

Unit 30: Pop Music in Practice

Unit code:	A/600/6957
QCF Level 3:	BTEC National
Credit value:	10
Guided learning hours:	60

● Aim and purpose

This unit is designed to enable learners to expand their knowledge of pop music grounded in practical experience of rehearsing and performing relevant works. Learners will know different styles and genres of pop music and how pop music has developed through different eras. Learners will then be able to perform their own compositions and works of others relative to the styles and genres studied.

● Unit introduction

The term 'pop music' is used here to refer to the music, predominantly songs, that have formed the backbone of the music recording industry from 1950 to the present day. It includes the many and varied forms of blues, rock 'n' roll, rock, country and western, soul, rap, dance, urban and new wave styles of music. It covers the common recorded and broadcast formats, as well as live gigs and concerts. It does not include classical music, world/folk music or modern music, though it has influenced and been influenced by these forms.

Pop music is an important expressive art form in contemporary culture. It is rooted in the behaviours of contemporary society. It provides a soundtrack to the modern world, reflecting and commenting on the ongoing human condition.

This unit will give learners considering a profession in music a thorough grounding in pop music. The unit will enable learners to engage with the profession from a position of knowledge and experience and will enhance their employability. It will also be of interest to learners seeking to broaden their knowledge and experience of pop music and to understand and appreciate the pop music they hear all around them.

This unit will give learners practical experience of rehearsing and performing relevant and original works. Learners will, as a result, be familiar with the key characteristics and creators of pop music styles.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Know different genres of pop music
- 2 Know how pop music developed
- 3 Be able to perform original pop music
- 4 Be able to perform pop music as part of an ensemble.

Unit content

1 Know different genres of pop music

1950s–60s genres and styles: eg blues, dance music, popular ballads, balladeers, novelty songs, R&B, rock, skiffle, rockabilly, rock 'n' roll

1960s–1970s genres and styles: eg Merseybeat, Motown, California sound, soul, folk rock, country and western, prog rock, psychedelia, reggae

1970s–1990s genres and styles: eg electronica, glam rock, heavy metal, soft rock, pop ballad, girl power, boy/girl bands, Britpop northern soul, grunge, punk, hip hop, garage

2000s genres and styles: eg urban, pop/rock bands, internet-based indie artists, contemporary R&B, Electronic Dance Music (EDM)

2 Know how pop music developed

Musical elements: song structure, harmony, texture, timbre

Format: eg A-side/B-side singles, LPs, extended length rock songs, concept albums, instrumental rock, music video, online digital formats

Technological/production: eg mono/stereo formats, wall of sound (Phil Spector), studio albums, 'garage' sound (Buddy Holly, White Stripes), high production values (Quincy Jones, Brian Eno), scratching, sampling

3 Be able to perform original pop music

Styles: any from 1950s–60s, 1960s–1970s, 1970s–1990s, 2000s; original composition appropriate to ability; stylistic accuracy

4 Be able to perform pop music as part of an ensemble

Styles: selection of cover versions appropriate to ability; stylistic accuracy

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 describe, with reference to examples, styles of pop music [IE, RL]	M1 explain, with reference to examples, styles of pop music	D1 comment critically, with reference to examples, styles of pop music
P2 describe, with reference to examples, how pop music developed [IE, RL]	M2 explain, with reference to examples, how pop music developed	D2 comment critically, with reference to examples, on how pop music developed
P3 perform original pop music with errors that do not detract from the overall performance [IE, SM]	M3 perform original pop music competently and accurately	D3 perform original pop music with artistic flair and interpretation
P4 perform a variety of pieces as part of an ensemble with errors that do not detract from the overall performance. [TW, EP]	M4 perform a variety of pieces as part of an ensemble competently and accurately.	D4 perform a variety of pieces as part of an ensemble with artistic flair and interpretation.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

The unit requires learners to develop a useful understanding of pop music from the 1950s to the present day. Delivery will most likely take the form, certainly initially, of tutor-led dissemination of information, probably in a 'lecture' or classroom setting. Tutors will need to ensure that learners are equipped with standard music vocabulary and terms in order to be able to understand the music with which they engage. In addition, extensive use should be made of exemplar recordings and lead sheets/scores from each of the periods, supporting learners' developing aural and score-reading skills. Learners should be provided with opportunities, and be encouraged to discuss, develop and assimilate the unit content. This might be through extended questions and answer sessions (tutor and learner-led), seminars, discussions, learner led presentations, etc.

The unit focuses on specific periods covering the early development of pop music but it may be helpful to include reference to contemporary examples that use similar techniques or forms with which learners are familiar, eg music for current films and television programmes, advertisements – both original and re-use of existing music and music for computer games. Similarly, learners should be encouraged to listen to radio stations playing relevant music and practise applying their emerging knowledge to what they hear.

It is important to note that this unit does not seek to analyse the social and cultural aspects of the relationship between pop music and society. This will take place in the *Unit 19: Music and Society*. Learning outcome 2 deals mainly with the musical and technological developments in pop music.

Group listening, analysis and discussion of accessible relevant examples of music will support learners, but the key is to enable learners to have a hands-on experience of the music being studied.

Ideally, learners will have some say in the pieces chosen for performance, drawing on their developing knowledge of the relevant repertoire. The scale and scope of the chosen works can be modest or more adventurous, depending on the resources available and the ability range and tenacity of learners. The tutor will need to ensure that the chosen works allow all learners the possibility of meeting the distinction criteria.

Learners should be encouraged to identify and make use of any relevant music they are using for other purposes, such as graded exams, or through participation in external music events and pieces written for the composition units: there is no reason why such material should not enable learners to achieve learning outcomes 3 and 4, subject to it being assessable.

Resources may require the tutor to work with larger groups, in which case appropriate arrangements of songs for larger forces may be used, as long as these still allow each learner, potentially, to achieve D3 and D4.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
General introduction to the unit.
Assignment 1: Article – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2
Write an article for a music magazine 'The development of pop music from 1950 to the current day'.
Definitions and descriptions of the genres and styles.
Examples that best highlight aspects of development:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• song structure• harmony• texture• timbre (relate to technological developments)• format• production• technological developments.
Research into article writing – formats and styles.
Article writing.
Presentations.
Feedback.
Assignment 2: Performance of Original Works – P3, M3, D3
Songwriting workshops with composers to develop awareness of style.
Supervised rehearsals.
Performances: video recordings
Feedback.
Assignment 3: Ensemble Performance – P4, M4, D4
Guided research on specific pieces for stylistic accuracy.
Workshops with recordings/external groups to develop awareness of style.
Supervised rehearsals.
Performances: video recordings
Feedback.

Assessment

Learning outcomes 1 and 2 can be evidenced as one article as suggested in the outline learning plan. This work may lend itself to different phases of assessment. It could be broken up into a series of articles exploring each era one by one. Tutors should be careful not to assess based on the presentation of the article but on the validity of the content.

To address learning outcome 3, learners are required to compose (individually or as part of a group) original music in styles popular during at least two of the specified period from the unit content and perform their pieces either solo, accompanied or as part of an ensemble.

Learning outcome 4 requires learners to perform at least four pieces, one from each of the eras listed in the unit content, essentially stylistically accurate 'cover versions' as part of an ensemble.

In the outline learning plan the performances are assessed separately, but could be mixed depending on the needs of the centre. It is important that learning outcomes 1 and 2 are completed before performances begin as this will help provide a thorough understanding of the stylistic requirements and intricacies of the pieces.

For P1, learners will describe the genres and styles of pop music from the different eras. At M1, learners will give details of the range of genres and styles from the different eras, giving specific examples and explaining how they developed. At D1, learners will comment critically on the different genres and styles, giving examples and making links between the different eras and the development of the genres, noting the similarities and differences. The examples given can relate to those covered in class or extend beyond that: the intention here is to enable learners to make sense of the unit content by applying it to examples of their own choosing.

For P2, learners will describe the development of pop music, covering the range of factors including musical elements, format and technological/production changes. At M2, learners will explain these factors, giving reasons for the changes and citing specific examples. At D2, learners will comment critically on the development of the musical elements, format and technological/production changes, making links between the factors, giving a comprehensive picture of how pop music has evolved. Learners should be able to identify and then justify the most important developments.

To achieve P3, learners are required to compose and perform pieces in contrasting styles drawn from at least two of the eras listed in the unit content. At this level, a performance that is stylistically accurate but with minor flaws would achieve a pass.

To achieve M3, learners will need to produce solid, competent compositions and performances with no noticeable flaws. This needs to be stylistically accurate but may lack the flair and expressive qualities that would achieve a distinction.

To achieve D3, learners are required to produce performances of composed pieces that are stylistically accurate, technically accurate and demonstrate good expression and flair. An energetic and enthusiastic performance is required.

To achieve P4, learners are required to play a variety of 'cover versions' as part of an ensemble each of which will retain the essence of the original but may have minor errors in the actual performance.

To achieve M4, each learner will need to produce a solid, competent performance with no noticeable flaws. This needs to be stylistically correct but may lack the flair and expressive qualities that would achieve a distinction.

To achieve D4, learners are required to produce performances of pieces that are stylistically and technically accurate, and which demonstrate good expression and flair. An energetic and enthusiastic performance is required.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Pearson assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1 P2, M2, D2	Article	You are a writer for a music magazine.	A magazine article(s) – ‘the development of pop music from the 1950s to the present day’.
P3, M3, D3	Performance of Original Works	You are working as a member of an ensemble playing original material.	A performance of your individual or group compositions (at least two pieces).
P4, M4, D4	Ensemble Performance	You are working as a member of an ensemble for live entertainment at a venue.	A performance of four stylistically accurate cover versions.

Links to other BTEC units

This unit forms part of the BTEC Music and Music Technology sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Music and Music Technology suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
		Contemporary Songwriting Techniques
		Music and Society
		Music Performance Techniques
		Music Performance Session Styles
		Singing Techniques and Performance
		Working and Developing as a Musical Ensemble

Essential resources

Rehearsal space for both individual and group sessions is vitally important. It is not fundamentally important that all learners rehearse at the same time so intelligent timetabling of a small number of spaces could be possible. However, opportunities for peer evaluation may be missed and the tutor needs to observe and guide rehearsals.

Listening materials and an area for individual study should be available. Trips to live events should also be organised taking account of age requirements at venues. Video recording equipment will be required for the provision of evidence relating to learning outcomes 3 and 4.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

It would be particularly useful to try and make links with a local act, not only to give learners a vocational insight to working musicians but to allow a focus on style, genre or act. Links with any professional musician or personnel in the music industry may be useful for learner-led interviews.

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	researching for and writing articles
Creative thinkers	writing original pop songs
Reflective learners	writing articles
Team workers	rehearsing in an ensemble participating in workshops
Self-managers	rehearsing
Effective participators	rehearsing in an ensemble participating in workshops.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	choosing their own repertoire
Creative thinkers	presenting their work via articles and formal presentation
Reflective learners	watching video evidence of their performances and evaluating their work
Team workers	choosing repertoire as a group.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
ICT – Find and select information	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching for article writing
Access, search for, select and use ICT-based information and evaluate its fitness for purpose	carrying out multiple search criteria for analysis of pieces for performance
ICT – Develop, present and communicate information	
Enter, develop and format information independently to suit its meaning and purpose including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ text and tables ◆ images ◆ numbers ◆ records 	developing and formatting articles in Publisher
Bring together information to suit content and purpose	presenting information from articles as a summary (PowerPoint)
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	presenting information from articles as a summary (PowerPoint)
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	presenting from articles
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching and writing articles and programme notes
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	researching and writing articles and programme notes.