



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Sound: Digital DJing — An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

CODE F5E3 12

SUMMARY

This Unit is intended as an introduction to contemporary DJ practice using digital hardware and software. This Unit will give candidates 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 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 suitable for candidates who wish to learn the basics of DJing using digital technologies.

OUTCOMES

- 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.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

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

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

Administrative Information

Superclass: XL

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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

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

Performance Criteria

- (a) Identify basic digital audio system hardware and software components.
- (b) Describe the basic operation of digital audio hardware and software components.
- (c) Describe the relationship between audio compression techniques and aural quality.
- (d) Specify a basic digital audio system to a given brief.

OUTCOME 2

Demonstrate digital DJ mixing techniques.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Demonstrate basic applications of software based beat detection and looping techniques for digital audio clips.
- (b) Demonstrate an equalization based mixing technique between two audio channels.
- (c) Demonstrate a cross-fader based mixing technique between two audio channels.

OUTCOME 3

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

Performance Criteria

- (a) Create a set list according to a given brief.
- (b) Accurately assemble digital audio system and take part in a sound check.
- (c) Manually cue and mix according to the set list.
- (d) Adhere to given health and safety requirements during set up and performance.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

For Outcome 1, PCs (a), (b) and (c) candidates are required to produce written and/or oral evidence. Candidates 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.

This assessment will take place under supervised, closed-book conditions on one assessment occasion.

For Outcome 1 PC (d) candidates are required to produce written and/or oral evidence. Their system specification should clearly identify their choice of hardware and software system components and inter-connectors.

This assessment will take place under supervised, open-book conditions on one assessment occasion.

For Outcome 2 performance evidence, supplemented by an Assessor Observation Checklist, is required to demonstrate that candidates 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 candidates are required to play out for a minimum of 10 minutes. In addition to this, candidates 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.

For Outcome 3 PC (a) candidates should 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 on one assessment occasion.

For Outcome 3 performance evidence, supplemented by an Assessor Observation Checklist, is also required to demonstrate that candidates:

- ◆ correctly assemble their proposed digital mixing system, providing a suitable connection for others to connect to a given sound reinforcement system and taking 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 gathered under supervised conditions on one assessment occasion.

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.

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. It is the aim of this Unit to respect and reflect this rapidly evolving body of knowledge and skills.

As an acknowledgement to the importance of audience rapport, candidates 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.

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. Candidates can produce system specifications using any combinations as long as the performance 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.

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 candidates 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.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR 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. A holistic approach is recommended for Outcome 3 where candidates 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.

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. Candidates 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 candidates, 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. Candidates 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, candidates could agree a musical genre with their tutor for a given venue. It is worth noting that some candidates may be involved in a promotion whilst undertaking the Unit which could be used as their brief, if considered suitable by their tutor.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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

Candidates will have opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Information Technology* as they use digital audio mixing equipment and software.

In Outcomes 1 and 3 candidates specify and then assemble a digital audio system which allows them opportunities to develop 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 question/short answer questions
Outcome 2	Practical assignment
Outcome 3	Practical exercise

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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A holistic approach is required for Outcome 3 where the candidates 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.

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).