BTEC LEVEL 2

Teamwork and Personal Development in the Community



Cadet Vocational College

LEARNING GUIDE

for completing Unit 14

Version 3.1

Pearson BTEC Approved Centre

Unit 14: Working as a Musical Ensemble

On successful completion of this unit you will:

1. Know the roles and responsibilities of members of musical ensembles
2. Be able to prepare for a performance as part of a musical ensemble
3. Be able to perform as part of a musical ensemble

Unit 14

Working as a Musical Ensemble

Very few musicians work in isolation and being able to work as part of an ensemble is an essential skill for any musician. Musical ensembles come in many different forms such as orchestras, choirs, brass bands, rock bands, military bands, etc., but no matter what form the ensemble takes, the skills required are the same.

In this unit, you will explore the roles and responsibilities of members of musical ensembles. You will need to form your own ensemble and select, plan and rehearse musical material and eventually present a performance as a group. In addition to developing your musical skills, you will also develop the necessary organisational, teamwork and professional skills required to be a successful ensemble musician.

Unit 14 has:



- Three tasks which require a written answer.
- You need to understand what the command verb is telling you to do before answering the questions.
- Additionally, you should read any case studies as they will help you understand and complete each task.



- A requirement for you to complete a **minimum of 35 hours** rehearsal time carried out under direct supervision and independently. You **must** complete a practice log to evidence this.
- Evidence of your performance **must** be uploaded for assessment.

LO

Learning Outcome 1

Know the roles and responsibilities of members of musical ensembles

This learning outcome will be in preparation for the practical part of this unit. You will develop the knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of members of musical ensembles.

Playing in an ensemble



Most performing musicians make their living by playing in ensembles. There are a wide range of musical ensembles. For example, a string player may perform as part of an orchestra, in a string quartet or as part of the backing group for a singer. Many musicians work as session players and perform as part of a musical group with whom they do not regularly play.

Different roles within an ensemble

There are a wide range of musical ensembles. Three examples are mentioned above (an orchestra, a string quartet and a backing group) and within each of these, there will be many different roles. For example within an orchestra there would be a Conductor.

Use the space below to list at least five different **roles** that you can think of. They can be from any form of ensemble. These notes will help you later on.

...

Ensemble Musicians' Roles and Responsibilities

Roles

Orchestra



- Conductor
- Instrumentalist
- Soloist

Military Band



- Band leader
- Section leader
- Musician

Choir



- Choir Master/ Mistress
- Singer
- Soloist

Group



- Vocalist
- Backing vocalist

Stage show



- Musical Director
- Assistant Musical Director
- Choir Master/ Mistress

Different responsibilities

Case study

Ella is a saxophonist and member of a six-piece jazz band, and they have decided to put on a small scale jazz concert within the next twelve months. This will be their first concert.

The case study below highlighted in **blue** shows the responsibilities that Ella has to ensure that this and further concerts are a success.



Ella

Ella **practises** privately at home regularly to ensure that she is confident and able to play her individual part.

Ella **attends** the twice weekly rehearsal on time and **works hard** for the duration, **paying attention** and **focusing** on the direction given from the conductor and working with band mates to gain positive results. Ella is **passionate** and **enthusiastic** about the band, **listens intently to feedback** and advice and **clearly wants to build on her skills** and **produce a good performance**. Ella intends to study Music at a specialist college and is considering music as a future career.

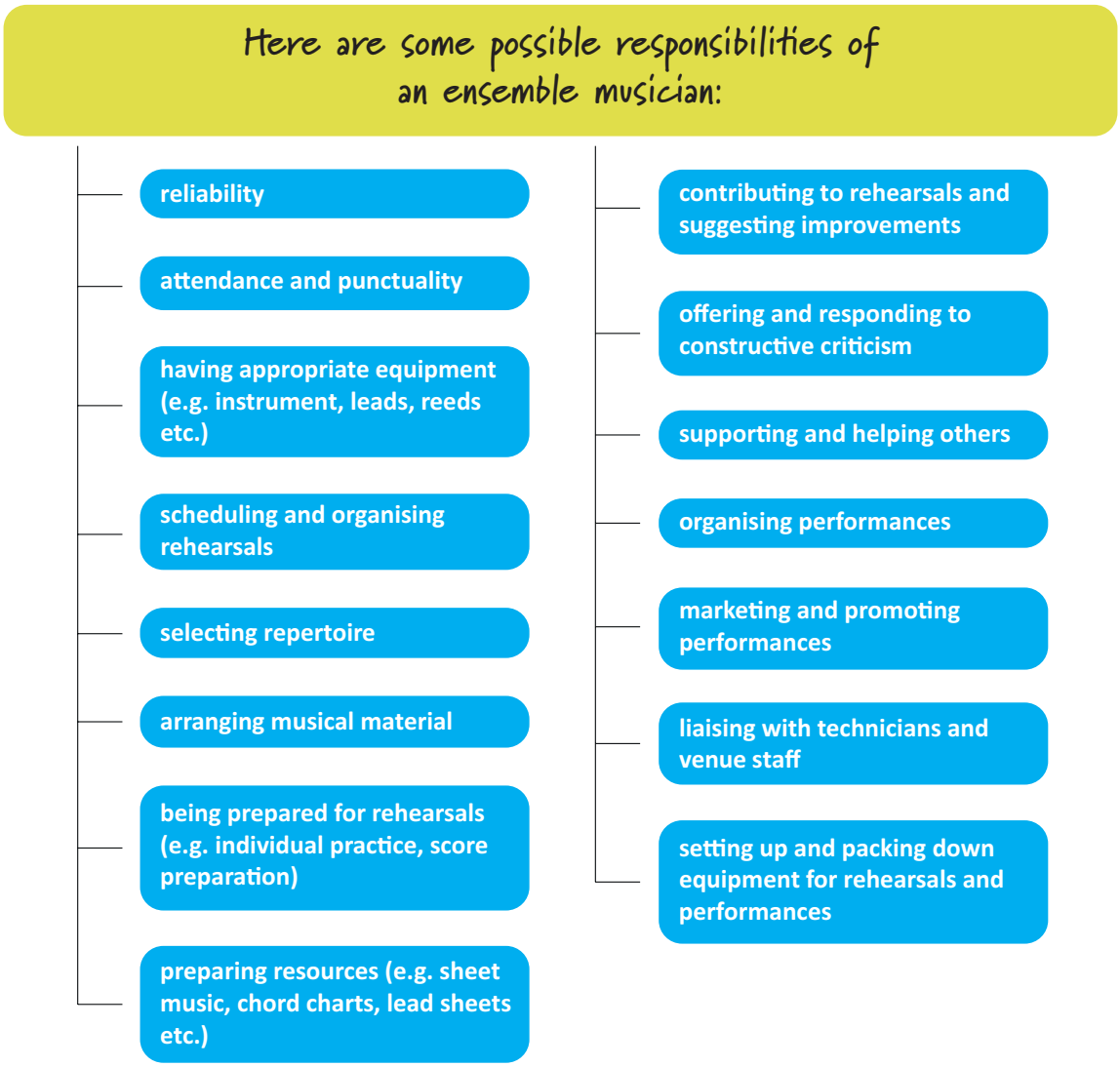
Ella is also involved in a band within her youth organisation and often helps younger or less experienced band members to improve their performance in a mentor type role.

Following on from reading about Ella can you think of any other **responsibilities** that could be added to this list? Use the space below to make a note of them.

...

Responsibilities

Every person in an ensemble will have different responsibilities.



Military Band: Musician

- Learning their individual part (private practice)
- Attending rehearsals
- Performing as an ensemble
- Stage management duties
- Security duties
- Playing and marching at the same time
- Following drum major or conductor signals
- Communicating with an audience



Orchestra: Conductor

- Selecting the programme of music
- Ensuring the orchestra is technically capable of playing the pieces
- Conducting
- Teaching the music of the piece (phrases, meaning etc.)
- Ensuring the venue is acoustically appropriate for the performance
- Liaising with sound recorders



Choir: Singer/Soloist

- Learning their individual part (private practice)
- Learning the pronunciation of words set to music
- Perform in a group
- Following the choirmaster or lead vocalist
- Musical communication



Following on from reading about Ella and the three detailed examples, think about the **responsibilities** that **you** have within your ensemble.



Recap

To check your understanding you may wish to answer the following questions:

- **A Conductor helps the musicians to interpret the music and gives each of them clear direction to perform to a high standard. True or False?**
- **Name two responsibilities of an ensemble musician**

If you want to check your answers, they are located on page 23.

LO **Learning Outcome 1 - complete** ✓

Task 1: Describe roles and responsibilities of members of musical ensembles (AC 1.1)



For this task you must **IDENTIFY three** roles within an ensemble. You must then **DESCRIBE** the specific responsibilities associated with each role.

As the verb is **DESCRIBE**, it is expected that you will write a detailed sentence for each answer.



An acceptable answer to describe the roles and responsibilities of a conductor would be:
"In an orchestra, the conductor, having selected the pieces, would work with the ensemble to explain how the music should be interpreted and teach the music of the piece. A conductor would support and rehearse the musicians giving them clear direction to perform to a high standard in rehearsals and during performances."

An answer that would not be accepted:
"A conductor conducts the music."



Consider one role that you have held when you have been part of an ensemble. How would you describe that role to someone else?

LO

Learning Outcome 2

Be able to prepare for a performance as part of a musical ensemble

This learning outcome requires you to take part in the planning, preparation and rehearsal process for an ensemble performance.

Preparing for a performance as part of an ensemble

There are **three** key elements that you need to consider when planning a performance as part of a musical ensemble. The pages that follow will explain each one in more detail.

The **first** element to consider is **planning and preparation**.

1. **Planning and preparation**
2. **Targets**
3. **Rehearsal skills**



1 Planning and preparation

For a performance to be successful it is important that you plan and prepare very carefully; this is not something that can be left to chance. At the start of the process you need to make decisions about the **arrangements** and **organisation** that you will need put in place for a successful performance.

Decisions you will need to make about **arrangements** include:

- **Venue** Where you are going to perform?
- **Available equipment** Can you access all the equipment you will need?
- **Audience** Who are you going to perform to?
- **Genre (type) of music** Consider the music you are going to perform including the style and mood.
- **Produce a contrasting and balanced programme** This will then appeal to your audience
- **Common musical interests** of musicians
- **Skill level of the available performers** Pitch this correctly
- **Availability of performers** You will need an appropriate mix of instrumentalists or singers
- **Time** How much time do you have before the performance?

Decisions you will need to make about **organisation** include:

- **Rehearsal space** Do you have access?
- **Equipment** What is available for rehearsals and the performance (e.g. instruments, music stands, PA system, etc.)
- **Organising sufficient rehearsals** How many will you need to reach the required standard?
- **Planning each rehearsal** Ensure that sufficient time is allocated to each piece
- **Liaising with technicians and venue staff** What will they need to do for you?
- **Arranging and booking the performance venue** Consider any costs?
- **Promoting your performance** To ensure that you have an audience

Task 2: Identify the planning and preparation required for a successful ensemble performance

(AC 2.1)

There are two parts to this task.

Part a.
IDENTIFY two examples of how **you** contributed to the **selection of musical material for your ensemble performance.**



An acceptable answer would be:
"I suggested the programme of music based on the bands performance skills, competency and current playlist."

An answer that would not be accepted:
"I suggested the programme of music."

Part b.
IDENTIFY two examples of how **you** contributed to the **planning and organisation of the rehearsals**.



An acceptable answer would be:
"I helped with getting all the instruments in my section in tune and correctly warmed up. I also made sure everyone worked on the most difficult sections in the music before the rehearsal began."

An answer that would not be accepted:
"I put up my music stand and got my music ready."



Remember this task is all about **you** and your contribution to the planning and preparation.

The **second** key element to consider when planning a performance as part of a musical ensemble is **targets**.

2 Targets

It is always good practice to set targets throughout the process to ensure that your final performance is the best it can possibly be.

The first step to do that is to produce a **SWOT** analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Once completed this can then inform target setting.

Case study

Here is an example of a SWOT analysis that links to Ella and her experiences in preparing for a concert with her jazz band.

STRENGTHS (Consider what you are good at?) Strengths	**WEAKNESSES** (Consider anything that you can improve on, this could be skills, knowledge or experience) Weaknesses
• Passion and Enthusiasm • Commitment • Skill level	• Limited experience • Can play one instrument • Key change on my first solo piece
OPPORTUNITIES (Consider things that you feel could be advantageous to you) Opportunities	**THREATS** (Consider things that you feel may present a challenge or prevent you from achieving what you want) Threats
• College course • Higher Education • Employment	• Time due to pending exams in college • Limited face to face due to impact of pandemic • Competition for a college place

You can use a completed SWOT template to:

- identify a series of long term goals and aims
- set short, medium and long-term targets

Any targets that are set must be **SMART**.

S	M	A	R	T
SPECIFIC	**MEASURABLE**	**ACHIEVABLE**	**REALISTIC**	**TIME**
State what exactly you will be looking to improve	**How will you measure your success?**	**Make your goal reasonable**	**Is it realistic for you? Will it be a challenge?**	**When will it be achieved by?**

Case study

Here is an example of a SMART target for Ella.



Ella

I find the change of key on the first page of my solo piece very difficult to manage.

I will concentrate on practising the first page of my piece separately for 10 minutes each day, so it is accurate and correct before the first full rehearsal in three weeks' time.

On the next page you can see how the different elements of this target make it SMART.

S	**Specific**	Change of key on the first page of my solo piece.
M	**Measurable**	Accurate and correct change of key when practicing.
A	**Achievable**	Before the first full rehearsal.
R	**Realistic**	Practice for 10 minutes each day.
T	**Time**	Complete this within three weeks.

Once SMART targets have been set they can help to identify deadlines and milestones leading to your performance.

It is importance that SMART targets are recorded and documented in an appropriate format and communicated and understood by all participants.

Task 3: Set and review relevant targets for rehearsals that will result in musical progress

(AC 2.2)

There are three parts to this task.

Part a.
Complete a personal SWOT analysis. You must include at least **two** points in each element.

Part b.
Set yourself **two** appropriate SMART targets that will help you to improve your musical performance for a series of rehearsals.

Part c.
You should now **REFLECT** on your contribution to rehearsals and detail **four** actions for improvement. For each action you must also consider the impact it may have.

Being honest with yourself when completing the SWOT template will help you to complete your SMART targets.



The **third** and final key element to consider when planning a performance as part of a musical ensemble is **rehearsal skills**.

3 Rehearsal skills

Key skills

When taking part in rehearsals, there are some key skills that you will need to be able to fulfil as a member of the ensemble. These include:

- Ensuring that you have warmed up properly before the rehearsal starts
- Ensuring that your instrument is in tune before the start of the rehearsal
- Ensuring that there are targets for each rehearsal – e.g. how much time to spend on each piece
- Are you able to both give and receive direction; this involves listening and responding to others to ensure that each rehearsal achieves the necessary targets
- Are you able to solve problems within the rehearsal both musical and logistical; this might include the use of different fingering, or maybe a change of technique; this might require additional rehearsal time
- When there are problems, are you able to suggest alternative solutions (e.g. maybe a change of repertoire)
- Where there are problematic sections of music, do you have the skills to be able to solve the problem (e.g. repeated practice at a slower tempo)

Expected behaviours

There are also a set of expected behaviours for members of ensembles. These might include:

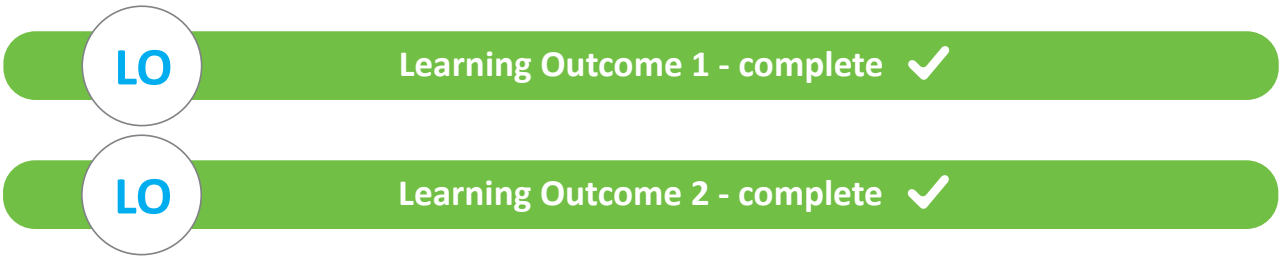
- Regularly attend the planned rehearsals and ensure that they arrive at each rehearsal in plenty of time for a prompt start
- Be well prepared for the session; e.g. they have worked on their own parts between rehearsals
- Have the correct equipment for each session
- Have a positive attitude towards the rehearsals and are enthusiastic
- Respect and encourage others
- Listen attentively throughout the session and follow all instructions
- Work tidily and safely
- Communicate clearly throughout rehearsals
- Respond appropriately to constructive criticism

Recap

To check your understanding you may wish to answer the following questions:

- **SMART targets can help to identify deadlines and milestones leading to improving your performance. True or False?**
- **As a member of an ensemble you need to have a number of key skills. Can you name two?**

If you want to check your answers, they are located on page 23.



Activity 1: Prepare for a performance as part of a musical ensemble (AC 2.3 & 2.4)



To complete the next part of the unit, you must **prepare** for a performance and perform as part of a musical ensemble.

To provide **evidence** of this **you must:**

- Contribute ideas that have a positive impact on rehearsals for an ensemble performance
- Demonstrate expected behaviours throughout ensemble performance rehearsals
- Complete a practice log (**VQF 657***) to evidence **35 hours** rehearsal time carried out under direct supervision and independently.

To provide **evidence** of this your **tutor must:**

- Complete a testimony (**VQF 659 Part a***) to provide evidence of your positive impact and your behaviour whilst preparing for your ensemble.

**Both templates can be found at the back of your workbook.*

LO

Learning Outcome 3

Be able to perform as part of a musical ensemble

This learning outcome requires you to demonstrate your competence in performing as part of a musical ensemble.

Performance skills

Performing in a group is what most musicians do. It is much more fun being part of a group rather than merely playing or singing by yourself. Being part of an ensemble will allow you to develop a set of skills that will aid your overall development as a musician, skills that you cannot develop by yourself.

There are two sets of skills that will be assessed;

- Technical accuracy and
- Ensemble skills.





Technical Accuracy

Before you can perform in a group you need to ensure that you have the following musical skills at a sufficient level to be able to contribute to the group:

Pitch → Are you able to play or sing the right notes at the right time in the pieces you are performing?

Rhythm → Are you able to play or sing the accurate length of notes throughout the chosen pieces?

Intonation → Are you able to play or sing every note in tune? Can you hear when you are slightly sharp or flat, and can you make the changes needed?

Pulse → Are you able to play or sing the chosen pieces at the correct speed? Can you maintain a steady pulse throughout the chosen pieces?

Dynamics, articulation and expression → Are you able to play the music expressively, correctly playing loud or soft when the dynamic marks indicated and accurately playing slurred or staccato notes.



Ensemble Skills

Playing as part of an ensemble is very different to playing as a solo performer. It is important to perform as a member of the musical team, playing sympathetically with the other musicians under the conductor's direction.

Consider the following questions...

- Is the music being performed in the appropriate style?
- Are the performers aware of their own roles within the ensemble?
- Is there an appropriate level of interaction between members of the ensemble?
- Do the members of the ensemble follow the conductor, musical director, drum major, band leader or choir master/mistress?
- Is there an appropriate balance between the instruments/voices?
- How is the ensemble organised in terms of layout (i.e. use of space)?
- Are the members of the ensemble dressed appropriately? Is the appearance and image created correct?
- Is the physical expression and body language of the members of the ensemble appropriate?
- In what ways do the members of the ensemble communicate with the audience (both verbally and non-verbally)?
- How do the members of the ensemble present themselves on stage. How do they enter and leave the stage?
- How do the members of the ensemble react when there are mistakes and other unexpected occurrences?

LO Learning Outcome 1 - complete ✓

LO Learning Outcome 2 - complete ✓

LO Learning Outcome 3 - complete ✓

Activity 2: Perform as part of a musical ensemble



(AC 3.1)

To complete the next part of the unit you must **perform** as part of a musical ensemble.

To provide **evidence** of this **you must:**

- Perform at least **three*** contrasting pieces of music as part of an ensemble with competent technical and ensemble skills

Each piece must be minimum of **three minutes in length. It is not necessary for you to perform all pieces at once as they may be presented over time.*

To provide **evidence** of this your **tutor must:**

- Take a video recording of the performances showing the audience.
- Complete a testimony (**VQF 659 Part b***) to give you feedback and to provide evidence of your performance as part of a musical ensemble.

**The template can be found at the back of your workbook. Guidance on how to upload the video recordings for assessment is given on the tutor testimony form.*

Answers

LO 1 Know the roles and responsibilities of members of musical ensembles

Q1: True.
Q2: Reliability and selecting repertoire. Others can be found on page 6.

LO 2 Be able to prepare for a performance as part of a musical ensemble

Q1: True.
Q2: There are many key skills required, some include: warming up properly, tuning your instrument, working to achieve targets and solving problems. Others are listed on page 16.

Additional reading

Should you wish to know more about this subject area, the following resources may be useful:
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zg6ntv4/revision/6
https://us.abrsm.org/media/63919/developing-ensemble-skills.pdf

Additional units of interest

As part of this qualification there are other units of study. A number of them have clear links with Working as a Musical Ensemble and include:

- **Unit 12:** Planning and Creating a Music Product
- **Unit 13:** Solo Music Performance

Contact

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LO Learning Overview

Criteria reference	To achieve the criteria the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	Task	Evidence (page no.)
Learning Outcome 1: Know the roles and responsibilities of members of musical ensembles			
1.1	**Describe** roles and responsibilities of members of musical ensembles	Task 1	WB Pages 4-5
Learning Outcome 2: Be able to prepare for a performance as part of a musical ensemble			
2.1	Identify the planning and preparation required for a successful ensemble performance	Task 2	WB Page 6
2.2	Set and review relevant targets for rehearsals that will result in musical progress	Task 3	WB Pages 7-9
2.3	Contribute ideas that have a positive impact on the rehearsals for an ensemble performance	Activity 1, VQF 659 Part a. **and** VQF 657	WB Page 10, 11 **and** 13-14
2.4	Demonstrate expected behaviours throughout ensemble performance rehearsals	Activity 1, VQF 659 Part a. **and** VQF 657	WB Page 10, 11 **and** 13-14
Learning Outcome 3: Be able to perform as part of a musical ensemble			
3.1	Perform contrasting pieces of music as part of an ensemble with competent technical and ensemble skills	Activity 2 **and** VQF 659 Part b.	WB Page 10 **and** 12



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