



## Higher National Unit Specification

### General information

**Unit title:** Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

**Unit code:** J01L 34

**Superclass:** LF

**Publication date:** May 2018

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 02 (September '21)

### Unit purpose

This unit is designed to give learners an understanding of the fundamental aspects of music theory and notation. Learners will explore note values, note pitch, key signatures, intervals, time signatures, selected scales, chords and chord progressions. Learners will develop skills in notating key signatures, scales, chords and rhythm. This unit is aimed at learners who wish to develop an understanding of the fundamental aspects of music theory and notation. It is intended for learners studying HNC/HND Music.

### Outcomes

On successful completion of the unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Identify note pitch, note values, time signatures, scales, key signatures and intervals.
- 2 Identify chords and chord progressions.
- 3 Notate rhythm, key signatures, scales, and chords.

### Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

### Recommended entry to the unit

Access to this unit is at the discretion of the centre. However, as a guide, a basic familiarity with conventional terms and music notation would be useful, where learners are able to demonstrate prior knowledge and skills through their experiences in any of a wide range of programmes of study: National Certificate (NC) in Music, Higher Music or any relevant Music unit(s).

## Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

### Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes for this unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this unit.

### 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 is a mandatory unit in the HNC/HND Music framework.

The Assessment Support Pack (ASP) for this unit provides assessment and marking guidelines that exemplify the national standard for achievement. It is a valid, reliable and practicable assessment. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the ASP to ensure a comparable standard. A list of existing ASPs is available to download from SQA's website (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/46233.2769.html>).

### Equality and inclusion

This unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

# Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

## Unit title: Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

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

Identify note pitch, note values, time signatures, scales, key signatures and intervals.

#### Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Notes on the staff (in the treble and bass clefs) including accidentals (flat, sharp and natural) including extensions of up to three ledger lines above and below the staff
- ◆ Note and rest values from semibreve (whole note) to semiquaver (16th note)
- ◆ Common simple and compound time signatures:

2	3	4	6	9	12
4	4	4	8	8	8

- ◆ Scales: major, natural and harmonic minor, major and minor pentatonic
- ◆ Key signatures: major and minor (up to four sharps and flats)
- ◆ Diatonic intervals (within an octave)

### Outcome 2

Identify chords and chord progressions.

#### Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Root position triads (within major and minor keys up to four sharps and flats)
- ◆ Roman numerals and chord symbols (within major and minor keys up to four sharps and flats)
- ◆ Simple chord progressions (I-IV-V; ii-V-I; I-vi-IV-V and I-vi-ii-V within major keys up to four sharps and flats)
- ◆ Four note chords: major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th, min7 ♭ 5 (within major and minor keys up to four sharps and flats)

### Outcome 3

Notate rhythm, key signatures, scales and chords.

#### Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Range of key signatures for notation (major and minor keys up to four sharps and flats)
- ◆ Range of notes and rests for notation in given time signatures
- ◆ Range of chords from given chord name for notation
- ◆ Range of scales (major, natural and harmonic minor, major and minor pentatonic)
- ◆ Range of chord progressions

## Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

### Evidence requirements for this unit

#### Outcome 1

Evidence for the knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome will be generated through sampling. To ensure that learners will not be able to foresee which items they will be questioned about, a different sample of four of the six knowledge and/or skills items below is required each time the Outcome is assessed. Learners must provide a satisfactory response to all four items.

- (a) identify the names of notes on the stave, including extensions of up to three ledger lines above and below each stave (in both treble and bass clefs), sharp, flat and natural signs and their cancellation.
- (b) identify note values of semibreve (whole note), minim (half note), crotchet (quarter note), quaver (eighth note) and semiquaver (sixteenth note) and their equivalent rests, single-dotted notes and rests and tied notes to the same value.
- (c) identify simple time signatures:

**2 3 4**  
**4 4 4**

and compound time signatures:

**6 9 12**  
**8 8 8**

- (d) identify key signatures for major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats.
- (e) identify scales (major, natural and harmonic minor, major and minor pentatonic) in all keys up to and including four sharps and flats.
- (f) identify the following notated melodic and/or harmonic intervals: perfect unison, major 2nd, major 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, major 6th, major 7th, perfect octave.

Written and/or oral evidence will be produced under closed book, controlled conditions at appropriate points in the unit.

#### Outcome 2

Evidence for the knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome will be generated through sampling. To ensure that learners will not be able to foresee which items they will be questioned about, a different sample of three of the four knowledge and/or skills items below is required each time the Outcome is assessed. Learners must provide a satisfactory response to all three items.

- (a) identify root position triads in major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats using both roman numerals and chord symbols where appropriate.

## Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

- (b) identify I-IV-V; ii-V-I; I-vi-IV-V and I-vi-ii-V chord progressions in major keys up to and including four sharps and flats using both roman numerals and chord symbols where appropriate.
- (c) identify four-note chords in root position: major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th, min7<sup>b</sup>5 using both roman numerals and chord symbols where appropriate.

Written and/or oral evidence will be produced under controlled conditions at appropriate points in the unit.

### Outcome 3

Evidence for the knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome will be generated through sampling. To ensure that learners will not be able to foresee which items they will be questioned about, a different sample of four of the five knowledge and/or skills items below is required each time the Outcome is assessed. Learners must provide a satisfactory response to all four items.

- (a) notate key signatures for major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats.
- (b) notate scales (major, natural and harmonic minor, major and minor pentatonic) up to and including four sharps and flats.
- (c) notate rhythm using note values of semibreve (whole note), minim (half note), crotchet (quarter note), quaver (eighth note) and semiquaver (sixteenth note) and their equivalent rests, single-dotted notes and rests and tied notes to the same value.
- (d) notate root position triads and four-note chords (major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th, min7<sup>b</sup>5) in treble and bass clefs.
- (e) notate I-IV-V; ii-V-I; I-vi-IV-V and I-vi-ii-V chord progressions in major keys up to and including four sharps and flats.

Written and/or oral evidence will be produced under closed book, controlled conditions at appropriate points in the unit.

The outcomes in this unit can be assessed separately, but it would also be possible to integrate some of the evidence requirements from Outcome 3 with the Outcome 1 and 2 assessments. This would result in only two assessments for the unit. In this case, each assessment would require learners to both identify and notate.

The assessment support pack for this unit provides sample assessment material. Centres wishing to develop their own assessments should refer to the Assessment Support Pack to ensure a comparable standard.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

Unit support notes are offered as guidance and 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 will give learners an understanding of the fundamental aspects of music theory and notation.

The unit is intended to give learners knowledge and skills that will enhance their potential for progression and employability in music. Once completed, it will help them to approach many musical activities, eg rehearsing, composing and analysing with greater precision and confidence.

Outcome 1 — learners will look at the fundamental aspects of music theory and notation. Learners will work to develop the ability to recognise pitch by exploring the staff, clefs and the effect of sharp, flat and natural signs on pitch. Learners will identify note values and rests from the semibreve (whole note) to the semiquaver (16th note) inclusive, and common simple and compound time signatures. Using this knowledge, learners will move on to identifying scales (major, natural and harmonic minor, major and minor pentatonic). From here, learners will develop skills in identifying key signatures up to four sharps and flats and diatonic intervals within an octave.

Outcome 2 — learners will examine chord construction and work to develop skills in identifying root position chords using Roman numerals and chord symbols. Learners will use this knowledge to explore chord progressions and develop skills in identifying a range of these progressions (I-IV-V; ii-V-I; I-vi-IV-V and I-vi-ii-V) in major keys up to and including four sharps and flats. From this point learners will look at a range of four-note chords (major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th, min7 ♭ 5).

Outcome 3 — learners will build on their skills gained in Outcomes 1 and 2 and notate a range of key signatures, scales, rhythm and chords from the range explored in Outcomes 1 and 2.

The unit is aligned to elements of the Creative and Cultural Skillset, National Occupational Standards (NOS):

CCSMR41    Read music  
CCSMR39    Apply music theory knowledge

This unit provides underpinning knowledge for *Music: Graded Unit 1* (SCQF level 7).

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

### Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

The unit can be delivered primarily in a group/class context; however, varied approaches to learning and teaching can be explored. It is important that this unit is delivered within the context of music making. Where practicable, the learning and teaching could also be related to the instruments the learner plays. Opportunities exist to contextualise the requirements for this unit alongside *Music First Study: Instrument* (SCQF level 7). This would be particularly useful for underpinning knowledge where visual recognition of music notation and symbols can be related to the sound being produced on an instrument or voice.

The contextualisation of the contents of this unit can also be promoted through a wide range of listening activities. Learners could follow music notation while they listen to live or recorded music.

There are many practical class activities which can enhance learning, eg rhythm clapping games or using a range of percussion instruments to teach groups how to respond to rhythm notation and time signatures.

Where possible, learners should be encouraged in the classroom setting to use their own instruments to explore and consolidate the aspects of music theory covered, eg chord progressions in different keys. In addition, the tutor/assessor could use musical material familiar to the learners to illustrate the relevance of music theory in practice.

The use of information technology is recommended to support learning and there are many online music theory sites and software packages currently available.

### Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

The outcomes in this unit can be assessed separately, but it would also be possible to integrate some of the evidence requirements from Outcome 3 with the Outcomes 1 and 2 assessments. This would result in only two assessments for the unit. In this case, each assessment would require learners to both identify and notate.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

For example, it is possible to combine evidence requirements from Outcome 1 and Outcome 3 as below:

### Outcome 1 evidence requirements:

- (a) Identify the names of notes on the staff (in the treble and bass clefs), including extensions of up to three ledger lines above and below both clefs; sharp, flat and natural signs and their cancellation.
- (b) Identify note values of semibreve (whole note), minim (half note), crotchet (quarter note), quaver (eighth note) and semiquaver (sixteenth note) and their equivalent rests, single-dotted notes and rests and tied notes to the same value.
- (c) Identify simple time signatures:

**2 3 4**  
**4 4 4**

and compound time signatures:

**6 9 12**  
**8 8 8**

- (d) Identify key signatures for all major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats.
- (e) Identify scales (major, natural and harmonic minor, major and minor pentatonic) in keys up to and including four sharps and flats.
- (f) Identify the following notated melodic and/or harmonic intervals: perfect unison, major 2nd, major 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, major 6th, major 7th, perfect octave.

### Outcome 3 evidence requirements:

- (a) Notate key signatures for major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats.
- (b) Notate scales (major, natural and harmonic minor, major and minor pentatonic) up to and including four sharps and flats.
- (c) Notate rhythm using note values of semibreve (whole note), minim (half note), crotchet (quarter note), quaver (eighth note) and semiquaver (sixteenth note) and their equivalent rests, single-dotted notes and rests and tied notes to the same value.

It is possible to combine evidence requirements from Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 as below.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

### Outcome 2 evidence requirements:

- (a) Identify root position triads in major and minor keys up to and including four sharps and flats using both roman numerals and chord symbols where appropriate.
- (b) Identify I-IV-V; ii-V-I; I-vi-IV-V and I-vi-ii-V chord progressions in major keys up to and including four sharps and flats using both roman numerals and chord symbols where appropriate.
- (c) Identify four-note chords: major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th, min7 ♭ 5 using both roman numerals and chord symbols where appropriate.

### Outcome 3 evidence requirements:

- (a) Notate root position triads and four-note chords (major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th, min7 ♭ 5) in treble and bass clefs.
- (b) Notate I-IV-V; ii-V-I; I-vi-IV-V and I-vi-ii-V chord progressions in major keys up to and including four sharps and flats.

Assessments should be conducted in closed book, controlled conditions.

## Opportunities for 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 Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the evidence requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at [www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment).

## Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

During this unit there will be opportunities for learners to develop Core Skills such as *Communication, Numeracy, Working with Others, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Problem Solving*. There is no automatic certification of Core Skills.

## History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Evidence for the knowledge and/or skills in Outcome 1, 2 and 3 can be generated through sampling.	03/09/21

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## General information for learners

### Unit title: Music Theory (SCQF level 7)

This section will explain what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit, and opportunities for further learning.

This unit is designed to give you an understanding of the fundamental aspects of music theory and notation.

The unit is intended to give you knowledge and skills that will enhance your potential for employability in music and progression to higher education.

There are three outcomes, each of which cover specific aspects of music theory.

- 1 Identify note pitch, note values, time signatures, scales, key signatures and intervals.
- 2 Identify chords and chord progressions.
- 3 Notate rhythm, key signatures, scales, and chords.

This unit is in the mandatory section of the framework of HNC/HND Music.

In Outcome 1 you will work to develop the ability to recognise pitch by exploring the stave, clefs and the effect of sharp, flat and natural signs on pitch. You will identify note values and rests up to the semiquaver (16th notes) and common simple and compound time signatures. Using this knowledge, you will move on to identifying scales (major, natural and harmonic minor, major and minor pentatonic). From here, you will develop skills in identifying key signatures up to four flats and sharps and diatonic intervals within an octave.

In Outcome 2 you will examine chord construction and work to develop skills in identifying root position chords using Roman numerals and chord symbols. You will use this knowledge to explore chord progressions and develop skills in identifying a range of chord progressions (I-IV-V; ii-V-I; I-vi-IV-V and I-vi-ii-V). From this point you will look at a range of four-note chords (major 7th, minor 7th, dominant 7th, min7 ♭ 5).

In Outcome 3 you will build on your skills gained in Outcomes 1 and 2 and notate key signatures, scales, rhythm and chords from the range explored in Outcomes 1 and 2.

The unit is likely to be taught in a variety of ways and you will be required to undertake self-study to consolidate your learning. Both *Music First Study: Instrument* (SCQF level 7) and *Music First Study: Composition* (SCQF level 7) will allow you to further contextualise the elements of music theory and notation explored in this unit.

During the course of the unit you will have the opportunity to develop Core Skills such as *Communication, Numeracy, Working with Others, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* and *Problem Solving*.