Awarding the Contemporary Arts

Unit Code: 203ta

Unit Title: Music Sequencing and Production – External Core
Level: 2
TQT/GLH: 80/60
Credit Value: 8

UNIT AIM

The purpose of this unit is to develop skills in using music sequencing software. The aim of the unit is to produce a 3-5 minute composition, following the set criteria.

UNIT CONTENT

Using the learning outcomes as the main point of reference, a scheme of work for this unit will include opportunities for learners to develop the following:

Using a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW)

- Layout of a DAW (key functions and windows)
- Key commands, screen sets and customisation

Project Management

- Project planning

Synthesis

- Background of synthesis
- Context of synthesis within music production
- Key synthesisers
- Functions of a synthesiser
  - Oscillators
  - LFO
  - Envelope (ADSR)
  - Modulation
  - Pitch
- Creation of a synth patch

Sampling

- Historical background of sampling
- Context of sampling within music production
- Key functions of a sampler
- Creation of a drum patch
- Creation of a melodic patch

Audio Editing

- Practical applications for audio editing
- The process of editing audio (chopping, time stretching and reversing)

MIDI editing

- Practical applications for MIDI editing
- The process of editing MIDI (hyper editor, velocity and programming)

Quantisation

- The creative and corrective uses of quantisation

Automation

- Automation of mixer parameters, plug-in parameters and instrument parameters
- Different automation modes

Mixing

- Key effects and their functions
- The use of sends (send effects, side chaining)
- Basics of mixing (stereo image, depth)

Critical Listening & Programming

- Identifying the programming of drumbeats, the use of synthesis, and the use of effects through critical listening

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learner will be able to:

1 Plan a music production project
2 Demonstrate use of DAW software to create a music production project
3 Reflect on the music production project and consider ways to improve future endeavours

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The learner can:

1.1 Create a project plan that considers the following in relation to the agreed brief:
  a. Personal aims
  b. Project timeline
  c. Audience expectation
  d. Resources

2.1 Use DAW software to create a project, demonstrating the following:
  a. The creation of at least eight tracks to include:
    - At least one programmed drum track
    - A created and saved synth patch
    - A created and saved patch within a sampler using at least three agreed audio files
  b. Use the system's internal routing options to create two alternative signal paths (e.g. sends, inserts, C.V.s, virtual wiring)
  c. Use of the sequencer to edit note data and velocity
  d. Use of at least one insert and one send effect
  e. Creation of automation data that controls a minimum of the mixer, one plug-in and one instrument
  f. Save music as a project/self-contained file in one location (including sampler and synth patch) and include an .mp3 mixdown

3.1 Review the project in the light of feedback, making sure to highlight strengths and areas for development.

GRADING CRITERIA

Unclassified

A learner not on course to achieve this unit might evidence a significant number of the following:

11 Insufficient ability to create a project plan that considers the following in relation to the agreed brief:

a. Personal aims
b. Project timeline
c. Audience expectation
d. Resources

21 Insufficient ability to use DAW software to create a project, failing to demonstrate following:

a. The creation of at least eight tracks to include:
    - At least one programmed drum track
    - A created and saved synth patch
    - A created and saved patch within a sampler using at least three agreed audio files
b. Use the system's internal routing options to create two alternative signal paths (e.g. sends, inserts, C.V.s, virtual wiring)
c. Use of the sequencer to edit note data and velocity
d. Use of at least one insert and one send effect
e. Creation of automation data that controls a minimum of the mixer, one plug-in and one instrument
f. Save music as a project/self-contained file in one location (including sampler and synth patch) and include an .mp3 mixdown

31 Insufficient ability to review the project in the light of feedback, making sure to highlight strengths and areas for development (including screenshots where appropriate).

Pass

To achieve a pass, all learners must:

11 Create a basic project plan that considers the following in relation to the agreed brief:

a. Personal aims
b. Project timeline
c. Audience expectation
d. Resources

21 Use DAW software to create a project, demonstrating the following:

a. The creation of at least eight tracks to include:
    - At least one programmed drum track
    - A created and saved synth patch
    - A created and saved patch within a sampler using at least three agreed audio files
b. Use the system's internal routing options to create two alternative signal paths (e.g. sends, inserts, C.V.s, virtual wiring)
c. Use of the sequencer to edit note data and velocity
d. Use of at least one insert and one send effect
e. Creation of automation data that controls a minimum of the mixer, one plug-in and one instrument
f. Save music as a project/self-contained file in one location (including sampler and synth patch) and include an .mp3 mixdown

31 Provide a basic review of the project in the light of feedback, making sure to highlight strengths and areas for development (including screenshots where appropriate).

Merit

To achieve a merit, learners should:

11 Create a clear and detailed project plan that considers the following in relation to the agreed brief:

a. Personal aims
b. Project timeline
c. Audience expectation
d. Resources

21 Use DAW software to create a project, showing well-developed skills in demonstrating the following:

a. The creation of at least eight tracks to include:
    - At least one programmed drum track
    - A created and saved synth patch
    - A created and saved patch within a sampler using at least three agreed audio files
b. Use the system's internal routing options to create two alternative signal paths (e.g. sends, inserts, C.V.s, virtual wiring)
c. Use of the sequencer to edit note data and velocity
d. Use of at least one insert and one send effect
e. Creation of automation data that controls a minimum of the mixer, one plug-in and one instrument
f. Save music as a project/self-contained file in one location (including sampler and synth patch) and include an .mp3 mixdown

31 Give clear and reflective review of the project in the light of feedback, making sure to highlight strengths and areas for development (including screenshots where appropriate).

Distinction

To achieve a distinction, learners should:

11 Create a rigorous project plan that considers the following in relation to the agreed brief:

a. Personal aims
b. Project timeline
c. Audience expectation
d. Resources

21 Use DAW software to create a project, showing accomplished skills in demonstrating the following:

a. The creation of at least eight tracks to include:
    - At least one programmed drum track
    - A created and saved synth patch
    - A created and saved patch within a sampler using at least three agreed audio files
b. Use the system's internal routing options to create two alternative signal paths (e.g. sends, inserts, C.V.s, virtual wiring)
c. Use of the sequencer to edit note data and velocity
d. Use of at least one insert and one send effect
e. Creation of automation data that controls a minimum of the mixer, one plug-in and one instrument
f. Save music as a project/self-contained file in one location (including sampler and synth patch) and include an .mp3 mixdown

31 Give an astute, wide and encompassing review of the project in the light of feedback, making sure to highlight strengths and areas for development (including screenshots where appropriate).

RECOMMENDED EVIDENCE

This unit will be evidenced through the following; ***written work****,* ***video presentation****,* ***blog, vlog*** *or* ***podcast****. Learners are not limited to a single submission type and may wish to use different methods of evidence dependent on their suitability to each learning outcome. Learners may use multiple evidence methods for the same learning outcome if they wish but should clearly state the learning outcome/assessment criteria they are addressing with their work.*

Learning Outcome 1 – Plan a music production project

Evidence for this learning outcome may be presented as; written work, video presentations, blog, vlog.
Total written evidence for this learning outcome must not exceed 1000 words
Total audio/visual evidence for this learning outcome must not exceed 8 minutes

Learning Outcome 2 – Demonstrate use of DAW software to create a project

Evidence for this learning outcome may be presented as; written work, video presentations, blog, vlog.
Total written evidence for this learning outcome must not exceed 1200 words
Total audio/visual evidence for this learning outcome must not exceed 10 minutes

Learning Outcome 3 – Reflect on the project and consider ways to improve future projects

Evidence for this learning outcome may be presented as written work, blog, or Vlog.
Total written evidence for this learning outcome must not exceed 800 words
Total audio/visual evidence for this learning outcome must not exceed 6 minutes

The learner must produce evidence of achievement of the assessment criteria. This must include:

- Statement of personal aims and project plan (1.1): written work, video presentation, blog, vlog
- Project audio file (2.1): Project file & mp3 audio mixdown (these do not count towards the recommended evidence for Learning outcome 2, however they must be no more than 5-minutes in length as per the practical guidance
- Project written evidence (2.1): screenshots of DAW project with annotation or narration presented in; written work, presentation, blog entry, vlog entry
- Project review (3.1): written work, presentation, blog entry, vlog entry.

Practical
The composition must be 3-5 minutes in length

The maximum evidence is stated in order to prevent learners from preparing and submitting work which is surplus to the requirements of the qualification. The minimum requirement for evidence is whatever is necessary for the individual learner to demonstrate all assessment criteria (in whichever stated, appropriate format) as long as the volume of work does not exceed the stated maximum. The maximum requirement should not be confused for a minimum requirement. Marks are awarded purely for how effectively the learner has met all assessment criteria within the maximum requirement boundary. In some instances, the assessment criteria (or an external RSL Brief) will set a minimum evidence requirement and in these cases the minimum evidence requirement must also be adhered to.

N.B. For each learning outcome, learners will be awarded a 20% buffer on exceeding the stated maximum limits. Any evidence that exceeds this 20% is not to be considered during grading. For practical elements of the assessment, learners will also be given a 20% buffer on the minimum performance length. If a learner falls under this threshold their performance will be graded as unclassified.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT METHODS

External Assessment

This unit is externally assessed in the form of a task based controlled assessment. Learners are given an assignment that is set and marked by RSL. The assignment provides the opportunity for learners to demonstrate and also integrate their knowledge, understanding and skills from across the area of study. It will also enable learners to develop study skills and underpin practical skills with core knowledge and understanding.

Preparation Period

Learners will be given 10 hours of preparation time, which can be spread over several weeks, and can include work time that is directed by the teacher/tutor and/or independent work.

Learners can use their centre's intranet and the internet to support their research and inform their final piece of work; however, they cannot copy directly from the internet. Any information used from the internet must be acknowledged in their work.

Controlled Assessment Period

The controlled assessment period will then take place over 20 hours. The activities in the assignments must take place inside the school community to ensure that the assessment can be administered by centre staff under controlled conditions. Learners should complete all work for the controlled assessment under a limited level of control but ensuring that plagiarism does not take place. Guidance should be given to learners about availability and choice of materials, Health & Safety and completion of work in accordance with specification requirements. However, learners are required to reach their own judgements and conclusions and produce their own work. Assessors must be able to authenticate the contributions of individual learners. It is expected that all of the evidence learners provide during the 20 hours-controlled assessment will be produced under supervised conditions. However, work during the 10 hours preparation time can be produced in an unsupervised environment. Learners must sign an Assessment Declaration Sheet on completion of their timed assessment to declare that the work produced is their own.

Time Frame

There is one controlled assessment window per year. The assessment window will be detailed in the Key Dates Calendar for the academic year. (The assignment will mirror industry practice and learners need to plan their response in a systematic fashion that takes into account contingencies and allows for time to make revisions where necessary.) The assignment papers must be kept secure throughout the duration of the assessment period. Centres must ensure that all assessments are submitted to RSL for marking in accordance with the deadlines given.

Example Assignments

Assignments are designed so that learners working on different areas within the suite of qualifications can work collaboratively on the same project. Equally, they can be completed by learners taking one area (e.g. performance). However, where this is the case learners taking technology & composition for music practitioners will need to draw on the help of peers who can provide a live performance for them to record if they choose to undertake the sound recording unit (206ta). The following are examples of assignments for the externally assessed unit in each of the study areas within this suite:

Technology & Composition

Your school has been approached by a music production company that is seeking out talented music technologists. To take part in an upcoming project they are recruiting for you must demonstrate your technology & composition skills. Your task is to create an original DAW project that shows your ability to compose and sequence music. Your project will involve a project plan, the creation of your DAW project file and a review of the project. To evidence this project, you will provide a statement of personal aims, a completed DAW audio file, and an evaluative report of the project.

Performance

Your school's Performing Arts or Music Department has decided to host an awards evening at the end of the year, as a way to recognise the achievements of its learners. You have been asked to perform at the awards ceremony to entertain the audience between presentation categories. Your task is to work collaboratively with your peers to plan, present and reflect on your performance at the ceremony. Your planning will include consideration of your personal aims, ideas for the performance and production of a plan for the performance. You will then present your performance to an audience and review it in the light of feedback. Evidence should include a statement of aims, a plan for the performance, a video recording of the performance, a record of feedback received and an evaluationreport/video.

SUGGESTED DELIVERY IDEAS

It is recommended that the teacher demonstrates the technical processes involved within sequencing prior to the learners kinaesthetically implementing the process themselves.

It is recommended that interactive hand-outs accompany processes to aid retention of information. Teacher feedback is essential for development of sequencing skills. The feedback should be constructive and inform skill progression.

On sequenced projects, teachers should give praise and constructive feedback as well as discussing areas for development and how they can be developed.

Teachers should signpost further reading for gifted and talented learners.

Teachers should facilitate collaboration between producers and also session musicians (where possible).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY IDEAS

The fundamental activity that learners should undertake is the implementation of the technical skills within the area of sequencing. Coupling the application of step-by-step instruction with creativity.

Learners should undertake drum and rhythm programming exercises to aid with their sequencing skills.

Learners should be encouraged to work in teams and individually to develop both their specialist and wider skills. This could manifest itself in peer teaching, collaboration and working within production teams.

Teacher demonstration, coupled with the kinaesthetic implementation, will be important in areas such as synthesis, sampling, editing, automation and quantisation.

The completion of worksheets to improve critical listening skills, the use of a single synthesiser to make a whole song and the use of a single sampler to make a whole song are possible extension activities.

The completion of quizzes, timed activities incorporating technical skills, competitions to win prizes such as sample packs, and the encouragement of learners to practise using a sequencer in the same way as a guitarist would practise their instrument.

GLOSSARY

Project plan	A plan for the music production project that shows consideration of personal aims, project timeline, audience expectation, resources
Personal aims	The learners aspirations for the project, aims (or goals) should be quantifiable
Project timeline	A planning tool used to map the project, learners will attempt to stick to their plan (deviation is expected and acceptable).
Audience expectation	What type of music might the audience expect to hear at the given event. How might the produced track deviate from this
Resources	The hardware, software, and instruments that will be used
Agreed brief	The brief set by RSL and released to centres prior to the start of the controlled assessment window
DAW	Digital Audio Workstation, i.e. the software used for music production
Composition	The process of creating original music
Tracks	Individual music elements of a composition
Programmed	Information inputted to a DAW
Patch	A saved user or pre-set setting on a musical device
Synth Patch	A patch that sets the functions of a synthesiser
Sampler	A device for recording and/or playing back audio
Send	An auxiliary output from a physical or software mixer
Insert	A direct break in a channel strip to insert a device or processor
C.Vs	Control voltage, used in analogue synthesis
Sequencer	A device for the playback of programmed material
Note data	A general MIDI term that monitors the pitch, duration, expression, velocity and after touch of a performance
Velocity	The strength of note
Automation	The recording or programming data for the use in playback
Mixer	A physical or software device for the combining of signals
Plug-in	A software processor that can affect the audio
Review	Look back on the production project and judge its success
In light of feedback	Make use of feedback from; tutor, peers