



# Examiners' Report Lead Examiner Feedback

January 2021

Pearson BTEC Level 3 National in Music  
Technology  
Unit 5: Music Technology In Context  
(31811H)

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## Introduction

In this session there were a very limited number of entries for the Unit 5 external assessment. It is recognised that this is a result of Covid19 disruption, and the Chief Examiner would like to thank centres and learners for their efforts in completing the paper in this unique circumstance.

Unfortunately, the limited number of entries in this session precludes feedback on specific learner performance, so the commentary below seeks to provide an overview of tasks within this assessment.

As a mandatory unit for the Pearson Level 3 Foundation Diploma, Diploma and Extended Diploma in Music Technology the external assessment for Unit 5 takes place twice a year in May and January. The January 2021 external assessment series was the seventh for the unit. It is noted that no assessment task brief was issued in the May 2020 session due to disruption resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The external assessment asks learners to apply knowledge to specific material to analyse music technology contextually. Teaching and learning of the unit should allow learners to consider development and use of technology over time, and be aware of how this has informed music production.

## Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

In this assessment the identified musical material was 'Atlantic City' by Bruce Springsteen and 'Dark Red' by Steve Lacy.

As in previous sessions the set task asked learners to write a detailed word-processed article. The assessment specified that the article should be written in four sections.

It is noted that aural discernment with reference to musical and sonic elements of audio material is a key part of music technology work, and the ability to express conclusions based on what can be heard is an invaluable skill for music technologists at all levels. It is therefore unlikely that reliance on secondary sources of information only will allow learners to produce a detailed and evaluative response in this assessment. Learners should be encouraged to apply their listening skills during the preparatory period to inform their response.

Whilst examiners mark all submissions holistically, a response which is explicitly sectionalised as required by the task is likely to reflect a more focussed and coherent outcome.

## Individual Questions

### Set Task Activities

#### Section 1

*How specific developments in sound recording technology influenced the recording of 'Atlantic City' and how this recording process may have influenced commercial recording practice during the 21st century.*

This section was designed to elicit learner responses based on knowledge of Section A of the specification '*Development of music technology and its effect on music production*' underpinned by the learner's own research in regard to the given material.

By consideration of the material and research sources the intention was to allow learners to explore equipment used in the production of 'Atlantic City' including recording, microphone and processing technology.

Learners might be expected to note that 'Atlantic City' (and its parent album 'Nebraska') were recorded using a minimal setup including a 4 track portastudio, which was somewhat unusual for a major artist in 1982.

Learners should have been able to link this use of technology to wider themes of changing practice explored in the specification, particularly with regard to the concepts of accessibility of music technology to artists, the artist as producer and DIY recording.

#### Section 2

*How wider technological developments, including mobile technology, may have influenced the recording of 'Dark Red'.*

This section allowed learners to apply knowledge from Section B of the specification '*Wider technological development and the affect on music production*' and contextualise this with research regarding 'Dark Red'.

Learners should have been able to explore mobile technology, and in turn the use of apps & software in the context of the recording of being made using an iPhone and audio / MIDI sequencing software, with relatively minimal hardware. Discussion of underlying technologies drawn from

specification content (for example, digital, microchips and high capacity storage media) would have allowed learners to contextualise and expand their response effectively into discussion of music production and wider technology.

### **Section 3**

*How free music sharing websites may be used to interact with and build an audience in the present day and how this contrasts with the ways in which music was consumed in 1982.*

This section focussed on Section C of the specification 'Listening to music through technology' and was designed to engage learners with discussion of changes to consumption of music over time.

Learners would be expected to have responded effectively through knowledge of formats (for example, records and cassettes) and broadcasting (for example, radio and music video) in use in 1982 and compared this with current patterns of music consumption.

Learners may have developed their response to explore the changing accessibility of artists and material (via, for example, downloads / streaming) and how audience engagement relates to this.

### **Section 4**

*Provide a detailed analysis of the sounds and musical style of 'Dark Red'.*

This section relates to Section D of the specification '*Music Technology and its relationship to sound / style of music*'. The intention of this section was to allow learners to demonstrate knowledge from the specification in the context of applied listening skills.

Learners may have approached this section by undertaking aural analysis of the given material during the preparatory period and making use of notes to frame their response.

Discussion of sounds, alongside musical elements, allows for exploration of stylistic markers of the material. Learners could further reinforce their conclusions with reference to other examples found during research and via their own knowledge of music.

## Summary

Based on the responses seen in this series, learners should:

- make focused use of the Part A preparatory period to undertake research and detailed listening which considers the supplied material, available information, wider concepts and examples to provide supporting material for their Part B response
- note that aural discernment with reference to musical and sonic elements of audio material is a key part of music technology work, and the ability to express conclusions based on what can be heard is an invaluable skill for music technologists at all levels
- employ discernment in research sources to ensure relevance and validity. Where possible information should be checked to establish reliability
- use material found through research to inform a response, rather than reproduce this to make up the body of the submission, which is unlikely to be explanative, critical or analytical
- appropriately reference research sources in Part B as in any other assessment. Unreferenced material included as part of the submission could also potentially be regarded as plagiarism and therefore subject to malpractice investigation
- be encouraged to consider each section prior to beginning to write their response, to avoid repetition and focus on each element in turn.

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