



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Vocal Ensemble Singing: An Introduction

Unit code: FN18 34

Superclass: LH

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to improve the candidate's overall musicianship through singing in harmony with others. It will enable them to perform in a range of appropriate vocal group situations, displaying correct technique and approach apposite to genre. It equips candidates with the skills to follow a vocal score, interpret basic conducting beats and gestures to perform a variety of styles in a vocal ensemble.

This Unit is aimed at candidates who wish to develop musicianship through singing in a vocal ensemble.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

- 1 Perform within a vocal ensemble a varied repertoire of vocal music.
- 2 Interpret a variety of vocal ensemble scores.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should have general competency on voice that will allow them to develop skills to the level required. Candidates should also have experience playing in a group or ensemble situation. This may be evidenced by Intermediate 2 Music (SCQF level 5), or by completion of a recognised programme of NQ Units, or by prior experience.

Candidates should also have good communication skills. These may be demonstrated by the achievement of Core Skill Communication at Higher level or by possession of Higher English and Communication or a suitable NQ Communication Unit (SCQF levels 5/6).

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Core Skills

There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards Core Skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Context for delivery

This is an optional Unit included in the frameworks for HNC/D Music Group Awards. It is recommended that it is taught and assessed within the context of the particular Group Award to which it contributes. For candidates undertaking the Group Award the assessment for this Unit may be integrated with:

HN Unit	Unit Title
	Music: Live Performance Skills 1
	Practical Musicianship
	Stagecraft for Musicians
	Music Theory 1

If done in year 2 this Unit may be combined with:

HN Unit	Unit Title
	Music: Live Performance Skills 2
	Session Skills for Musicians
	Instrumental Accompaniment
	Music Theory 2

The Group Award is primarily to provide candidates with technical or professional knowledge and skills related to a specific area. While all the Units can be assessed individually it is anticipated that integration will occur.

Assessment

Assessment for Outcome 1 requires the candidate to participate in a vocal ensemble to perform a varied set of vocal music. Outcome 2 can be integrated with Outcome 3 of Music Theory 1.

Assessment should be carried out under controlled conditions.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, and Evidence Requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Perform within a vocal ensemble a varied repertoire of vocal music.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Good posture and breath control
- ◆ Independent harmony
- ◆ Conducting directions (beats and gestures)
- ◆ Varied vocal repertoire

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can, as a member of a vocal ensemble, perform a varied programme of vocal music where they:

- ◆ Demonstrate good posture and breath control
- ◆ Demonstrate independence of own part
- ◆ Sing melodies and rhythms with appropriate dynamics while maintaining a steady tempo
- ◆ Respond to basic conducting beats and gestures including:
 - preparatory beats
 - releases
 - tempo changes
 - entrance cues
 - dynamic and other expressive gestures
- ◆ Perform music of a variety of styles using expression and phrasing appropriate for the work being performed
- ◆ Perform with others, accurately and expressively, to achieve a refined ensemble sound including blend, balance and timbre

Assessment Guidelines

Assessment for this Outcome will take the form of a live performance as part of a vocal ensemble. The assessor should use a checklist to record the above Evidence Requirements. The performance should be recorded on a high quality media format and kept as evidence for external verification.

The assessment for this Unit may be integrated with Music: Live Performance 1, Practical Musicianship, Music Theory 1 and Stagecraft for Musicians Units for candidates undertaking the Group Award.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Vocal Ensemble Singing: An Introduction

Outcome 2

Interpret a variety of vocal ensemble scores.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Pitch within vocal range
- ◆ Vocal score markings and directions

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide written or oral evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ Identify all pitches appropriate to candidate's range
- ◆ Identify vocal score markings and directions to include but not limited to:
 - pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff, crescendo and decrescendo
 - accelerando, ritardando, allegro, moderato, adagio and largo
 - legato, staccato, marcato, tenuto and slurs
 - repeat signs, 1st and 2nd time endings, D.C. and D.S. indications and multiple rests

Assessment Guidelines

This Outcome may be integrated with Outcome 3 of Music Theory 1.

Individual assessment of this Outcome should be carried out under closed-book controlled conditions.

Should there be ambiguity regarding a candidate's response, oral questioning may be used to eliminate any doubt as to the candidate's understanding. The lecturer should note questions and responses.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Vocal Ensemble Singing: An Introduction

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

The Unit is designed to provide candidates with opportunities to develop their vocal ensemble singing skills. The understanding of vocal harmony and an ability to harmonise contributes immeasurably to musicianship. Vocal ensemble music enriches the social, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual and creative musical development of candidates. Participation in a vocal ensemble reinforces and promotes good study habits, teamwork, responsibility and positive self-esteem, and contributes beneficially to the greater community culture.

Candidates should be encouraged to listen to a variety of vocal ensemble styles and performance techniques to help develop their understanding and performance.

The Outcomes cover appropriate areas of musical knowledge, technical proficiency and performance skills.

Outcome 1 — looks at the overall areas concerned with a vocal ensemble performance.

Outcome 2 — focuses on the music literacy skills required for vocal ensemble score reading.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is an optional element of the HNC/D Music Group Award. While all the Units in the Group Award can be assessed individually it is anticipated that integration will occur between the Outcomes in this Unit with Outcomes from the Units *Stagecraft for Musicians*, *Music: Live Performance Skills 1*, *Music Theory 1* and *Practical Musicianship*. If the Unit is to be deployed in Year 2 it can be integrated with *Music: Live Performance Skills 2* and can be used in conjunction with Units such as *Session Skills for Musicians* and *Instrumental Accompaniment*. This is particularly useful when teaching large classes whereby an instrumental ensemble supports a vocal one with candidates taking it in turns to perform in both groupings. Overall the Unit can be delivered using a wide variety of ensemble combinations where vocal harmonisation plays a key role.

Assessment for Outcome 1 will be undertaken when the candidate has fully participated in sufficient rehearsals leading to successfully contributing to a vocal ensemble live performance.

Assessment for Outcome 2 can be integrated with Outcome 3 of Music Theory 1 or individually by a closed-book assessment.

If delivered in Year 2 assessment for Outcome 2 can be integrated with Outcome 4 of Music Theory 2 or by a closed-book assessment.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Vocal Ensemble Singing: An Introduction

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by open learning with suitable support material. The candidate would have to provide video evidence for the rehearsal and performance requirements of Outcome 1 and the written evidence of Outcome 2. Delivering centres will be responsible for ensuring authenticity of candidate's work.

Opportunities for the use of e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or e-checklists. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all candidate evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. Further advice is available in *SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education (AA1641, March 2003)*, *SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools (BD2625, June 2005)*.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill(s) in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for candidates

Unit title: Vocal Ensemble Singing: An Introduction

This Unit is intended to improve your overall musicianship through singing in harmony with others. There are two Outcomes in this Unit where you will learn how to rehearse and perform in a vocal ensemble. You will develop the ability to follow a vocal score, interpret basic conducting beats and gestures, maintain good posture and breathing, sing independently within a group context, and perform in a variety of styles.

In music performance the understanding of, and ability to, harmonise vocally has many benefits:

- ◆ Enriched social, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual and creative musical development
- ◆ Improved aural skills
- ◆ Increased employability as a performer
- ◆ Teamwork
- ◆ Positive self-esteem
- ◆ Enjoyment

Assessment for Outcome 1 will take the form of a live performance and will be undertaken when you have successfully rehearsed vocal ensemble material. In addition you will provide evidence that you can successfully follow a vocal harmony score.

Assessment for Outcome 2 can be integrated with Outcome 3 of Music Theory 1 or by a closed-book assessment.