UNIT   Sound: Design (SCQF level 6)

CODE   F5DY 12

SUMMARY

The purpose of this Unit is to introduce candidates to the supporting role of sound and music in narrative and image for a variety of mediums such as film, television, radio, theatre, and computer games. Candidates will have the opportunity to acquire practical skills in using sound design techniques to produce soundtracks to support different mediums. The Unit is intended to give the candidate an opportunity to practise sound production or music performance competencies through the creative application of skills and techniques.

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

This Unit is suitable for candidates interested in the creative use of sound in areas such as radio production, multimedia, animation, theatre, and computer games.

OUTCOMES

1   Describe the way that sound and music are used to support different mediums.
2   Design and create soundtracks to support different mediums.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

Entry is at the discretion of the centre. However, it is desirable that candidates have skills or experience in sound engineering and production and MIDI sequencing at SCQF level 5 or equivalent prior to commencement of this Unit.

National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Higher (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6*).

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 is no automatic certification of Core Skills in this Unit.

The Unit provides opportunities for candidates to develop aspects of the following Core Skills:

♦ Communication
♦ Information Technology
♦ Problem Solving

These opportunities are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit Specification.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

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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

Describe the way that sound and music are used to support different mediums.

Performance Criteria

(a) Identify how sound and music can be used to support narrative in different mediums.
(b) Describe how sound is used to support different mediums.
(c) Describe how music is used to support different mediums.
(d) Use sound design terminology correctly.

OUTCOME 2

Design and create soundtracks to support different mediums.

Performance Criteria

(a) Research appropriate sounds and music to support a supplied medium.
(b) Research appropriate sounds and music to support chosen medium.
(c) Create sound design maps for each medium.
(d) Source and edit appropriate sounds in accordance with sound design maps.
(e) Source and edit appropriate music in accordance with sound design maps.
(f) Compile and present the soundtracks using edited music and sound.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Evidence is required to demonstrate that candidates have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

For Outcome 1 candidates must produce written and/or oral evidence which shows that they can identify when sound and music are being used to:

Criteria:
♦   set the mood
♦   establish environment
♦   support narrative
♦   establish character
♦   convey emotions
♦   create or support transition

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Candidates must select and describe short sequences from two of the following mediums: film; television; radio; animation; theatre and computer games. In their description they should discuss the possible reasons for the choice of sounds and music used and refer to at least three of the criteria on the previous page. They should also comment on whether they think the sounds and music used are successful.

The following terms must be used correctly in the description:

♦ terms applied to set the mood, establish environment: empathetic sound, sound perspective and room tone
♦ terms applied to support narrative, establish character, convey emotions, create or support transition: synchresis, synchronous, asynchronous, sound motif, and foley

The assessment evidence should be gathered under open-book conditions throughout the Unit to an agreed timescale.

For Outcome 2 candidates will be given one narrative and/or image sequence and will select one narrative and/or image sequence from the following mediums:

♦ film
♦ television
♦ radio
♦ theatre
♦ computer games
♦ animation

Candidates must then produce written and/or oral evidence which demonstrates that they have:

♦ researched different sounds and music that could be used to support the narrative and/or image of each medium. Candidates should explain how various sounds and music could support the narrative/image (for example, they could help establish environment, create or support transition, set the mood, establish character, convey emotions of the chosen medium, etc).
♦ created a sound design map to support each of the mediums.

The completed sound design maps should clearly identify the sound and music, ie the sound design elements that will be used to support the narrative and/or image. A linear depiction, eg timeline and/or storyboard should be supplied. The sounds and music used by the candidate can be sourced 'ready-made' or be created by the candidate. Copyright issues regarding the use of copyright material will need to be observed.

Candidates must also produce product evidence, in the form of one edited and complete soundtrack to support each medium in accordance with the sound design maps. The sound files must be in an appropriate industry format.

One soundtrack file must be a minimum of 60 seconds' duration and one must be a minimum of 120 seconds' duration. Neither soundtrack file should be longer than five minutes. Each sound design should have a minimum of four unique sounds including one musical element and one non-musical element.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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This evidence can be produced over the duration of the Unit under open-book conditions. An assessor checklist should be used to keep a record of candidate progress.

The given mediums for Outcome 2 can be from a variety of resources, eg an excerpt of film, animation, theatrical or musical scene, text, prose, poetry, verse, script. The candidate could also supply appropriate material for this. All material used should comply with the appropriate copyright laws applicable at the time.

National Unit Specification: support notes

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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

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

This purpose of this Unit is to introduce candidates to sound design for a variety of mediums. By exploring how sound is used as a supporting mechanism for film, television, radio, theatre, and computer games, etc candidates will have the opportunity to become familiar with the terminology and vocabulary of this art-form. The distinction between sound and music should be established so that candidates can identify when these supporting mechanisms are being used to:

♦   establish environment
♦   support narrative
♦   create or support transition
♦   set the mood
♦   establish character
♦   convey emotions

Candidates should be encouraged to explore how sound and music support the relationship of characters, emotions and the environment of the narrative. Candidates should also be encouraged to explore different genres, eg comedy, horror, drama and sci-fi.

Elements could be explored such as: pitch; spectrum; rhythm; harmony; silence; melody; consonance/dissonance. These elements can be explored, for example, through analysis of synchronous and asynchronous sound elements and also through the support of emotion, eg major and minor chords, increasing pitch and/or tempo to add tension.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

In Outcome 1 candidates should be encouraged to study familiar and unfamiliar examples of media. Candidates would benefit from teacher/lecturer exposition of examples of sound design and should be given opportunities to analyse at least two examples from radio, TV, film, theatre, and computer games.

By using case studies for formative assessment, candidates should acquire a basic knowledge of the principles of sound design through the introduction of terminology and techniques. It will benefit the candidate and the assessor to have an agreed timescale for completion of this Outcome. Centres may choose to deliver and assess Outcome 1 before commencing Outcome 2, but a degree of overlap may provide opportunities for the candidate to gain confidence with the subject terminology whilst developing evidence for Outcome 2.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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For Outcome 2, candidates should be encouraged to create sound design ideas and to produce sound designs in response to supplied media materials, eg script, moving image, slide-show, etc. To facilitate this, candidates could be given video clips for which they would develop sound designs.

The primary focus of this Unit is to allow candidates to explore the use of sound and music for reasons other than general music consumption. The use of sound as a support mechanism could be explored historically. Candidates could be asked to consider:

♦   a theatrical event they have been to or studied and recall how sounds were used
♦   a film they are familiar with
♦   a computer game they are familiar with
♦   other examples of sound design for consumable media

They could then be asked to compile a set of sound clichés and stereotypes, for example: cat screams, red-tailed hawk screech, full moon and wolf howl, etc and discuss the merits of these sounds.

Definitions of terms:
♦   empathetic sound: music or sound effects that match the mood of the action
♦   room tone: the background and ambient sound of the scene's location
♦   synchresis: the combination of visual image and sound image
♦   synchronous: sounds that are synchronus with action
♦   asynchronous: sounds not synchronised with the action on screen
♦   sound perspective: the natural change of acoustic properties as sound sources move to and come from different on or off screen locations
♦   sound motif: a sound, sound effect or combination of sounds associated with a particular character, location or editorial device
♦   foley: post production or live sounds used to reinforce the action on screen

A group exercise could be beneficial for early skills development by analysing a small excerpt of descriptive text as the basis of creating a sound map. Candidates can consider a set of sounds and music that would be successful and they could then present their ideas for class discussion. The next formative stage would be to create a small sound design to any appropriate medium.

To develop skills and knowledge of the importance of timing, short excerpts of moving image could be analysed. Candidates will benefit from having access to resources that allow the editing of the soundtrack elements to the moving image so that timing and audio dynamics can be investigated.

There are many resources available online for the study of sound design for film and computer games. Candidates and tutors should be encouraged to explore and compile a list of resources, including articles, glossaries, copyright-free sound and music resources, etc.

There are many online publications to which candidates can refer.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Candidates will be producing written and oral communication evidence as part of the assessment for Outcomes 1 and 2. This offers ideal opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Communication*.

If candidates use audio editing hardware and/or software to construct and edit the sound design then this will give them an ideal opportunity to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Information Technology*.

Candidates will have opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* in Outcome 2 when they source, edit and compile their soundtracks.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

A suitable instrument of assessment for each Outcome is:

Outcome 1:   Questions related to case studies
Outcome 2:   Project

For Outcome 1 the candidate will benefit from a series of tutorials prior to the summative assessment.

The vocabulary of sound design may not be familiar to the candidate and therefore the candidate must be given sufficient opportunity to acquire, use, and then be tested on the correct use of the appropriate terminology.

The case studies should not be overly simple or complex and should be different from those used in any formative exercise.

In Outcome 2 assessors will need to approve the sound design maps and should give support where appropriate. Checklists for Outcome 2 will additionally allow tracking of candidate progress.

Sound design can be used to accompany either a projection or live action. The given mediums for Outcome 2 can be from a variety of resources, eg an excerpt of film, animation, theatrical or musical scene, text, prose, poetry, verse, script. The candidate could also supply appropriate material for this.

In Outcome 2 multi-track audio editing hardware and/or software would normally be expected to be used to construct and then edit the sound design, however the sound design could also be performed live to accompany either a projection or other live stage performance. Appropriate checklists will be required to record the performance evidence; a video recording is not required but may be beneficial to the candidate.

Outcome 2 of this Unit may be integrated with one or more of the following Units:

- *Creative Project* (SCQF level 6)
- *Music: Compositional Techniques* (SCQF level 6)
- *Sound Engineering and Production* (SCQF level 5 or 6)
- *Music: Live Performance* (SCQF level 5 or 6)
- *Sound: Synthesis and Sampling Skills* (SCQF level 6)

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Candidates must be aware of, and adhere at all times to the requirements of current copyright legislation in relation to the creation, performance and use of music and other forms of intellectual property. Guidance should be sought from the centre's designated copyright specialist or the appropriate copyright licensing organisation.

Time should be allowed for any necessary re-assessment.

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 communications 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)*.

CANDIDATES WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (**www.sqa.org.uk**).