



## Higher National Unit Specification

### General information

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

**Unit code:** J0MN 34

**Superclass:** LF

**Publication date:** August 2018

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 02

### Unit purpose

This unit is designed to enable the learner to develop the skills required by a songwriter. This will be achieved through listening and researching the work of existing songwriters or songwriter teams. Learners will examine the work of existing songwriters to gain an understanding of the techniques and key features of their work. Learners will then develop their own songwriting skills through undertaking the process of songwriting using techniques that they have researched. This unit is intended for learners with knowledge of music theory and competence on a musical instrument who wish to gain a broad understanding of the songwriting process.

### Outcomes

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

- 1 Describe the key musical features and techniques of a songwriter or songwriting team.
- 2 Write a song employing key features and techniques from study of a songwriter or songwriting team.

### 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: Songwriting (SCQF level 7)

### Recommended entry to the unit

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, learners would be recommended to have good communication skills. These may be demonstrated by the achievement of Core Skill *Communication* at Higher level or by possession of Higher English (SCQF level 6). It would be beneficial if learners have completed, or are working towards the *Music Theory* (SCQF level 7) and *Music First Study: Instrument* (SCQF level 7) or *Music First Study: Composition* (SCQF level 7) units.

### 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 5

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

### Context for delivery

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

### 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: Songwriting (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

Describe the key musical features and techniques of a songwriter or songwriting team.

#### Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Melody
- ◆ Harmony
- ◆ Rhythm
- ◆ Lyrical devices
- ◆ Structure
- ◆ Critical listening
- ◆ Recognising key musical features and techniques

### Outcome 2

Write a song employing key features and techniques from study of a songwriter or songwriting team.

#### Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Musical concepts and devices
- ◆ Melodic construction
- ◆ Harmonic content
- ◆ Lyric writing
- ◆ Creative development

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

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

### Evidence requirements for this unit

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

#### Outcome 1

Considering the work of a chosen songwriter/songwriting team:

- ◆ describe melodic techniques of the songwriter/songwriting team.
- ◆ describe harmonic techniques of the songwriter/songwriting team.
- ◆ describe rhythmic elements of the songwriter/songwriting team.
- ◆ describe lyrical devices of the songwriter/songwriting team.
- ◆ describe song structures of the songwriter/songwriting team.

Written and/or oral evidence in the form of a report or presentation will be created under open-book conditions at appropriate points in the unit. Audio or a link to an audio clip for each of the evidence requirements above must be included.

#### Outcome 2

Learners will write a song employing at least three of the following elements from the songwriter/songwriting team studied in Outcome 1:

- ◆ Melodic construction
- ◆ Harmonic content
- ◆ Rhythmic elements
- ◆ Lyrical devices
- ◆ Song structure

The song will have a minimum of voice and harmonic accompaniment on the recording and be a minimum of 2 minutes 30 seconds in duration. An audio or video recording of the song will be retained in a high quality format for verification.

Product evidence, in the form of a recording of the song, will be generated under open-book conditions at appropriate points in the unit.

The outcomes of this unit should be assessed separately and sequentially.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Music: Songwriting (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 is intended to provide learners with an understanding of the skills involved in songwriting by studying the work of successful songwriters or songwriting teams. They will then put the features and techniques into practice as part of their own songwriting. The term 'songwriting team' applies to songwriting partnerships of two or more individuals.

Outcome 1 involves written and/or oral work on the features and techniques of a chosen songwriter or songwriting team. It is recommended that a sufficient range of work by the chosen songwriter/team is studied to ensure that the techniques derived from study are 'signature' techniques for the chosen songwriter/team. It is recommended that contrasting songs by the songwriter should also be studied and in this context, the word 'contrasting' can apply to style, mood, tempo, melodic content, rhythmic content, harmonic content and/or lyrical subject matter.

'Melodic techniques' refers to the songwriter's use of melodic devices such as particular scales and intervals. A basic knowledge of music theory would be desirable here, particularly of scales and intervals, to discuss these devices appropriately.

'Harmonic techniques' refers to chords accompanying the melody. Learners should refer to chord numbers such as I, ii, IV, V, etc. when discussing harmony and, where appropriate, discuss the effect that chords have on the overall effectiveness of the songwriting. Chords should be discussed in relation to the melody showing how they support and enhance melody.

'Rhythmic elements' refers to the rhythmic content of the melody and harmony. Tempo, meter and time signatures will be discussed. Note values should be included such as quarter notes, eighth notes, etc. Traditional terms such as 'crotchet' and 'quaver' would be equally valid. Effective use of rhythm in melody and harmony should be identified and described.

'Lyrical devices' can be drawn from, but not be limited to the use of metaphor, extended metaphor, personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration, point of view and cliché. Instances where these devices occur in songwriting should be identified and described in terms of their effectiveness.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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

'Song structures' should be identified in terms such as 'ABABB', 'AAAAA', etc. The effectiveness of the structure should be discussed. Some structures may defy such identification — awareness of this would be acknowledged in these instances.

Outcome 2 requires learners to employ at least three key features and techniques studied in the previous outcome in the production of a song. As such, this outcome should be approached after Outcome 1.

At least three of the five following elements are required to be applied to songwriting in order to demonstrate an awareness of the techniques studied in outcome one. The following should serve as a guide:

'Melodic construction' would be applied using scales and intervals appropriate to the techniques of the songwriter studied in Outcome 1. Effective use of intervals may include creative use of large leaps, small steps or repetition on the same note, all where appropriate to demonstrate awareness of the techniques studied earlier.

'Harmonic content' would employ the use of chords accompanying the melody. The number and sequence of chords used would use chords to create a similar effect to the songwriters studied for Outcome 1, as discussed above.

'Rhythmic elements' would employ the appropriate use of rhythm in the harmony and melody.

Some though not all of the 'lyrical devices' discussed in Outcome 1 should be employed in the song. It will depend on the lyrical style of the songwriter studied earlier. Where the learner uses three elements other than lyrical devices from the songwriter studied it would be suggested that at least one of following is used: metaphor, personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration or point of view. Cliché should, in the main, be avoided although there are some occasions where it can be used effectively and it is at the discretion of the tutor/assessor to decide when this is appropriate. Highly commercial pop songs, for example, often rely on cliché to reach their target audience.

'Song structure' should be appropriate and related to structure used by the songwriter studied in Outcome 1. Some songwriters may utilise structures that are more free and this can be demonstrated where appropriate.

There is no maximum number of instruments that can be included in the recording of the song but the minimum number would be one voice and one accompanying instrument. If voice were to be used as accompanying instrument then the voices accompanying would have to be sufficient in number to provide harmonic information.

Learners are encouraged to employ the terminology, musical features and devices studied in *Music Theory* (SCQF level 7), which provides underpinning knowledge for this unit. This unit provides underpinning knowledge for *Music: Songwriting* (SCQF level 8).

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

CCSMR39 Apply music theory knowledge

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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

### Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit

The delivery of Outcome 1 of this unit could take place in a classroom environment. IT access would be encouraged for research purposes. It is envisaged that Outcome 1 would be delivered prior to Outcome 2.

Outcome 2 would be delivered in an environment which allows musical performance and experimentation. A rehearsal room or class room could be used. An IT suite equipped with music production software could also be used. Access to musical instruments is encouraged.

Songwriting exercises and classroom activities which encourage learner-centred, participative and practical approaches are encouraged across the whole unit.

Songwriting exercises could include lyric writing workshops which explore lyrical devices, melodic, harmonic and rhythmic exercises and individual and group exercises which encourage creativity.

The following could serve as a bank of ideas which can be drawn from, but are not a list of requirements. Learners should be allowed enough time to develop their songwriting.

Lyric writing exercises could include, for example:

- ◆ Group/individual task on combining nouns/adjectives, verbs/adverbs to create metaphors
- ◆ Group/individual task to find alternative ways to express clichés
- ◆ 'Brainstorm' exercise to stimulate 'stream-of-consciousness' writing to provide new lyrical ideas
- ◆ A 'lyric first' approach to writing a verse/song

Melodic exercises could include, for example:

- ◆ Create melody informed by a lyrical concept. For example: the word 'up' suggests an ascending melody.
- ◆ Create a series of melodies in specific scales. For example: major; minor harmonic/melodic; blues; pentatonic major/minor.
- ◆ Create a new melody over a given chord progression.
- ◆ Create a new melody over a well-known chord progression.
- ◆ Create a 'melody first' verse or song.

Melodies can be captured using any form of written notation or recorded using acoustic/electric instruments or MIDI instruments.

Harmonic exercises could include, for example:

- ◆ Application of chord progression to a given melody.
- ◆ Application of a new chord progression to a well-known melody.
- ◆ Experimentation with modulation (key change). Using bridge chords to introduce a new key and return to a previous key. Well known examples could be provided and discussed in class.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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

- ◆ Exercises based around harmonising a melody within given keys (major / minor) using two or more instruments including voice, such as a backing vocal.
- ◆ Exercises in creating counter melody.

Harmonic elements can be captured using any form of written notation or recorded using acoustic/electric instruments or MIDI instruments. Piano or guitar are particularly useful for many of these exercises.

Rhythmic exercises could include, for example:

- ◆ Creating a section/song based around a rhythmic pattern that is unfamiliar. If a learner is used to writing in four over four, then different and unusual time signatures could be tried. The same could apply to rhythmic patterns and/or tempi.

Song structure exercises could include experimenting with different song structures.

### 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.

Outcome 1 should be assessed under open-book conditions at appropriate points in the unit. Presentation (if that is the chosen method of assessment) should be approximately 10 minutes in duration. It should contain musical clips to illustrate each of the elements listed in the evidence requirements. Written reports should contain appropriate information to satisfy the evidence requirements and contain links to musical clips that illustrate each of the elements listed in the evidence requirements.

For Outcome 2, it is intended that the standard of songwriting should be such that it can be demonstrated how three techniques/elements employed by the songwriter(s) studied earlier have been used in the learner's song. The assessor should note where and how the techniques have been used in the learner's song.

Evidence for Outcome 2 should be captured on high quality video or audio format and retained for verification.

### 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).



## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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

### **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 critical listening, 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 5.

## History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skills Component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5 embedded.	31/08/18

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## General information for learners

### Unit title: Music: Songwriting (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 designed to enable you to develop the skills required by a songwriter. This will be achieved through listening and researching the work of existing songwriters or songwriter teams. You will examine the work of existing songwriters to gain an understanding of the techniques and key features of their work. You will then develop your creativity in songwriting through undertaking the process of songwriting using techniques that you have researched. This unit is intended for learners who have some ability on a musical instrument and knowledge of music theory who wish to gain a broad understanding of the songwriting process.

The unit has two outcomes.

- 1 Describe the key musical features and techniques of a songwriter or songwriting team.
- 2 Write a song employing key features and techniques from study of a songwriter or songwriting team.

In Outcome 1 you will write a report or deliver a presentation on the work of a songwriter or songwriting team of your choice. You will explore the melodic and harmonic techniques, rhythmic elements, lyrical devices and song structures that they use.

You will be required to listen critically to a range of their songs and to recognise the key musical features within them.

Outcome 2 requires you to create a song using the key features that you have explored in Outcome 1 — melodic construction, harmonic content, rhythmic elements, lyrical devices and song structure while developing creativity in songwriting.

The finished song will be presented on a high quality format. The standard of songwriting should be such that it can be demonstrated how three techniques/elements employed by the songwriter(s) studied earlier have been used in your song.

During this unit, there will be opportunities for you 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 critical listening, employability, enterprise and sustainable development may be developed throughout this unit.

You are encouraged to employ the terminology, musical features and devices studied in *Music Theory* (SCQF level 7), which provides underpinning knowledge for this unit. This unit provides underpinning knowledge for *Music: Songwriting* (SCQF level 8).

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 5.