

# Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

## Performance Skills for the Actor (SCQF level 8)

**Unit code:** J87L 48  
**SCQF level:** 8 (32 SCQF credit points)  
**Valid from:** session 2024 to 2025

### **Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 1.0) May 2024**

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

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## **Unit purpose**

This unit enables learners to advance and develop their skills in acting, voice and movement. It provides opportunities for them to deepen their knowledge and skills of the acting process, including textual analysis, and encourages the physical awareness required in acting, voice and movement skills. Learners also reflect on and understand their own performance skills and develop their meta-skills.

We recommend the unit to learners who have completed Higher National Certificate (HNC) Acting and Performance at SCQF level 7 and who want to further advance and develop their acting skills.

Learners who complete the unit may wish to progress to further studies and seek work in the performing arts industry.

## Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 apply developed acting practices appropriate to styles required
- 2 understand vocal apparatus, application and care
- 3 demonstrate advanced vocal techniques in a creative context
- 4 understand movement styles, application and care
- 5 demonstrate advanced movement techniques in solo and group work
- 6 apply critical reflection and knowledge, highlighting awareness of skillset and practices

## Evidence requirements

Learners must provide the following evidence:

### Outcome 1

Learners apply developed acting practices appropriate to styles required. They must:

- ◆ provide evidence of research relating to their chosen acting practices and methods
- ◆ demonstrate their understanding and practically apply acting practices in workshops and rehearsals
- ◆ apply knowledge of acting methods in relation to text, stimulus and character development across all practices
- ◆ effectively rehearse a solo performance project, to include two vocal pieces and one movement piece, applying methods, knowledge and skills in a creative context
- ◆ perform a solo performance project, to include two vocal pieces and one movement piece, lasting a minimum of 6 minutes and demonstrating contrasting vocal and physical characterisation appropriate to a creative concept

### Outcome 2

Learners understand vocal apparatus, application and care. They must provide:

- ◆ a diagnostic of their own vocal qualities, vocal apparatus and areas that impact positively and negatively on their vocal and speech production
- ◆ evidence of warm-up exercises designed to enhance and protect the voice; to include a minimum of two contrasting warm-up plans to prepare the voice for two different performance spaces, styles or characterisations
- ◆ evidence of a vocal practice designed to enhance confidence and ability, using their own authentic voice and addressing areas of concern

### **Outcome 3**

Learners demonstrate advanced vocal techniques, confidence and dexterity across a range of texts. They must:

- ◆ participate in a minimum of two contrasting group performance events, applying vocal characterisation and intention in a creative context appropriate to style and method
- ◆ perform a solo voice programme, lasting between 4 and 6 minutes, demonstrating application and understanding of contrasting texts and/or stimuli, one of which should include an authentic or non-dramatic vocal

### **Outcome 4**

Learners understand movement styles, application and care. They must:

- ◆ explore and demonstrate a minimum of two movement styles, showing adequate exploration of each movement style, incorporating appropriate steps, formations, gestures, dynamics, and timings
- ◆ demonstrate safe practice for movement work. This must involve learners having an awareness of their own individual needs and requirements for movement, and making sure that safe practice is adhered to at all times. This must include executing appropriate warm-ups and cool-downs, and monitoring and managing the body throughout all movement

### **Outcome 5**

Learners demonstrate advanced movement techniques in solo and group work. They must:

- ◆ plan and prepare for a solo movement piece. Learners must select a theme, idea or stimulus for their solo movement sequence. They must structure their movement piece and include any movement components and compositional devices that enhance their performance
- ◆ perform a solo movement piece lasting a minimum of 2 minutes. Learners must demonstrate clear articulation of movement components and compositional devices
- ◆ work in a group of at least three learners to collaborate, adapt, plan, prepare and produce a movement piece. The piece should be a minimum of 3 minutes, but can be longer if integrated with another unit

## **Outcome 6**

Learners apply critical skills and knowledge, highlighting awareness of skillset and practices. They must:

- ◆ produce an e-portfolio that critically analyses and evaluates own skills development and highlights areas for development across the three disciplines of acting, voice and movement
- ◆ summarise key knowledge and skills gained through the exploration of acting practices
- ◆ identify own vocal qualities and areas of strengths and weaknesses in voice work
- ◆ identify and discuss personal strengths and weaknesses throughout the solo and group movement pieces, from the beginning of the process to their final performance. Learners should highlight any challenges they faced and how they overcame them. They should also highlight the skills they have learned throughout the process
- ◆ evidence understanding of the different acting practices
- ◆ evaluate their own solo performance, as it evidences the acting, voice and movement skills they have developed
- ◆ conclude their portfolio with a reflective statement, presented orally or in writing, highlighting their personal strengths and weaknesses, and strategies for development

The standard of evidence should be consistent with the SCQF level of the unit.

## Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

Knowledge	Skills
<p><b>Outcome 1</b>                      Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ key acting practices, as required in rehearsals and performances</li> <li>◆ key practitioner theories and methods relating to performance style, characterisation and textual analysis</li> <li>◆ appropriate vocal and physical choices in the creation of character, role or stimulus</li> <li>◆ effective application of rehearsal techniques and practice in the development of a character or role</li> <li>◆ how to communicate character and concepts in a performance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcome 1</b>                      Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ research key acting practices effectively</li> <li>◆ engage creatively with the practice, exploring text, stimulus and characterisation</li> <li>◆ explore key acting practices and styles in workshops and rehearsals</li> <li>◆ creatively apply acting choices to a performance</li> <li>◆ create a performance portfolio, demonstrating skills acquired</li> <li>◆ positively engage with rehearsals</li> <li>◆ communicate ideas effectively in a performance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 2</b>                      Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ vocal apparatus, application and care, including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— key breathing techniques</li> <li>— warm-up techniques</li> <li>— laryngeal muscles and tensions application</li> <li>— posture and alignment</li> <li>— core strength, supporting resonance and energy</li> <li>— articulatory areas for vocal advancement</li> <li>— overall vocal consolidation</li> <li>— own natural voice areas of strength and needs for improvement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcome 2</b>                      Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ demonstrate a clear understanding of their own vocal qualities and areas for development</li> <li>◆ demonstrate an awareness of vocal health and care</li> <li>◆ demonstrate regular participation in vocal warm-ups, applying advanced techniques</li> <li>◆ apply practice to demonstrate vocal consolidation across a range of materials</li> <li>◆ demonstrate vocal confidence and progression in presentational materials, applying authentic voice</li> </ul>

Knowledge	Skills
<p><b>Outcome 3</b>                      Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the application of the vocal skills and techniques they need to meet different performance requirements</li> <li>◆ vocal skills and techniques, including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— use of dynamics</li> <li>— characterisation</li> <li>— accents (as appropriate)</li> <li>— mood, atmosphere, expression</li> <li>— connection with character and/or stimuli</li> <li>— textual understanding, analysis and vocal intentions</li> <li>— contrasting performative settings to support natural, intimate and dramatic vocal applications</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcome 3</b>                      Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ demonstrate a wide range of vocal styles and applications</li> <li>◆ apply vocal energy in performance</li> <li>◆ demonstrate expressiveness and fluency in vocal practice</li> <li>◆ create mood and atmosphere appropriate to texts</li> <li>◆ demonstrate vocal characterisation in a minimum of two contrasting performance styles</li> <li>◆ create a solo programme of work demonstrating use of natural and/or intimate voice in a minimum of one text application</li> <li>◆ demonstrate an understanding and application of the use of the voice in a minimum of two contrasting spaces</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outcome 4</b>                      Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ movement styles</li> <li>◆ movement components that differentiate the movement form or style</li> <li>◆ appropriate steps, formations, gestures and timings</li> <li>◆ safe practice for movement work</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcome 4</b>                      Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ explore and practise movement styles</li> <li>◆ demonstrate movement styles</li> <li>◆ demonstrate safe practice for movement work</li> </ul>

Knowledge	Skills
<p><b>Outcome 5</b> Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ movement themes, ideas or stimuli for solo and group work</li><li>◆ structure and sequence for a movement piece</li><li>◆ movement components and compositional devices to include in the movement piece</li><li>◆ working as a solo performer to plan, prepare, and produce a movement piece</li><li>◆ working in a group to collaborate, adapt, plan, prepare and produce a movement piece</li><li>◆ how to respond to feedback</li><li>◆ their personal strengths and weaknesses</li></ul>	<p><b>Outcome 5</b> Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ plan and prepare for a solo movement piece</li><li>◆ perform a solo movement piece</li><li>◆ collaborate, adapt, plan and prepare for a group movement piece</li><li>◆ perform a group movement piece</li></ul>



Knowledge	Skills
<p><b>Outcome 6</b>                      Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ self-evaluation techniques, and reflection in workshops and rehearsals that is appropriate to performance skills development</li> <li>◆ the application of key practitioner methods and techniques on the development of vocal, physical and acting skills</li> <li>◆ the process of documenting skills development</li> <li>◆ techniques required across voice, movement and acting to produce an effective performance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Outcome 6</b>                      Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ reflect on performance skills, demonstrating awareness of development, and identify areas for improvement across acting, voice and movement</li> <li>◆ discuss knowledge gained across acting, voice and movement workshops, in relation to performances</li> <li>◆ identify and discuss personal strengths and weaknesses throughout the solo and group movement pieces, including any challenges faced and skills gained throughout the process</li> <li>◆ evidence understanding of the differences between acting methods, and highlight key principles applied in rehearsals</li> <li>◆ evaluate the solo performance project effectively</li> <li>◆ document skills development and identify areas for development</li> </ul>

## Meta-skills

Throughout this unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the acting and performance sector.

### Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing:
  - remaining focused throughout rehearsals and performances
- ◆ integrity:
  - being a reliable member of a cast
  - respect for others
  - punctuality and attendance at rehearsal
- ◆ adapting:
  - working with others as part of an ensemble
  - taking direction
  - developing materials
  - reacting to audiences
- ◆ initiative:
  - creating and developing ideas

### Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating:
  - interacting through devising
  - performing
  - presenting
- ◆ feeling:
  - empathy with, and respect for, fellow cast members
  - empathy with characters
  - empathy with a story
  - inclusivity in practice
- ◆ collaborating:
  - working in a team
  - being part of a cast
  - taking direction

## **Innovation**

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ creativity:
  - being artistic in devising, rehearsing, and developing character and storylines
- ◆ sense-making:
  - researching
  - analysing text
- ◆ curiosity:
  - learning about new materials and stimuli
  - characterisation
- ◆ critical thinking:
  - reviewing and reflecting on work of self and others

## **Literacies**

Throughout this unit, learners have opportunities to develop their literacy skills.

## **Communication**

Learners develop communication skills by working with others, collaborating with a team, being part of an ensemble, and devising, presenting and performing.

## **Digital**

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by researching, communicating with others in a group or cast, and preparing an e-portfolio.

## **Delivery of unit**

This is a mandatory unit in the Higher National Diploma (HND) Acting and Performance.

We recommend that this unit runs throughout the duration of the HND Acting and Performance course.

There are opportunities to integrate and cross-assess with the other mandatory units:

- ◆ Performance Skills: Advanced Application (SCQF level 8)
- ◆ Industry and Audition Advanced Skills (SCQF level 8)

There are also opportunities to integrate and cross-assess with optional units.

## **Additional guidance**

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

### **Content and context for this unit**

#### **Apply developed acting practices appropriate to styles required (outcome 1)**

Learners participate in a series of workshops and rehearsals that demonstrate and enhance their knowledge and understanding of acting methods through application to text. You should integrate this with Performance Skills: Advanced Application (SCQF level 8), so that learners can apply acting skills to stage-based work, devised work and screen-based work. These practices must be contrasting in style, allowing learners the opportunity to expand their performance vocabulary. You should particularly focus on learners' choice of vocal and physical qualities appropriate to their character, and encourage learners to expand their skills using techniques in voice and movement. Acting practices might include those of key practitioners, such as Stanislavski, Brecht, Bogart, Meisner, Uta Hagen, classical or other key practitioners, as appropriate.

Learners should apply the principles in a solo performance programme, which includes a minimum of three performance pieces (two vocal and one movement). You should encourage learners to be autonomous in their choice of texts and apply techniques that relate to those choices. They should focus on practical rehearsal techniques.

The solo performance programme should be a minimum of 6 minutes and showcase a portrait of the learner as an actor or performer, with a range of performative skills and a creative mindset. Learners' solo performance portfolios should bring together skills they have developed across all three disciplines. The portfolios are a creative composition that allows learners to engage in a dramaturgical process, exploring and presenting themselves as unique, creative artists.

You can integrate this outcome with outcomes 3 and 5. You can also integrate it with work produced in Performance Skills: Advanced Application, and with work in audition preparation for Industry and Audition Advanced Skills.

#### **Understand vocal apparatus, application and care (outcome 2)**

The vocal diagnostic in this outcome should be practical and encourage critical self and/or peer reflection on vocal areas, including:

- ◆ throat focus
- ◆ vocal qualities
- ◆ tonal differentiation
- ◆ vocal energy linked to breathwork
- ◆ any outstanding areas of concern

You can link these to articulatory, pitch, tonal and/or other areas that learners might need to address to expand and develop their vocal production to performance requirements. You should encourage learners to listen to their own vocal practice, and research new methods

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and techniques designed to enhance their performance knowledge and ability. You should also encourage them to engage in reflective commentary on these processes.

Contrasting warm-up plans can reflect the different vocal focus required for two different performance spaces, types and/or energies, and learners can document or record them in portfolio practice.

You should discuss texts and the performative requirement for industry-related activity, for example:

- ◆ audio and podcasting
- ◆ performative vocals for radio drama
- ◆ stage and screen presenting and performing
- ◆ voice work to sell, entertain and inform across a range of media
- ◆ exercises and materials to enable them to work with natural, intimate, informational, as well as the dramatic, voice

### **Demonstrate advanced vocal techniques in a creative context (outcome 3)**

Learners should work across a range of texts to demonstrate different vocal applications for performance events and a minimum of two contrasting performance spaces. Texts should include materials for natural, intimate, presentational and dramatic voice, and can be integrated with project work associated with other relevant units.

Learners should demonstrate effective research and delivery for a minimum of two contrasting dramatic characterisations. You can integrate this outcome with outcome 1, and you can also integrate it with the other mandatory units, Performance Skills: Advanced Application, and Industry and Audition Advanced Skills.

### **Understand movement styles, application and care (outcome 4)**

You should introduce learners to movement styles and explore and demonstrate a minimum of two. You can select any two styles, such as (but not limited to):

- ◆ contact improvisation
- ◆ butoh
- ◆ tai chi
- ◆ melodrama
- ◆ mime
- ◆ mask work
- ◆ clowning
- ◆ commedia dell'arte
- ◆ stage fighting
- ◆ contemporary movement
- ◆ choreography

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Learners should demonstrate an understanding of styles through taking part in class exercises where they experience and practise each style and its components. The style they choose may link to other units, including Performance Skills: Advanced Application.

### **Demonstrate advanced movement techniques in solo and group work (outcome 5)**

Learners must perform two movement pieces — a solo piece and a group movement piece. Learners can choose the theme or ideas themselves, or be directed by you. The movement pieces may link into character work from acting and highlighting a character's emotional journey, thoughts and personality, or they can be more stylised and based on dance or physical theatre.

### **Apply critical reflection and knowledge, highlighting awareness of skillset and practices (outcome 6)**

Learners must produce a creative e-portfolio that documents their learning journey and growth across acting, voice and movement in the unit, and with any work integrated with Performance Skills: Advanced Application. Learners should document their practice, critically reflecting on their growth, research, practice and development. They should cover how they are processing and applying their performance concepts and techniques across the three disciplines, and building them into a cohesive artistic process.

Learners' portfolios should include reflective content and document their journey, with particular focus on the skills and knowledge gained throughout the unit, including information on choice of character, rehearsal techniques applied, and the effectiveness of these choices. In reflecting on their skills, learners should highlight any challenges they faced and how they overcame them, and the skills they have learned throughout the process.

You should encourage learners to document their character research, practice and studies to justify acting, vocal and movement choices, and characterisation.

Learners should aim for a visual presentation and explore the use of video and audio blogs, rehearsal footage, creative documentation, and oral presentation. The e-portfolios should be live documents learners use throughout the unit and update regularly as the unit continues. Learners should conclude their e-portfolios with a reflective statement, presented orally or in writing, highlighting personal strengths and weaknesses and strategies for development.

The e-portfolio can be a maximum of 2,000 words. There is no minimum word count applied, however you should ensure that learners have fulfilled the criteria required and their work is succinct, robust and sound. If presented orally, the presentation should last a maximum of 10 minutes.

We recommend the e-portfolio or blog as a sustainable resource for documenting and recording all practice and critical reflection. There are a range of different digital platforms, apps and exemplars that support this method of practice and activity. Your centre may work with a preferred design or platform.

## **Approaches to assessment**

You should use your professional judgement when observing learners in class, rehearsals and performances, to ensure they evidence all knowledge and skills. You can use an assessor's checklist to record your assessment of each outcome.

### **Apply developed acting practices appropriate to styles required (outcome 1)**

Learners apply developed acting practices appropriate to styles required, through workshops, rehearsals and performances. They create a performance portfolio in which they evidence research and understanding of the skills they have gained. Learners' performance portfolios can also contribute to outcome 6 of the unit.

Learners perform in a solo performance project lasting a minimum of 6 minutes. This must include two vocal pieces and one movement piece.

You assess this outcome by observing learners' work in class and rehearsals. You also observe the performance of the solo performance project.

### **Understand vocal apparatus, application and care (outcome 2)**

Learners demonstrate their understanding of their own vocal apparatus, application and care, through a diagnostic of their own vocal qualities and warm-up exercises designed to enhance and protect the voice. This should include a minimum of two contrasting warm-up plans to prepare the voice for two different performance spaces, styles or characterisations.

You assess this outcome through on-going observations of learners' voice work and warm-ups.

### **Demonstrate advanced vocal techniques in a creative context (outcome 3)**

Learners demonstrate advanced vocal techniques, confidence and dexterity across a range of texts in a minimum of two contrasting group performance events in two contrasting spaces, and in a solo voice programme. The group performances may integrate with other performances in mandatory and other optional units. The material learners select for their performances should allow them to demonstrate their vocal range, energy, expressiveness and fluency. The solo programme should last between 4 and 6 minutes.

You assess this outcome by observing the two performances in two contrasting spaces and by observing the solo voice programme.

### **Understand movement styles, application and care (outcome 4)**

Learners should demonstrate an understanding of movement styles through taking part in class exercises, workshops and rehearsals.

You assess this outcome by observing class work, workshops and rehearsals.



### **Demonstrate advanced movement techniques in solo and group work (outcome 5)**

Learners demonstrate their movement techniques in a solo piece and a group movement piece. The solo movement piece should be a minimum of 2 minutes. The group movement piece should be a minimum of 3 minutes, but can be longer if integrated with another unit.

You assess this outcome by observing learners' two performances.

### **Apply critical reflection and knowledge, highlighting awareness of skillset and practices (outcome 6)**

Learners present their knowledge for assessment through an e-portfolio. You assess the portfolio for:

- ◆ a summary of key knowledge and skills gained through the exploration of acting practices
- ◆ identification of own vocal qualities and areas of strength and weaknesses in voice work
- ◆ identification of personal strengths and weaknesses throughout the solo and group movement pieces
- ◆ understanding of the different acting practices
- ◆ evaluation of their own solo performance
- ◆ a conclusion with a reflective statement, highlighting their personal strengths and weaknesses, and strategies for development

You assess this outcome through learners' portfolios.

## **Equality and inclusion**

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You must consider the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and those with additional support needs is available on the [assessment arrangements web page](#).

## Information for learners

### Performance Skills for the Actor (SCQF level 8)

This information explains:

- ◆ what the unit is about
- ◆ what you should know or be able to do before you start
- ◆ what you need to do during the unit
- ◆ opportunities for further learning and employment

### Unit information

This unit enables you to develop and enhance your skills in acting, voice and movement. It provides opportunities for you to develop and integrate these skills in the acting process, allowing you to perform in a range of materials.

We recommend the unit if you have completed Higher National Certificate (HNC) Acting and Performance at SCQF level 7.

During the unit, you:

- ◆ explore acting practices
- ◆ explore texts and stimulus materials
- ◆ apply your knowledge to further develop your skills as an actor
- ◆ learn about your voice and speech production
- ◆ learn about the importance of physical care, to ensure you can warm up and prepare the body for rehearsal and performance requirements
- ◆ learn about movement styles and application
- ◆ engage creatively in practical exercises, rehearsals and performance opportunities
- ◆ explore and perform in a portfolio of solo work, integrating your skills in acting, voice and movement

You develop meta-skills in self-management, social intelligence and innovation, to enhance your employability.

When you finish the unit, you can progress to further studies in the performing arts and to working in the performing arts industry.

# Administrative information

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**Superclass:** LC

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## History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: please check [SQA's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.