



Frequently Asked Questions:

BHS Expanded International Contest Entry, Qualification and Awards

Project Vision: Simplicity in Implementation and Equality in Competition

Development and timing

How was the proposal developed?

Aiming always for feedback from as many different perspectives to bring forth the best possible ideas, the Society Board, staff, and Events Team actively sought feedback through every phase of development across 16 months.

- **August 2018:** Society Board commissions BHS Events Team to draft a proposal. Over the next 10 months, the team works with numerous stakeholders, including Society Contest and Judging leadership, BHS Executive Team and staff, and volunteer advisory groups such as the Impact Alignment Team, Women's Advisory Group, and BHS Convention and Production Teams.
- **June 2019:** [Version 8.2](#) released. Public feedback solicited via email, social media, direct mail.
- **September 2019:** Feedback incorporated into [revised proposal](#). Notable unanswered questions center on method for determining top awards and medals. Additional feedback solicited via web form, email, social media, direct mail.
- **November 2019:** Society Board reviews all feedback, adopts final version.

Instead of all the feedback, why not simply take a vote of all members?

BHS is not a direct one-vote-per-person democracy, nor has it ever been. One might legitimately question who holds the greatest stake in the contest and awards system: the competitors? The audience in the arena? The worldwide audience watching at home? And do those groups represent the interests of future members who only now are entering our barbershop sphere? The elected Society Board of Directors has worked diligently and extensively to act in the best interests of not only past, current, and future members, but also in the interests of barbershop as a whole.

Why wait to expand International Contest participation until 2021?

The process of qualifying quartets and choruses begins more than 9 months ahead of the International Contests, and the competitors beginning preparing even further in advance. In order to give events teams and competing groups ample time to prepare, it was felt that the June 2021 International was the earliest achievable date. With some districts already holding local contests, new-to-BHS quartets



and choruses will have time to acclimate to the process before launching into International prep. Additionally, our venue for the 2021 convention in Cleveland is just right for this expansion.

Classification of ensembles

How does BHS define a Mixed Harmony ensemble?

Definition of eligibility for Mixed Harmony ensembles, which will be clarified in the official rules: A quartet or chorus is considered mixed if it does not identify as all-male or all-female.

Why present Men's alongside Women's alongside Mixed Harmony groups? Why not separate events?

The order of appearance at International will be mixed among the three classifications during all contest sessions. This addresses the core value of the contest expansion:

- **Simplicity:** This is how most of our districts currently handle the order of appearance.
- **Equality:** An open draw ensures that preferential performance time slots are equally accessible to all classifications.

How can judges switch gears between Men's, Women's and Mixed Harmony ensembles?

The BHS Contest & Judging system is mature, time-tested, and rigorous. Our judges are highly trained, smart, and demonstrably consistent. Ultimately, judging ensembles from multiple classifications is not different from current practice. The same rules, approach, and criteria apply to everyone. Each performer is already unique, and all are judged each on their own merits. Adding different classifications of quartets and choruses will not change that -- good barbershop is good barbershop. [Read a discussion on judging expanded sound for all ensembles.](#)

How are judges trained to appropriately handle performances that are sexist, or uncomfortable/unfamiliar to BHS audiences?

The judging system starts from a principle that judges are an extension of the audience, and experience performances with similar emotional and artistic sensitivities. The same issues of good taste, appropriateness, and suitability of song to performer apply to all ensembles, and are supportable in the same way.

What if people misrepresent their gender to manipulate the system and qualify in a different classification?

Gender identity is deeply personal, and not something that people casually switch for convenience.



Individuals describe for themselves how they gender identify, and that description is stored as part of the member record. The Barbershop Harmony Society strives to treat all individuals equitably and with a presumption of good character and integrity in accurately maintaining their own member records.

District Conventions

How has District representation been addressed?

Based on feedback, the current system of District representation will be continued. The District representative will be the highest scoring quartet or chorus, regardless of classification, and must still meet the minimum qualifying score. For 2021, the minimum score is 74% for choruses; 76% for quartets.

Why retain the “guaranteed district representative” qualification process, instead of only taking the very top scores?

Feedback from stakeholders in multiple areas suggested that the geographic component of qualification brings benefits to many people beyond the ensembles themselves. District representatives share high quality performance and education with their local barbershop community, to the betterment and growth of all.

Why not keep the chorus qualifying process the same, and potentially expand the total number of competitors?

Facilities vary from year to year, and the executive director and staff exercise some latitude under strategic direction of the Board to right-size the optimum number of competitors. The ability of the audience to enjoy still more ensembles must be gauged and understood as part of an entire week of activities which includes shows, education, unstructured free time for singing and socializing... everything that makes our convention a great vacation. Expect continuing experimentation of event formats and timing as we step forward into our future!

Can a chapter be represented in all three classifications at a District event?

Yes, but only one chorus per each classification (maximum of 3) per contest cycle.

Can a chorus make a second attempt to qualify for the International contest?

Yes, both quartets and choruses can make a second attempt at qualification if desired. Access to venues for a second attempt is subject to capacity of other preliminary contests. Once an ensemble makes a second attempt, the earlier qualifying attempt score is discarded and cannot be used for qualification.



Can a chorus or quartet participate at a District Prelims event for evaluation only without counting that as an attempt at qualifying?

Yes! Absolutely. Be sure to complete your entry form correctly to indicate your intentions.

Will this reduce the importance of District conventions?

No. District events are a vital component of contest participation! District champions should continue to be celebrated and recognized by their local barbershop community. The goal is to maximize the number of participants at local events -- more singing groups will come in and compete at the District level, increasing the impact and excitement at these events.

Districts will have the opportunity to expand their convention offerings and local impact. More kinds of contests means more competitors, plus their friends and families, greatly expanding the market and potential reach. Districts can site contests where and when it makes sense for maximum participation and design events to include other convention activities in addition to contests. Districts will be able to develop more ways to deliver on their mission to help all groups become their best selves.

Can a District limit the number of outside quartets participating in a Preliminary contest to avoid the necessity of a third judge on the panel?

In some cases, the increased number of event registrations could offset the costs of increasing the size of the panel. In order to expand participation, some District Preliminary contests have chosen to cap the number of quartets that would receive an onsite evaluation, on a first-come, first-served basis.

A variety of options for evaluations is being explored by the Society Contest and Judging Committee, particularly focused on addressing the financial and logistical concerns around increased participation at District Preliminary Contests.

Qualification Process

When will groups know that they've qualified for International?

QUARTETS: All BHS quartets achieving the qualification score would immediately know that they've qualified. Wildcard invitations (if any) would be issued in May 2021, after all qualifying events have been completed.

CHORUSES: All BHS choruses achieving the qualification score would immediately know that they've qualified. Wildcard invitations (if any) for choruses would be determined and extended in early November 2020.



How are wildcards selected?

For quartets and choruses, the ensemble with the next highest score, regardless of classification, will be invited. The number of wildcard spaces available is determined after the conclusion of qualifying contests each year.

Why set the qualifying score for choruses to 81%?

We had 31 choruses achieve an 80.0%+ in the 2019 chorus preliminary competitions (men's classification). This change is needed to expand the International contests to all classifications and keep our International contest the "best of the best." Typically, the wildcard invitees to an International contest have scored 81.0% or higher in a given year. This baseline was set using that level.

How does this affect qualification for ensembles in global Alliance organizations?

The scope of this proposal does not affect how any BHS global Alliance organizations (formerly known as Affiliates) qualify for International.

International Contest Operation

Could an individual member compete in more than one quartet classification at international, if they were to qualify at prelims with both groups?

An individual may compete in prelims in **no more than one quartet in each of two classifications** (e.g., one Women's quartet and one Mixed Harmony quartet). If both quartets qualify for International, they may both compete. On the other hand, a person cannot compete at prelims in two quartets in the same classification, e.g., two Men's quartets.

What if a classification isn't represented the finals or semifinals rounds?

A champion and up to four medalists will be named in each classification based on cumulative score across all rounds, regardless of how many rounds are completed. This is how we currently handle the Dealer's Choice award at International, as well as various awards at the district level. In all cases, men compete only against other men, women against other women, and Mixed Harmony groups against Mixed Harmony groups.

Why is no overall champion named?

Men compete only against other men, women against other women, and Mixed Harmony groups against Mixed Harmony groups. As in tennis, gymnastics, or skating, champions in each classification have well earned the accolades as "best of the best."



Do the three championship quartets in each classification retire from competition?

Yes, the long-standing BHS tradition that “once a champion, always a champion” will apply to all gold medalist quartets in all classifications. See “[Operational Guidelines for Quartets](#).”

Do championship choruses in each classification have to lay out for two years?

Yes.

Other contests

Will Women's and Mixed Harmony contests be added to Next Generation Barbershop Varsity events?

Yes, all classifications will be incorporated into the NextGen Varsity Quartet Competition. Varsity choruses are already being piloted. In 2021, both Varsity events will expand to include all three classifications in **a single contest with an overall champion and up to four medalists awarded.**

Both the Next Generation Junior Quartet Competition and Junior Chorus Invitational are already open to Women's, Mixed Harmony, and Men's ensembles and will remain as currently structured.

Why aren't Next Generation Barbershop Varsity events being changed to match the International Contest?

Our Next Generation contests and invitationals are designed primarily for student participation. A single qualification and award process for all Next Generation Junior and Varsity events will provide a consistent and encouraging experience for all ensembles.

Will Women's and Mixed Harmony contests be added to the International Seniors Quartet Contest and Seniors Chorus Festival?

Not at this time. The initial pilot of the Seniors Chorus Festival is scheduled to conclude in 2021, and will be evaluated at that time.