



Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Technical Theatre: Sound

Unit code: F38E 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is intended for candidates who wish to work as technical practitioners within the theatre. It is designed to enable candidates to become familiar with the techniques and skills associated with sound for performance. This Unit will develop the candidates' basic understanding of sound reproduction, recording/editing techniques and providing sound for theatrical or other live performances.

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

- 1 Plan sound equipment requirements for a performance.
- 2 Set up a sound system for a performance.
- 3 Source, record and edit sound effects for a performance.
- 4 Operate a theatre sound system for a performance.

Credit points and level: 2 HN credits at SCQF level 7: (16 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.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit will be at the discretion of the centre. However, it would be beneficial if candidates had completed a relevant National Qualification, or equivalent, in Technical Theatre.

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Numeracy*, *Communication*, *Problem Solving*, *Information Technology* and *Working with Others* at SCQF level 5 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

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. This Unit was developed within the framework of the HNC Technical Theatre.

Assessment: This Unit will be assessed by four instruments of assessment. It is recommended that evidence for Outcome 1 is presented as a stage sound plan. Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 are practical assessments and evidence should be recorded with the use of checklists.

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

Plan sound equipment requirements for a performance

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Equipment selection
- ◆ Positioning and cabling
- ◆ Signal paths
- ◆ Health and safety

Evidence requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by designing a stage sound plan. Candidates must design a plan that can be utilised for either:

(a) a performance that involves live sound

or

(b) a performance involving playback of recorded music

The plan should show the elements listed and how they are linked together through a mixing desk, and also knowledge of relevant health and safety procedures.

(a) Live sound — to include at least one acoustic instrument, two amped instruments, and a DI keyboard.

- ◆ A microphone and fold back monitor selection sheet, detailing polar patterns and reasons for choice.
- ◆ An accurate plan of equipment placement and cable runs, which complies with accepted conventions and safety regulations within a working theatre environment.
- ◆ An accurate plan detailing signal paths from stage to the mixing desk and to a stage fold back system.

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or

- (b) Playback of recorded sound — to include at least two pre-recorded sound playback sources.
- ◆ A list of playback equipment to be used, detailing reasons for choice.
 - ◆ An accurate plan of equipment placement and cable runs, which complies with accepted conventions and safety regulations within a working theatre environment.
 - ◆ An accurate plan detailing signal paths from the playback devices through the mixing desk to theatre amplifiers and speakers.

Assessment guidelines

The candidate could submit a detailed plan for either type of performance.

For performances involving live sound, the plan could detail positioning and cabling of microphones, fold back speakers, stage boxes and DI boxes, such as would be used for a production that involves a small orchestra. The plan could detail the signal paths of this on-stage equipment to and from the theatre mixing desk, and from the mixing desk to the amplifiers and speakers.

For performances involving playback of recorded sound, the plan could detail positioning and cabling of playback equipment, mixing desk, amplifiers and speakers, and also detail the signal paths between such equipment.

Outcome 2

Set up a sound system for a performance

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Sound get in
- ◆ Sound get out
- ◆ Set up and placement of audio equipment
- ◆ Line checks
- ◆ Audio equipment
- ◆ Sound checks
- ◆ Health and safety procedures

Evidence requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can either set up a live stage sound system and incorporate it into a theatre sound system **or** set up and check an existing theatre sound system for use in a performance.

Each candidate must prepare for using sound in a performance by using all of the above Knowledge and/or Skills items. Checklists may be used by the tutor to record candidate evidence.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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A candidate's response can be judged to be satisfactory where the evidence is sufficient to meet the requirements of observation checklists that indicate that the candidate is able to:

- ◆ participate in a sound 'get in' professionally and efficiently
- ◆ participate in a sound 'get out' professionally and efficiently
- ◆ set up and place audio equipment professionally and efficiently
- ◆ design a line check and sound check, checklist
- ◆ test the audio system with line checks and sound checks
- ◆ apply Health and Safety procedures in line with professional best practice and current legislation

Assessment guidelines

Candidates could be assessed in this Outcome as they set up the sound system plan submitted in Outcome 1.

Outcome 3

Source, record and edit sound effects for a performance

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Sound effects
- ◆ Sourcing pre-recorded music and/or pre-recorded sound effects
- ◆ Recordings
- ◆ Editing operations
- ◆ Audio formats

Evidence requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can source, record and prepare sounds for a performance.

Candidates should create one or more 'show disks' (or computerised playlist) containing the final sound cues in the correct order for playback during the performance. Computer files should be shown to be backed up and a duplicate show disk (or disks) created. The candidate should submit:

- ◆ at least **nine** contrasting sound cues, drawn from at least **three** of the following sources:
 - pre-recorded music
 - pre-recorded sound effects
 - the candidate's own recordings of speech
 - the candidate's own recordings of music and/or singing
 - the candidate's own recordings of sound effects
- ◆ a description of editing operations carried out on at least **three** of the **nine** cues detailed above, showing use of one or more current editing technologies (eg minidisk editing, digital editing)
- ◆ at least one 'show disk' (or computer show files and media where computer based playback is used) in a current industry standard format containing the above sound cues edited and in the correct order for the performance

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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- ◆ a backup of all show disks and/or computer show files and media, ready to use, in the same format as the originals

Assessment guidelines

It is recommended that each candidate receives a brief from the director of a theatrical performance and follows the brief to create the suitable sound effects required. When editing the candidate could be assessed on common basic editing requirements such as trimming, looping, combining and splitting track. Playback materials could be compiled in whatever current formats are commonly used in industry.

Outcome 4

Operate a theatre sound system for a performance

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Mixing desk
- ◆ Sound sources
- ◆ Audio peripherals
- ◆ Audio levels
- ◆ Playback
- ◆ Cue sheets
- ◆ Sound checks
- ◆ Communications systems
- ◆ Health and Safety

Evidence requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can operate a theatre sound system during a live performance.

Candidates should undertake the role of a sound operator during the production process to produce the required assessment evidence.

A candidate's response can be judged to be satisfactory where the evidence is sufficient to meet the requirements of observation checklists that indicate that the candidate is able to:

- ◆ operate and manage a theatrical sound system based on the above Knowledge and/or Skills
- ◆ set up, manage and operate all sound sources as required (for performances involving live sound these should include wired and/or radio microphones; for performances involving recorded sound these could include playback devices such as Mini Disk, Compact Disk and computers)
- ◆ set up/manage and operate all audio peripherals including processors, graphic equalisers, feedback reduction systems where needed by the production
- ◆ accurately create and work from cue sheets
- ◆ conduct pre-show checks and act on any issues
- ◆ set up and manage any communications system in use in the theatre
- ◆ apply Health and Safety procedures in line with professional best practice and current legislation

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Assessment guidelines

It is recommended that this Outcome is assessed by the candidate operating a sound system within a theatre during a live performance.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F38E 34
Unit title: Technical Theatre: Sound
Superclass category: LE
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Technical Theatre: Sound

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 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is intended to develop the candidates' skills in sound reproduction, recording/editing techniques and providing sound for theatrical or other live performances.

Outcome 1 introduces candidates to sound system stage plans and the equipment used during a production.

Outcome 2 should allow candidates to set up a live stage sound system and incorporate it into a theatre sound system, **or** to set up and operate a theatre sound system.

Outcome 3 looks at the sourcing, creation and preparation of sound materials for a stage production. Playback materials may be compiled in whatever current formats are commonly used in industry. At the time of writing this Unit specification, the most common are: Minidisk, Compact Disk and Computer-based playback but as the Unit is intended to be future proof it therefore does not demand any specific format.

Outcome 4 looks at the operation of sound systems during a live performance.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit is a mandatory Unit in the HNC Technical Theatre Group Award. This Unit is primarily intended to provide candidates with the necessary skills to plan, set up and operate a sound system during a live performance. It is intended to be a practical Unit, allowing candidates to practise their skills during live performances.

Outcome 1 could be delivered as lectures and tutorials whilst all other Outcomes could be delivered as practical workshops. The intention of the Unit is to allow candidates to plan, connect and operate a sound system within a theatre environment to a successful level, and to find and prepare sound materials for a performance. It is understood that many theatre systems are different but the basic level of understanding and utilisation has been incorporated into this Unit. Tutors may want to add equipment and practices, not listed within the Unit specification, if relevant to the technical requirements of the theatre space utilised by the delivering educational establishment. However, it must be made clear to candidates that this is optional and does not form part of the candidate's assessment. Candidate achievement will be based on meeting the minimum Evidence Requirements for each Outcome.

Outcome 1 may be assessed by a stage sound plan.

Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 may be assessed by practical tasks involving the set up of a sound system; sourcing and recording sound effects; and operating a sound system for a performance.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

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Opportunities for developing Core Skills

Opportunities could be taken to develop the Core Skills of *Oral and Written Communication* in discussions with production team, writing and by email throughout all Outcomes. Candidates will be able to develop their *Problem Solving* skills (*Critical Thinking*) by participating in production planning meetings and discussions and communicate with their director and fellow team members in rehearsals and during shows. Candidates will also use rehearsal notes and other reference materials in their planning and create their own lists, notes and cue sheets which could involve use of *Numeracy* (*Working with Numbers*) and *Information Technology*.

If candidates deal with scale drawings, cue numbers, and timings of audio materials then they will have opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Numeracy* (*Working with Numbers*) at SCQF level 5.

If the candidates select, position, cable and test the sound equipment they will be dealing with choices of equipment, connections between equipment and systematic testing and fault finding of the playback system. These tasks will give the candidates the opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* (*Critical Thinking*) at SCQF level 5.

If candidates use paperwork such as rehearsal notes, sound equipment plans, equipment lists, cue lists, schematics and scale drawings then they will have opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* (*Written*) at SCQF level 5.

If candidates deal with production issues which will often be addressed orally in meetings and informal discussions, and if candidates use professional verbal communication techniques during technical rehearsals and shows, then they will have opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* (*Oral*) at SCQF level 5.

If candidates produce plans and other paperwork on computers, and if candidates use computers for editing and preparing of audio materials they will have opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Information Technology* at SCQF level 5.

If candidates work as part of a team in staging a performance they will have opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Working with Others* at SCQF level 5.

Open learning

The Outcomes in this Unit rely on developing skills through interaction with a lecturer and/or fellow candidates, and so the opportunities for distance learning are limited. Centres may, however, find it possible to develop solutions, provided all Unit and verification requirements are met in full. Technological advances may make the possibility of such creative solutions more widespread in the future.

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).

General information for candidates

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In this Unit you will learn to plan, connect and operate a sound system to a successful level within a theatre environment. You will find and prepare sound materials for use in a performance. This Unit is a practical Unit, allowing you to practise your skills during live performances.

The Unit has four main areas, each the subject of a separate Outcome:

1 Plan sound equipment requirements for a performance.

In Outcome 1 you will learn how to choose sound equipment for a performance. You will learn to plan where and how to set the equipment up, how to connect the equipment together, and how to draw plans showing the connections and signal paths between the equipment.

2 Set up a sound system for a performance.

In Outcome 2 you will put the planning skills learned in Outcome 1 into practice, as you learn how to professionally and efficiently take part in a sound 'get-in' and 'get-out'. You will learn how to set up, connect and test sound equipment in a practical theatre environment.

3 Source, record and edit sound effects for a performance.

In Outcome 3 you will learn how to find sound materials such as pre-recorded sound effects and music. You will record your own sound material such as speech, music, singing and sound effects. You will edit these materials to prepare them for use in a performance, and recognise the importance of making backup copies.

4 Operate a theatre sound system for a performance.

In Outcome 4 you will learn to set up and operate sound in a performance. You will learn how to create and use sound cue sheets, and how to check the equipment for faults before the performance. You will also learn how to set up and manage theatre communication systems.

Throughout all four Outcomes you will use the appropriate professional safe working practices.