



Syllabus Guide

2013-2018

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About this specification

Welcome to the Play Live Performance Syllabus for 2012. This Syllabus Guide is designed to provide teachers, students and candidates with practical information on the graded assessments run by Play Live.

The main features of this syllabus are:

- It engages musicians from very early stages of musicianship
- It provides a structured and scaffolded approach to playing in an ensemble
- It provides flexibility in terms of learning material
- It allows for diversity in teaching methods
- It encourages students to evaluate their own and others' musical performances
- It provides opportunities for students to make use of music technology

Aims

This programme aims to develop the ensemble performance skills of students from the early stages of playing their instrument up to the standard required at A-level.

Students are engaged in musical performance and with their music departments from these early stages right through to their GCSE and A Level studies, from primary school level through to Sixth Form. This maximises the potential for continued participation by students in music at school at all levels.

Students are grouped into ensembles and supported both as a group and as individual musicians. They are guided through the elements of performing successfully together, whilst being encouraged in both their teamwork and active participation in musical choices and arrangements. Students are expected to evaluate and review their performances both individually and collectively.

Students are engaged in key areas of musical performance:

Live performances:

- Performances to classmates and teachers
- Performances in school assemblies and at school musical events
- Performances to the public at 'Play Live' events
- Musical and technical preparation towards live performances
- Critical evaluation of these performances through recorded material

Studio/recording skills:

- Regular recordings of learned material
- Active participation in the recording process
- Critical evaluation of these recordings

At higher levels, students are engaged in additional activities:

- Logistical and organisational preparation towards live performances
- Development of musical identity in a musical ensemble
- Development of brand identity in a musical ensemble
- Engagement of the music community through social media

Learning Outcomes

By the end of level 2, students should be able to:

- Perform a repertoire of very basic arrangements in ensemble
- Play in time with other musicians
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of dynamics and apply them to a performance

By the end of level 4, students should be able to:

- Perform a repertoire of pieces in an ensemble
- Demonstrate understanding of, and independence in their note and chord choices within an arrangement
- Successfully apply dynamic variations within a song arrangement

By the end of level 6, students should be able to:

- Perform a stylistically varied repertoire of pieces in an ensemble
- Demonstrate a degree of originality in their interpretation and performance of parts within an arrangement
- Work effectively as a part of a group, demonstrating active participation in musical arrangement and creative decision-making
- Work independently to develop their own parts in a stylistically appropriate way

By the end of level 8, students should be able to:

- Perform a comprehensive repertoire of technically and theoretically challenging pieces in an ensemble
- Demonstrate a strong ability in original interpretations or improvisations of stylistically appropriate parts
- Engage with, and react to other musicians during ensemble performance in terms of dynamics, improvisation and structure
- Demonstrate an ability to engage an audience in a musical performance

Course Details

A 10 week programme will consist of the following.

Levels 1-2

Typically suitable for Year 5-6 students and suitable for class sizes up to 30.

- Weeks 1-6
 - o One new song studied per week
 - o Learning, understanding and performing the basic rhythm
 - o Finding and playing the notes on a variety of instruments
 - o Reading, understanding and singing a short selection of lyrics
 - o Performing and singing together the short arrangement
- Weeks 7-10
 - o Select two songs in which to specialise and prepare for performance
 - o Learn and understand two basic levels of dynamic appropriate for the song
 - o Apply these dynamics to the songs in appropriate places
 - o A selection of capable musicians perform a melody line or solo

Levels 3-4

Typically suitable for Year 7-9 students and best suited to groups of up to 12.

- Weeks 1-6
 - o One new song studied per week
 - o Learning to play two progressions necessary for each song
 - o Studying the song structure
 - o Singing together the song chorus
 - o Selected singers learn to sing verses
 - o Perform the song together in ensemble
- Weeks 7-10
 - o Select three songs in which to specialise and prepare for performance
 - o Discuss and choose appropriate dynamics to apply to song structure referencing original recorded material
 - o A selection of capable musicians perform a melody line or solo at appropriate section
 - o Prepare and practise repertoire for performance

Levels 5-6

Typically suitable for Year 10-11 students. Ideal for those studying for GCSE music, with repertoire selected appropriately, and individual parts arranged according to the syllabus criteria for ensemble performance.

Best suited to groups of up to 6 (or 12 students divided into two groups)

- Weeks 1-6
 - o Repertoire carefully selected in week 1
 - o Critical listening of original recordings and discussion of appropriate arrangements
 - o Development of individual parts between instruments to compliment overall arrangement

- Performance of basic song structures
- Weeks 7-10
 - Develop song structures with appropriate dynamics
 - Soloists develop improvisational structures or solo parts using appropriate scales and arpeggios
 - Some instrumentalists develop backing vocal parts
 - Prepare and practise repertoire for performance

Levels 7-8

Typically suitable for Sixth Form students. Ideal for those studying for AS/A Level music, with repertoire selected appropriately, and individual parts arranged according to the syllabus criteria for ensemble performance.

Best suited to groups of up to 6 (or 12 students divided into two groups)

- Weeks 1-6
 - Repertoire carefully selected in week 1
 - Critical listening of original recordings and discussion of appropriate arrangements
 - Identification of the unique challenges of pieces within a challenging repertoire
 - Identification of solutions to the above challenges
 - Focus on developing an originality in individual parts within overall arrangement
 - Performance of basic song structures
- Weeks 7-10
 - Develop song structures with appropriate use of musical dynamic
 - Develop and manage song structures with musical communication techniques during performance
 - Develop appropriate performance techniques to compliment the pieces within the repertoire and the repertoire as a whole
 - Soloists develop improvisational structures or solo parts using appropriate scales and arpeggios
 - Some instrumentalists develop backing vocal parts
 - Prepare and practise repertoire for performance

At all levels, students will critically evaluate the performances of both themselves and the other performers.

In ensemble groups with no singer, or with pieces that have no sung part, the 'chorus' and 'verse' can be substituted for the 'head' and the 'bridge' themes respectively.

Teaching and Learning Methods

1 hour weekly sessions are delivered over the course of a 10-week term by experienced and enthusiastic teachers with expertise in song arrangement. All tutors fully DBS checked.

Time during each session is spent with the whole group in discussion as well as demonstration of individual instrumentation. Limited one-to-one assistance in individual parts from levels 3-4 and more substantial individual assistance from level 5 upwards.

Students are encouraged to listen to original recorded material and identify the musical devices and techniques being used. Students are provided with charts for each song, with information regarding the overall song structure. At levels 3 and above, students are encouraged to make their own, more detailed notes regarding their own parts using uniquely designed lead sheet templates.

Further differentiation and development is directed by the teacher.

Self-directed, and directed work conducted outside of rehearsal time, forms a central element of this programme. Systematic written and verbal feedback from the subject tutor is an essential aspect of learning on this programme. Peer feedback is also used where possible, and where appropriate.

Online Learning Resources

A range of videos, backing tracks and transcriptions are made available for students where appropriate to access online.

The [Play Live facebook page](#) is an invaluable tool for students to reference live performances and share their own ideas where appropriate. At the higher levels of study, the network of social media is a crucial part of development and promotional areas of study.

The [Big Show facebook page](#) is dedicated to the Play Live events and is the most active of the pages. Here students at higher levels can actively promote their events and engage with the wider musical community.

Assessment

The focus of the Play Live course is to integrate into GCSE and AS/A Level assessment structures from levels 5-8.

Level 5 is suitable for GCSE ensemble music assessment at the 'easier' and 'standard' levels of difficulty.

Level 6 is suitable for GCSE ensemble music assessment at the 'standard' and 'more difficult' levels of difficulty.

Levels 7&8 are suitable for AS and A Level ensemble music assessment.

Play Live supply scores for the assessed performances of each student from levels 5-8 for the purposes of GCSE and A-Level assessment and moderation.

The Play Live course is suitable for both summative and formative assessment in the following areas:

- Musicianship
- Musical understanding and theory
- Performance skills
- Teamwork skills within an ensemble
- Flexibility to perform within a variety of genres
- Arrangement skills (levels 5-8)
- Song-writing skills (levels 5-8)
- Awareness and knowledge of various aspects and areas of the music scene (levels 7-8)

Formative Assessment & Feedback:

Students can monitor their own progress and develop key skills through a range of formative activities.

- First, students receive feedback on independent study or homework activities
- Second, regular in-session checks of learning allow tutors and students to track progress and address identified weaknesses in a timely fashion
- Thirdly, at higher levels, performance skills training is provided before the final performance at the end of term. This enables students to form a clear idea of the skills and knowledge required for a successful performance

Students will be assessed on their performance skills and will be tracked throughout the programme in the above assessment areas.

At the end of the programme, all students receive a Play Live Certificate of Completion (non-accredited), depicting one of the following outcomes:

Enhanced Performer

At this level the student demonstrates an advanced level of musical accomplishment, theoretical knowledge and application, as well as an ability to create a sophisticated song arrangement.

The student can perform on a multi-instrumental level and perform parts simultaneously.

The student can perform and/or improvise a solo within a piece using stylistically and harmonically appropriate scales and/or arpeggios.

At higher levels, the student can evaluate a range of promotional methods including the use of Social Media outlets in promoting an event.

The student is aware of his or her overall areas for improvement.

Developing Performer

At this level the student demonstrates a consolidated level of musical accomplishment, theoretical knowledge and application, as well as some ability in developing themes within a musical arrangement.

The student can use dynamics to enhance the structure and performance of a song in the appropriate areas.

The student can reproduce a melody line or theme within a song on instruction.

Emerging Performer

At this level the student demonstrates a basic level of musical performance, theoretical knowledge and application, as well as some ability in developing themes within a musical arrangement.

The student can accurately perform the parts of a piece according to the given structure.

The student demonstrates a willingness and confidence in performing with others.

Ensemble groups are also assessed in their outcomes for the term:

World Superstars

At this level, the group has selected a varied, sophisticated and interesting repertoire to showcase their skills both individually and as a group.

The group has arranged the repertoire to reflect a degree of dynamic and harmonic interest. They have also showed an excellent degree of originality in their arrangements.

The performance was musically accomplished and entertaining for the audience.

National Act

At this level, the group has selected an interesting repertoire of pieces and they have demonstrated good time-keeping ability and interesting dynamic arrangements in their performance.

The group has arranged the repertoire in which each instrument has a unique part to play and each instrument enhances the overall sound.

The performance was musically sound and enjoyable for the audience.

Local Heroes

At this level, the group has selected a basic repertoire of songs and performed it successfully with a sense of enthusiasm and good time-keeping between musicians.

Each of the parts in the arrangement are suited to one another and result in a consistent and harmonious sound throughout the piece.

The performance was musically sound and enjoyable for the audience.

Performance Certificates

Play Live Performance Certificates are available at every level, with outcomes assessed on the above criteria.

Learning Materials

Play Live performance pieces are designed to showcase a range of musical ability, genre and style. The chosen pieces have a focus on progression through the Performance Levels and allow a differentiated form of assessment, both formative and summative.

The performers can both suggest and choose from a provided list of pieces, which are then individually arranged to encourage development through collective performance enhancement of the chosen piece. From levels 7-8, performers have the option to provide their own original material for arrangement and assessment. Special guidance is given by teachers in the structure and arrangement of original material.

At each level, arrangements become more challenging and demand a greater level of musicianship, showmanship and collaboration from the student and the band. In addition to this, Play Live introduces a unique focus on song arrangement and writing throughout the higher Performance Levels, which enables the student and band a greater level of autonomy to learn and develop their own identity.

The criteria for learning material at each level are shown below in a progressive table.

Level:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Progressive Material Criteria	Harmonic Detail	1 chord progression using 3 chords (played as single notes or diads)	1 chord progression using 4 chords (played as single notes or diads)	2 chord progressions (or two different interpretations of one progression)	2 chord progressions (or two different interpretations of one progression)	3 chord progressions (or three different interpretations of chord progressions)	3 chord progressions (or three different interpretations of chord progressions)	at least 3 chord progressions (or three different interpretations of chord progressions)	at least 3 chord progressions (or three different interpretations of chord progressions)
	Key	keys using only open string notes & only white notes	keys using occasional fretted notes & only white notes	keys using occasional fretted notes & occasional black notes	keys using open chords, fretted notes & occasional black notes	keys using occasional bar chords, fretted notes & occasional black notes	keys using occasional bar chords, fretted notes, occasional black notes and occasional key changes	modulation in key or non-diatonic chords	modulation in key or non-diatonic chords and use of altered chords in modulation
	Melodic Detail				melody lines or ostinatos in appropriate sections	melody lines or ostinatos in appropriate sections	melody lines or ostinatos in appropriate sections	concurrent, contrasting melody lines or ostinatos	concurrent, contrasting melody lines or ostinatos
	Meter	basic 2/4 or 4/4 meter	basic 2/4 or 4/4 meter	basic 2/4, 4/4 or 3/4 meter	basic 2/4, 4/4 or 3/4 meter	basic 2/4, 4/4 or 3/4 meter	compound or basic meter with some time signature or tempo changes	compound or basic meter with some time signature or tempo changes	some complex meters including irregular time signatures
	Rhythmic Detail	1 rhythm of basic notes	1 rhythm including dotted or tied notes	2 rhythms	2 rhythms including more complex rhythms	2 rhythms including more complex rhythms	3 rhythms including use of devices such as syncopation	3 rhythms including use of devices such as syncopation	3 rhythms including use of devices such as syncopation and rhythmic displacement
	Dynamics		some dynamic variation (forte and piano)	some dynamic variation (forte and piano)	at least three levels of dynamic variation	at least three levels of dynamic variation	dynamic variations specifically appropriate to enhance song structure	plenty of creative use of dynamic variation	plenty of creative use of dynamic variation
	Soloists		More advanced musicians perform a solo based on three note vocabulary	More advanced musicians perform a solo based on three note vocabulary	More advanced musicians perform a solo based on pentatonic scale	More advanced musicians perform a solo based on diatonic scale	Soloists perform a solo either improvised or originally composed, using diatonic scale as well as dynamic articulation	Soloists perform a solo either improvised or originally composed, using diatonic scale notes and either modulation or chromaticism as well as dynamic articulation	Soloists perform a solo either improvised or originally composed, using diatonic scale notes and either modulation or chromaticism as well as dynamic articulation

Skill Assessment	Level:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Musicianship								Demonstrate strong command of chosen instrument(s) during live performance
	Creative Teamwork								Demonstrate a collaborative and constructive engagement in processes of writing, arranging and performing
	Performance Ability								Demonstrate strong sense of character and audience engagement in performance
	Stylistic Flexibility								Demonstrate high level of versatility across a variety of musical styles and genres
	Music Theory								Demonstrate an understanding and creative insight into the theory behind song-writing and arranging
	Song Arrangement								Display creative ability in arrangement and interpretation of lesson material
	Self-Promotion								Display self-motivation, initiative and creativity in spreading awareness of musical activities
	Song Writing								Display high levels of creative inspiration in bringing original ideas and interpretations to

Assessment Requirements

Students are assessed according to the table shown below:

	Performance	Essential Skills	Vocational Skills
Levels 1 – 2	Bands perform a short set of 2 songs to a school based audience. Musicians are assessed individually and as a group.	Students display clear ability to recreate basic rhythms and combine them with chord or note progressions with dynamic variation.	
Levels 3 - 4	Bands perform a set of 3 songs to a school based audience. Musicians are assessed individually and as a group.	Students discuss the recordings taken of their performances and highlight areas for improvement individually and as a group.	
Levels 5 - 6	Bands perform a set of 3 or 4 songs to a school audience or in an event open to the public. Musicians are assessed individually and as a group.	Students provide written critical assessments of recordings taken of their performances. Areas for improvement are highlighted at the start of each term and assessed for progress again the following term.	Musicians compile a case study of their chosen vocational interest using a range of research methodology.
Levels 7 - 8	Bands perform a live 20-30 minute set to the public. The set demonstrates a level of individuality and character. The set should contain at least one original composition or one highly original arrangement. Musicians are assessed individually and as a group.	Students each complete an e-portfolio during the term, providing evidence of their developing skills in key areas. Musicians critically evaluate theirs and others skills, using a range of self and peer assessment, to identify strengths and areas for improvement.	Musicians run a blog, podcast or article, relating to their vocational interest.

Please note: *The above assessment criteria, may lead to a spiky profile for each learner, which will allow progress and development laterally, as well as vertically.*