



## Higher National Unit specification

### General information

**Unit title:** Sound: Digital DJing: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

**Unit code:** H7FJ 33

**Superclass:** XL

**Publication date:** July 2014

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

### Unit purpose

This Unit is intended as an introduction to contemporary DJ practice using digital hardware and software. This Unit will give learners the opportunity to gain an understanding of digital audio mixing by preparing audio for performance, setting up a digital system, demonstrating basic mixing techniques and finally performing a digital DJ set to a given brief.

This Unit (SCQF level 6) is an optional Unit within the Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Sound Production (SCQF level 7/8), but can also be taken as a free-standing Unit.

### Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Demonstrate an understanding of the technical and performance features of a digital audio mixing system.
- 2 Demonstrate digital DJ mixing techniques.
- 3 Prepare and perform digital audio mixing according to a given brief.

### Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 6: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6)

## Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

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### Recommended entry to the Unit

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, it would be beneficial for learners to have IT skills and/or experience of digital audio. It would also be beneficial if learners had attained the following, or equivalent:

F1KT 11 *Digital Media: Audio Editing* (SCQF level 5)

### Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for this Unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit.

### Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

### Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

**Unit title:** Sound: Digital DJing: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

### Outcome 1

Demonstrate an understanding of the technical and performance features of a digital audio mixing system.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ basic digital audio hardware and software components
- ◆ operation of digital audio hardware and software components
- ◆ relationship between audio compression techniques and aural quality
- ◆ basic digital audio systems design

### Outcome 2

Demonstrate digital DJ mixing techniques.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ basic applications of software based beat detection and looping techniques for digital audio clips
- ◆ equalization based mixing technique
- ◆ cross-fader based mixing technique

### Outcome 3

Prepare and perform digital audio mixing according to a given brief.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Set list creation
- ◆ Digital audio equipment set-up
- ◆ Manual cue and mix
- ◆ Mixing styles
- ◆ Sound check
- ◆ Health and safety

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Sound: Digital DJing: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

### Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills across all Outcomes.

For Outcome 1, learners are required to produce written and/or oral evidence. Learners will identify hardware and software components of a digital audio system and describe how they operate together, including inter-connectors and software configurations. They will also describe, in simple terms, the relationship of audio sample rates, bit depth and common audio compression techniques to aural quality.

Learners are also required to specify a basic digital audio system to a given brief. Their system specification should clearly identify their choice of hardware and software system components and inter-connectors.

For Outcome 2 performance evidence, supplemented by an Assessor Observation Checklist, is required to demonstrate that learners can undertake the two mixing techniques and demonstrate the basic principles of beat mapping, digital audio loop creation and a tempo adjustment technique.

Outcome 3 should be assessed holistically based on a live event scenario where learners are required to play out for a minimum of 10 minutes. In addition to this, learners should be given a set of Health and Safety parameters to work within. The parameters should reflect current best practice in the industry and cover the following aspects: venue audio volume levels, rigging/cable runs and trip hazards.

Learners must produce written and/or oral evidence which covers:

- ◆ audio tracks stating track name, author, original BPM, file type, file size, length, cue points, sample rate, bit depth and location

This evidence will be gathered under open-book conditions.

Performance evidence, supplemented by an Assessor Observation Checklist, is also required to demonstrate that learners:

- ◆ correctly assemble their proposed digital mixing system, providing a suitable connection for others to connect to a given sound reinforcement system.
- ◆ take part in a sound check.
- ◆ manually cue and mix their set according to their set plan using a minimum of two mixing styles during the performance (as this is a basic Unit no form of automation is permitted during the set).
- ◆ work within a given set of health and safety requirements of the scenario venue.

This evidence will be gathered under supervised conditions.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Sound: Digital DJing: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and 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

This Unit is an optional Unit within the HNC/HND in Sound Production, but can also be taken as a free-standing Unit. This Unit is suitable for learners who wish to learn the basics of DJing using digital technologies. Associated Units within the HNC/HND Sound Production frameworks include; *Sound Production Practice 1, Digital Audio Workstations, Music: Second Study (DJ option), Creative Music Re-mixing, Advanced DJ Techniques and Sound Reinforcement 1.*

Technological innovation in the field of live audio mixing is constantly evolving. New ways of producing and mixing live audio using digital techniques are emerging all the time, and the role of the DJ is changing. The combined skills of sound production, sound design and performance skills often provide DJs, particularly digital DJs with the opportunity to supplement traditional music recording and live music performances. It is the aim of this Unit to respect and reflect this rapidly evolving body of knowledge and skills. In the context of the HNC/HND Sound Production framework it is expected that the digital DJ will be able to demonstrate an accomplished implementation of sound production practice skills including; the appropriate use of gain structure, EQ, dynamics and/or time domain effects.

As an acknowledgement to the importance of audience rapport, learners should be encouraged to create sets where there is some scope for improvisation during their performance. Furthermore, whilst the technology offers the scope to produce a fully automated set in a studio, any form of automation is not permitted and should be regarded as an advanced technique beyond the scope of this Unit. At an introductory level such as this, manual techniques should be regarded as forming the underpinning knowledge from which automated approaches can be developed at a later stage. This is intended as a means of encouraging a structured approach to developing more advanced skills. (From an industry viewpoint, it is worth mentioning it is widely regarded as good practice to design sets which include a mixture of automation and manual improvisation and after demonstrating the Evidence Requirements for this Unit, learners are freely encouraged to demonstrate this skillset.)

For the purposes of this Unit, laptops, CD decks, samplers, MIDI controllers and mixers are considered to be the core components of a digital audio mixing system. Learners can produce system specifications using any combination as long as the performance Evidence Requirements are met, and it can connect with the sound reinforcement system of the venue scenario they are working to. Where appropriate, all amplification and speaker rigs could be assumed to be provided by the venue. This includes monitors or fold-back speakers.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Sound: Digital DJing: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

A lot of the technology covered by this Unit is also used in related areas of studio sound production, sound synthesis, electronic music and sound design. Probably the most important aspect to emerge from the development of digital DJing is the ease with which the skills and knowledge the learners will have the opportunity to develop can be transferred into these areas. Another important, complementary aspect is the increased scope for creativity compared with traditional DJing methods. In many cases, DJs move beyond simply playing a montage of the work of others towards creating their own material, or producing a significantly different studio re-mix. In this context the Unit could be regarded as a useful entry point for an introduction to broader areas of electronic music and sound production. It is also worth noting the high degree of integration that occurs within these areas of the industry, where overlapping skills can transfer in either direction.

### Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

Early teaching sessions covering Outcomes 1 and 2 should help establish basic theory and techniques from which the more practical skills of Outcome 3 can be developed. The system specification required for Outcome 1 could be in the form of a diagram with appropriate specified components and inter-connects. A holistic approach is recommended for Outcome 3 where learners work through a process of preparation, set-up and performance to a given scenario. Scenarios should be kept as realistic as possible but can vary according to available resources eg supporting live music events, providing aural backdrop for social and cultural events, providing 'live on-air' sets for radio or as the main feature for either narrow or wide genre club and stage events. Ideally there would be an audience for Outcome 3 as their interaction can influence the pace and performance aspects of the DJ.

Practical formative work in preparing and performing to a given range of events and venues would help reinforce underpinning knowledge and practical skills. Drawing upon local venues and events would help keep it realistic. Learners could research the technical capabilities of venues and current practice amongst DJs. Being present at a set up and sound check before a gig, or observing a performance from 'behind the decks' would give valuable insight. If appropriate, practical live demonstrations/workshops could be organised giving students the opportunity to watch local established DJs demonstrating the process of sound checking and performance elements of a live set and inviting students to observe from 'behind the decks'.

Developing a working relationship with venue management and promoters would greatly benefit learners, especially for the brief for Outcome 3, which could be based on local venues and events. This would help make it realistic and give a basis for both technical design aspects and musical genre for the set. Learners could be given an example of an actual promotion to work to where they are given a time slot and possibly a 'room' for their set. This would help contextualise their activities and introduce more advanced aspects such as choosing appropriate music for a set that suits the time at which they play during the evening, and fitting their set in with a sequence of other DJs. Alternatively, to cater for a range of different tastes, learners could agree a musical genre with their tutor for a given venue. It is worth noting that some learners may be involved in a promotion whilst undertaking the Unit which could be used as their brief, if considered suitable by their tutor.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Sound: Digital DJing: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

### Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

The recommended instruments of assessment are as follows:

Outcome 1 Multiple-choice question/short answer questions, report or presentation

Outcome 2 Practical exercise

Outcome 3 Practical exercise

A holistic approach is required for Outcome 3 where the learners are given a scenario or brief to work to which gives sufficient details of the event and venue for them to carry out the required design and preparation work. This should be kept as realistic as possible.

Outcome 2 and 3 could be integrated but if this approach is adopted then adequate formative assessment practice must be provided prior to summative assessment.

### Opportunities for 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 social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at [www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment).

### Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

Learners are likely to be producing written evidence for Outcome 1 which gives them opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication*.

Learners will have opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* as they use digital audio mixing equipment and software.

In Outcomes 1 and 3 learners specify and then assemble a digital audio system which allows them opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Problem Solving*.

In Outcome 3 there may be opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Working with Others*.

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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## General information for learners

### **Unit title:** Sound: Digital DJing: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This Unit is designed as an introduction to contemporary DJ practice using digital hardware and software. This Unit will give you the opportunity to gain an understanding of digital audio mixing by preparing audio for performance, setting up a digital system, demonstrating basic mixing techniques and finally performing a digital DJ set to a given brief.

This Unit is an optional Unit within the HNC/HND Sound Production, but can also be taken as a free-standing Unit.

The Unit has three Outcomes:

Outcome 1 covers knowledge and understanding of the technical and performance features of a digital audio mixing system. You will learn what the components are and how to integrate them into a performance system.

Outcome 2 covers digital DJ mixing techniques. You will learn and demonstrate the basic principles of beat mapping, digital audio loop creation and a tempo adjustment technique to enhance your performance skills.

Outcome 3 is designed to allow you to demonstrate the knowledge and skills you have gained through Outcomes 1 and 2. You will be given a brief or scenario and you will be required to prepare and perform a digital DJ set for a minimum of 10 minutes using manual mix techniques without the use of automation. You will also correctly assemble your digital mixing system and provide a suitable connection for others to connect to a given sound reinforcement system. You will then take part in a sound check, manually cue and mix your set according to your set plan using a minimum of two mixing styles during the performance without automation whilst working within a given set of health and safety requirements.

Further details of assessment methods used for the Unit can be obtained from your tutor. Where flexibility of performance time allows where you can extend your set beyond the initial ten minutes you will be allowed to introduce automation techniques after the initial 10 minute manual performance.