Higher Nationals

Sound Engineering

Specification

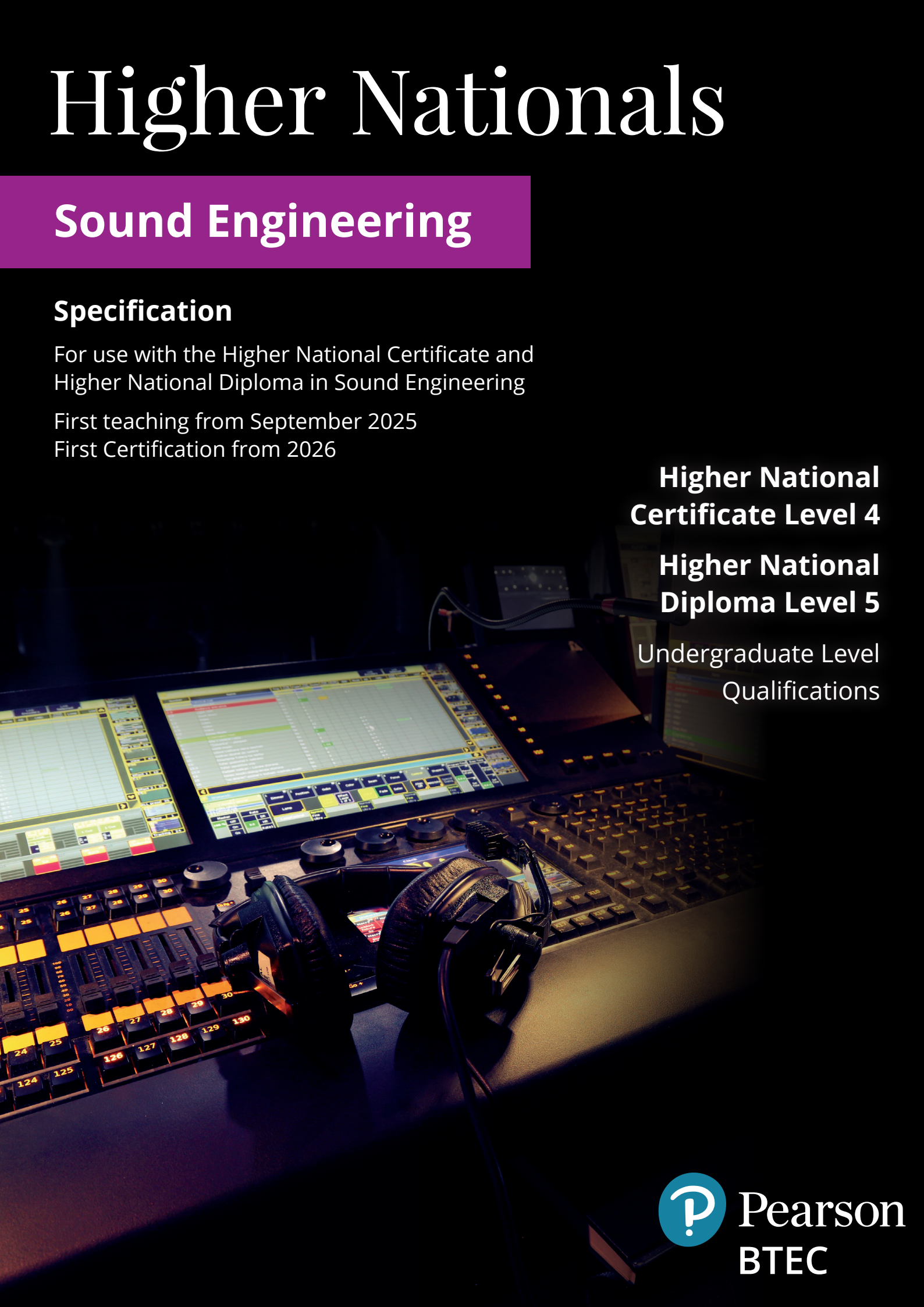
For use with the Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma in Sound Engineering

First teaching from September 2025
First Certification from 2026

Higher National Certificate Level 4

Higher National Diploma Level 5

Undergraduate Level Qualifications



Pearson BTEC

About Pearson

We are the world's leading learning company operating in countries all around the world. We provide content, assessment and digital services to learners, educational institutions, employers, governments and other partners globally. We are committed to helping equip learners with the skills they need to enhance their employability prospects and to succeed in the changing world of work. We believe that wherever learning flourishes so do people.

All information in this specification is correct at time of publication.

HN000004

Contents

1.0 Introduction

BTEC is one of the world's most recognised applied learning brands, engaging students in applied, practical, interpersonal and thinking skills for more than three decades. The Pearson BTEC Higher National (HN) qualifications are widely supported by higher education and industry as the principal vocational qualifications at Levels 4 and 5.

When developing our BTEC Higher National qualifications, we worked with a wide range of students, employers, higher education providers, colleges and subject experts to make sure that the qualifications meet their needs and expectations. We also work closely with professional organisations to make sure that the qualifications are in line with recognised professional standards.

Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications are designed to reflect the increasing need for high-quality professional and technical education at Levels 4 and 5. They provide students with a clear line of sight to employment and to a degree at Level 6 if they choose.

1.1 The student voice

Students are at the heart of what we do. That is why, from the outset, we consulted with students in the development of these qualifications. We involved them in writing groups, sought their feedback and added their voices and views to those of other stakeholders.

The result, we believe, are qualifications that will meet the needs and expectations of students worldwide.

1.2 Why choose the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals?

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals are designed to help students secure the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to succeed in the workplace. They represent the latest in professional standards and provide opportunities for students to develop behaviours for work, for example, by undertaking a group project or responding to a client brief. A student may even achieve exemption from professional or vendor qualifications, or student membership of selected professional bodies, to help them on their journey to professional competence.

At the same time, the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals are intended to keep doors open for future study should a student wish to progress further in their education after their Level 5 study. They do this by allowing space for the development of higher education study skills, such as the ability to research. Clear alignment of level of demand with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) descriptors at Levels 4 and 5 means that students wishing to progress to Level 6 study should feel better prepared.
The Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals address these various requirements by providing:

- a range of modules, each with a clear purpose, so there is something to suit each student's choice of programme and future progression plans
- fully revised content that is closely aligned with the needs of employers, professional bodies, vendors and higher education for a skilled future workforce
- the opportunity to develop transferable skills, useful for work and for higher education, including research skills, the ability to meet deadlines and communication skills
- learning outcomes mapped against professional body standards and vendor accreditation requirements, where appropriate
- assessments and projects chosen to help students progress to the next stage (this means that some are set by the centre to meet local needs, while others are set by Pearson). Students are required to apply their knowledge to a variety of assignments and activities, with a focus on the holistic development of practical, interpersonal and higher-level thinking skills
- an approach to demand at Levels 4 and 5 that is aligned with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- support for students and tutors, including example assessment briefs.

1.3 HN Global

Our HN Global website provides a specially designed range of digital resources to give tutors and students the best possible experience during the BTEC Higher Nationals course. More information is available at at: https://hnglobal.highernationals.com/.

1.4 Qualification titles

1.4.1 Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate in Sound Engineering

1.4.2 Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma in Sound Engineering

1.5 Qualification codes

Ofqual Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) qualification codes:

- Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Sound Engineering: **610/5765/4**
- Pearson BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Sound Engineering: **610/5766/6**

1.6 Awarding organisation

Pearson Education Ltd.

1.7 Key features

Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications in Sound Engineering offer the following:

- an exciting and informative study programme that stimulates and challenges students
- a simple and flexible structure that enables students to take the Higher National Certificate and then build on it in the Higher National Diploma, with optional units linked to their specialist area of study
- an opportunity for students to follow specialist routes of interest at Level 5, gaining the knowledge and skills they need to progress to higher education or employment in their specialist area
- core competencies developed throughout the curriculum, to support lifelong learning skills for personal and professional development
- the opportunity for centres to offer assessments that consider cognitive skills (what students know) along with effective and applied skills (how they behave and what they can do) to support a practical and dynamic approach to learning
- a curriculum designed to encourage thorough and analytical learning, challenge students and develop skills in critical thinking, personal responsibility and decision-making
- a flexible approach to assessment that supports progression to higher education or work and allows for different learning styles
- quality assurance measures that assure professional organisations, universities, businesses, colleges and students of the integrity and value of the qualifications, and
- a programme of learning designed to meet skills gaps in the current workforce and build today's talent to meet tomorrow's needs in an international environment.

1.8 Qualification frameworks

Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications are recognised higher education qualifications in the UK. They are in line with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statements, where applicable. These qualifications are part of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

1.9 Collaborative development

We are very grateful to the university and further education tutors, employers, professional bodies and others who have generously shared their time and expertise to help us develop these new Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications. Our thanks go to:

- AD Education
- Andy Reynolds
- Arlette Hovinga
- Ashaine White
- Ballyfermot College of Further Education
- Bray Institute of Further Education
- Colin Waterson
- Creative Hub Academy
- Dan Armstrong
- Djp Music School
- Elliot Richardson
- ETIC
- Germana Stella la Sorsa
- Gibbi Bettini
- Hannah Horton
- Hertford College
- Highfield Studio
- Leonardo Colturi
- London Music Artist Academy
- Lorenzo Bonfante
- Marco Piccioni
- Martin Hummel
- Migdalia Van Der Hoven
- Ubuntu Music
- Warren Woodcraft
- Wendy Kirkland
- Women in Jazz Media

2.0 Programming purpose and objectives

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of these qualifications is to develop students as professional, self-reflecting individuals able to meet the demands of employers and adapt to a constantly changing world. The qualifications aim to widen access to higher education and enhance the career prospects of those who undertake them.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of these qualifications are:

- To give students the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to achieve high performance in the international Sound Engineering environment
- to develop students with enquiring minds, who have the abilities and confidence to work across different business functions and to lead, manage, respond to change, and tackle a range of complex Sound Engineering situations
- to provide the core skills required for a range of careers in Sound Engineering
- to offer a balance between employability skills and the knowledge essential for students with entrepreneurial, employment or academic ambitions
- to develop students' understanding of the major impact that new digital technologies have on the Sound Engineering environment
- to provide insight into music operations and the opportunities and challenges presented by a global marketplace
- to equip students with knowledge and understanding of culturally diverse organisations, cross-cultural issues, diversity and values, and to allow flexible study to meet local and specialist needs.

2.2.1 Health and safety in the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals in Sound Engineering

Health and safety in Sound Engineering is both a regulatory responsibility and a matter of ethical practice. It is important that everyone working in the industry, including those in education and training, is aware of the legislation, regulation and practice of ensuring the safety of those working in Sound Engineering.

Pearson has taken the approach that health and safety be integrated throughout the qualifications where appropriate. This is to ensure that students do not see health and safety matters as being separate or 'standalone' activities. Rather, health and safety should be understood as a standard feature of typical practices.

The content within these qualifications includes curriculum related to health and safety, regulations and statutory requirements. Where such topics are included in the Essential Content it is a requirement that they are taught in sufficient depth to ensure that students understand the importance of the topic. Where there are assessment criteria that call specifically for students to evidence aspects of health and safety, risk assessment, legislation or regulation, it is required that this be designed in the assessment.

2.3 Aims of the Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Sound Engineering

The Level 4 modules lay the foundation of learning by providing a broad introduction to Sound Engineering and different creative and development functions. This develops and strengthens core skills while preparing students for specialist subjects at Level 5 or to enter employment with the qualities necessary for job roles that require some personal responsibility.

Students will gain a wide range of music knowledge linked to practical skills gained through research, independent study, directed study and workplace scenarios. Students are involved in vocational activities that help them to develop behaviours (the attitudes and approaches required for a competence) and transferable skills. Transferable skills are those such as communication, team work, research and analysis, which are highly valued in higher education and in the workplace.

By the end of Level 4, students will have sound knowledge of the basic concepts of Sound Engineering. They will be competent in a range of subject-specific skills as well as in general skills and qualities relevant to key areas of music.

2.4 Aims of the Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Sound Engineering

The Level 5 modules prepare students to move on to specific areas of Sound Engineering at Level 6 or to enter employment with the qualities and abilities necessary for roles that require personal responsibility and decision-making.

Students will be able to develop and apply their own ideas to their studies, to deal with uncertainty and complexity, to explore solutions, demonstrate critical evaluation and use both theory and practice in a wide range of Sound Engineering situations.

By the end of Level 5, students will have a sound understanding of the principles in their area of specialist study and will know how to apply those principles more widely in the business world. They will be able to perform effectively in their specialist area.

2.5 Developing students' employability skills and academic study skills

Employability skills (sometimes referred to as transferable skills) are vital to increase students' career prospects and contribute to their personal and professional development. Our BTEC Higher Nationals in Sound Engineering support students in developing the key skills, qualities and strengths that employers are looking for.

We divide employability skills into five main categories.

Problem-solving skills

These include:

- critical thinking
- using expert and creative solutions to solve non-routine problems
- using systems and digital technology, and
- generating and communicating ideas creatively.

Independent skills

These include:

- self-management
- adaptability and resilience
- self-monitoring and self-development
- self-analysis, and
- reflection, planning and prioritising.

Interpersonal skills

These include:

- leadership skills
- communicating effectively
- working with others
- negotiating and influencing, and
- presentation skills.

Commercial skills

These include:

- awareness of the music sector
- understanding client needs
- managing and monitoring budgets.

Business skills

These include:

- awareness of types of companies and company formations
- legal and statutory responsibilities
- business management.

Students also benefit from opportunities for deeper learning, where they can make connections between different study modules and select areas of interest for detailed study. In this way, BTEC Higher Nationals in Sound Engineering provide a vocational context in which students can develop the knowledge and academic study skills they need to progress to university degree courses.

These academic study skills include:

- active research
- effective writing
- analytical skills
- critical thinking
- creative problem-solving
- decision-making
- preparing for exams, and
- using digital technology.

2.5.1 Use of maths and English within the curriculum

A career in music requires both technical skills and broader employability skills. For example, appropriate communication with clients and colleagues is an essential skill, so the ability to use maths and English in a professional context is a key area for student development.

This type of development is embedded throughout the BTEC Higher Nationals, in line with industry requirements. Students may encounter some of the examples given below in the course of their study:

- preparing written reports
- giving formal presentations
- taking part in informal conversations
- using professional, sector-specific language.

Some aspects of music require maths skills and we strongly recommend that all students complete diagnostic maths assessments before beginning a Higher National course, as well as having a grade 9 to 4 or A* to C in GCSE Maths. (See *Section 5.2* for more information.)

2.6 What could these qualifications lead to?

The Level 4 Higher National Certificate provides a solid grounding in Sound Engineering, which students can build on should they decide to continue their studies beyond the certificate stage. The Level 5 Higher National Diploma allows students to specialise by committing to specific career paths and progression routes to degree-level study.

On successful completion of the Level 5 Higher National Diploma, students can develop their careers in the sector through:

- entering employment
- continuing existing employment
- linking with the appropriate professional body
- committing to continuing professional development (CPD)
- progressing to university.

2.6.1 Progression to university

The Level 5 Higher National Diploma is recognised by higher education providers as meeting admission requirements to many relevant music-related courses, for example:

- BSc (Hons) Live Sound
- BSc (Hons) Sound Engineering
- BMus(Hons) Audio Engineering and production
- BA (Hons) Music and Sound Production
- BA (Hons) Music Production and Sound Engineering
- BMus(Hons) Performance and Recording

2.6.2 University recognition and articulations

We work with a range of higher education institutions around the world that recognise and accept Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals as qualifications for entry to an undergraduate degree. Many universities allow advanced entry to the second or third year of a degree, and agreements can include credit transfer, articulation and case-by-case admission. A full list is available on our Degree Finder tool but some of our current articulations include:

- City of Liverpool College, University Centre
- ETIC
- Bedford College
- Birmingham City University
- University of Portsmouth
- London Metropolitan University
- Linfield University

- Coventry University
- Solent University
- Massey University, New Zealand
- The Open University
- University of East London
- Royal Roads University.

Students should be aware that university admission criteria are always subject to change and remain at the discretion of the institution. Students should take time to understand the course entry requirements for the subject, year and grade before applying. For more information on entry requirements, including 2+1 articulations, please visit: https://hnglobal.highernationals.com/degree-finder.

3.0 Preparing students for employment

3.1 Designing with employers, for employers

As a large employer and qualification-awarding organisation, Pearson understands the value of developing the skills and talent of the future workforce. We believe in, and champion, higher technical education that is relevant to employers.

We work with employers, students, professional bodies, education providers and other experts to design qualifications with the future workforce in mind. Higher National qualifications blend employability skills with academic, business and technical knowledge. They support trainees and apprentices in their higher apprenticeship and other technical education programmes, as well as students working towards a degree. We update our programmes regularly to maintain their high quality and meet the changing needs of the workforce.

Employers contribute to our Higher Nationals in several ways.

- They are involved in every stage of designing our qualifications, from developing the structure and pathways to selecting subjects, developing content and approving qualifications.
- They help us deliver qualifications, for example, through vendor accreditation, letters of support and co-badging. Our qualifications actively encourage training providers to work with employers. Work placements and work through learning are key features of BTEC Higher Nationals.
- They help us review and update our qualifications to meet occupational standards and provide supporting material such as case studies to reflect the real world of work.

We are committed to equipping apprentices, trainees and organisations with the tools and resources they need to support high-quality, innovative technical education and higher apprenticeship programmes that work.

Including a Higher National qualification as part of a higher apprenticeship or technical education programme gives students:

- an internationally recognised higher-level qualification in line with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and
- a stepping-stone to continue their education or training and gain a recognised degree or professional qualification.

To find out more, and to access detailed mapping to higher apprenticeships and occupational standards for your qualification, please visit the following pages: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/apprenticeships.html and https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/higher-nationals/higher-technical-qualifications.html on our website.

3.1.1 Employability skills and competencies for student career success

Pearson is committed to delivering learning that is rooted in the real world and to developing work-ready graduates with the professional skills and behaviours that employers need. The Pearson BTEC Higher National curriculum provides a clear pathway to employment, depending on which specialist areas students complete. The aim is to produce students who are equipped to thrive in the changing world of work, whether they leave with an HNC or an HND qualification.

The table below shows the type of position in which a student graduating at each educational level might expect to start, and gives some examples of the competencies expected.

Levels of competency			
Employability level at learning level	**Level 4 Operational**	**Level 5 Managerial**	**Level 6 Professional**
General employment outcomes for graduates at each level	Graduates can: • perform key music tasks • understand processes and operations, and • work effectively.	Graduates can: • increase performance through strategic planning to meet music aims, and • manage music functions to work effectively in lower- or middle-management positions.	Graduates can: • take the lead and direct others, and • manage change effectively in middle-management positions.

Table 1: Levels of competency at employability level

3.1.2 Developing competencies for the workplace

Core competencies developed on the specialist pathways of the programme will support students in preparing for a range of employment opportunities in their chosen sector. These core competencies collectively summarise the key capabilities that are important across the sector, covering areas of relevant expertise and technical skills that would be required within the sector to successfully perform a job, as defined in current advertised job vacancies.

Core competencies are developed on the programme within a balanced framework of cognitive (knowledge), affective (behaviours) and psychomotor (practical) learning outcomes to encourage a more vocational and practical approach to learning.

4.0 Centre support

You can access a wide range of resources and support to help you set up and deliver our Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals in Sound Engineering with confidence.

4.1 Specification

This specification gives you details of the administration of the qualifications and information on the units included in them.

4.2 HN Global

HN Global is a dedicated online learning platform for all Pearson BTEC Higher National students and delivery centres. You can find various free resources to support staff in delivering a Pearson BTEC Higher National programme and to guide students on their learning journey. The HN Global Forum connects students and tutors, and provides the opportunity to discuss common themes and to share good practice. HN Global also provides access to the following:

The Learning Zone includes student study materials such as core textbooks, study skills modules, a 'Progression hub' featuring opportunities to develop employability skills, an e-library and subject materials.

The Tutor Resources section hosts a wealth of delivery materials, reading lists, blended learning resources, video guidance on assessment and professional development opportunities. Staff can also access the Quality Assurance (QA) Hub for templates and more centre support.

Short Courses provides support for curriculum planning, developing schemes of work and developing students' academic skills.

These are available from the HN Global website at: https://hnglobal.highernationals.com/.

4.3 Assessment and assignment guidance

We provide an *Assessment and Assignment Guidance Booklet* that includes example assessment briefs. These briefs have been developed to support centres with their assessment strategy for the delivery of a sample of modules, as well as providing guidance and inspiration for effective planning and design of future assignment briefs. The briefs have been written to assess students' knowledge, understanding and skills specifically relevant to the module Learning Outcomes, but they have not been contextualised to meet local need and international diversity. Therefore, they cannot be used as authorised assignments and would need to be modified and customised to meet localisation. The briefs offer a range of real and simulated assessment activities, for example, group work to encourage cooperation and social skills or a solution-focused case study to develop cognitive skills.

All assignments must be moderated in line with the internal verification process.

The Tutor Resources section on HN Global offers a wide range of resources and guidance documents to help you plan and design assessments effectively. Please see the *Assessment and Assignment Guidance Booklet* for more information.

4.5 Pearson English

Pearson provides a full range of support for English learning, including diagnostics, qualifications and learning resources. Please see: www.pearson.com/languages.

The Pearson Languages portal also offers a variety of digital resources. The portal encourages users to get involved, improves teaching and results, and enhances the learning experience.

5.0 Planning your programme

5.1 Delivering Higher Nationals

As a large employer and qualification-awarding organisation, Pearson understands the value of developing the skills and talent of the future workforce. We believe in, and champion, higher technical education that is relevant to employers.

You play a central role in helping your students choose the right Pearson BTEC Higher National qualification.

Assess your students very carefully to make sure they take the right qualification. This will allow them to progress to the next stage in their learning or employment journey. You should also check the qualification structures and modules carefully when giving students advice.

Make sure your students have access to a full range of information and advice to help them choose the right qualification. When students are recruited, you need to give them accurate information on the title and focus of the qualification they are studying for. Centres must provide a programme specification for approvals but it is also essential that centres produce:

- a staff handbook to support full- and part-time members of your team, and
- a student handbook to guide students through the course requirements so they know what is expected of them and understand their rights.

You can find more information in the *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment* available on our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/ en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html.

5.1.1 Centre approval

We need to approve all centres before they can offer our qualifications. This is to make sure that centres are ready to assess students and that we can provide the support you need.

For more information about becoming a centre and gaining approval to run our qualifications, please see 'Centre/Qualification approvals' in the support section of our website at: https://support.pearson.com/uk/s/article/Centre-Qualification-Approvals.

5.1.2 Tutor knowledge

We do not set any requirements for tutors, but we do recommend that centres assess the overall skills and knowledge of the teaching team to make sure they are relevant, up to date and at the correct level.

5.1.3 Resources

As part of your centre approval, you will need to show that the right resources and workspaces are available to deliver Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals. Some modules need specific resources. This is clearly explained in the module descriptions.

5.1.4 Delivering learning

With our approval, you can deliver our Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals using a mixture of learning options that meet your students' needs. We recommend you offer full-time, part-time, blended learning and distance learning modes of delivery.

If you are delivering distance learning, please see the *Pearson distance learning and assessment policy* at: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html.

5.1.5 Support from Pearson

For each programme with active registrations, we will provide an external examiner to help you plan and review assessments. You will also be able to access training events and support from a dedicated team of Pearson Higher National subject leads. Please see: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/training-from-pearson-uk.html.

5.2 Entry requirements and admissions

Pearson does not set formal entry requirements for our qualifications but, as a centre, you are responsible for making sure that the students you recruit have a reasonable chance of success on the programme.

Students who have recently been in education are likely to need:

- a BTEC Level 3 qualification in Sound Engineering
- a GCE Advanced Level profile that demonstrates strong performance in a relevant subject or adequate performance in more than one GCE subject. This profile is likely to be supported by GCSE grades at 9 to 4 or A* to C (or equivalent) in subjects such as maths and English
- other related Level 3 qualifications
- an Access to Higher Education Diploma from an approved further education institution
- relevant work experience, or
- an international equivalent to the above qualifications.

Our recognition of priorlearning policy means that students' previous learning and experience can be taken into account and they may be awarded certain qualifications or modules/units of a qualification based on that learning or experience. Please see *Section 9* for more information.

5.2.1 English language requirements

Pearson's mission is to help people make more of their lives through learning.

In order for students to be successful on Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications that are **both** taught and assessed in English, it is critical that they have an appropriate level of English language skills.

The following clarifies the requirements for all centres when recruiting applicants on to new Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications.

All centres delivering the new Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications must ensure that all students who are non-native English speakers and who have not undertaken their final two years of schooling in English can demonstrate capability in English at a standard equivalent to the levels identified below, before being recruited to the programme **where the programme is both taught and assessed in English**:

- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Level **B2**
- Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic **51**
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) **5.5**; reading and writing must be at **5.5**
- or equivalent.

It is up to the centre to decide what proof will be necessary to evidence individual student proficiency.

The following clarifies the requirements for all centres when recruiting applicants on to new Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications that are **taught in a language other than English, but are assessed in English**.

All centres delivering the new Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications **wholly or partially in a language other than English**, but that are assessed in English, must ensure that all students can demonstrate capability in English at a standard equivalent to the levels identified below, on completion of the programme:

- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Level **B2**
- PTE Academic **51**
- IELTS **5.5**; reading and writing must be at **5.5**
- or equivalent.

It is up to the centre to decide what proof will be necessary to evidence individual student proficiency.

5.3 Access to study

This section focuses on the administration you will need to carry out when delivering our Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications. It will be most relevant to quality controllers, Programme Leaders and examinations officers.

Our qualifications should:

- be available to everyone able to reach the required standards
- be free from any barriers that restrict access and progress, and
- provide equal opportunities for all those who want to access the qualifications.

For more information, please see our *Equity, diversity and inclusion in Pearson qualifications and related services policy*, available at: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html.

Please recruit with integrity when registering students to our Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes. You should:

- make sure that students applying have the information and advice they need about the qualification to be sure it meets their needs
- check each student's qualifications and experience to make sure they have the potential to achieve the qualification, and
- for students with disabilities and specific needs, consider the support available to them during teaching and assessment. For more guidance, please see *Section 5.6.2* on reasonable adjustments.

5.4 Student registration and entry

All students should be registered on the qualification they are studying and suitable arrangements need to be made for internal and external verification. For information on making registrations, please see the information manual available in the support section of our website at: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-for-you/exam-officers-administrators/entries-information-manual.html?view=manual.

Students can only be formally assessed for a qualification they are registered on. If a student changes the qualification they want to study for (for example, if they decide to choose a different specialist pathway), you must transfer their registration to the new pathway. We cannot sample a student's work unless they are registered on the correct pathway.

5.5 Access to assessments

Assessments need to be managed carefully so that all students are treated fairly and results and certificates are published without delay.

Our equity, diversity and inclusion policy requires that:

- all students have an equal opportunity to access our qualifications and assessments, and
- our qualifications are awarded in a way that is fair to every student.

We are committed to making sure that:

- students with a protected characteristic as defined by law (for example, race, sexuality or religious belief) are not disadvantaged in comparison to students who do not share that characteristic
- all students achieve the recognition they deserve for taking a qualification, and
- this achievement can be compared fairly to the achievement of their peers.

For more information on access arrangements, please visit the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) website at: https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/.

5.6 Administrative arrangements for internal assessment

5.6.1 Records

You are required to retain records of assessment for each student. Records should include assessments taken, decisions reached and any adjustments or appeals. Further information on quality and assessment can be found in our UK and international guides available in the support section on our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html. We may ask to audit your records, so they must be retained as specified. All student work must be retained for **a minimum of 12 weeks** after certification has taken place.

5.6.2 Reasonable adjustments to assessment

A reasonable adjustment is one that is made before a student takes an assessment, to ensure that they have fair access to demonstrate the requirements of the assessments.

You are able to make adjustments to internal assessments to take account of the needs of individual students. In most cases, this can be achieved through a defined time extension or by adjusting the format of evidence. We can advise you if you are uncertain as to whether an adjustment is fair and reasonable. You need to plan for time to make adjustments, if necessary.

Further details on how to make adjustments for students with protected characteristics are available on the support section of our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html.

5.6.3 Special consideration

Special consideration is given after an assessment has taken place for students who have been affected by adverse circumstances, such as illness, and require an adjustment of grade to reflect normal level of attainment. You must operate special consideration in line with Pearson policy (see previous paragraph). You can provide special consideration related to the period of time given for evidence to be provided, or for the format of the assessment (if it is equally valid). You may not substitute alternative forms of evidence to that required in a module, or omit the application of any assessment criteria to judge attainment. Pearson can consider applications for special consideration in line with the JCQ guide to the special consideration process, which can be downloaded from the JCQ website at: https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/.

Please note that your centre must have a policy for dealing with mitigating circumstances if students are affected by adverse circumstances, such as illness, which result in non-submission or late submission of assessment.

5.6.4 Appeals against assessment

Your centre must have a policy for dealing with appeals from students. These appeals may relate to assessment decisions being incorrect or assessment not being conducted fairly. The first step in such a policy could be a consideration of the evidence by a Programme Leader or other member of the programme team. The assessment plan should allow time for potential appeals after assessment decisions have been given to students. If there is an appeal by a student, you must document the appeal and its resolution. Students have a final right of appeal to Pearson, but only if the procedures that you have put in place have been followed.

Further details of our policy on enquiries and appeals are available on the support section of our website at: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html/.

If your centre is located in England or Wales and the student is still dissatisfied with the final outcome of their appeal, they can make a further appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) by emailing: enquiries@oiahe.org.uk. In Northern Ireland a further appeal may be lodged with the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman (NIPSO) by emailing: nipso@nipso.org.uk.

5.7 Dealing with malpractice in assessment

'Malpractice' refers to acts that undermine the integrity and validity of assessment, the certification of qualifications and/or may damage the authority of those responsible for delivering the assessment and certification.

Pearson does not tolerate actual or attempted actions of malpractice by learners, centre staff or centres in connection with Pearson qualifications. Pearson may impose penalties and/or sanctions on learners, centre staff or centres where malpractice or attempted malpractice has been proven.

Malpractice may occur or be suspected in relation to any module/unit or type of assessment within a qualification. For further details on malpractice and advice on preventing malpractice by learners, please see Pearson's *Centre guide for dealing with malpractice and maladministration*, available to download on our website: www.qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html.

Centres are required to take steps to prevent malpractice and to investigate instances of suspected malpractice. Learners must be given information that explains what malpractice is for internal assessment and how suspected incidents will be dealt with by the centre. The *Centre guide for dealing with malpractice and maladministration* document gives full information on the actions we expect you to take.

Pearson may conduct investigations if we believe a centre is failing to conduct internal assessment according to our policies. The malpractice guidance document gives further information and examples, and details the penalties and sanctions that may be imposed.

In the interests of learners and centre staff, centres need to respond effectively and openly to all requests relating to an investigation into an incident of suspected malpractice.

5.7.1 Student malpractice

The Heads of Centres are required to report incidents of suspected student malpractice that occur during Pearson qualifications. We ask centres to complete a *JCQ Form M1* available to download at: www.jcq.org.uk/malpractice and email it with any accompanying documents (signed statements from the student and invigilator, copies of evidence etc.) to the Investigations Processing team at: candidatemalpractice@pearson.com. The responsibility for determining appropriate sanctions or penalties to be imposed on students lies with Pearson.

Students must be informed at the earliest opportunity of the specific allegation and the centre's malpractice policy, including the right of appeal. Students found guilty of malpractice may be disqualified from the qualification for which they have been entered with Pearson.

Failure to report malpractice constitutes staff or centre malpractice.

5.7.2 Tutor and centre malpractice

Heads of Centres are required to inform Pearson's Investigations Processing team of any incident of suspected malpractice (which includes maladministration) by centre staff, before any investigation is undertaken. The Heads of Centres are requested to inform the investigations team by submitting a *JCQ Form M2* (downloadable from: www.jcq.org.uk/malpractice) with supporting documentation to: pqsmalpractice@pearson.com. Where Pearson receives allegations of malpractice from other sources (for example Pearson staff, anonymous informants), the investigations team will conduct the investigation directly or may ask the Head of Centre to assist.

Pearson reserves the right in cases of suspected malpractice to withhold the issuing of results/certificates while an investigation is in progress. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, results and/or certificates may not be released or they may be withheld.

We reserve the right to withhold certification when undertaking investigations, audits and quality assurance processes. You will be notified within a reasonable period of time if this occurs.

5.7.3 Sanctions and appeals

Where malpractice is proven, we may impose sanctions or penalties, such as:

- mark reduction for affected external assessments
- disqualification from the qualification, or
- debarment from registration for Pearson qualifications for a period of time.

If we are concerned about your centre's quality procedures, we may impose sanctions such as:

- working with centres to create an improvement action plan
- requiring staff members to receive further training
- placing temporary suspensions on certification of learners
- placing temporary suspensions on registration of learners
- debarring staff members or the centre from delivering Pearson qualifications, or
- suspending or withdrawing centre approval status.

The centre will be notified if any of these apply.

Pearson has established procedures for considering appeals against penalties and sanctions arising from malpractice. Appeals against a decision made by Pearson will normally be accepted only from the Head of Centre (on behalf of learners and/or members or staff) and from individual members (in respect of a decision taken against them personally). Further information on appeals can be found in the JCQ Appeals booklet available to download at: www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/appeals

6.0 Programme structure

6.1 Modules, assessment units, credits and total qualification time

The Higher National Certificate (HNC) is a Level 4 qualification made up of 120 credits. It is usually studied full time over one year, or part time over two years.

The Higher National Diploma (HND) is a Level 4 and Level 5 qualification made up of 240 credits. It is usually studied full time over two years, or part time over four years.

Pearson would expect an HND student to have achieved a Pass grade for *Assessment Unit A1: Concept and Development* (340 GLH – 85 credits) before beginning the Level 5 curriculum. This allows the student to complete the assessment of *Assessment Unit A2: Creative Project* (140 GLH – 35 credits). This allows for the student to complete the remaining Level 4 assessment while continuing with Level 5 study. Centres must ensure that such situations do not place the student in a position where the increased workload in Level 5 puts the student's overall achievement at risk. Therefore, where such a plan is in place, the assessment of the remaining Level 4 assessment unit should be undertaken early in the student's Level 5 experience.

If an HND student does not complete the full qualification, they may be awarded an HNC if they have gained enough credits.

The Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals in Sound Engineering use modules to define the overall structure of the qualification. Each module includes one, or more, assessment units, which provide the definition of Learning Outcomes and Essential Content for delivery.

Modules are designed around the amount of time it will take for a student to complete them and receive a qualification. This is known as the total qualification time (TQT). TQT includes guided learning activities, directed learning activities and assessment.

The total qualification time for Higher National Certificate (HNC) = 1,200 hours.

The total qualification time for Higher National Diploma (HND) = 2,400 hours.

Examples of activities that can contribute to TQT include:

- guided learning
- independent and unsupervised research and learning
- unsupervised creation of a portfolio of work experience
- unsupervised e-learning
- unsupervised e-assessments
- unsupervised coursework
- watching a recorded podcast or webinar, and
- unsupervised work-based learning.

6.1.1 Guided learning hours

These are the hours when a student is engaged with a member of staff who provides specific guidance towards the learning aim being studied. Guided learning hours include lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, open learning centres and learning workshops. They also include supervised assessment activities such as invigilated exams, observed assessments and observed work-based practice.

The total guided learning hours for Higher National Certificate (HNC) = 480 hours.

The total guided learning hours for Higher National Diploma (HND) = 960 hours.

Some examples of activities that can contribute to guided learning include:

- classroom-based learning supervised by a tutor
- work-based learning supervised by a tutor
- working under supervision in a workshop or library
- a live webinar or telephone tutorial with a tutor
- live e-learning supervised by a tutor, and
- all forms of assessment guided or supervised at the time by a tutor or other education or training provider. This includes times where the assessment is competence-based and turned into a learning opportunity.

6.1.2 Independent learning hours

These are the hours where a student is learning without the direct guidance of a member of centre staff. They are critical to the student's ability to develop knowledge and skills, as well as providing them with the opportunity to develop key transferable skills such as self-discipline, time management and self-motivation.

The total independent learning hours for Higher National Certificate (HNC) = 720 hours.

The total independent learning hours for Higher National Diploma (HND) = 1,440 hours.

Some examples of activities that can contribute to independent learning include:

- self-directed research and investigation
- reading set texts or other sources of information
- watching subject-related videos as part of investigation and research
- reviewing recordings of scheduled sessions or notes from those sessions
- peer activities, such as group meetings and online discussions, where students explore their learning together, and
- reviewing and recording thoughts on their own learning.

Modules

Each module defines:

- A broad area of creative practice where the student will learn, develop work and be assessed.
- The *Introduction*, which provides an overview of the module, highlighting what students will learn and how this fits within their overall development of creative practice.
- The *Assessment Summary*, which provides a brief overview of the approach to assessment and the Learning Outcomes, defined within the assessment units (see below).
- The *Essential Content* that must be taught, to support the student to achieve the Learning Outcomes:
    - Essential Content is divided into key areas that correspond to the standard assessment criteria.
    - Essential Content *may* be further divided to include specific *Subject Domain* content, where there are differences between what may be necessary for different domains.
- *Essential Information for Assessment*, which provides support for teaching and assessment teams:
    - Recommended Evidence provides an overview of the strategy for assessment and types of evidence that may be appropriate for the assessment unit. These are provided for guidance, and teaching assessment teams are encouraged to explore other forms of evidence that may be appropriate to the module, assessment unit and subject.

Assessment units

Each assessment unit defines:

- The Level of the assessment unit
- The required number of guided learning hours
- Learning Outcomes that articulate what the student should be able to evidence at the end of the learning period:
    - each Learning Outcome corresponds to one of the standard assessment criteria for the level
    - the number of Learning Outcomes will match the number of standard assessment criteria.

6.2 Programme structures

Programme structures specify:

- the total credit value of the qualification, and
- the minimum credit to be achieved at the level of the qualification.

When combining units for our Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications, it is up to the centre to make sure that the correct combinations are followed.

6.2.1 Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Sound Engineering

- Requires at least 120 credits
- Total qualification time = 1,200 hours
- Total guided learning hours = 480 hours

	Guided learning hours
Module A: Process and Practice	**480**
A1: Concept and Development	340
A2: Creative Project	140

Table 2: Guided learning hours in Module A: Process and Practice

6.2.2 Pearson BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Sound Engineering

- Requires 240 credits, of which 120 credits are at Level 5 and 120 credits are at Level 4
- Total qualification time = 2,400 hours
- Total guided learning hours = 960 hours

	Guided learning hours
Module B: Professional Creative Practice	**480**
B1: Personal Professional Development	170
B2: Professional Project	310

Table 3: Guided learning hours in Module B: Professional Creative Practice

7.0 Assessment

This Pearson BTEC Higher National is assessed using centre-developed internal assignments that are set and assessed by the centre.

7.1 Principles of internal assessment

This section summarises the main features of internal assessment and explains how you can offer it effectively. Full details are given in the *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment* handbook, downloadable in the enhanced quality assurance section of our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html. All of your assessment team will need to refer to this document.

For Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals, you must meet the expectations of stakeholders and the needs of students by providing a programme that is practical and applied. You can tailor programmes to meet local needs and should use links with local employers and the wider business sector.

Effective internal assessment is challenging, engaging, practical and up to date. It must also be fair to all students and meet national standards.

7.1.1 Assessment through assignments

For internally assessed modules/units, assessment takes the form of an assignment carried out after the module/unit (or part of the module/unit if several assignments are used) has been delivered. An assignment may take a variety of forms, including practical and written. It is a distinct activity completed independently by students (alone or in a team). It is separate from teaching, practice, exploration and other activities that students complete with direction from tutors.

Students should receive each assignment as an assignment brief with a hand-out date, a completion date and clear requirements for the evidence they must provide. There may also be specific practical activities that the student must complete under tutor observation as part of the assignment. Assignments can be divided into separate parts and may require several forms of evidence. A valid assignment will enable a clear and formal assessment grade based on the assessment criteria.

7.1.2 The assessment team

You will need an effective team for internal assessment. There are three key roles involved, each with different responsibilities. These roles are listed below.

- The **Programme Leader** is responsible for the programme, its assessment and internal monitoring to meet Pearson's requirements. They must register with us each year. They are also responsible for:
  - record-keeping
  - liaising with the standards verifier
  - acting as an Assessor
  - supporting the rest of the assessment team
  - making sure that the team has the information it needs about our assessment requirements
  - organising training, and
  - using our guidance and support materials.
- **Internal Verifiers** oversee all assessment activity with the Programme Leader. They check that assignments and assessment decisions are valid and meet our requirements. All Internal Verifiers will follow the same standards and procedures as instructed by your Programme Leader. Internal Verifiers are usually also Assessors, but they do not verify their own assessments.
- **Assessors** set assignments or use assignments to assess students to national standards. Before taking any assessment decisions, Assessors are trained by the Programme Leader to all work to the same standards and procedures. They also work with the Programme Leader and Internal Verifiers to make sure the assessment is planned and carried out in line with our requirements.

Our external examiner will sample student work across your Assessors. They will also want to see evidence of how you have verified assignments and assess your decisions.

Full information is provided in the *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment* available in the enhanced quality assurance section of our website: www.qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html

7.1.3 Effective organisation

Internal assessment needs to be well organised so that you can track student progress and so that we can make sure your assessments are in line with national standards. It is particularly important that you manage the overall assignment programme and deadlines to make sure that all your students can complete their assignments on time.

When developing an overall plan for delivering and assessing your programme, you will need to consider:

- the order in which you deliver modules/units
- whether delivery will take place over short or long periods of time, and
- when assessment can take place.

We support you in this through:

- assessment and feedback guidance documents available on HN Global, and
- training materials and sample templates for curriculum planning.

Please also see the *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment*, available in the Enhanced quality assurance section of our website: www.qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html

7.1.4 Preparing students

You need to make sure that your students understand their responsibilities for assessment and the centre's arrangements. From induction onwards, you will want to make sure that students are motivated to work consistently and independently to achieve their qualifications. They need to understand:

- how assignments are used
- the importance of meeting assignment submission deadlines, and
- that all the work submitted for assessment must be their own.

To support them, you should provide a guide that explains:

- how you use assignments for assessment
- how assignments relate to the teaching programme
- how to use and reference source materials, including how to avoid plagiarism, and
- your centre's approach to assessments – for example, how students must submit assignments, what happens if they submit late work and how they can request an extended deadline in special circumstances.

7.2 Assessment using standard criteria

7.2.1 Standard assessment criteria

Assessment criteria are not a series of tasks to be done separately. Rather, they are a means to allow the assessment team to determine the level of achievement of Learning Outcomes.

A creative practitioner will use the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are included within assessment criteria as they develop their body of work. As such, each criterion is equally weighted, meaning they should be given equal importance in students' development.

The standard criteria for the BTEC Higher Nationals in Sound Engineering are as follows.

Criterion	Description
Contextual knowledge	The knowledge and understanding of the underlying concepts and practices associated with the subject, based on historic and contemporary precedent.
Ideas generation and development	The development of propositions based on research and analysis. The ability to evaluate solutions based on research and analysis.
Technical knowledge and skill	The use of existing skills, and development of new skills, that enable the production of creative outcomes. The ability to determine the appropriate skills to complete creative work.
Professional practice	Awareness of contemporary professional practice in the subject and the behaviours appropriate for employment in the sector.
Communication	The ability to share ideas and processes accurately and reliably to diverse audiences and recognise the appropriate forms of output to address different audiences.

Table 4: The standard assessment criteria for the BTEC Higher Nationals in Sound Engineering

7.2.2 Standard criteria for Level 4

Criterion	Ungraded Limited/insufficient/superficial/generic	Pass Competent/appropriate/adequate	Merit Effective/considered/clear/consistent/ secure	Distinction Confident/perceptive/proficient/ highly skilled/comprehensive
Contextual knowledge	Insufficient evidence of an understanding of the underlying concepts and principles within the area of practice. Superficial interpretation of the impact of relevant contextual factors within the area of practice.	Competent understanding of relevant concepts and principles within the area of practice. Appropriate interpretation of the impact of relevant historical, social and cultural contexts within the area of practice.	Clear understanding of relevant concepts and principles within the area of practice. Considered interpretation of the impact of relevant historical, social and cultural contexts within the area of practice.	Comprehensive understanding of relevant concepts and principles within the area of practice. Perceptive interpretation of the impact of relevant historical, social and cultural contexts within the area of practice.
Ideas generation and development	Insufficient use of research and analysis to develop ideas and solve creative problems. Limited application of iterative development processes.	Competent use of research and analysis to develop ideas and solve creative problems. Appropriate application of iterative development processes incorporating adequate exploration, testing and review.	Considered use of research and analysis to develop ideas and solve creative problems. Effective application of iterative development processes incorporating considered exploration, testing and review.	Perceptive use of research and analysis to develop ideas and solve creative problems. Confident application of iterative development processes incorporating comprehensive exploration, testing and review.
Technical knowledge and skill	Insufficient development and application of technical practices to undertake creative work. Work demonstrates limited understanding of how tools, materials, techniques and processes are used within the area of practice.	Appropriate development and application of technical practices to undertake creative work and produce appropriate outcomes. Work demonstrates competent understanding of how tools, materials, techniques and processes are used within the area of practice.	Effective development and application of technical practices to undertake creative work and produce consistent outcomes. Work demonstrates secure understanding of how tools, materials, techniques and processes are used within the area of practice.	Highly skilled development and application of technical practices to undertake creative work and produce high-quality outcomes. Work demonstrates perceptive understanding of how tools, materials, techniques and processes are used within the area of practice.
Professional practice	Limited understanding of contemporary professional practices used within the sector. Insufficient application of professional behaviours, processes and transferable skills.	Competent understanding of contemporary professional practices used within the sector. Appropriate application of professional behaviours, processes and transferable skills necessary for employment within the sector.	Clear understanding of contemporary professional practices used within the sector. Consistent application of professional behaviours, processes and transferable skills necessary for employment within the sector.	Comprehensive understanding of contemporary professional practices used within the sector. Confident application of professional behaviours, processes and transferable skills necessary for employment within the sector.
Communication	Superficial communication of development and outcomes of work and ability to convey ideas and concepts. Generic use of media and formats to convey intentions, with superficial understanding of the needs of the audience.	Competent communication of development and outcomes of work and ability to convey ideas and concepts. Appropriate use of media and formats to convey intentions, supported by adequate understanding of the needs of the audience.	Effective communication of development and outcomes of work and ability to convey ideas and concepts. Considered use of media and formats to convey intentions, supported by clear understanding of the needs of the audience.	Proficient communication of development and outcomes of work and ability to convey ideas and concepts. Confident use of media and formats to convey intentions, supported by perceptive understanding of the needs of the audience.

Table 5: The standard criteria for Pearson Higher Nationals Level 4

7.2.3 Standard criteria for Level 5

Criterion	Ungraded Limited/insufficient/superficial/generic	Pass Effective/considered/clear/through/secure	Merit Confident/perceptive/highly skilled/ proficient	Distinction Fluent/sophisticated/critical/strategic/ insightful
Contextual knowledge	Limited application of the concepts and principles within the area of practice in different contexts, making insufficient links to concepts beyond the area of practice. Superficial understanding of own work within the historical, social and cultural context of the area of practice.	Effective application of the concepts and principles within the area of practice in different contexts, making considered links to concepts beyond the area of practice. Clear understanding of own work within the historical, social and cultural context of the area of practice.	Confident application of the concepts and principles within the area of practice in different contexts, making perceptive links to concepts beyond the area of practice. Perceptive understanding of own work within the historical, social and cultural context of the area of practice.	Fluent application of the concepts and principles within the area of practice, making sophisticated links to concepts beyond the area of practice. Critical understanding of own work within the historical, social and cultural context of the area of practice.
Ideas generation and development	Limited use of methods of enquiry and analysis of information to support ideas generation and development. Superficial selection of solutions based on evaluation of approaches.	Effective use of methods of enquiry and considered critical analysis of information to support ideas generation and development. Considered selection of solutions based on thorough evaluation of diverse approaches.	Confident use of methods of enquiry and perceptive critical analysis of information to support ideas generation and development. Confident selection of solutions based on perceptive evaluation of diverse approaches.	Strategic use of methods of enquiry and insightful critical analysis of information to support ideas generation and development. Sophisticated selection of solutions based on critical evaluation of diverse approaches.
Technical knowledge and skill	Insufficient refinement of skills and limited use of industry-standard tools and techniques to undertake work and produce high-quality outcomes. Work demonstrates superficial understanding of technical practice and quality assurance in professional contexts.	Clear refinement of skills and secure use of industry standard tools and techniques to undertake work and produce effective outcomes. Work demonstrates thorough understanding of technical practice and quality assurance in professional contexts.	Confident refinement of skills and highly skilled use of industry-standard tools and techniques to undertake work and produce high-quality outcomes. Work demonstrates perceptive understanding of technical practice and quality assurance in professional contexts.	Strategic refinement of skills and fluent use of industry-standard tools and techniques to undertake work and produce sophisticated outcomes. Work demonstrates critical understanding of technical practice and quality assurance in professional contexts.
Professional practice	Superficial use of self-reflection to develop limited professional skills, knowledge and practices and support personal progression. Limited application of planning and management processes to deliver projects in professional contexts.	Thorough use of self-reflection to develop effective professional skills, knowledge and practices and support personal progression. Clear application of planning and management processes to deliver projects in professional contexts.	Perceptive use of self-reflection to develop confident professional skills, knowledge and practices and support personal progression. Confident application of planning and management processes to deliver projects in professional contexts.	Critical use of self-reflection to develop fluent professional skills, knowledge and practices and support personal progression. Strategic application of planning and management processes to deliver projects in professional contexts.
Communication	Limited use of communication to generically convey ideas, purpose and intentions through work. Insufficient use of communication techniques, demonstrating superficial understanding of context and audience needs.	Considered use of communication to effectively convey ideas, purpose and intentions through work. Effective use of communication techniques, demonstrating clear understanding of context and audience needs in order to maximise engagement.	Highly skilled use of communication to confidently convey ideas, purpose and intentions through work. Proficient use of communication techniques, demonstrating perceptive understanding of context and audience needs in order to maximise engagement.	Sophisticated use of communication to fluently convey ideas, purpose and intentions through work. Fluent use of communication techniques, demonstrating critical understanding of context and audience needs in order to maximise engagement.

Table 6: The standard criteria for Pearson Higher Nationals Level 5

7.3 Formative assessment

Not all assessment results in a final grade. Formative assessment is intended to provide students with a sense of their progress and support them to improve and develop their knowledge and skill as they work towards summative (final) assessment.

Formative assessment may be undertaken through many of the same types of activity that are used in summative assessment. An approach to formative assessment that supports students to build their knowledge and skill, through ungraded activities that 'model' aspects of what will be required in summative assessment, provides students with learning that is focused on their development.

The feedback associated with formative assessment is often the most challenging and critical element. Tutors must seek to provide students with a clear understanding of their progress and how to continue to improve, but must avoid coaching the student.

Formative assessment should:

- be aligned to the five common assessment criteria
- include formative feedback that is used to support the development of knowledge and skills, but not to provide an indicative grade or to direct students on what to do to achieve higher grades
- be recorded as evidence and be sampled by the external examiner, and
- allow students to submit the same work for formative assessment and summative assessment.

7.3.1 Frequency and timing of formative assessment

Students should receive formative assessment feedback while working towards the following assessment units:

- A1 and B2 – at least twice
- A2 and B1 – at least once.

Where assessment units are broken down into smaller assignments, students should have some formative assessment for each assignment provide them with an understanding of their progress and to identify areas for continued development.

Formative assessment that is too frequent can be detrimental to students' development. On the one hand, it will create an environment where students are working to produce *for* the formative assessment, rather than using the outcomes of formative assessment to support their learning and development towards the summative assessment. In addition, too much formative assessment risks becoming 'coaching', as students will only have time to respond to what has been indicated in formative feedback.

Therefore, the frequency of formative feedback should be considered carefully, as part of an overall curriculum plan, to occur at points where there is a clear benefit for the student in gaining further insight into their development and progress.

The timing of formative assessment should also be considered. Formative assessment that is too close to a summative assessment does not provide effective learning for the student. With limited time between formative and summative assessment, there is less opportunity for the student to make effective use of the feedback from formative assessment to address any issues in the work towards summative assessment. Again, there is also a risk that the feedback from formative assessment becomes simply instructions (coaching) for the student.

Care should be taken to ensure that formative assessment takes place with sufficient time for the student to reflect upon the feedback from the formative assessment and make whatever adjustments they deem necessary to improve their future work or performance towards summative assessment.

It is important to recognise that formative assessment can, in some cases, be continuous; depending on the learning and teaching strategy that has been adopted for a module/unit or programme. For example, where students may be undertaking a large project, which they are working on throughout the semester/term, you may have regular tutorials (either group or individual) to review work-in-progress and provide students with feedback that helps them to understand their progress and development. In this context, the tutorials are a form of continuous formative assessment. The feedback from these tutorials still needs to avoid coaching and tutors should plan for tutorials (formative assessment) to stop at a point where there is sufficient time, before the summative assessment, to make effective use of the feedback in the later tutorials.

Please also see the *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment*, which can be found on our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html.

7.3.2 Formative feedback

While assessment and feedback always constitute a part of the student's learning, the purpose of assessment will vary depending on when it is undertaken and the aim of the assessment activity.

Formative assessment feedback is given to students during the learning journey. This is to say that it relates to formative assessment that may be undertaken, at any point, prior to the summative assessment. Just as formative assessment is undertaken to support students to understand their progress, the associated feedback must be aimed at helping the student to recognise their current position and how to move forward.

Formative assessment should always result in qualitative feedback: not a grade. When giving formative assessment feedback it is important to avoid giving students advice that directly informs the work that they may do for summative assessment. This is referred to as 'coaching' and is inappropriate. Feedback should provide students

with general advice on how to progress in their studies, but should not tell them what to do.

For example, a tutor might say:

"… your analysis of the research is not clear, you will need to look at the research more critically… "

rather than

"… what you should be writing is… "

In the former, the tutor is supporting the student to understand their current progress and how to improve, while the latter is 'coaching' the student.

Formative assessment can be either formal or informal. We might schedule specific points where students present work for formative assessment. Such instances can be valuable opportunities for group discussion and peer assessment. In such cases, it is expected that students will receive written formative assessment feedback. In other instances, the formative assessment feedback may be during tutorials or classroom activities.

Please also see the *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment*, which can be found on our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html.

7.4 Making valid assessment decisions

7.4.1 Authentic student work

An Assessor must assess only student work that is authentic – in other words, the student's own independent work. Students must sign a declaration for each assessment to confirm that it is their own work. This declaration must confirm that:

- any evidence submitted for the assignment is the student's own, and
- the student understands that, if this is not the case, they may face penalties for malpractice.

Assessors must make sure that evidence is authentic by setting valid assignments and supervising students during the assessment period. Assessors must also take care not to provide direct input, instructions or specific feedback that may influence the student's work and final grade.

You can use Pearson templates or your own templates to document authentication.

If your Assessor suspects that a student's evidence is not authentic, they must take action in line with our policies for malpractice. Please see *Section 5.7* for more information.

7.4.2 Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance in relation to the use of AI can be found here. While the principles above remain, centres may wish to consider additional assessment methods to address the potential use of AI.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has also provided updated guidance for providers in relation to the increase in use of artificial intelligence within higher education, and potential risks to academic integrity. The guidance can be found here.

7.4.3 Use of artificial intelligence (AI) in creative subjects

The capabilities of AI are developing rapidly and are already having a deep impact on working practices and society. There is potential for positive and exciting impacts on the creative industries and on creative education when used in conjunction with genuine student ideas, technical skill and creativity that cannot be replicated by AI. As an awarding body we will continually review AI developments and their impact on learning and qualifications to ensure the benefits and potential are harnessed while mitigating risks to assessment.

We would like to provide some guidance and information on the use of AI by students in work that is produced for assessment.

Pearson understands that these powerful tools are being used as a valid part of creative work, but that there are also inherent risks to their use, particularly in an educational or assessment context. It is important that students understand the appropriate use of AI in creative contexts to be prepared for a future in the creative sectors, but also that they develop and demonstrate their own skills in generating ideas, research, use of technical and practical processes, and so on, independent of AI input.

The guidance published by JCQ on the use of AI states that "*all work submitted for qualification assessments must be the student's own".* This means ensuring that the final product/outcome is their own work, and is not copied, paraphrased or heavily derived from another source, including content generated by AI. Within a creative assessment, this means that students must independently develop work beyond any AI input to evidence their own skills and knowledge. If AI is being used by students to produce creative content without sufficient demonstration of their own independent input, they cannot be rewarded for it. JCQ guidance also notes that all Assessors must be trained on identifying and reporting suspected malpractice.

However, it is also noted that the use of AI may be appropriately incorporated into the research, ideas generation, development and production phases of creative work, in the same way that taking inspiration from the work of others can be. Bearing this in mind, when AI is used by students as part of the development of creative work, it is important for tutors and Assessors to consider the following:

- Ensure that you are familiar with the students' styles and work so you can confidently authenticate their independent work.

- Supervise/check on the iteration and development phases of student work, ensuring that their independent demonstration of having met assessment criteria is clearly evidenced.
- Ensure any use of AI tools in the research, ideas generation, development and/or production of creative work is **properly referenced and annotated**. It should also contain details of how the tool was used and reflection on how the results impacted their own work.

Further support and guidance can be found in the *Assessment and Assignment Guidance Booklet.*

7.4.4 Making assessment decisions using criteria

Assessors must use our criteria to make assessment decisions. They can judge the evidence from a student using all the relevant criteria at the same time, but they must be satisfied that there is enough detailed evidence for each criterion required. For example, including a concluding section may not be enough evidence to meet the criterion requiring 'evaluation'.

Assessors should use the information and support available to help them reach their decisions. This includes:

- examples of moderated assessed work, and
- their Programme Leader and assessment team's experience.

7.4.5 Dealing with late assignments

For assessment to be fair, it is important that students are all assessed in the same way and that some students are not given an advantage by having extra time or the opportunity to learn from others. You should develop and publish your own regulations on late assignments and circumstances where you may agree to an extension.

Students must understand your policy on completing assignments by the deadlines you give them. You may agree to extend a deadline for a genuine reason such as illness in line with your centre policies. Please see *Section 5.6* for more information.

You can apply a penalty to assignments that are submitted late. To do this, you should:

- assess the assignment normally
- apply the penalty or cap to the grade awarded
- tell the student their uncapped grade to recognise the learning they have achieved and provide genuine assessment feedback
- record both the uncapped and capped grades, and
- have both grades verified by a suitable Assessment Board, taking into account any genuine reasons for the assignment being late.

Please also see the *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment,* which can be found on our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html.

7.4.6 Providing assessment decisions and feedback

Once your assessment team has completed the assessment process for an assignment, they will provide a formal assessment decision. This should be recorded formally and reported to the student. The information given to the student:

- must show the formal decision and how it has been reached, including how assessment criteria have been met
- may show why they have not demonstrated achievement against assessment criteria
- must not provide feedback on how to improve evidence, and
- may provide feedback on how to improve in the future.

7.4.7 The opportunity to resubmit an assignment

If a student's assignment does not pass after the first assessment, they must have the opportunity to resubmit the assignment for reassessment. In this case:

- students can have the assignment reassessed once only
- if coursework and project-based or portfolio-based assignments need to be reassessed, this will usually involve carrying out the original activity again
- for examinations, reassessment will involve completing a new activity
- the grade for a reassessed assignment will be capped at a Pass, and
- assignments already graded at a Pass or higher cannot be reassessed.

7.4.8 Repeat modules

If a student fails to achieve a Pass for a module following reassessment, your Assessment Board may agree that they can repeat the module. In this case:

- the student must pay the module fee and study the module again, with full attendance, and
- the grade for the module (if successfully completed) will be capped at a Pass.

Students can repeat a module once only.

7.4.9 Assessment Boards

It is a formal Pearson requirement that centres hold an Assessment Board for all your Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes. The main purpose of an Assessment Board is to make recommendations on:

- the grades achieved by students on the modules and assessment units
- extenuating circumstances
- cases of cheating and plagiarism
- students progressing to the next stage of the programme
- the awards to be made to students, and
- students resubmitting assignments and repeating modules.

Assessment Boards may also monitor academic standards. The main board meetings normally take place at the end of the session, but if your centre operates on a semester system there may be meetings at the end of the first semester. There may also be separate meetings to deal with referrals.

If you do not have an Assessment Board, our external examiner will discuss this with your quality nominee and Programme Leader. Assessment Board reports and minutes provide valuable evidence of your quality assurance processes.

7.5 Planning and record-keeping

For internal processes to be effective, your assessment team needs to be well organised and keep effective records. We will work closely with you to make sure you are meeting national standards. This process gives stakeholders confidence in your assessment approach.

Your Programme Leader must have an assessment plan, produced as a spreadsheet. This plan should include:

- the time required to train the assessment team and make sure they are working to the same standards and procedures
- the time available for teaching and carrying out assessments, including when students may complete assessments and when quality assurance will take place
- the completion dates for different assignments
- who is acting as Internal Verifier for each assignment and the date by which the assignment needs to be verified
- a procedure for Internal Verifiers to sample Assessors' decisions that covers all assignments, Assessors and a range of students
- a process to assess and verify students' work so that they receive formal decisions quickly, and
- a system for scheduling resubmissions.

The Programme Leader must also keep records of all assessments carried out. The key records are:

- checking of assignment briefs
- student declarations
- Assessor decisions on assignments, with feedback given to students, and
- confirmation of assessment decisions.

Examples of records and more information are available in the *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment*, available on the enhanced quality assurance process section of our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html.

7.6 Calculating the final qualification grade

7.6.1 Conditions for the award

7.6.1.1 Conditions for awarding our HNC

To achieve our Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate qualification, a student must have:

- completed modules equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4.

7.6.1.2 Conditions for awarding our HND

To achieve our Pearson BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma qualification, a student must have:

- completed modules equivalent to 120 credits at Level 5, and
- completed modules equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4.

7.6.2 Compensation

7.6.2.1 Compensation for the HNC

Students who have attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of their Level 4 17-credit units can still be awarded an HNC as long as they have completed and passed the remaining units.

7.6.3 Calculating the overall qualification grade

A student's overall qualification grade is based on their performance in all modules. They are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction using the points gained through all 120 credits, at Level 4 for the HNC or Level 5 for the HND. The overall qualification grade is calculated in the same way for the HNC and the HND. For HND, the overall qualification grade is based on student performance in Level 5 modules only.

Students must have attempted all modules and assessment units in a valid combination for each qualification. The conditions of award will apply as explained above.

7.6.3.1 Points per assessment unit criteria

Grade	Points
Pass	1
Merit	2
Distinction	3

Table 7: Points per credit

7.6.3.2 Point boundaries

Grade	Point boundaries
Pass	10
Merit	16
Distinction	23

Table 8: Grade point boundaries

7.6.4 Modelled student outcomes

7.6.4.1 Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate

Module A										
	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3		Student 4		Student 5	
	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points
Assessment Unit A1										
A1.AC1	P	1	P	1	M	2	P	1	M	2
A1.AC2	P	1	M	2	M	2	M	2	M	2
A1.AC3	P	1	D	3	D	3	D	3	P	1
A1.AC4	P	1	M	2	D	3	D	3	P	1
A1.AC5	P	1	P	1	D	3	M	2	D	3
Assessment Unit A1 total points		5		9		13		11		9

Module A										
	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3		Student 4		Student 5	
	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points
Assessment Unit A2										
A2.AC1	P	1	P	1	M	2	P	1	M	2
A2.AC2	M	2	P	1	M	2	M	2	M	2
A2.AC3	P	1	D	3	D	3	D	3	P	1
A2.AC4	D	3	D	3	D	3	D	3	M	2
A2.AC5	P	1	D	3	M	2	M	2	M	2
Assessment Unit A2 total points		8		11		12		11		9
Total qualificationpoints		**13**		**20**		**25**		**22**		**18**
Overall Higher National Certificate grade		**Pass**		**Merit**		**Distinction**		**Merit**		**Pass**

Table 9: Example HNC model outcomes

7.6.4.2 Pearson BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma

Module A										
	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3		Student 4		Student 5	
	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points
Assessment Unit A1										
A1.AC1	P	1	P	1	M	2	P	1	M	2
A1.AC2	P	1	M	2	M	2	M	2	M	2
A1.AC3	P	1	D	3	D	3	D	3	P	1
A1.AC4	P	1	M	2	D	3	D	3	P	1
A1.AC5	P	1	P	1	D	3	M	2	D	3
Assessment Unit A1 total points		5		9		13		11		9

Module A										
	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3		Student 4		Student 5	
	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points
Assessment Unit A2										
A2.AC1	P	1	P	1	M	2	P	1	M	2
A2.AC2	M	2	P	1	M	2	M	2	M	2
A2.AC3	P	1	D	3	D	3	D	3	P	1
A2.AC4	D	3	D	3	D	3	D	3	M	2
A2.AC5	P	1	D	3	M	2	M	2	M	2
Assessment Unit A2 total points		8		11		12		11		9
Total qualification points		**13**		**20**		**25**		**22**		**18**
Overall Higher National Diploma grade		**Pass**		**Merit**		**Distinction**		**Merit**		**Pass**

Table 10: Example HND model outcomes

Module B										
	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3		Student 4		Student 5	
	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points
Assessment Unit B1										
B1.AC1	P	1	P	1	M	2	P	1	P	1
B1.AC2	M	2	M	2	M	2	M	2	M	2
B1.AC3	M	2	D	3	P	1	D	3	P	1
B1.AC4	P	1	D	3	M	2	D	3	P	1
B1.AC5	P	1	P	1	D	3	M	2	P	1
Assessment Unit B1 total points		7		10		10		11		6

Module B										
	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3		Student 4		Student 5	
	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points	Grade	Grade points
Assessment Unit B2										
B2.AC1	P	1	P	1	M	2	P	1	P	1
B2.AC2	M	2	P	1	M	2	M	2	M	2
B2.AC3	D	3	M	2	D	3	D	3	P	1
B2.AC4	M	2	D	3	D	3	D	3	M	2
B2.AC5	P	1	D	3	D	3	M	2	M	2
Assessment Unit B2 total points		9		10		13		11		8
Total qualification points		**16**		**20**		**23**		**22**		**14**
Overall Higher National Diploma grade		**Pass**		**Merit**		**Distinction**		**Merit**		**Pass**

Table 11: Example HND model outcomes

Notes:

1. The calculation of overall qualification grade for the Higher National Diploma is based only on achievement within the Level 5 elements of the qualification.
2. The tables above are provided as general examples of using assessment unit and module grades to calculate qualification grades. They may not reflect the specifics of this qualification.

8.0 Quality assurance

The quality assurance system for all Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes is linked to Level 4 and Level 5 of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). This means that centres must have effective quality assurance processes to review their programme delivery. It also means that assessment grades are in line with national standards.

The quality assurance process for centres offering our Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes has five main features:

1. The approval process.
2. Monitoring internal systems.
3. Independent review of assessments.
4. Annual programme monitoring report.
5. Annual student survey.

8.1 The approval process

If you want to deliver our programmes at your centre, you must apply first through the existing centre approval process and then through the programme approval process. We can consider your application by:

- carrying out a desk-based review, or
- visiting your centre.

You will need to provide evidence that your centre:

- has the human and physical resources needed to deliver and assess the programme effectively
- understands the rules of independent assessment and agrees to follow them
- has a strong internal assessment system supported by 'fit for purpose' assessment documentation, and
- has a system to internally verify assessment decisions so that they are consistent across all Assessors and sites.

Your application must be supported by the Head of the Centre (your principal or chief executive). It must include a declaration that you will operate the programmes strictly and in line with our requirements.

If your centre is already approved and you want to renew approval, you may be able to use our automatic approval process.

We may withdraw qualification or centre approval if we believe you can no longer quality assure your programme delivery or assessment standards.

8.2 Centre and qualification approval

As part of the approval process, your centre must meet the conditions listed below before offering the qualification.

- You must have suitable physical resources (for example, equipment, IT, learning materials, teaching rooms) to support delivery and assessment of the qualifications.
- You must provide the specific resources required for individual modules.
- Staff involved in the assessment process must have relevant skills or experience.
- You must have systems to provide continuing professional development for staff delivering the qualification.
- You must have suitable health and safety policies for students and staff using equipment.
- You must deliver the qualification in line with current equality legislation.

In this way, we can provide qualifications that meet the needs and expectations of students worldwide.

8.3 Monitoring internal systems

You will need to demonstrate that you continue to meet our centre approval criteria over time and across all Higher National programmes. This involves providing evidence to our external examiners for review.

Our examiners will check that:

- your systems and the way you use them remain suitable for supporting the programmes
- you apply student registration and appeals policies consistently, and
- you have effective internal examination and standardisation processes.

In some cases, you may present evidence of your operation within a recognised code of practice such as that of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. However, we may still want to confirm independently that these arrangements are operating to our standards.

If our examiners identify problems with your internal systems, we will take steps to help you correct them.

8.4 Independent review of assessments

The external examiner will review your internal assessments for all Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes benchmarked to Levels 4 and 5 of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. They will either:

- confirm that your internal formative and summative assessments meet national standards and allow certification, or
- provide actions to improve the quality of your assessments before allowing certification.

8.5 Annual programme monitoring report (APMR)

This annual review form gives you the opportunity to analyse and reflect on the most recent teaching year. It also provides us with information to help us improve the quality assurance of the Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes. An overview report is produced to outline the findings of the APMR each year.

8.6 Annual student survey

Pearson will conduct an annual survey of Pearson BTEC Higher National students. This provides us with a snapshot of every Higher National student's experience as part of the quality assurance process. Each centre with enough students taking part in the survey will get its own report about their results. You can access the report on HN Global at www.hnglobal.highernationals.com/login.

8.7 Continuing quality assurance and standards verification

Each year we update our *BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment,* available in the enhanced quality assurance section of our website: www.qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about/quality-assurance-process.html. The handbook contains detailed guidance on the quality processes you should follow.

8.7.1 Our key principles of quality assurance

- A centre delivering Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes must be approved by us and must have our approval for the programmes or groups of programmes it is delivering.
- As part of gaining our approval, the centre agrees to always follow our terms and conditions for delivering programmes effectively and to follow the assessment quality assurance policy.

- We provide approved centres with a range of materials and opportunities for reviewing internal materials through our assessment-checking service. This service demonstrates the processes required for effective assessment and provides examples of effective standards. You must use these materials and services to make sure all staff delivering Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications keep up to date with the guidance on assessment.
- You must follow agreed processes for:
  - making sure Assessors and verifiers all work to the same standards and procedures
  - planning, monitoring and recording assessment processes, and
  - dealing with special circumstances, appeals and malpractice.
- We will work in partnership with you to help you achieve quality-assured assessment.
- We will help you follow best practice and use suitable technology to support quality assurance processes.
- We will try to make sure our quality assurance processes do not create unnecessary administrative work for you.
- We will monitor and support you in achieving effective assessment and quality assurance.

We will do this by:

- making sure that you complete a suitable declaration at the time of approval
- carrying out approval visits to your centre
- making sure you have a well-trained, effective team of Assessors and verifiers
- sampling and verifying your assessments, assessed student work and other relevant documents, and
- reviewing your strategy for assessing and quality-assuring your BTEC programmes.

As an approved centre, you must advertise your certification only with our permission and in line with our reporting requirements.

If you do not have and maintain a strong approach to quality assurance, you will not be able to apply for certification for any Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications.

If you do not follow our recommendations for improving your quality assurance, we may withdraw approval for you to deliver our qualifications.

9.0 Recognition of prior learning and attainment

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a way of awarding credit if a student can demonstrate they meet the assessment requirements for a module/unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already have. As long as the assessment requirements are met, RPL can be used to accredit an assessment unit, modules or a whole qualification.

RPL provides a route for recognising the achievements of continuous learning from a range of activities using any valid assessment procedure. We encourage you to recognise students' previous achievements and experiences at work, at home, in leisure and in the classroom. Evidence of learning must be valid and reliable.

For full guidance on RPL, please see *Recognition of prior learning policy and process* in the support section of our website:
www.qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html

10.0 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, and inclusion and fairness are central to our work. The design of these qualifications embeds equality, diversity and inclusion as set out in the qualification regulators' general conditions of recognition.

Promoting equality and diversity involves:

- treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, and
- raising ambitions and supporting achievement for people with different needs and backgrounds.

Creating an inclusive learning environment means anticipating students' varying needs and trying to make sure all students have equal access to educational opportunities. This involves providing access for people who have differing individual needs and removing unnecessary barriers to learning. Qualification design must be inclusive so that students with and without disabilities have equal access to learning opportunities.

Our equality, diversity and inclusion policy requires that:

- all students have an equal opportunity to access our qualifications and assessments
- assessments should reflect the wide diversity of students, and
- our qualifications are designed and awarded in a way that is fair to every student.

We are committed to making sure that:

- students with a protected characteristic as defined by law (for example, race, sexuality or religious belief) are not disadvantaged in comparison with students who do not share that characteristic
- all students achieve the recognition they deserve for taking a qualification, and
- this achievement can be compared fairly to the achievement of their peers.

Our qualifications should:

- be available to everyone capable of reaching the required standards
- be free from any barriers that restrict access and progress, and
- offer equal opportunities for all those who want to access them.

Please see our *Equity, diversity and inclusion in Pearson qualifications and related services policy,* downloadable from the support section of our website: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html.

Please use your integrity when recruiting students to our Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes. You should:

- make sure they have the information and advice they need about the qualification to be sure it meets their needs
- check each student's qualifications and experience to make sure they have the potential to achieve the qualification, and
- for students with disabilities and specific needs, consider the support available to them and any other support they may need during teaching and assessment.

Please see our policy documents on students with particular needs.

10.1 Access to qualifications for students with disabilities or specific needs

Students can be assessed in a recognised regional sign language.

Further information on access arrangements can be found in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) document *Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration* at: www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration. Details on how to make reasonable adjustments for students with protected characteristics are provided in our *Supplementary guidance for reasonable adjustments and special consideration in internal assessments,* available at: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html.

11.0 Modules in the BTEC Higher National Certificate in Sound Engineering

Module A: Process and Practice

Level: 4

Guided learning hours: 480

Introduction

Working in the music industry requires a wide portfolio of diverse skills that need to be continually updated and analysed to enable students to be relevant and innovative. Understanding the complexities, professional practice and behaviours in the music industry is essential to employment and developing one's own technique and proficiency in a range of settings where sound engineers can seek employment. An understanding of historic and current developments is also vital; technological innovation and social media play an essential role in any career in the music industry. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has placed an increased importance on understanding copyright and ethics and the role these play in the creation and promotion of any type of art.

Audiences have been rapidly evolving since the pandemic, with a rise in online performances and the economic impact affecting revenue for the wider industry. These changes bring significant challenges, as well as opportunities, for practitioners.

Sound engineers must understand the development processes, the technical skills and the music business industry for successful employment in the sector.

This module will develop students' underlying knowledge and skills, enabling them to begin their journey in the music industry. Combining technique, research, development and a deep understanding of the technologies involved, students will explore the knowledge, understanding and technical skills required to progress within the sector. The learning and teaching for this module integrate the Essential Content across two assessment units.

Learning Outcomes for assessment units

A1: Concept and Development (340 GLH – 85 credits)

Unit code: M/650/4784

A1.1 Explore the history, theories and developments related to the area of practice.

A1.2 Explore and develop ideas, based on an iterative approach to problem-solving in creative practice.

A1.3 Explore technical knowledge and skills necessary to support creative practice.

A1.4 Explore professional knowledge, behaviours and practices within the sector.

A1.5 Explore techniques, media and formats to communicate ideas and concepts for diverse audiences.

A2: Creative Project (140 GLH – 35 credits)

Unit code: T/650/4786

A2.1 Apply relevant contextual knowledge to inform a creative project.

A2.2 Analyse a given brief to develop creative solutions, applying an iterative development process.

A2.3 Apply technical knowledge and skill in the production of a project outcome.

A2.4 Demonstrate professional knowledge, behaviours and practices in response to a given brief.

A2.5 Present the development process and outcomes of a creative project for a specified audience.

Essential Content

Students must engage with the following content before they are assessed. The content is designed to allow students to develop the knowledge and skills associated with practical vocational contexts related to the subject area.

Content may be delivered through a variety of different teaching and learning approaches that combine to provide a holistic learning journey.

Some aspects of the content are provided as generalised topics that allow teaching teams to develop detailed delivery to meet localised needs. In other cases, there are indications of the types of information that may be delivered in detail; these are indicated by (e.g. ...).

The content defined here is not intended to be exhaustive or exclusive and should be taught within the context of the focus that the centre has identified for its students within the subject area.

Contextual knowledge

The knowledge and understanding of the underlying concepts and practices associated with music performance based on historic and contemporary precedent.

Contextual influences:

- Social:
  - demographic change; media, culture and societal expression; traditions, spiritual and religious contexts; individual and collective identity; music in the internet age
- Technological:
  - digital innovation, digital expression, algorithms, new and emerging technologies, vintage technologies (e.g. tape, vinyl, cassette, tube/valve amps), social media and content creation
- AI:
  - the history and development of AI (e.g. the Illiac Suite, Experiments in Musical Intelligence (EMI) continuator), AI key practitioners (e.g. Paul McCartney, Timbaland, Grimes, Arca, David Guetta), AI plug-in development (e.g. iZotope, Waves, multitrack separation and the Beatles' single 'Now And Then')
- Economic:
  - national/regional economies, the impact of broader economies and globalisation, the independent (DIY/freelance) sound engineer, record labels (e.g. major labels, independent labels)
- Political:
  - conflict, music censorship, government and laws affecting the music industry, artists and activism (e.g. music in the Civil Rights Movement, Taylor Swift's role in the 2024 USA election), political music movements (e.g. the Estonian Singing Revolution, the New Song Movement, the Arab Spring Movement)
- Geographic:
  - the music market for digital, streaming and physical music products, local music scene, the British Invasion, the American Scene (e.g. Detroit and Motown, the Bronx and hip-hop), European electronic scene, traditional music (e.g. folk music, Celtic music, flamenco, music from the African Diaspora), cultural awareness and sensitivity

- Historical:
    - historical development of western genres and subgenres (e.g. rock, pop, jazz, electronic music), historical development of non-western genres (e.g. krautrock, K-pop, salsa, samba), historical and contemporary precedents and practitioners (e.g. George Martin, Alan Parsons, Joe Meek, Rudy Van Gelder, Quincy Jones), technological milestones (e.g. AEG tape machine, MCI 24 track, musical instrument digital interface (MIDI), Soundstream DAW, the CD (1982), ADAT, ProTools), innovative studios and their heritage (e.g. Abbey Road, AIR, BOP, Capitol, Electric Lady, Hansa, Hitsville, Muscle Shoals, Ocean Way, Onkio Haus, RCA, Real World, Sound City, Sun).

Disciplines:

- Sound engineer
- Mix engineer
- Mastering engineer
- Producer
- Studio session musician and live session musician
- Artist
- Musical director
- Theatre musician (e.g. pit musician)
- Film musician
- Music educator
- Songwriter
- Singer/songwriter
- Composer
- DJ
- Top liner
- Arranger.

Cultural theories and principles for interpreting the subject:

- Identity formation
- Music consumption
- Music audience theory
- Purpose
- Connectivity
- Ethics.

Ideas generation and development

The development of a creative project based on research and analysis. The ability to explore, evaluate and assimilate musical sounds, concepts, repertoires and practices, and to relate them to relevant music practices and projects.

Developing and creating a brief/plan:

- Aims and objectives (e.g. sound generation, album creation, live performance)
- Competitors and the market (unique selling point or USP):
  - analysing similar work and approaches, identifying trends
- Market (e.g. musicians, record label, audiences)
- Context (e.g. live performances, releases, distribution, film or game soundtrack, music sync library)
- Demographics, psychographics and audience needs
- Client types and expectations (e.g. label, musical director, band leader, producer or self)
- Constraints (e.g. house and brand styles, financial constraints, availability, technical skills, equipment)
- Timeline
- Budget (e.g. equipment purchase, equipment hire, venue hire, personnel).

Creative ideas generation:

- Informing ideas through research and exploration of a diverse range of music:
  - song analysis, harmonic analysis, sonic analysis, production analysis, stylistic analysis, structural analysis, conceptional and intentional analysis (e.g. commercial intention, spiritual intention), retrograde production techniques
- Creative ideas sources:
  - reflection, internal sources and self-exploration, external sources, creative practitioners, research, collaborative work/working with co-creators, technical/instrumental practice.

Research:

- Research ethics:
  - fair use of references and sources, responsibility and representation

- Research and analysis methodologies:
    - primary research (e.g. direct interviews with industry professionals, case studies), secondary research (e.g. critical analysis of styles, artists), market research (e.g. audience preferences and reception), thematic research (e.g. visual and contextual references), audiences (e.g. determining age groups, cultural backgrounds, media consumption habits), data collection methods (e.g. focus groups, observation, interview), and bibliography, references and citation
- Validity and reliability (e.g. credibility and authenticity)
- Research bias (e.g. avoiding preconceived ideas and stereotypes, embracing diverse perspectives)
- Quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. streaming data or reviews vs audience insights)
- Reputable sources
- Copyright and ownership (e.g. sample clearance, remixes, using existing material)
- Creative processes (e.g. pre-production, sampling, avant-garde technique, audio manipulation).

Reflective practice:

- Internal critical evaluation
- External critical evaluation (e.g. peer feedback, critiques)
- Responding to and analysing feedback
- Resilience in the creative industries (e.g. critics, self-reflection, rejection)
- Mental health (e.g. support, guidance, awareness)
- Workspace and the creative space (e.g. equipment, studio, location)
- Processes:
    - iterative mix comparisons, voice recordings, vlogs, blogs, apps.

Technical knowledge and skill

The use of existing skills, and the development of new skills, that enable the production of creative outcomes. The ability to determine the appropriate skills to complete creative work.

Equipment:

- Microphones: dynamic, condenser, ribbon, piezo/boundary, esoteric (Soundfield, binaural head)
- Speakers:
    - studio speakers (nearfield monitors, farfield monitors, grotbox), live speakers (standard PA, line array speakers), subwoofers (front loaded, bandpass/scoop), speaker enhancements (ports, passive radiator, transmission line)

- Headphones (dependent on the application):
  - open back headphones, closed back headphones, on-ear vs over-ear, in-ear headphones, multi-driver personal monitoring in-ear headphones (IEM)
- Mixing desk:
  - inline mixing desk, classic desk and architecture (e.g. Neve, SSL, Audient, Trident TGI/Abbey Road, API), digital mixing desk (e.g. Digidesign, Yamaha, DiGiCo), live mixing desks (analogue vs digital)
- Outboard processing/hardware:
  - Equalisation (EQ) (e.g. parametric, bandpass, graphic), compression (e.g. optical, voltage controlled amplifier (VCA), tube), limiter, gate, analogue delay (tape), digital delay, analogue reverb (plate, spring, reverb chambers), digital reverb, modulation (chorus, flange, phase), distortion, channel strips
- Recording media:
  - analogue (magnetic) tape, digital tape (e.g. ADAT), hard disk recorders, digital audio workstation (DAW) (e.g. computers, laptops), solid-state recorders (portable)
- Sound sources:
  - percussion (drum kit, hand percussion, folkloric/tribal percussion), tuned percussion (piano, vibraphone, clock, xylophone), brass and reed, stringed instruments (guitar, double bass, violin, viola, sitar, harp), voice (sung vocals, spoken word, ensemble, choir), electric stringed instruments (guitar, bass), esoteric instruments (ancient instruments, tribal instruments), electronic instruments (synths, samplers)
- Cables and connections:
  - analogue signal (XLR, jack, phono/RCA), digital signal (ADAT, optical, SP-DIF, AES/EBU, ethernet RJ45), multicore cables (DB25 loom, touring cables), speaker cable (bare/spade end, Speakon)
- MIDI:
  - MIDI input (step, controller keyboards), MIDI processing (quantisation, nomalling, expression parameters), sound libraries (sound fonts, sample libraries, virtual studio technology (VST) instruments), central processing unit (CPU) handling (buffer size, freeze audio, sampling).

Technique:

- Live microphone technique:
  - polar patterns (e.g. omni, cardioid, hypercardioid, figure 8), close mic'ing (boundary effect), ambient mic'ing, stereo mic technique (e.g. X/Y, M/S, coincident pair, Blumlein pair), multi-mic technique (e.g. Decca tree)
- Mix technique:
  - balance, EQ, panning, spatial effects, metering (average volume, relative volume, LUFs, dB, goniometer), summing

- Mastering:
  - file delivery (e.g. format, sample/BIT rates), audio analysis (e.g. metering, average volume), comparative analysis (e.g. genre norms in volume, width and energy), master file delivery; format, sample/BIT rates, file management (e.g. cloud storage, online preview platforms), delivery format considerations (e.g. CD master, MP3s, vinyl masters), DIY mastering vs professional mastering (e.g. commercial considerations, budgeting, quality of outcomes)
- Acoustic/sound principles:
  - sound energy (SPL, inverse square law), modes, phase, filtering, harmonics, harmonic distortion.

Digital audio technology:

- Digital audio:
  - sample rates, bit rates, dither, AD/DA conversion (soundcards, bouncing, rendering), clocking (e.g. BNC, master clocks, SMPTE), timecode (e.g. film sync, MIDI sync, MIDI keyboard triggering)
- Soundcards:
  - formats (e.g. ADAT optical, SP-DIF, AES/EBU, ethernet RJ45), I/O requirements, digital signal processing (DSP) (e.g. processor management), latency
- Digital audio workstations (DAWs):
  - industry standards (e.g. Pro Tools, Logic, Cubase, Ableton Live), file management (e.g. caches, bin, file directories), audio processing (e.g. plug-ins, third-party processors, non-destructive processing), hardware integration (e.g. sync, clocking, latency), time manipulation (e.g. beat detective, flex audio, quantise lock, phase alignment), in-the-box mixing, desk mixing (e.g. I/O, latency), bouncing (e.g. file formats, dither, sample rates).

Recording studio:

- Studio type (open plan, multi-room, booths)
- Acoustic design (golden ratio, coffin rooms)
- Location recording (makeshift studio – The Band).

Live sound:

- Venue type (room size, reflective surfaces, diffusion)
- Music venue (e.g. small club, large club, arena)
- Theatre sound
- Corporate or A/V
- Festival (e.g. music festival, arts festival, outdoor public events).

Applied sound principles

- Properties and propagation of sound waves:
  - modes amplitude
  - frequency
  - wavelength
  - velocity
  - longitudinal waves, compression and rarefaction
  - Modes: Fundamental, room modes
  - amplitude
  - phase and Interference
- The anatomy of the human ear:
  - the outer ear: pinna, helix, external auditory canal
  - the middle ear: tympanic membrane, auditory ossicles
  - the inner ear: semi-circular canals, vestibule, cochlea
- The human perception of sound :
  - frequency
  - amplitude
  - directionality (eg; psychoacoustic effect)
  - Doppler effect.

Creative Synthesis

- Waveforms:
  - sine
  - sawtooth
  - square
  - triangle
  - white noise
- Fundamental frequency and harmonics: natural frequency and forced vibration
- Architecture of a subtractive synthesiser:
  - oscillators
  - filters
  - amplifiers
  - envelopes
  - LFOs
- Concepts of subtractive synthesis:
  - timbre
  - change over time and articulation of conventional instruments

- Programming techniques:
  - amplitude envelopes
  - filter envelopes
  - pitch envelopes
  - LFOs (eg producing both vibrato and tremolo)
  - velocity mapping
  - keyboard tracking
  - MIDI CC modulation.

Professional practice

Awareness of contemporary professional practice in the music industry and the behaviours appropriate for employment in the creative sector.

The music industry workforce and structure:

- Structure:
  - live and touring industry, distribution, music production, licensing and sync, artist management, marketing and promotion, education, music therapy
- Employment:
  - working as a freelancer (e.g. contracts, tax, accountants, marketing, invoicing and bookkeeping, legal and financial regulations, terms and conditions), networking (e.g. online, physical, building relationships), CV and portfolios, agencies, international employment (e.g. visas), travel, competition, access to employment (e.g. portfolios, agencies, networking, social media, personal website), funding, branding
- Revenue:
  - physical products (e.g. CD sales, vinyl sales), digital products (e.g. streaming), collection societies (e.g. PRS), music sync, publishing, teaching (e.g. masterclasses)
- Roles:
  - creative roles (e.g. artist, composer, arranger, creative director, music photographer, creative assistant, freelance practitioner, videographer), production roles (e.g. music producer, engineer, assistant engineer), management roles (e.g. label manager, studio manager, venue manager, artists and repertoire (A&R), public relations (PR), music director, band leader, merchandise manager), technical roles (e.g. studio sound engineer, live sound engineer, mastering engineer, technician), support roles (e.g. roadie, assistant, creative assistant, post-production assistant), working in education (e.g. facilitator, classroom tutor, peripatetic tutor, masterclasses, mentor), health and wellbeing roles (e.g. music therapist, music psychologist)

- Relationships:
  - management/hierarchies, creative relationships (e.g. collaborating with musicians, writers, producers, brand partnerships), support relationships (e.g. social media assistant, marketing teams), collaboration (e.g. online, in person), accountant, PR, venue staff (e.g. venue owner, tech engineer, bar staff, marketing team)
- Ethics:
  - regulators (e.g. professional bodies, media regulators, censorship), protecting vulnerable audiences/stakeholders and performers (e.g. parental advisory lyrics, radio play, safeguarding for musicians), professional ethics (e.g. codes of conduct), AI (e.g. rights and responsibilities, ownership of content including music, video and images, morals), ownership (e.g. copyright, intellectual property, licensing), accessibility and protected characteristics, equality, diversity and representation, sustainability (e.g. energy consumption and carbon footprint, sustainable sources, disposal and recyclability).

Creative project management:

- Workflow and planning processes (e.g. roles and responsibilities)
- Post-production
- Time management (e.g. schedule, milestones, deadlines)
- Asset management (e.g. audio file storage, cloud backups, tape archive practices)
- Resource management (e.g. financial, equipment, human)
- Contingency.

Health, safety and wellbeing:

- Workspace (e.g. personal protective equipment (PPE), screen, equipment, studio, location)
- Physical health for engineers:
  - healthy eating (e.g. touring, time management), common damage and injuries (e.g. repetitive strain injury (RSI), tinnitus)
- Mental health (e.g. support, guidance, awareness)
- Mental health:
  - performance anxiety, stress and burnout, imposter syndrome
- Safe working environments (e.g. discrimination, time management, bullying and harassment)
- Resilience in the creative industries:
  - self-reflection, social media and online harassment, critics/feedback
- Disability and diversity in the workplace:
  - accessibility, working at height, cultural appropriation, genre/race sensitivities (e.g. stage access for wheelchair)

- Hearing health:
    - sound levels (e.g. safe volumes for speakers/headphones/dB meters), tinnitus, ear protection.

Sustainability:

- Economic sustainability
- Social sustainability
- Environmental sustainability
- Developing sustainable working practices:
    - climate charters (e.g. Music Declares Emergency), product life cycle and disposal/recyclability (e.g. water usage at festivals), sustainable sources (e.g. PVC use in vinyl), energy consumption and carbon footprint (e.g. streaming)
- Innovation and creativity (e.g. Life Water, Heard, Julie's Bicycle, collaboration, stakeholder engagement)
- Practitioners who champion sustainability (e.g. Billie Eilish, Coldplay, Pearl Jam, BLOND:ISH)
- Festivals that champion sustainability (e.g. Sommo Festival, ESNS, Spendour In The Grass, Leeds Festival, Hillside Festival, Latitude Festival, Glastonbury, Small World)
- Merchandise.

Reflective practice and lifelong learning:

- Competition (e.g. USP, staying up to date with new technologies and equipment)
- Evolving technologies (e.g. AI, new plug-in releases/capabilities)
- Trends and platforms (e.g. social movements, social media)
- Mentors
- Industry legislation and regulations (e.g. copyright, intellectual property, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), professional indemnity, public liability)
- Sustainability
- Equality, diversity and inclusion.

Communication

The ability to share ideas and processes accurately and reliably with diverse audiences, and to recognise the appropriate forms of output to address different audiences.

Communication types for sound engineers:

- Live performance and recorded performance
- Podcast

- Social media:
  - range of current platforms (e.g. TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook), messaging, copyright (e.g. sharing music), AI risks and innovations, image and brand (e.g. targeting clients, genre-specific trends and presentation)
- Audio books
- Moving image soundtracks
- Music videos
- Press release
- Website
- Interviews
- Communication purpose:
  - audience growth, audience engagement, promotion, pitching, ideas and progress, collaborative working, research
- Risks in sound engineer communication:
  - wellbeing and mental health, cyberstalking and cyber harassment, AI, copyright and licensing, reputational damage.

Audiences:

- Audience demographic:
  - online and in-person audiences, age, geographical (e.g. local audience, global audience), streaming, purchase format (e.g. vinyl, CD, digital), gender, ethnicity, economic (e.g. ticket pricing)
- Target market:
  - online and in-person market, existing customers, expanding customer base, client-led target market (e.g. session work), industry (e.g. showcase, festival, label), sponsorship (e.g. equipment endorsements, equipment reviews, journal/magazine article, branding partnership)
- Communication context:
  - music for soundtracks (e.g. games, films, TV), music for adverts (e.g. radio advert, TV), pitching (e.g. gig application for festival/venue, recording session proposal), funding (e.g. applying for funding).

Presentation

- Presentation formats (e.g. studio recording, live performance, multimedia/interactive)
- Material:
  - clarity of concept and purpose, original material, existing material, format/platform for delivery (e.g. online, physical products).

12.0 Modules in the BTEC Higher National Diploma in Sound Engineering

Module B: Professional Creative Practice

Level: 5

Guided learning hours: 480

Introduction

The music industry offers a wide variety of careers – ranging from creative to technical, producing to managing, and both studio and live performances. There are many crossovers across these different career trajectories; knowledge of these different roles is required to undertake a specific role. Sound engineers will be required to interact with all sorts of clients to undertake work, fulfil briefs and grow within the industry.

Through this module, students will develop their creative, technical, and contextual knowledge and skills. They will begin applying them to more complex and professionally oriented outcomes. The curriculum and assessment units will allow students to explore the creative and technical aspects of their own practice, as well as their future career intentions, by developing projects, professional skills and materials that will enable them to progress to employment or continued study.

The learning and teaching for this module integrate the Essential Content across two assessment units.

Learning Outcomes for assessment units

B1: Personal Professional Development (170 GLH – 45 credits)

Unit code: F/650/4799

B1.1 Develop and apply contextual knowledge to inform personal progression.

B1.2 Develop and apply professional approaches to creative problem-solving to support personal progression.

B1.3 Develop and apply technical knowledge and skill to support personal progression.

B1.4 Develop and apply professional knowledge, behaviours and practices to support personal progression.

B1.5 Develop and apply professional communication skills to support personal progression.

B2: Professional Project (310 GLH – 75 credits)

Unit code: R/650/4801

B2.1 Apply contextual knowledge to inform a response to a professional brief.

B2.2 Apply creative problem-solving skills to the development of ideas, proposals and final project outcomes.

B2.3 Use technical knowledge and skills to produce professional outcomes.

B2.4 Demonstrate professional knowledge, behaviours and project management skills.

B2.5 Present project development and outcomes, demonstrating professional communication skills.

Essential Content

Students must engage with the following content before they are assessed. The content is designed to allow students to develop the knowledge and skills associated with practical vocational contexts related to the subject area.

Content may be delivered through a variety of different teaching and learning approaches that combine to provide a holistic learning journey.

Some aspects of the content are provided as generalised topics that allow teaching teams to develop detailed delivery to meet localised needs. In other cases, there are indications of the types of information that may be delivered in detail; these are indicated by (e.g. ...).

The content defined here is not intended to be exhaustive or exclusive and should be taught within the context of the focus that the centre has identified for its students within the subject area.

Contextual knowledge

The knowledge and understanding of the underlying concepts and practices associated with the subject, based on historic and contemporary precedent.

The creative approaches of others in context:

- Methods and processes of sound engineers across a range of genres and/or cultures (e.g. reggae/dub, krautrock, EDM)
- Intentions of work at a point in time
- The role of music education
- The role of the practitioner
- External influences on work
- Influences of work on society
- Contextual links and relationships
- Reactions of different audiences and groups.

Cultural and critical concepts:

- Ethnomusicology (e.g. Béla Bartók, Alan Lomax, Jaap Kunst, Ellen Koskoff, folk music traditions, gamelan, the relationship between music, society and culture)
- Musicology (e.g. Schenkerian, Rosetta Reitz, Tammy Kernodle, music and conflict, disability, masculinity, gay musicology, subjectivity)
- Narrative theory (e.g. conceptional and analytical considerations)
- Music philosophy (e.g. expressiveness, relationships, value of music)
- Music psychology (e.g. psychoanalysis, humanistic, behavioural)
- Gender and identity (e.g. race, feminism, queer theory, LGBTQ+, fluid identities, gender disparity in sound engineering)
- Media and communication (e.g. social identity theories, mass media, media culture).

Music economies:

- Globalisation (e.g. distribution, social media)
- Commercialisation and monetisation (e.g. royalties, subscriptions)
- Industry context (e.g. independent studio, large studio, niche studio)
- Rights (e.g. copyright, public domain, creative commons, publishing)
- Drivers for production and commercial needs
- Impact of technologies (e.g. streaming, algorithms)
- Sustainability (e.g. social, economic, environmental).

Critical contextualising of own work:

- Reception by different audiences
- How work sits within own practice
- How work relates to current and historic practice
- Unique selling point (USP)
- Potential impacts of work on wider contexts.

Ideas generation and development

The development of creative projects based on research and analysis. The ability to evaluate solutions based on research and analysis.

Developing a creative brief/proposal:

- Client and stakeholder requirements/needs:
  - market position, return on investment (ROI), tie-ins (e.g. merchandising, add-ons, other media)
- Artistic goals/client requirements/needs:
  - artist/client intention, artistic and technical development, artistic or technical viability in current music industry (unique selling point or USP)
- Consultation (e.g. engaging with industry professionals, working with teams to refine material)
- Obligations and deliverables (e.g. working to schedules)
- Defining roles and responsibilities
- Legal and ethical constraints (e.g. copyright laws)
- Feasibility (e.g. major label budgets vs independent musician, location, equipment, musician availability)
- Strategy:
  - platforms, longevity (e.g. lifespan, releases, updates, industry expectations), audience engagement (e.g. hidden messaging, call to action)
- Trends.

Ideas development:

- Research:
  - research objectives (e.g. audience growth, engagement, streaming), primary research (e.g. experiences, field, documentary, observation, action, comparative), secondary (e.g. review, case study, market data), data collection (e.g. survey, focus groups, oral history, interview)

- Problem-solving:
    - GROW (goal, reality, obstacles, options, way forward), lateral thinking (e.g. idea generation, provocation, movement, challenge, concept formation, disproving, fractionation), five 'W's and how (who, what, when, where, why, how), problem-based thinking and solution-based thinking (e.g. improvisation), means-ends analysis (e.g. how choices relate to artistic vision), analogical reasoning (e.g. development of new ideas from exploration of past ideas).

Sound concept development:

- Concept generation (e.g. production conventions, retrograde techniques, technological limitations, external and internal influences)
- Narrative
- Existing musical concept analysis (e.g. David Bowie, Beyoncé, Gorillaz)
- Collaboration
- Live music analysis.

Critical reflection:

- Ongoing reflection
- Reflective models (e.g. Gibbs, Kolb, Schön, Brookfield)
- In relation to personal intentions and refining artistic voice and vision:
    - refinement of ideas, personal development goals (e.g. knowledge, practice), career goals, creative intentions, how new learning shapes response to the brief
- In relation to the brief:
    - development and progress, fulfilment of purpose and function, technical execution (e.g. techniques and processes), comparisons with market, sustainability, and diversity, equity and inclusion
- Goal setting
- Identifying opportunities for networking and collaboration.

Technical knowledge and skill

The use of existing skills, and development of new skills, that enable the production of creative outcomes. The ability to determine the appropriate skills to complete creative work.

Mastery – developing and refining technique and technical understanding:

- Studio recording:
  - digital audio workstation (DAW) functionality (e.g. Pro Tools, Cubase, Logic, Albeton), audio recording for chosen source (e.g. vocals, guitar, bass), transducer for chosen source (e.g. microphone, DI, amplification), working with studio personnel (e.g. studio etiquette, preparation), monitoring (e.g. safe practice, dB metering), audio interfaces (e.g. I/O requirements, device networking), studio environment for performers (e.g. space, acoustics), advanced mix technique (e.g. balance, equalisation (EQ), spatial effects, clarity/separation)
- Live sound:
  - working with relevant technical staff at venue (e.g. etiquette, preparation), live sound requirements (creating detailed, professional tech specs for artists and interpreting tech specs sent to you), microphones and microphone techniques, DI and amplification, PA systems, sound checks (e.g. time management, personal skills, communication, correct equipment deployment), monitoring – considering the needs of performers and the space to achieve optimum sound (e.g. IEM vs floor monitoring), mixing, live sound environment (e.g. space, acoustics, external influences).

Musical equipment and tools:

- Instruments:
  - tuning, authenticity of tone, sound production for instruments (e.g. amps, microphones, acoustic instruments, voice production), awareness of biomechanics and ergonomics for musicians (e.g. mic'ing instruments)
- Audio technology:
  - cabling requirements, rigging/stands, power (mains) requirements, effects (e.g. spatial effects, modulation, retrograde techniques, modelling software).

Advanced synthesis and processing:

- FM synthesis concept and function
- Wavetable synthesis concept and function
- Additive synthesis concept and function
- Resynthesis concept
- Granular synthesis concept and function
- Physical modelling synthesis concept and function.

Professional practice

Awareness of contemporary professional practice in the subject and the behaviours appropriate for employment in the sector.

Working with stakeholders and collaborators:

- Stakeholder types (e.g. self, client, label, venue, producer, funding, audiences, collaborators)
- Stakeholder relationships (e.g. contractual obligations, funding obligations, musicians, engineers, public relations (PR), writers)
- Stakeholder analysis (e.g. establishing and negotiating stakeholder objectives, conflict resolution, effective communication with stakeholders):
    - labels and expectations, venues, audiences, fanbase
- Teams:
    - collaborative practice (e.g. roles and responsibilities), collaborative workflows (e.g. studio, remote, outsourcing), reflective practice (e.g. goals, individual, team).

Project planning processes:

- Process:
    - conception, initiation, planning, execution, monitoring, reviewing, launch, post-production
- Situation analysis and risk analysis (e.g. facilities, pandemic, injury, political movement, reputational risk)
- Analysing resource requirements:
    - physical resources, human resources (duties and responsibilities)
- Monitoring and process reflection (e.g. project performance, individual performance, group performance, goals)
- Contingency and impact (e.g. moveable dates, rescheduling, reputational risk).

Project management tools:

- Project management systems for sound engineers (e.g. IndieFlow, EZO, Milanote)
- Traditional tools that are paper-based (e.g. notebooks, scores, diagrams, charts, artwork)
- Digital tools (e.g. spreadsheets, Microsoft Project, Milanote).

Career development:

- Continuing professional development:
  - maintaining skills and knowledge currency, developing new skills and knowledge, critical appraisal (e.g. reviews, charting, playlists, peer, self-appraisal, collecting feedback), training and professional certification, career aspirations, mapping own skills to specific job roles, new advances in technology/plug-ins (AI), trends in audio production
- Professional networking:
  - business/social networks, live music, studio sessions, showcases, industry events, masterclasses, meet-ups
- Securing creative work in the music industry:
  - building a personal brand (e.g. genre trends and conventions), social media presence, radio play and playlisting, content creation (e.g. live music performance videos, YouTube Shorts, Instagram reels), letters of application and personal statements, CV types, portfolio (e.g. showreel, work examples, website, social media), work shadowing or placement, online and offline press (e.g. interviews, equipment reviews, production reviews, podcasts), industry showcase events and competitions, exploitation risks
- Setting fees:
  - engineer's rates for live and studio session work, revenue through publishing points, exploitation awareness
- Creative professional bodies and organisations:
  - membership (e.g. the Recording Academy, the Music Producers Guild (MPG), the Musicians' Union (MU), rights and revenue collection organisations (e.g. PRS, PPL, ASCAP), funding and grants, residencies/internship and work experience, research funding.

Legislation/regulation/taxation:

- Music copyright:
  - music copyright for contributors in a sound recording, music copyright for contributors in a live performance, copyright in music education, music copyright for songwriters and composers
- Regulations (e.g. noise regulations)
- Taxation and insurance in the freelance industry (e.g. National Insurance, health insurance, company/corporate tax, employment tax, income tax, local/national tax)
- Data protection
- Equality rights
- Partnership right (e.g. co-writers, musicians in a band)
- Music licensing (e.g. sync)

- Digital distribution rights and service agreements
- AI rights and legislation.

Working as a freelance practitioner:

- Financial management and literacy for sound engineers:
  - invoicing and payment terms, working with an accountant, effective budgeting (e.g. studio costs, travel costs), funding and grant sources
- Contracts and deals:
  - publishing and songwriting contribution, social media managers, live and studio session contracts
- Key challenges:
  - wellbeing (physical and mental health), discrimination, accessibility, sustainability (e.g. carbon footprint, studio manufacture and materials, touring), lack of diversity in workforce (e.g. music producers, technicians, performers), competition, exploitation (e.g. free work for exposure, interns, work experience), working practices (low pay, long hours), high price of technology, censorship.

Communication

The ability to share ideas and processes accurately and reliably with diverse audiences, and recognise the appropriate forms of output to address different audiences.

Communication ethics:

- Codes of conduct:
  - adhering to professional and ethical guidelines
- Cultural awareness:
  - ensuring responsible and authentic representation in recording and live performance
- Accessibility:
  - creating audio products and performances that consider a range of audiences
- Representation:
  - balancing commercial and artistic considerations to deliver audio products
- Listening and responding to feedback:
  - engaging constructively with input.

Applying communication techniques:

- Professional standards and formats
- Consideration of context:
  - tailoring communication based on whether the audience is a producer, funding body, musician or crew member
- Communication channels and presentation opportunities
- Audience reactions:
  - anticipating and responding to potential feedback
- Consistency and coherence
- Personal and client intentions:
  - balancing sonic vision with production constraints and audience expectations
- Intentions
- Purpose of work (e.g. function, concept, message, results)
- Constraints and limitations.

Engaging target markets and audiences:

- Differentiation from existing markets
- Reach (e.g. primary and secondary audiences)
- Supportive media (e.g. packaging, trailers)
- Consistency – maintaining a coherent visual and thematic style across projects, pitches and professional communication
- Marketing:
  - publicity (e.g. leveraging media exposure, interviews and social media engagement), press (e.g. engaging with podcasters, journalists, blogs and industry publications), marketing channels, product placement (e.g. understanding brand partnerships and sponsored content in music industry and wider market), follow-up communications (e.g. building and maintaining relationships with industry professionals).

Communication with clients, collaborators and stakeholders:

- Pitches and presentations
- Consultation:
  - seeking and integrating feedback
- Briefing:
  - understanding and responding to artist or producer requirements in commissioned work
- Progress update and tracking:
  - managing timelines, rehearsals, and so on

- Feedback and guidance
- Negotiation and conflict resolution:
  - handling creative disagreements, contractual disputes and challenges professionally
- Platforms for collaboration
- Documents (e.g. proposal, plans, specification, agenda, budget, applications)
- Logistical communication (e.g. booking, schedules, quotes, equipment)
- Networks:
  - social networking, making contacts (e.g. attending workshops, sharing expertise, guidance), opportunities for communication (e.g. guest speaking, podcasts, demonstrations).

Communication for progression:

- Employment/academic progression (identifying further study, mentorship or apprenticeship opportunities to refine skills)
- Interview:
  - preparing for interview, interview skills, seeking feedback post-interview to refine approach
- Personal communication for progression:
  - personal identity, portfolio/showreel, print/business media (e.g. using business cards, press kits and promotional brochures effectively), online presence (e.g. establishing and maintaining a professional website, social media profiles and online portfolios), modes of distribution, maintenance (e.g. updates, blogging).

13.0 Recommended Resources

Textbooks

Adams, S. (2017) *Interviewing for Journalists*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Allen, P. (2022) *Artist Management for the Music Business.* 5th Ed. Massachusetts: Focal Press.

Amos, J. (2024) *The Music Business for Music Creators: Industry Mechanics for Contemporary Creators*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Attias, A. and Gayanas, A. (2013) *DJ Culture in the Mix: Power, Technology and Social Change in Electronic Dance Music*. London: Bloomsbury.

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