



## Higher National Unit Specification

### General information

**Unit title:** Music: Vocal Ensemble Singing (SCQF level 7)

**Unit code:** J0MR 34

**Superclass:** LH

**Publication date:** June 2018

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

### Unit purpose

This unit is designed to improve the learner's overall musicianship through singing in harmony with others. It will enable them to perform in a range of appropriate vocal group situations, displaying correct technique and approach apposite to genre. It equips learners with the skills to follow a vocal score, interpret basic conducting beating patterns and gestures to perform a variety of styles in a vocal ensemble.

This unit is aimed at learners who wish to develop musicianship through singing in a vocal ensemble.

### Outcomes

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

- 1 Interpret a variety of vocal ensemble scores.
- 2 Perform a varied repertoire of vocal music within a vocal ensemble.

### Credit points and level

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

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

**Unit title:** Music: Vocal Ensemble Singing (SCQF level 7)

### Recommended entry to the unit

Entry to this unit is at the discretion of the centre. Learners should have general competency on voice that will allow them to develop skills to the level required. It would be beneficial if learners also have experience playing in a group or ensemble situation.

It would be beneficial if learners also have good communication skills. These may be demonstrated by the achievement of Core Skill *Communication* at Higher level or by possession of Higher English and Communication or a suitable NQ *Communication* unit at SCQF level 6.

### 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

This is an optional unit included in the framework for HN Music. It is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes.

For learners undertaking the group award the assessment for this unit may be integrated with:

|         |                                                         |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| J01M 34 | <i>Music: Live Performance (SCQF level 7)</i>           |
| J0MP 34 | <i>Music: Stagecraft for Musicians (SCQF level 7)</i>   |
| J01L 34 | <i>Music Theory (SCQF level 7)</i>                      |
| J01N 35 | <i>Music: Live Performance (SCQF level 8)</i>           |
| J0N1 35 | <i>Music: Session Skills (SCQF level 8)</i>             |
| J0MK 34 | <i>Music: Instrumental Accompaniment (SCQF level 7)</i> |
| J0MX 34 | <i>Music Theory (SCQF level 8)</i>                      |

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: Vocal Ensemble Singing (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

Interpret a variety of vocal ensemble scores.

#### Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Pitch within vocal range
- ◆ Vocal score markings and directions

### Outcome 2

Perform a varied repertoire of vocal music within a vocal ensemble.

#### Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Posture and breath control
- ◆ Independent harmony
- ◆ Conducting directions (beating patterns and gestures)
- ◆ Varied vocal repertoire

### Evidence requirements for this unit

#### Outcome 1

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

- ◆ identify all pitches appropriate to learner's range.
- ◆ identify vocal score markings and directions to include a minimum of:
  - pp, p, mp, mf, f, ff, crescendo and decrescendo
  - accelerando, ritardando, allegro, moderato, adagio and largo
  - legato, staccato, marcato, tenuto and slurs
  - repeat signs, 1st and 2nd time endings, D.C. and D.S. indications and multiple rests

Written and/or oral evidence will be created under closed-book, supervised conditions at an appropriate point in the unit.

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

**Unit title:** Music: Vocal Ensemble Singing (SCQF level 7)

### Outcome 2

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can, as a member of a vocal ensemble, perform a varied programme of vocal music where they:

- ◆ demonstrate good posture and breath control.
- ◆ demonstrate independence in own part.
- ◆ sing melodies and rhythms with appropriate dynamics while maintaining a steady tempo.
- ◆ respond to basic conducting beating patterns and gestures including:
  - preparatory beats
  - releases
  - tempo changes
  - entrance cues
  - dynamic and other expressive gestures
  - perform music of a variety of styles using expression and phrasing appropriate for the work being performed. At least three styles will be covered.
  - perform with others, accurately and expressively, to achieve a refined ensemble sound including blend, balance and timbre.

A minimum of three pieces, lasting approximately 10 minutes in total will be performed. Each piece must have a minimum of three independent parts.

Performance evidence of video of the performance of three pieces will be retained on a high quality format for verification. In order to satisfy the evidence requirement that the learner has responded to respond to direction the conductor must be captured on video. The assessor will complete an assessor observation checklist.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Music: Vocal Ensemble Singing (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

The unit is designed to provide learners with opportunities to develop their vocal ensemble singing skills. The understanding of vocal harmony and an ability to harmonise contributes immeasurably to musicianship. Vocal ensemble music enriches the social, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual and creative musical development of learners. Participation in a vocal ensemble reinforces and promotes good study habits, teamwork, responsibility and positive self-esteem, and contributes beneficially to the greater community culture.

Learners should be encouraged to listen to a variety of vocal ensemble styles and performance techniques to help develop their understanding and performance.

The outcomes cover appropriate areas of musical knowledge, technical proficiency and performance skills.

**Outcome 1** — focuses on the music literacy skills required for vocal ensemble score reading.

**Outcome 2** — looks at the overall areas concerned with a vocal ensemble performance and the product is a performance, or series of performances covering three styles.

### Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

This unit is an optional within the HN Music Group Award. While all the units in the group award can be assessed individually it is anticipated that integration will occur between the outcomes in this unit with outcomes from the units *Music: Stagecraft for Musicians* (SCQF level 7), *Music: Live Performance* (SCQF level 7), *Music Theory* (SCQF level 7), *Music: Live Performance* (SCQF level 8) and can be used in conjunction with units such as *Music: Session Skills* (SCQF level 8) and *Music: Instrumental Accompaniment* (SCQF level 7). This is particularly useful when teaching large classes whereby an instrumental ensemble supports a vocal one with learners taking it in turns to perform in both groupings. Overall the unit can be delivered using a wide variety of ensemble combinations where vocal harmonisation plays a key role.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Music: Vocal Ensemble Singing (SCQF level 7)

Assessment for Outcome 2 will be undertaken when the learner has fully participated in sufficient rehearsals leading to successfully contributing to a vocal ensemble live performance.

Standard music theory textbooks and sight reading practice books could support delivery and assessment. Study of scores used for performance and the relevant pitches, score markings and directions contained within, could be useful in contextualising this knowledge.

### 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.

Assessment should be carried out under controlled conditions.

#### Outcome 1

This outcome may be integrated with *Music Theory* (SCQF level 7).

Individual assessment of this outcome should be carried out under closed-book supervised conditions.

Should there be ambiguity regarding a learner's response, oral questioning may be used to eliminate any doubt as to the learner's understanding. The assessor should note questions and responses.

#### Outcome 2

Assessment for this outcome will take the form of a live performance as part of a vocal ensemble. The assessor should use a checklist to record the above evidence requirements. The performance should be recorded on a high quality media format and kept as evidence for external verification.

The assessment for this unit may be integrated with *Music: Live Performance* (SCQF level 7), *Music Theory* (SCQF level 7) and *Music: Stagecraft for Musicians* (SCQF level 7) units for learners undertaking the group award.

Assessment for Outcome 2 requires the learner to participate in a vocal ensemble to perform a varied set of vocal music.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Music: Vocal Ensemble Singing (SCQF level 7)

### 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 and Information and Working with Others*.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills.

There will also be opportunities to develop critical listening skills, developed listening to other performers to create a blend of musical parts.

## History of changes to unit

| Version | Description of change | Date |
|---------|-----------------------|------|
|         |                       |      |
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## General information for learners

### Unit title: Music: Vocal Ensemble Singing (SCQF level 7)

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.

This unit is intended to improve your overall musicianship through singing in harmony with others. There are two outcomes in this unit where you will learn how to rehearse and perform in a vocal ensemble. You will develop the ability to follow a vocal score, interpret basic conducting beating patterns and gestures, maintain good posture and breathing, sing independently within a group context, and perform in a variety of styles.

In music performance the understanding of, and ability to, harmonise vocally has many benefits:

- ◆ Enriched social, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual and creative musical development
- ◆ Improved aural skills
- ◆ Increased employability as a performer
- ◆ Teamwork
- ◆ Positive self-esteem
- ◆ Enjoyment

There are two outcomes in this unit:

- 1 Interpret a variety of vocal ensemble scores.
- 2 Perform a varied repertoire of vocal music within a vocal ensemble.

Assessment for Outcome 1 takes the form of an assessment on musical directions for vocal ensemble under closed-book, controlled conditions.

Assessment for Outcome 2 will take the form of a live performance and will be undertaken when you have successfully rehearsed vocal ensemble material. You will successfully follow a vocal harmony score in this performance. Your assessor will capture the performance on video.

During this unit there will be opportunities for you to develop Core Skills such as *Communication, Numeracy and Information and Working with Others*.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills.

There will also be opportunities to develop critical listening skills, developed listening to other performers to create a blend of musical parts.