

## MUSPRA Qualifications

Unit Code: 223

Unit Title: Live Sound Recording – External Assessment

Credit Level: 2

Credit Value: 8 (80 TQT)

### Unit Content

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

#### **Analytical Skills**

Analysis of personal aims

Evaluation of own work

Making decisions on microphone types and placement

Developing strategies for improvement

#### **Organisational Skills**

Selecting and setting up musical and recording equipment

Organising resources and planning a time frame

Time management – working to the time frame, working to deadlines

Organising groups of people

File management – organising recording project files

#### **Recording Skills**

Setting up microphones, DI boxes and leads

Using a mixing desk

Signal routing

Using sub-groups

Controlling levels

Using appropriate gain structure

Setting up monitoring for the control room and the musicians

#### **Mixing Skills**

Balancing levels

Panning

Using equalisation

Using dynamic processing

Adding effects

Using sends and inserts

Applying mastering processes

#### **Communication Skills**

Giving musical direction

Controlling the studio environment

Verbal and non-verbal communication in the studio (with musicians and engineers)

Essay writing

## Suggested Delivery Ideas

The delivery, where possible, should be learner led. They should be responsible for making decisions and planning the recordings (through consultation with the band and the tutor). They will need input on mic types and techniques; on how to use mixing desks, signal routing and using a DAW (or other recording facilities) for recording multiple tracks at once. This could be lecture-based with practical demonstrations and/or video-based tutorials. Handouts and links to online instructions or books would be of benefit.

Much of the learning will take place in a recording studio environment and will be learner driven. Learners may experiment with selection of microphones and DI boxes and will arrange the musicians in the studio. It is important that they learn the benefits of correct gain staging/structure how to apply the principles correctly to minimise distortion and maximise signal to noise ratio.

Proper labelling of files (or track sheets) and file management (or storage) are also very important and learners must learn the appropriate procedures.

After the recordings have taken place, learners may need demonstrations on how to mix the tracks, either using music software or hardware, which may involve patching in effects units. Learners will need to know the difference between sends and inserts and different techniques for EQ.

Learners could listen to and review their own and each other's recordings and compare their mixes to professionally recorded work.

## Suggested Activity Ideas

Learners could develop an understanding of microphone types and placement through online or paper-based quizzes and could arrive at conclusions for the most appropriate techniques for their recordings through group discussions and debates. Practical experimentation with different microphone models and placement will help inform their decisions.

Learners will need hands-on experience of using a mixing desk and applying appropriate gain at different stages of the process. They will need to learn how to use sub-groups where necessary and to apply EQ and dynamic processing. These may be before or after the instrument has been recorded. They may also need hands-on experience of using the audio recording device (DAW, digital recorder or tape) and learn how to store the recorded files in the most useful and safest ways.

Much of the activity will be the recording itself and the subsequent mixdown to stereo. Learners could also make peer assessment of other learners' work whilst observing recording sessions. They could comment on preparation (bringing and setting up the correct equipment, time management); communication (with band members and engineers); and the finished recordings.

## Summative Assessment Methods

Learners should produce a detailed recording plan, stating the music that is to be recorded; the instrumentation and personnel; the accommodation and resources; the schedule and timescale. This should be discussed with the musicians to arrive at the most suitable methods for recording. They should evaluate and justify their choices of resources and how they intend to use them (e.g. mic types and mic placement). They should also create a track sheet or plan and label the tracks correctly on the mixer or digital audio workstation.

Learners must then create a multi-track live recording of one or more songs of an ensemble of at least four musicians containing at least eight simultaneously recorded audio tracks; use of a variety of microphones and mic techniques and use of direct injection; use of correct gain structure at input ensuring no harmonic distortion; use of dynamic processing where appropriate (e.g. compressor, limiter, gate); recording of at least two overdubs (e.g. vocal overdub over guide track and solo); use of sub groups where appropriate; effective use of EQ, pan and level to mix the track; use of sends and inserts for effects and processing where appropriate. The finished track should then be mixed down to stereo.

They need to evaluate the success of the project by analysing their strengths and areas for development and understanding of the different skills required to complete the project (e.g. communicating with musicians, planning time, microphone choice and placement, signal routing, using a mixing desk, EQ, dynamic processing, using a Daw, mixing etc). Learners must also compare their mix to an example of a professionally recorded work.

## Recommended Evidence

This section identifies the types of evidence deemed appropriate to demonstrate the required knowledge and skill.

- 1.1 Recording plan – essay, table, justification of choices
- 2.1 Recording – mp3 (or other audio format) of finished recording; DAW project files; video of recording session
- 2.2 Conclusions, Strengths & Areas for Development – essay; recorded discussion; screen shots; photos from recording session (showing mic placement etc.); mp3 or audio/video link of professionally recorded work as comparison

## Evidence Required

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

1. a statement of personal aims (written or audio/video presentation)
2. a recording plan to include all areas detailed in the assessment criteria (written report or videoed presentation accompanied by notes).
3. a recording (mp3 or other audio format; DAW project files; video of recording session)
4. an evaluative report of the conclusions, strengths and areas for development (log/diary/essay and/or audio/video presentation; screen shots; photos from recording session showing mic placement etc; mp3 or audio/video link of professionally recorded work as comparison).

## Grading Criteria

(Please note – this unit is **externally** assessed by RSL. This criterion is provided for guidance purposes.)

<b>Distinction</b>	<p>To achieve a <b>distinction</b>, learners must have evidenced all the skills required for level 2, plus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show an excellent grasp of how to organise a recording plan including all of the relevant details. Be highly organized and efficient at coordinating resources and personnel, be able to work to a schedule effectively</li> <li>2. Produce an excellent multitrack recording, which is clear free from distortion and have a good level demonstrating a very good grasp of the recording equipment that they are using. Be able to highly effective in managing the session in terms of time management and communication</li> <li>3. Be able to effectively self assess demonstrating the ability to evaluate their strengths and areas for development offering viable solutions, based on the success of the process.</li> </ol>
<b>Merit</b>	<p>To achieve a <b>merit</b>, learners must have evidenced all the skills required for level 2, plus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show a good grasp of how to organise a recording plan including all of the relevant details. Be very organized and efficient at coordinating resources and personnel, be able to work to a schedule well</li> <li>2. Produce a good quality multitrack recording, which should be clear free from distortion and have a good level demonstrating a grasp of the recording equipment that they are using. Be able to effectively in manage the session in terms of time management and communication with personnel</li> <li>3. Be able to demonstrate the ability to evaluate their strengths and areas for development making reference to the success of the process in relation to their abilities</li> </ol>
<b>Pass</b>	<p>To achieve a <b>pass</b>, all learners must have evidenced all the skills required for level 2, plus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show a basic grasp of how to organise a recording plan including all of the relevant details. Displaying some organizational skills with resources and personnel, be able to work to a schedule</li> <li>2. Produce a multitrack recording, which should be clear, may contain a little distortion and may have a low level demonstrating a basic grasp of the recording equipment that they are using. Be able to part manage the session in terms of time limitations and communication with personnel</li> <li>3. Be able to demonstrate the ability to list their strengths and areas for development in a basic form which takes their success into consideration</li> </ol>
<b>Unclassified</b>	<p>A learner <b>not</b> on course to achieve this unit might evidence the majority of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not be able to organise a simple recording plan including all of the relevant details. Be disorganized in terms of the personnel and time, not turn up to the recording session</li> <li>2. Be unable to produce a two-track recording, Produce a recording, which is not clear, may overly distorted and un-listenable may have a recording level so low that it is unintelligible, show no real grasp of the recording equipment that they are using.</li> <li>3. Be unable to demonstrate the ability to list their strengths and areas for development in a bullet point style list.</li> </ol>

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Assessment Framework

### Unit Aim

This unit aims to introduce learners to the live sound recording process. The purpose of this unit is to enable the learner to develop a plan and undertake the recording of a piece of music.

### Learning Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

1. plan a live recording session
2. use an audio recorder to record a piece of music in a live situation
3. reflect on their work and consider ways to improve future live recordings

### Assessment Criteria

The learner can:

- 1.1 describe personal aims in relation to the recording
- 1.2 produce a recording plan describing repertoire to be recorded, instrumentation, personnel, accommodation, resources, schedule and timescale, to meet the needs of an agreed brief
- 2.1 create a multi-track live recording of an ensemble using:
  - a. at least four tracks
  - b. a variety of microphones for different applications
  - c. ambient and close micing techniques
  - d. sound screens/acoustic panels to diffuse reflections where appropriate
  - e. direct injection
  - f. input gain to avoid distortion and excessive noise levels
  - g. application of EQ, pan and level to mix the track
  - h. effects (internal or external) on at least one track
  - i. creation of a balanced two-track mix
- 3.1 evaluate the success of the recording in relation to the agreed brief
- 3.2 suggest ways to improve future recordings