Higher National Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Music First Study: Composition (SCQF level 8)

Unit code: J01P 35

Superclass: LF

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Version: 01

Unit purpose

This unit is designed to provide learners with the knowledge and skills to develop technical proficiency in composing music. The unit will build on technical ability through a range of compositional exercises. Learners will then build on their ability to create, shape and structure musical ideas, undertaking three musical compositions. Learners will build on their ability to utilise key musical elements in composition and develop knowledge and skills in arrangement. Finally, learners will critically evaluate their compositions throughout their period of study, creating a series of programme notes. This unit is aimed at learners studying HND Music and those wishing to extend their skills in composing music.

Outcomes

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

1 Demonstrate technical understanding and proficiency in a range of compositional techniques.
2 Compose music demonstrating technical assurance.
3 Create programme notes and critically evaluate development of compositional ideas.

Credit points and level

3 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 8: (24 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8)

Higher National Unit Specification: General information (cont)

Recommended entry to the unit

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, it is recommended that learners have some previous experience of composition and the ability to communicate sophisticated musical ideas using appropriate terminology and notation. This could be evidenced by the completion of *Music First Study: Composition* (SCQF level 7). Learners should also have good communication skills. These may be demonstrated by possession of Core Skill *Communication* at Higher level, Higher English, or a suitable *Communication* unit at SCQF level 6 or above.

Core Skills

Achievement of this unit gives automatic certification of the following Core Skills component:

Complete Core Skill None

Core Skill component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the support notes of this unit specification.

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 optional unit in the framework for HNC/HND Music.

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**.

Higher 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 technical understanding and proficiency in a range of compositional techniques.

Knowledge and/or skills

- Musical elements: rhythm, harmony, melody, instrumentation, tonality, dynamics, texture, genre and form
- Music concepts, features and devices consistent with genre
- Melody writing
- Harmonisation
- Arrangement techniques consistent with genre
- Notation skills

Outcome 2

Compose music demonstrating technical assurance.

Knowledge and/or skills

- Range of compositions
- Development and refinement of musical material.
- Key elements in chosen idiom (melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, timbre, texture, colour, tonality)
- Arranging skills consistent with genre

Outcome 3

Create programme notes and critically evaluate development of compositional ideas.

Knowledge and/or skills

- Musical, structural, stylistic and technical aspects of composition
- Compositional process
- Critical evaluation skills

Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence requirements for this unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can:

Outcome 1

- compose music in response to three composition exercises.
- provide an audio recording for each exercise.
- provide an appropriate form of notation for each exercise.

Product and/or performance evidence will be produced under open-book conditions at appropriate points in the unit. Learner evidence will be recorded on a high-quality format and the assessor will complete an observation checklist.

Outcome 2

- create a portfolio of three complete musical compositions (or three movements of an extended work).
- provide an audio recording for each composition.
- create an appropriate form of notation for each composition.

Product and/or performance evidence will be produced under open-book conditions at appropriate points in the unit. Learners will be assessed towards the end of the period of study to allow for maximum opportunity to develop and refine musical ideas. Learner evidence will be recorded on a high-quality format and the assessor will complete an observation checklist.

Outcome 3

- create programme notes for each of the three complete compositions in Outcome 2. Programme notes will provide a commentary which critically evaluates the following elements:
  - use of chosen musical elements such as, but not restricted to: melody, harmony, tonality, texture, colour, rhythm, arrangement, dynamics, articulation and timbre
  - compositional process.

Written and/or oral evidence will be produced under open-book conditions. This outcome can be assessed with Outcome 2. Learners will be assessed towards the end of the period of study to allow for maximum opportunity to develop and refine musical ideas.

Higher National Unit Support Notes

Unit title: Music First Study: Composition (SCQF level 8)

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 120 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this unit

This unit is primarily intended to give learners an understanding of musical composition. It is designed to build on the underpinning knowledge to develop technical skills and allow for development in personal compositional work. The unit aims to develop in learners a range of skills, techniques and understanding to enable them to become effective composers and further develop creativity and technical proficiency through hands-on working in a variety of compositional styles.

Outcome 1 — learners will be given three exercises and will compose music in response to the requirements of each exercise. Some suggestions of exercises are made in the guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit. Centres should ensure that learners have the opportunity to address all the knowledge and skills from the outcome.

Outcome 2 — Learners will create three complete compositions which demonstrate technical assurance. Compositions should be sufficient to allow learners to present musical ideas and develop material. A recording and an appropriate form of notation should represent each composition. At this level it is expected that learners will be able to compose for multi-instrumental groups and ensembles such as quartet and beyond.

Outcome 3 — Learners will evaluate the development of their compositional ideas by creating a programme note for each of the three complete compositions created in Outcome 2. The programme note will allow the learner to critically evaluate their compositions.

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

CCSMPR9 Compose music
CCSMPR13 Compose music for digital media
CCSMPR14 Compose music for the stage
CCSMPR3 Arrange music for film or television

This unit provides underpinning knowledge for *Music: Graded Unit 2* (SCQF level 8).

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Music First Study: Composition (SCQF level 8)

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

It is expected that centres would deliver Outcome 1 in advance of Outcomes 2 and 3 to ensure that the learners have sufficient opportunity to further develop their knowledge and skills before commencing with the portfolio of three complete compositions.

Possible delivery methods could include classroom activities; client briefs, eg film soundtrack, commissions from soloists/ensembles and bands. Guest instrumentalists could provide a useful approach to delivery and would allow learners to work with a performer to explore specific instrumental or vocal techniques.

Outcomes 2 and 3 should be delivered over a significant part of the study period to allow the maximum time for learners to develop and refine compositional ideas. A learner-centred approach is encouraged to allow learners to explore areas of particular interest with the support and guidance of their tutor/assessor. The tutor/assessor will mentor learners through the process of developing and refining ideas. Outcome 3 can be integrated within the body of evidence for Outcome 2 and learners should have opportunities to critically evaluate their work throughout the development of their compositions. Teaching activities could include presentations where learners articulate and defend their ideas to their peer group. Learners could compare and contrast their own work with the work of others to aid the development of critical thinking. Tutors should encourage the use of accurate musical concepts, terminology and language to effectively discuss the music and its development. It is likely that opportunities will naturally arise for learners to connect and contextualise their learning from other aspects of the course.

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.

This unit could be assessed using two assessments over the period of study. Assessment will be conducted in open-book conditions and centres must ensure that all learner work is their own.

Outcome 1 could be assessed by a single submission of three completed exercises. Each exercise should be submitted as an audio recording and appropriate form of notation. The audio recording should provide a clear representation of the learner's composition. This could be a live recording of a performance of the composition, a sequenced version of the composition, or an audio export from a notation programme. If the learner is composing music in response to a visual stimulus such as film, theatrical performance or dance, it is recommended that a video recording be created. The appropriateness of the notation will depend on the set exercise. For example, if the set exercise requires the learner to compose a one-minute 'miniature' for piano, then it would be appropriate for the learner to produce a traditional score using signs and symbols relevant for a pianist to re-create the music.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Music First Study: Composition (SCQF level 8)

If the exercise is to compose a piece of 'acousmatic' music, then a graphic score would be appropriate.

Some suggestions for Outcome 1 exercises are provided below:

- A one-minute miniature for solo piano exploring chromatic harmony.
- A piece for a specified ensemble, ie string quartet, clarinet quintet, etc
- A soundtrack: learners could compose a set of cues for a given film, or other digital media
- Following exploration of the work of other composers, learners could compose their own piece based on the specific techniques studied, for example, acousmatic music
- Compose music to a given text for SATB incorporating extended harmony

Outcomes 2 and 3 can be assessed together and would require the learner to submit a portfolio consisting of the following items:

- Three complete musical compositions, each submitted with:
  - an audio recording
  - an appropriate form of notation
  - a programme note critically evaluating compositional ideas

As with the standard set in Outcome 1, the audio recording should provide a clear representation of the learner's composition. This could be a live recording of a performance of the composition, a sequenced version of the composition, or an audio export from a notation programme. If the learner is composing music in response to a visual stimulus such as film, theatrical performance or dance, it is recommended that a video recording be created. The appropriateness of the notation will depend on the music composed.

The portfolio should show compositional skills with regard to: style and concept, pitch, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, timbre, effective knowledge of appropriate instrumentation/technology, ability to shape and structure musical ideas, accurate and appropriate musical notation.

Learner evidence will be produced under open-book conditions and be assessed towards the end of the period of study to allow for maximum opportunity to develop and refine musical ideas. Centres should take care to ensure that learner work is their own. This could be authenticated by regular contact with the tutor who can verify the on-going development of the music.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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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**.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

During this unit there will be opportunities for learners to develop Core and Essential Skills such as *Communication*, *Working with Others*, *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*, and *Problem Solving*. In addition, broader skills such as employability, enterprise and Sustainable development may be developed throughout this unit.

This unit has the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving* embedded in it. This means that when learners achieve the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to show they have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6.

History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for learners

Unit title: Music First Study: Composition (SCQF level 8)

This section will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining 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 and employment.

The unit will allow you to explore a range of skills and techniques to enable you to develop proficiency as a composer of music and extend your understanding of music through hands-on working in a variety of compositional styles.

The unit has three outcomes.

1 Demonstrate technical understanding and proficiency in a range of compositional techniques.
2 Compose music demonstrating technical assurance.
3 Create programme notes and critically evaluate development of compositional ideas.

The unit is in the mandatory section of the framework of HND Music**.**

In Outcome 1 you will be given three exercises and will compose music in response to the requirements of each exercise. Through this you will develop the technical skills to respond proficiently to the specific musical requirements of each exercise. You will be required to provide an audio recording of your work and create an appropriate form of notation for each exercise.

In Outcome 2 you will create three complete compositions. These will demonstrate your creativity and technical skills. You can agree the musical style of your compositions with your tutor. You will be required to provide an audio recording of your work and create an appropriate form of notation for each composition.

In Outcome 3 you will critically evaluate the development of your compositional ideas by producing a programme note for each of the three complete compositions. Your programme notes will include an explanation of style and structure. In addition, you will discuss your use of chosen musical elements such as, but not restricted to: melody, harmony, tonality, rhythm, arrangement, dynamics, articulation and timbre.

You will be required to undertake a large period of self-study and develop working practices that will allow you to complete the unit. Group work may be undertaken when learning and exploring new techniques as well as regular sessions with a tutor. Assessment will be the submission of your three composition exercises with supporting recordings and notation, plus the submission of your three complete compositions with recordings, notation and programme notes.

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

This unit has the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving* embedded in it. This means that when you achieve the unit, your Core Skills profile will also be updated to show you have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6.

This unit provides underpinning knowledge for *Music: Graded Unit 2* (SCQF level 8).