gain	8
		Provides musical gain	5
		Is an important preparation for the piece.	4
		Is an important measuring tool	4
		Shows the student's level	3
	Playing a double stops etude	Is important for intonation	2
		Contributes to intonation	6
		Is not my primary criterion	5
		Provides correct left hand position	4
		Contributes to polyphonic hearing	3
		Shows the student's level	2
		Inability to perform due to low student level	2
Inability to perform due to insufficient course hours		2	
Is important for advanced level pieces		1	
Reinforces correct bow use	1		

In Table 7, the views of the teaching staff on the technical aspect of playing the violin/ viola are given. The opinions regarding the technical dimension were collected in 5 sub-themes: playing a scale, playing an arpeggio, being able to apply different bow techniques, playing an etude and playing a double stops etude. Participants stated that the playing a scale criterion in the exam evaluation will provide correct intonation (f:10), form a pre-preparation for the etude and piece to be played (f:8), provide instrument dominance (f:6), form the basis of left-hand behaviours (f:3), improve bow techniques (f:2) and provide muscle development

and muscle memory. It was also stated that playing scales was not an important criterion in the exams (f=1). According to the participants, the criteria for playing an arpeggio should be evaluated together with playing a scale (f:8). Six participants stated that playing an arpeggio is not important. Other participants stated that playing an arpeggio will create a pre-preparation for the etude and piece that the student will play (f:4), provide the correct intonation (f:3) and develop the technical skills in the right hand and left hand (f:2). Participants stated that the criterion of being able to apply different bow techniques in the exam

will show the level of the student (f:7) and that they should apply basic bow techniques (f:4). In addition, it has also been stated that it will lay the groundwork for advanced bow techniques (f:4), contribute to the richness of the repertoire (f:2), and form the basis of musical expression (f:2). One participant stated that this criterion is not important. According to the participants, playing an etude provides technical (f:8) and musical gains (f:5), is an important preparation for the piece (f:4), is an important measurement tool (f:4), shows the level of the student (f:3) and is important in terms of intonation (f:2). According to six participants, the criterion of playing a double stops etude contributes to intonation, but it is not a priority for five participants. Participants stated that playing a double stops etude will provide the correct left hand position (f:4), will contribute to polyphonic hearing (f:3) and show the level of the student (f:2). Two participants stated that this criterion could not be met due to the low level of students and insufficient course hours. One participant stated that it is important for advanced pieces and reinforces correct use of the bow. Some examples of the views of the teaching staff are presented below.

“The student’s practice of scale and arpeggio for the exam will improve his/her intonation, and the application of different bow techniques will also enable his/her to produce a correct and beautiful sound.” TS13

“Bow techniques are among the most important sub-titles of violin playing skills. These techniques give an idea of how much the student has mastered his instrument skills.” TS15

“Etude studies are one of the important tools to show technical achievements.” TS4

“With the arrival of the 800 thousand threshold, there was a great decrease in the musical skills of the students. For this reason, I cannot perform double stops studies.” TS18

“Due to the low course hours, there is not much time for this criterion very often.” TS8

### Findings Related to Participants’ Opinions on the Musical Dimension in the Violin/ Viola Playing Process

Table 7. Participant views on the technical dimension

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	f
Musical Dimension	Playing a duet	Contributes to musicality	6
		Contributes to intonation	5
		Is not important	5
		Allows making music together	3
		Strengthens student communication	1
		Contributes to polyphonic hearing	1
		May create negative interactions among peers	1
	Playing a piece or part of a piece	Contributes to musicality	9
		Demonstrates technical skills	6
		Provides learning of the period and style features	5
		Allows learning the form of the piece	2
		Allows him/her to recognize the literature	2
		Is not important	1

Musical Dimension	Playing with a musical expression	Reveals all the talent of the student	4
		Displays the period features	3
		Is the most important criterion	3
		Should be the main purpose of teaching	2
		Is a sign of care	2
		Inability to perform due to low student level	1
	Playing with piano accompaniment	Allows the student to express himself/herself	1
		Allows the student to recognize the original version of the piece	9
		Enables the students to play with intonation, tempo and integrity	5
		Develops music making skills together	5
	May be a problem when there is no companion	2	

Table 8 shows the opinions of teaching staff on the musical dimension of playing the violin/viola. The disciplines regarding the musical dimension are gathered under four sub-themes: playing a duet, playing a piece or part of a piece, playing with a musical expression and playing with piano accompaniment. According to the participants, the criteria for playing a duet contributes to musicality (f:6) and intonation (f:5). According to five participants, this criterion is not important. According to other participants, this criterion enables making music together (f:3), strengthens student communication (f:1) and contributes to polyphonic hearing (f:1). According to one participant, it can create negative interaction among peers. Playing a piece and part of a piece contributes to musicality (f:9), shows the technical skills of the student (f:6), provides learning of the period and style features (f:5), enables the form of the piece to be learned (f:2), and helps the student to recognize the literature (f:2). According to one participant, it is not an important criterion. Playing with a musical expression, reveals all the talent of the student (f:4), enables him/her to display the period characteristics of the piece he/she plays (f:3), is the most important criterion (f:3), should be the main goal of the educator (f:2), is a sign that the student cares (f:2) and enables him/her to express himself/herself (f:1). One participant stated

that he/she could not realize this criterion due to the low level of the student. According to the participants, the criterion of playing with piano accompaniment enables the student to recognize the original version of the piece (f:9;), enables him/her to play with intonation, tempo and integrity (f:5), and improves the students’ ability to make music together (f:5). According to two participants, this criterion may cause problems in cases where there is no companion.

“Gaining the habit of making music together is important for observing and evaluating musicality and intonation.” TS9

“It can be described as the stage in which he/she transforms what he/she has learned into music, and it is one of the most important elements for evaluation.” TS14

“In order to play with a musical expression, all difficulties must be overcome, which is a sign that the student pays attention to musicality.” TS17

“Piano accompaniment provides intonation, tempo and unity. Unfortunately, the lack of easy access to the accompanist leads to the inability to carry out the desired studies on this subject.” TS8

## **Discussion**

In this study, how the assessment and evaluation process in the Violin and Viola final exams carried out in music education departments in Türkiye is carried out and what the assessment and evaluation criteria are, were examined from the perspective of violin and viola teaching staff. When the findings obtained from the study were examined, it was found that some participants stated that they listened to the students themselves during the final exams. Bergee (2003) investigated the reliability among observers in applied music performances at the end of the semester in the faculty. As a result of the study, no difference was noted between teaching assistants and faculty members in terms of reliability, and it was recommended to use at least five evaluators for performance evaluation. Similarly, Tebis (2004) suggested that teaching staff working in music education departments develop scales that they can apply together by forming a commission. Thus, a nationwide standard can be achieved in assessment and evaluation criteria. In Coban's (2011) study, in which he examined the evaluation process from the perspectives of the students, the participants (teacher candidates) stated that the teaching staff did not evaluate themselves objectively in the final exams and did not care about themselves.

Participants also suggested that modal melodies be played in the exam. Parasiz (2009) determined that contemporary Turkish music works are used very little in violin teaching in music education departments in Türkiye, that the number of works is not sufficient in number, that there are great difficulties in performing them and suggested that more place should be given to our traditional music in the violin education process. Participants also stated that they evaluated students in terms of awareness (form, period, style features, composer, etc.) about the program they played in the exam. According to Yucetoker (2009), it is extremely important for the student to play the piece that he/she played in concert events or classes according to

the characteristics of the period, to fulfil all the techniques and to bring life to the work with his/her own emotions by using his/her creativity.

The participants stated that they evaluated the student at the point of correct holding of the violin and correct posture, and that incorrect posture and holding could negatively affect violin performance as well as cause physical discomfort. In support of these findings, according to Yagisan (2004), repetition of incorrect posture and holding mistakes in violin training can cause serious injuries. For this reason, it is of great benefit to transfer details such as posture, using the body, and recognizing physical elements during playing to the playing technique. According to Akinci (1998), the most basic behavior to be acquired in violin playing is the correct grip of the instrument and the bow and the factors related to the bow that are necessary to produce sound from the violin. With the determination of these factors, the first goal will be set and the training process will be initiated.

Most of the participants stated that they evaluated the students on scale and arpeggio playing during the exam. Playing scales and arpeggios plays an important role in improving the violin playing skills of the student. These can be listed as: coordination, bow control, position changes, quality tone production, touch feeling, accelerating the learning of new pieces, increasing auditory awareness and familiarity with the violin (ABRSM, 2012). In the violin education process, many difficulties regarding the intonation and can be overcome with scale and arpeggio exercises (Ganioglu, 2016).

Participants stated that they attach great importance to etudes that show technical behaviours during the exam. According to Fisher (1997), basic technical etudes, intonation, tone production, rhythm and articulation, coordination, should be used by students of all levels in order to make hands and fingers as comfortable as possible in violin education. According to Tarkum (2006), practices, etudes and their

implementation are among the important factors in violin teaching. All techniques such as bow techniques, positions and position transitions, double stops and chords, trills can be learned in this way, and the correct holding and use of the violin and bow is shaped in this process and is determiner in the formation of the technique.

According to the findings of the study, it was determined that the participants did not give much importance to playing a duet during the exam evaluation. According to Paillan (2021), playing a duet, whether for beginner, intermediate or advanced violin students, encourages relative intonation and listening to harmonies, as opposed to absolute intonation. Hearing a second piece requires being a more active listener, which improves sound awareness. Duets also require paying close attention to the ensemble, identifying rhythmic unisons and places where articulations should match. It encourages teamwork and shared responsibility can motivate students to practice more to support their duet partners as best they can. In addition, having someone else on the stage to support the student strengthens self-confidence and reduces stage fright. In support of this, according to Karakus and Tufan (2018), playing a duet makes important contributions to issues such as providing rhythmic unity, developing polyphonic sense, playing the piece at a constant tempo, increasing the sense of self-confidence and improving deciphering skills.

Some participants stated that with the arrival of the Turkish High School Entering Exam (THSEE) 800 thousand threshold, which is required for application to undergraduate programs, the musical skills of the students decreased and they had difficulty in teaching some technical behaviours, so they could not include some disciplines in the evaluation criteria in the final exams. Supporting these findings, Basbug & Kaya (2022) concluded that the THSEE 800 thousand threshold resulted in a decrease in the number of students applying for the exam, the number of students who passed the exam, and the

number of students enrolled.

## Conclusion

The following results were reached in the study, in which the assessment and evaluation process in the Violin and Viola final exams held in the music education departments in Turkiye was examined from the perspective of violin and viola teaching staff.

- It was seen that the participants evaluated students in the final exams mostly with a commission consisting of string instruments teaching staff, however, a substantial number of teaching staff evaluated students only by themselves.
- Most of the participants listed violin or viola holding, bow holding, application of bow techniques, playing an etude, playing a piece or part of a piece, musicality, physical preparation, playing a scale and playing an arpeggio as criteria in the final exam. A small number of participants considered playing a double stops etude and a duet as evaluation criteria.
- It has been determined that the participants consider the disciplines of physical preparation, violin or viola holding and bow holding as the most important criteria, and they place playing double stops etudes and duet playing at the bottom of their order of importance.
- Apart from these criteria, it has been suggested that students should also be evaluated in terms of their attitudes towards performance and exams during the semester, playing modal melodies, their attendance to the lessons, and their awareness of the program they are playing.
- In the pre-preparatory dimension for playing the violin or viola, the results that the appropriate physical preparation, proper violin viola holding and bow holding prevent physical problems, develop technical skills, contribute to correct

intonation and increase the quality of tone are predominantly noticeable.

➤ In the technical dimension, it has been determined that playing a scale and an arpeggio creates a pre-preparation for the etudes and pieces that the student will play, being able to apply different bow techniques shows the level of the student, playing an etude provides technical gains, and playing a double stops etude contributes to intonation.

➤ It has been concluded that playing a piece or part of a piece in the musical dimension contributes to musicality, playing with piano accompaniment, on the other hand, allows the work to be played in intonation, tempo and integrity by recognizing its original form.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the findings obtained from the study, the following recommendations are presented.

➤ Students can be evaluated by violin and viola teaching staff, and in cases where this condition cannot be achieved, by a commission formed by teaching staff of different instruments.

➤ First, a standard can be achieved by establishing a common assessment and evaluation criterion for the groups in music education departments, and then for the violin and viola teaching staff in the music education departments across the country.

➤ Various behaviours regarding playing the violin and viola can be included in the teaching process and evaluated during the exam.

➤ Not only the performance and status of the students during the exam, but also their attitudes towards the course during the semester can be taken into consideration.

➤ Final exams can be performed with piano accompaniment, and in the absence of a piano, accompanied by technology.

➤ Final exams can be presented in the form of a concert that can be watched by other students and teaching staff of the department.

➤ In order to increase the number and quality of students, the entry criteria to music education departments can be revised.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited to the opinions of 22 teaching staff who are working in the Departments of Music Education affiliated to 16 different universities in Turkiye in the 2022-2023 academic year and who conduct violin and viola lessons.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview Form

**Q1.** Which of the following disciplines are among your assessment and evaluation criteria in violin/viola exams? Please tick them.

Physical preparation	Holding the violin/ viola	Holding the bow	Playing a Scale	Playing an Arpeggio	Bow techniques
Playing an etude	Playing a double stops etude	Playing a duet	Playing a piece or part of a piece	Playing with a musical expression	

**Q2.** Rate the following disciplines in order of importance (most important 7, least important 1) in the box on the right. You can use the same score for more than one discipline.

Disciplines	Ranking (Points)
Physical preparation	
Holding the violin/viola	
Holding the bow	
Playing a Scale	
Playing an Arpeggio	
Bow techniques	
Playing an etude	
Playing a double stops etude	
Playing a duet	
Playing a piece or part of a piece	
Playing with a musical expression	
Other (Specify)	

**Q3.** If you perform a different evaluation criterion other than those given above, please explain with the reasons.

**Q4.** Is it important for you that the student provides the appropriate physical setup to play the Violin/Viola in the exam? If it is important, what are the reasons for this?

**Q5.** Is it important for you that the student provides the appropriate / correct violin / viola grip in the exam? If so, what are the reasons for this?

**Q6.** Is it important for you that the student provides appropriate/correct bow grip in the exam? If it is important, what are the reasons for this?

**Q7.** Is it important for you that the student plays scales in the exam? If it is important, what are the reasons for this?

**Q8.** Is it important for you that the student plays arpeggio in the exam If so, what are the reasons for this?

**Q9.** Is it important for you that the student presents examples of different bowing techniques in the exam? If important, what are the reasons for this?

**Q10.** Is it important for you that the student plays monophonic etudes in the exam? If it is important, what are the reasons for this?

**Q11.** Is it important for you that the student plays double-voice etudes in the exam? If it is important, what are the reasons for this?

**Q12.** Is it important for you that the student plays a duet with a friend in the exam? If it is important, what are the reasons for this?

