National Unit Specification: general information

XSQA

UNIT Music: Visuals for Live Performance (SCQF level 7)

CODE F5E4 13

SUMMARY

This Unit will introduce candidates to the use of video as a means of visually enhancing a live music performance. Candidates will have the opportunity to gain the practical skills and knowledge required to play back visual material as part of a live audio visual event. On completion of this Unit, candidates should be able to prepare material for visual playback, specify and set up a simple visual playback system, and use basic visual playback techniques during a live event.

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

This Unit is designed for candidates who want to include a visual element in their live set or as an introduction for those who intend to progress further with visualisation and work as a video jockey or multimedia artist.

OUTCOMES

1 Explain the basic technical features of using video as a visual performance platform and the role it plays in supporting audio.
2 Plan and prepare visual material to support audio during a live event to a given brief.
3 Specify and assemble a simple visual playback system to support audio during a live event to a given brief.
4 Use visual cueing and mixing techniques to support audio during a live event to a given brief.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

Entry is at the discretion of the centre, however it may be beneficial for candidates to have some IT and/or audio visual experience.

National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Music: Visuals for Live Performance (SCQF level 6)

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Advanced Higher (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 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

Explain the basic technical features of using video as a visual performance platform and the role it plays in supporting audio.

Performance Criteria

(a) Explain the basic technical features of video as a medium to compose and play back visual material.
(b) Describe how these technical features can be used to complement an audio performance as part of a live audio visual event.
(c) Describe the advantages and disadvantages of using video to support audio as part of a live event.

OUTCOME 2

Plan and prepare visual material to support audio during a live event to a given brief.

Performance Criteria

(a) Select suitable visual material in accordance with a given brief.
(b) Produce a set plan based on cues for a live event.
(c) Create a log file of the visual material.
(d) Prepare visual material for playback.

OUTCOME 3

Specify and assemble a visual playback system to support audio during a live event to a given brief.

Performance Criteria

(a) Identify basic visual playback system components and layout.
(b) Specify a simple visual playback system.
(c) Correctly assemble and link components to create a visual playback system.
(d) Satisfy Health and Safety requirements.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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OUTCOME 4

Use visual cueing and mixing techniques to support audio during a live event to a given brief.

Performance Criteria

(a) Cue and trigger a sequence of visual clips according to a set plan.
(b) Mix visual sources to create smooth transitions as part of the visual playback system.
(c) Adjust the playback speed of a visual sequence to establish a visual pace and rhythm synchronised to a set piece of audio.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

In Outcome 1 candidates are required to produce written and/or oral evidence. This will cover knowledge and understanding of the following basic technical features: image resolution, colour depth, video compression and file formats. Candidates must also describe the basic technical features of visual playback system components: hardware, software, cabling for signals and data (inter-connectors), and typical visual playback system equipment layouts. Candidates are also required to describe how these technical features can be used to complement a live audio event. This will be done by candidates being given a minimum of two examples of different equipment layouts, identifying the key functions of the hardware components, how they work together, typical connectors for data/signals/power and any particular operating requirements. Candidates are also required to describe a minimum of two advantages and two disadvantages of using video to support audio as part of a live event.

This evidence will be gathered under supervised, closed-book conditions on one assessment occasion.

Outcomes 2 to 4 should be assessed holistically using a live audio visual event scenario that will allow the candidates to work through the process stages represented by the Outcomes. This evidence will be gathered under supervised conditions at appropriate points in the Unit.

Candidates will work to a given brief for a set lasting between 6 and 10 minutes which includes:

♦   a set piece of audio
♦   an outline visual theme
♦   details of the proposed venue, stage layout and other equipment that will be used during the performance

Candidates will assemble a set of visual clips that will allow them to play a set of 6 to 10 minutes' duration to support a given piece of audio. They will also be required to use a visual playback system to play the video material during a live event.

Candidates are required to select the visual material they intend to use for playback (not create the visual material). Copyright issues should therefore be acknowledged. Note: screensavers are not acceptable visual material.

The minimum specification permitted for the basic visual playback system would include a laptop with video sequencing software running through a projector or large screen.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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For Outcome 2 the following written and/or oral evidence is required:

♦   candidate's interpretation of the design brief and set play-list with timings
♦   log file of visual material covering file location, type, resolution, compression, content and copyright status

In Outcome 3 candidates are required to produce written and/or oral evidence which:

♦   details the components selected and their specification of a simple visual playback system

Performance evidence, supplemented by an Assessor Observation Checklist, is also required for Outcome 3 to cover the process of assembling the visual playback system and adhering to health and safety guidelines.

Evidence for Outcome 4 will be performance evidence supplemented by an Assessor Observation Checklist that takes the candidate's set plan into account. The Assessor Observation Checklist should record the candidate's achievement and be retained by the centre. Candidates are required to mix a minimum of two different visual sources.

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

Visuals are increasingly used in live sound productions in musical genres ranging from symphony orchestras to club DJs. This can create what is effectively a live audio visual performance which can enhance and extend the audio performance.

This Unit will give candidates basic practical skills and knowledge of preparing and setting up a visual playback system. Candidates should also develop basic techniques of playing visuals as part of an integrated audio visual performance.

Whilst a wide range of different technologies for visual synthesis and playback are available, it is not intended that technology should be the dominant feature of this Unit. A playback system as simple as a laptop with a software video sequencer connected to a projector or large screen is acceptable. Another example of a simple system would be DVD decks linked to a video mixer and projector. Even within such a simple set up quite a range of specification variations are possible.

Knowledge may be usefully transferred from other relevant areas. For example, it is possible to draw upon film making and musical concepts for the preparation and playback aspects of this Unit. As covered in Outcome 4, pace and rhythm is fundamental to integrated and engaging visuals. Live playback can be regarded as similar to live movie editing, and the concepts of film montage are useful here for assembling clips where length of scenes, pace of movement within a scene and transitions are key parts of the narrative.

An understanding of concepts related to music analysis will be useful in developing an understanding of visual sequencing and playback techniques.

Some previous technical knowledge is highly desirable regarding the format and preparation of the visual material, and the hardware and software used to play it back.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Practice at setting up and playing equipment in different locations and in different configurations would help develop practical skills and knowledge for Outcomes 3 and 4.

Once candidates start to put together their visual material and have a grasp of the playback equipment available to them, they can then start to work on playback techniques required by Outcome 4. It is expected that some practice will be required. This should also give them some insight into the suitability of the material they have chosen and how their set design will work overall.

Research and analysis of AV playback technology used at different events will help candidates grasp technical and aesthetic concepts.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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In terms of sound production, electronic musicians who work with sequencers and audio samples should recognise similarities between the processes.

A systemic approach should be encouraged when specifying and setting up a visual playback system. The failure of the simplest component can render the whole system useless. Arriving without the right leads, or forgetting where files are saved, can be a disaster in a live situation and a disciplined, structured approach should be emphasised.

Outcome 4 is intended to cover the basic skills behind visual playback without going into video synthesis. At this level it can be regarded as requiring skills similar to sequencing audio clips where a well developed sense of timing and fluid mixing between clips is necessary. Once the basic skills of cueing and mixing are mastered, additional 'tweaks' can be added in terms of adding effects and adjusting rhythm. For example, the most basic playback skill that the candidate is expected to demonstrate is to cue and trigger a sequence of visual clips, this could be a set of video loops loaded into the deck of a software video sequencer which are then played one after another without transitions between them. The next skill to build upon that is to mix between them using transitions. Once a candidate can do this smoothly following cues and timings they can then learn to add (and remove) effects to segments of the sequence. The effects should be limited to something simple such as mirror symmetries and colour cycling. The final skill, which would round off their basic set of skills, would be to manually control the pace of movement within a segment to establish a rhythmic visual pattern that complements aspects of the audio rhythm. This is one of the most important playback skills and can take some practice to master.

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.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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

Should candidates use a laptop and/or video sequencing software as part of their playback system then this allows opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Information Technology*.

Candidates will undertake planning and organising for Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 in preparation for their performance. This offers ideal opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Problem Solving*.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

The recommended instruments of assessment are as follows:

Outcome 1   Multiple choice/short answer questions
Outcomes 2, 3 and 4   Practical project

In Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 candidates work to a design brief with the aim of specifying and setting up a simple visual playback system and playing back 6–10 minutes of visual material as part of an audio visual event.

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The brief would present the candidate with a scenario which has a wide range of playback possibilities, such as:

♦   visuals for a band performance
♦   club visuals for DJs and electronic musicians
♦   fusion theatre
♦   promotional event visuals, eg for the launch of a new car at an exhibition
♦   Son et Lumiere events

The performance scenario and visual design brief should be kept as realistic as possible.

For Outcome 2, the visual material could be short video clips, live camera feeds, still image sequences or animation files. Software or hardware based pattern generators are also acceptable. Interpretation of the brief could take the form of a movie treatment and the set plan could be done using storyboards to illustrate the main visual elements of the set linked to timings.

Time should be allowed for any necessary reassessment.

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**).