



Unit 13: Music Recording

Delivery guidance

Approaching the unit

Learners may have already completed *Unit 3: Introduction to Music Recording* or will have the equivalent knowledge of recording equipment, skills and techniques covered in that unit. The purpose of this unit is for them to build on and develop their recording skills by carrying out a range of contrasting recording projects.

Learners should be encouraged to produce recordings for different purposes and work with different ensembles, musical styles and recording environments. There will be lots of opportunities within and outside the centre for recordings to take place such as concerts, recitals and productions. Learners might produce recordings that could be used as promotional material or for use in film, TV or radio. They should not be limited to making just studio-based recordings and should explore a range of options.

It is best for learners to approach this unit practically and establish a continual process of planning, recording and mixing. It is essential that learners then reflect on and log their process so that they can document their decision making and the recording skills they are developing and applying. By continually experimenting with different equipment and techniques, seeking feedback and reflecting, learners will improve their recording skills. Teachers should monitor the work of learners and offer suggestions and support as necessary based on the project being undertaken.

Delivering the Learning aims

An integrated approach to delivering the three learning aims would enable a coherent and logical approach to the unit. As learners will be working on different types of projects, the teacher should facilitate these and provide guidance and support based on the demands of the particular project and the skills required. It would be helpful to recap the unit content from *Unit 3: Introduction to Recording* so that learners are prepared for this unit. A skills audit may be a useful activity to undertake at the start of delivery to see which aspects of the unit content learners are familiar with and which aspects may need revising. The findings from the skills audit will guide the teacher on what areas may need to be covered and in what level of detail. It will also enable the teacher to provide bespoke support to individual learners.

Learning aim A is concerned with the planning stages of a recording project. Learners should explore the different types of recording projects and their purposes and then work with musicians and ensembles at the centre to identify material to record. Learners should then undertake the relevant planning, preparation and setting up so that recording sessions can take place efficiently. At first, learners may need lots of guidance of how to structure a recording session and may need support to keep on track. As they carry out more sessions and continually reflect and receive feedback from the teacher and the musicians they work with, they will become more autonomous and efficient in the planning and setting up stages of the recording process. Learners should work on contrasting projects with different ensembles, musical styles and recording environments.

Learning aim B allows requires learners to run recording sessions and develop their recording skills. Learners may have some experience of this from Unit 3 and they should now build on this as they will have more time to develop their skills. At first, learners might undertake recording projects in small groups or pairs and then could work towards carrying out an individual project. Learners should be encouraged to experiment with recording techniques and continually reflect



on their decisions and ideas in a project log. Teachers should be on hand to support, model good practice and demonstrate skills and techniques to learners as appropriate to the recording project e.g. communicating with musicians, overdubbing, dropping in and critical listening

Learning aim C is where learners edit and mix the audio they have recorded. Again, they will have some experience of this from Unit 3 and should now develop and refine their skills through experimentation and in response to feedback. Teachers and peers should listen to work in progress and identify strengths and areas for improvement. Learners should be encouraged to refine and enhance their final mixes to create an effective final recording. Again, teachers should demonstrate mixing and editing techniques such as adding EQ, use of stereo field, compression, fade in/out etc.



Assessment model

Learning aim	Key content areas	Recommended assessment approach
A Plan for recording sessions	A1 Types of recording project A2 Planning and scheduling recording sessions A3 Selecting and setting up equipment	Planning documentation. Video and/or annotated photographs of set ups Recording process commentary. Unmixed audio tracks. A portfolio of two contrasting recordings lasting at least five minutes.
B Carry out recording sessions	B1 Managing the recording session B2 Recording techniques B3 Logging the recording process	
C Produce a portfolio of contrasting recordings	C1 Mixing and editing C2 Presenting a portfolio	

Assessment guidance

This unit is internally assessed. There is a maximum number of one summative assignment for this unit and learning aims A, B and C can be assessed together. Teachers should refer to the assessment guidance in the specification for specific detail, particularly in relation to the requirements for Pass, Merit and Distinction grades.

Learners should individually undertake two contrasting recording projects to create a portfolio that demonstrates their skills. Learners might record a demo for a small pop music ensemble featuring vocals, drums, guitar and bass in a studio environment. They might then contrast this with recording a choir with piano accompaniment in a school hall. Learners who undertake two very similar projects are unlikely to demonstrate the range of skill and thought required to achieve the higher grades. Learners should take responsibility for the planning and setting up of the recording sessions and their plans and schedules will be useful evidence of this. They might also provide annotated videos or photographs to evidence their ability to set equipment up effectively and to explain their process.

Learners should then take the lead in the recording sessions and capture good quality audio. They should document their process in a project log as this will provide an insight into their contribution and decision making. Video footage could also provide evidence for key moments within the recording process that show learners making effective contributions. Learners should submit their unmixed audio recordings so that they can be compared with their final mixes to demonstrate how they have applied mixing and editing skills to enhance the audio. Again, learners should account for their editing and mixing process in their project log to draw attention to the skills and techniques they are using. The project log could be written, but learners could choose to present it as a blog or vlog and should bring it to life by including audio examples to illustrate their points. Learners should submit their two final recordings bounced down to stereo and these will provide robust evidence as to how learners have applied thought and skill to the whole recording process.



Getting started

This gives you a starting place for one way of delivering the unit, based around the recommended assessment approach in the specification.

Introduction

Introduce this unit by recapping the work completed in *Unit 3: Introduction to Recording* which all learners taking Unit 13 may have already completed. Learners should audit their knowledge and skills against the Unit 3 content.

Learning aim A: Plan for a recording session

Learning aim B: Carry out a recording session

Learning aim C: Produce a portfolio of contrasting recordings

The three learning aims are best delivered together so that learners can experience the full recording process as a holistic activity. The emphasis of this unit is for learners to continually develop their recording skills and they should have lots of opportunities for undertaking the full recording process of planning, recording and mixing and then reflecting on this before undertaking their next project.

- The teacher should recap the purpose and function of recording equipment and how to set this up to capture audio. Using the findings from the skills audit, the teacher should also demonstrate recording skills and techniques such as talkback, critical listening, using guide and click tracks, layering tracks, overdubbing and dropping in. Learners should practice these skills and techniques. Working in pairs or small groups, learners should identify an ensemble or artist to work with in pairs. In liaison with the artist/ensemble, they should identify a piece of music to record and the most suitable environment for the recording to take place.
- Learners should create a schedule for the recording which includes the timeline and resource requirements. Learners should plan out what they intend to achieve in the recording session(s).
- Learners should select and safely set up the most suitable equipment for the planned recording session(s) and then undertake the recording process as planned.
- Learners should reflect on the recording session(s) and its outcome and produce a log, which could be written or filmed, that outlines their process and the skills that they used.
- The teacher should demonstrate and recap a range of editing and mixing techniques such as levels, EQ, panning, reverb, compression, fade in/fade out.
- Learners should edit and mix their recorded tracks to produce a final multitrack recording. They should consider balance, EQ, panning and other effects before bouncing down to stereo.
- Learners should complete their logs and reflect on the mixing and editing stage of the process, outlining their thought processes and the skills used.
- Learners should seek and reflect on feedback from their teacher, peers and artists and identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The above process should then be repeated but this time learners should work individually and on a contrasting recording project such as a different ensemble, style of music or recording environment. Learners should apply their feedback from their first project to make improvements to their process in the next project.



Details of links to other BTEC units and qualifications, and to other relevant units/qualifications

This unit links to:

- Unit 3: Introduction to Recording
- Unit 5: Introduction to Live Sound
- Unit 6: Plan and Create a Music Product for a Brief
- Unit 9: Technology in Music Performance
- Unit 14: Live Sound
- Unit 17: Personal Music Project

Resources

In addition to the resources listed below, publishers are likely to produce Pearson-endorsed textbooks that support this unit of the BTEC International L2 Qualifications in Music. Check the Pearson website at: (<http://qualifications.pearson.com/endorsed-resources>) for more information as titles achieve endorsement.

Textbooks

Huber, David M. & Runstein, Robert E., *Modern Recording Techniques (Audio Engineering Society Presents)*, Routledge (2017)

Owsinski, B., *The Mixing Engineer's Handbook (4th Edition)* Bobby Owsinski Media Group (2017)

Owsinski, B., *The Music Producer's Handbook: Second Edition (Music Pro Guides)*, Applause Theatre Book Publishers (2016)

Pederson, K. & Grimshaw-Aagaard, M., *The Recording, Mixing, and Mastering Reference Handbook*, OUP (2019)

Rumsay, Francis, *Sound and Recording*, Routledge (2014)

Websites

www.soundonsound.com

www.musictech.net/

Pearson is not responsible for the content of any external internet sites. It is essential for teachers to preview each website before using it in class so as to ensure that the URL is still accurate, relevant and appropriate. We suggest that teachers bookmark useful websites and consider enabling students to access them through the school/college intranet.