National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT   Music: Compositional Techniques (SCQF level 6)

CODE   F5E9 12

SUMMARY

This Unit will give candidates the opportunity to explore the use of compositional elements and compositional techniques used by composers. The Unit will help candidates to understand the breadth of styles of composition possible and the many different uses of music. Candidates will have the opportunity to learn about creative and technical skills which are used in composition including structure, arrangement, technology and instrumentation. They will have the opportunity to learn about different uses for compositions and different compositional techniques used within these areas.

This Unit is a mandatory Unit within 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 are undertaking a music programme of study. It is also suitable for those who have an interest in or experience of composing.

OUTCOMES

1   Describe compositional elements.
2   Describe a range of compositional techniques used by composers.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

♦   Intermediate 2 Music
♦   Standard Grade Music at Credit level

National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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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
♦   Working with Others

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 compositional elements.

Performance Criteria

(a) Correctly describe form and structure.
(b) Correctly identify instrumentation.
(c) Describe melodic, rhythmic and harmonic elements.
(d) Describe the use of tonality.

OUTCOME 2

Describe a range of compositional techniques used by composers.

Performance Criteria

(a) Select compositions in contrasting styles.
(b) Identify the style and purpose of the compositions selected.
(c) Compare and contrast techniques used in the compositions selected.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Written and/or oral evidence is required to demonstrate that candidates have achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

In Outcome 1 candidates will study at least three compositions in contrasting styles. They must use appropriate terminology when describing the structure and form. In addition, they must give at least one example of each of the headings in Performance Criteria 1(c) per composition studied. This evidence should be gathered under supervised, closed-book conditions on one assessment occasion.

For Outcome 2 the candidate must select a minimum of three compositions in contrasting styles from one or more composers and will identify the style and purpose of each. They must then compare and contrast techniques used within each of the pieces. These techniques should be in relation to those elements identified in Outcome 1. The candidate must support findings with audio examples. This evidence should be gathered at appropriate points throughout the Unit under open-book conditions.

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

This Unit is designed to develop and broaden a candidate's knowledge and understanding of different music genres by encouraging them to listen to and study genres and types of music that may be unfamiliar to them. Candidates will learn to identify and describe the basic compositional elements featured in a range of music genres and will go on to analyse the compositional techniques used by composers.

This Unit further develops some of the ideas introduced in the *Appreciation of Music* (SCQF level 6) Unit and it may therefore be beneficial to candidates if they have already studied this Unit. Candidates may also benefit from knowledge obtained in the *Music: Songwriting* (SCQF level 6) Unit. There is also potential for integration with the *Music: Composing* (SCQF level 5 or 6) Unit since candidates could use knowledge gained through study of this Unit towards making creative decisions when compiling a composing folio.

A significant amount of time will be spent on introducing candidates to different musical genres, and candidates will be encouraged to listen to and discuss music both individually as well as within a group context. Teaching staff will require the use of audio and video playback facilities during class times in order to illustrate examples of different genres and types of music. ICT facilities for demonstrating computer game music in addition to research by the candidates will also enhance the learning process and will allow further scope for teaching. Candidates should be encouraged within class times to explore different purposes for compositions through internet searches of music and video sites. This will afford the lecturer the opportunity to introduce and explore issues regarding intellectual copyright covered in the Unit *Music: An Introduction to the UK Music Industry* (SCQF level 6).

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

When examining structure and form, teaching staff should consider verse, chorus, middle 8, bridge, AABBACA type structure, counterpoint, modulation, atonality, a cappella, chord progression, unison, round, ground bass, loop based, etc. This list should not be considered as exhaustive. Context and style of music will determine which different elements may be identified and analysed. When examining instrumentation the candidate must consider technology used and if they are hearing 'real' or electronically created instruments. They should consider if the technology has influenced the compositional techniques used or not.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT   Music: Compositional Techniques (SCQF level 6)

It is possible that the Performance Criteria for Outcome 1 could be covered by looking at several different versions of one song and examining the different treatments of it by several artists or arrangers. This will highlight how changing various elements of the same song can alter the mood or change the genre of the piece. If this approach is adopted, teaching staff should refer to copyright and ownership issues. There is scope for linking this area with the *Music*: *Introduction to the UK Music Industry* (SCQF level 6) Unit.

For Outcome 2, candidates should be encouraged to work together in small groups towards short classroom presentations to practise speaking in front of others and should each have input towards the presentation. If working in groups, each member should contribute to at least one of the areas covered by the Performance Criteria. They should also use audio examples to illustrate the information presented. Use of ICT is recommended and there are many online sites currently available where research may be undertaken which teachers/lecturers should encourage the use of to support learning. This can be of particular benefit to candidates who perhaps wish to research areas or genres which have not been addressed within the teaching environment.

This Unit can primarily be taught in a classroom context, however many varied approaches to teaching and learning should be encouraged. It is recommended that the lecturer should adopt a wide approach to encompass a broad range of techniques and styles of composition. Delivery of the Unit could include covering various differing areas of music such as advertising or film music in order to demonstrate different purposes for composition. Other types of music could include religious music, ceremonial, multimedia presentation, computer games, animation, popular song, dance music, art installation, orchestral, chamber group and jazz. However, this list should not be considered to be exclusive.

The lecturer may wish to explore the relationship between audio and visual stimuli when covering music for adverts, film, multimedia and computer games, etc as these areas have very recognisable techniques which can be quite distinct from those used in compositions which are mostly solely listened to. Candidates should be encouraged to adopt approaches to analysis which they have learned during the course of the Unit when listening to music outwith the class time.

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 Outcomes 1 and 2. This offers ideal opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skill of *Communication*.

Should candidates choose to work together in small groups towards short classroom presentation there will be further opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skills of *Communication* as well as *Working with Others*.

Should candidates choose to use online websites to support their learning, there will be opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Information Technology*.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT   Music: Compositional Techniques (SCQF level 6)

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Outcome 1 could be assessed by responding to a listening test, however it may also take the form of a presentation/written submission.

Outcome 2 could be assessed by a written report or oral response.

It is recommended that where possible candidates undertake an oral presentation for Outcome 2 as a chance to develop their presentation and delivery skills.

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**).