

Background Paper and Brief for the Review of
Junior Cycle Music

Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Background	6
2.1: Intermediate Certificate Music Syllabus 1972	6
2.2: The Junior Certificate Music Syllabus 1989	7
2.3: Rebalancing the Junior Certificate Music syllabus 2008	10
3. Experiences of music in junior cycle	14
3.1: Music in the Primary School Curriculum	14
3.2 ESRI Research	15
3.3 Implementation of the Music Syllabus	16
3.4 Intended and experienced curriculum	19
4. National developments in the Arts	22
4.1: Arts in Education Charter	22
4.2: Short Course in Artistic Performance	24
4.3: Music Generation	26
4.4: Arts in Junior Cycle	27
4.5: National Strategy for Sustainable Development	28
5. Emerging themes in music education research	30
5.1 New digital technologies	30
5.2 Formal and Informal music experiences	31
5.3 International developments in music curricula	34
GCSE Music (UK)	34
Scotland	35
The International Baccalaureate (IB)	36
5.4 A final note: curriculum considerations	36
6. Music specification in the new junior cycle	39
7. Brief for the review of Junior Cycle Music	41

References	44
Appendix: Student Voice	48

1. Introduction

Music will be introduced in 2018 as a Phase Four subject as part of the new junior cycle. The curriculum and assessment specification for the subject will be published a year earlier in September 2017. This paper provides a background for the development of the specification for Junior Cycle Music. It begins by presenting a brief overview of the existing Music syllabus and the format of the Junior Certificate examination, and then comments on the consultation on the draft rebalanced syllabus from 2008.

The paper outlines recent significant initiatives in the arts domain at a national level that are relevant to the development of the new specification. It explores the experience of students and teachers in music classrooms, and presents some outcomes and trends regarding performance and uptake in the Junior Certificate examination. The paper goes on to consider current concerns in the international music education literature, some developments in international curricula, and the impact of these on the new specification. Finally, it sets out the brief for the development of the specification.

2. Background

2.1: Intermediate Certificate Music Syllabus 1972

The starting point for this background paper is the Intermediate Certificate Music and Musicianship syllabus introduced in 1972. This course consisted of two music syllabuses (A and B) that were to replace the three in existence, and were to commence in the school year 1972/1973 and be examined from 1975.

Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools outlined that Syllabus 'A' would consist of a written and aural test, while Syllabus 'B' would provide the opportunity for those with a practical aptitude the option to display their 'talent for instrumental performance' as part of the exam (p. 109). The instruments for the practical exam were prescribed and it is interesting to note here that 'voice' could not be presented for the practical exam.

The music course aimed

to give young people an appreciation of the music they hear everyday by equipping them with sufficient knowledge and skill to listen to music intelligently (DES, 1973, p. 109).

Syllabus 'A' had 4 distinct sections:

- 1) *Songs*: The syllabus had 30 prescribed songs and these included traditional songs with Irish words, Irish ballads with English words, folk songs from other countries and songs from the masters.
- 2) *Listening*: A set of prescribed works, supplemented by meaningful listening experiences chosen by the teacher, aimed at awakening in their pupils an explicit awareness and understanding of music.
- 3) *Reading*: This third section on music literacy included reading from the treble clef in major and minor keys up to four sharps and four flats; a greater fluency in writing in the keys of two sharps and two flats; some familiarity with the bass clef and the understanding of time values from semibreves to quavers.
- 4) *Composition*: Students were expected to develop the skills to write melodies that could range from four to sixteen bars in groups of two- and four-bar phrases using staff notation.

Syllabus 'B' covered this theoretical content and also included the practical component, which had a prescribed set of technical exercises and pieces to choose from. In essence, this meant that what students were presenting was extracted from their musical experiences *outside* the classroom.

Table 1 presents a summary of the Intermediate Certificate syllabus.

	Intermediate Certificate: A	Intermediate Certificate: B
Songs	30 prescribed songs	30 prescribed songs
Listening/Aural	5 prescribed works and other aural experiences	5 prescribed works and other aural experiences
Reading	Theoretical concepts	Theoretical concepts
Composition	Melody writing	Melody writing and triads/chords/cadences
Performance	None	3 pieces and technical exercises; solo in delivery; small selection of instruments and no singing option

Table 1: Summary of Intermediate Certificate Syllabus

2.2: The Junior Certificate Music Syllabus 1989

This syllabus was introduced in 1989 and examined for the first time in June 1992. The content was organised under the three distinct headings of Performing, Composing and Listening. The syllabus was accompanied by a supporting document with comprehensive guidelines to teachers on approaches for implementing the course.

The syllabus starts with a clear statement of intent, claiming that the course

“has been designed to enable all students to acquire musical skills suited to their age, varying abilities and musical experiences...through a much broader set of mediums and genres than before” (DES, 1989, p.2).

While containing elements of content prescription, this syllabus in many instances outlines the ‘parameters of choice’ within which teachers and students may choose the content material, and how to approach it as ‘it best suits their (student’s) individual and particular needs’ (p. 2). In this way, unlike the Intermediate Certificate course, there are elements of teacher and student autonomy that allow for a flexible and local interpretation of how best to mediate and experience

the components of the syllabus. In a departure from the previous syllabus, this course is accessed at either Ordinary or Higher level.

The division of the content into three components is intended to provide for the full range of experience in the development of musical skills. The language of the aims and objectives clearly states that these three components are intended to complement each other and promote 'active rather than passive learning' (NCCA, 1989, p. 3). The subject title was changed from *Music and Musicianship* to *Music* to reflect the involvement of all students in all three activities. Each of the three components is explored further in the following sections.

2.2.1 Performing

With this syllabus, students are permitted to present their performance as the result of either school-based or private tuition, and be assessed on an individual or group basis. Popular music genres were introduced and recognised as equal in value to traditional and classical styles. The emphasis is not solely on a technically polished performance but rather on the musical activities themselves (NCCA, 1989, p. 13). To this end, the syllabus excludes scales and arpeggios, in recognition of the fact that in some genres these technical exercises are alien to the culture, and the students' technical ability can be measured in the context of the pieces that they perform.

There are seven categories from which the students can choose their performance content. These categories are broad enough in scope to cater for all students and include vocal categories, which were absent from the preceding course. Similar to the Intermediate Certificate syllabus, a list of approved classical and Irish traditional instruments are provided, with a list of prescribed pieces for each instrument. The last category, number seven, is a 'catch all' category, which is designed to facilitate performances that are not accommodated by the other six. What has become custom and practice in the 25 years since the syllabus was introduced is that teachers/candidates have tended to bypass the category system and enter all their students under category seven, performing a programme of their own choice. As part of the performance, students are expected to undertake a sight-reading or aural memory test.

2.2.2 Composing

The rationale for undertaking the study of composing skills is to help students to know what to look for in the music of others.

Composing helps students discover how musical decisions are made, and it enhances their own understanding of music itself and makes them more sensitive in the development of listening and performing. (NCCA, 1989, p.20).

With this component, the students compose short melodic phrases, identify triads and some elementary harmony, or they can exchange these elements and prepare a piece of 'free composition'.

With melody writing, candidates are required to show sufficient understanding of the rudiments of music and aural imagination to be able to conceive and notate melodic phrases in the treble stave, use rhythmic values from semibreve to quaver and common time signatures in major keys up to two sharps and two flats. All candidates are to show an understanding of triads and chord progressions, which may be set in major and minor keys up to two sharps and two flats.

The free composition option was designed to give Higher Level students choice and flexibility, but in reality very few students attempt this question, as it is perceived to be easier to get full marks through the other composition options. Furthermore, this lack of uptake is not surprising as the NCCA guidelines explicitly recommend that some students avoid this option, making the point that it is an option intended for *some* higher-level students, and that the vast majority of students would benefit best by exploring melody, triads and chord progressions independently of one another (NCCA, 1989, p. 20). This matter will be explored further in the next chapter.

2.2.3 Listening

This component asks that students be involved in responding in musically perceptive ways to prepared and unprepared songs and recorded works using technical and/or non-technical language. Through this aural engagement, students will be *able to perceive and illustrate the relationship between sound and symbol* (DES, 1989, p. 4) and through direct purposeful listening, be able to *enjoy knowingly, benefit musically and discriminate aurally* (NCCA, 1989, p. 33). This section contains eight prescribed songs (rotating over three-year cycles) and eight choice songs, one from each of the prescribed categories. There are three prescribed works (again rotated over a three-year cycle), and six choice works from six prescribed categories. The intention is to provide an element of choice within which teachers and students can exercise agency in choosing material to best suit their individual and particular needs, in the expectation that this choice would make the programme *more open and attractive* (NCCA, 1989, p. 40).

However, with the choice works/songs element of this syllabus, there are fourteen categories from which to learn features associated with the song/work from that category, and only one of these features in the final exam. This section of the exam has come in for a lot of criticism, and this will be explored in further detail in Chapter 3. There is a separate section in the syllabus on Irish Music and

this asks that students *show familiarity with Irish traditional music and its distinguishing features*, as well as offering a general account of its history and recognition of Irish instruments (DES, 1989, p.14).

There is a chosen general study as part of this component, where students are asked to choose from a set of headings and undertake a study in the area chosen. The intention of the syllabus clearly states that the essence of this should allow for *tremendous freedom* to plan and direct the content as appropriate. However, examination content has tended to frame the approach taken to this section of the syllabus as, anecdotally, the study becomes pre-planned and structured with students learning responses off by heart and repeating them in the exam.

Of note here, and explored later, is the impression that the syllabus, in reality, is set out in terms of exam requirements. Page 6 states that

...the course content can be perceived more clearly when outlined in terms of the precise examination requirements. (DES, 1989).

The focus on the examination is something that has disenchanted many music teachers. This will be explored in further detail in the next chapter.

2.3: Rebalancing the Junior Certificate Music syllabus 2008

In 1999 *The Junior Cycle Review – Progress Report: Issues and Options for Development* reported that there was a perception of curriculum overload at junior cycle. The NCCA undertook an initiative in 2003, aimed at rebalancing subjects to a common template and at reducing overload, overlap and obsolescence in subject content. Music was one of five subjects selected for the first phase. As this was a rebalancing rather than a full review process, the development group involved was restricted to working within the confines of the existing syllabus, and the rebalanced syllabus was framed in the same way as the existing syllabus, under the three main activities of Performing, Composing and Listening.

2.3.1 Performing

With this proposed syllabus, the seven performing categories were abandoned, and in their place was the requirement that the student presents one of the following performance options:

- Solo songs (2 or 4)

- Songs as part of a group (2 or 4)
- Solo instrumental pieces (2 or 4)
- Instrumental pieces as part of a group (2 or 4)
- Music technology option

There are suggested pieces offered with criteria for choosing suitable music, but no specific programmes were given. Music technology was offered as a new option. A new, unprepared test was added, where students could opt to clap at sight, and the syllabus stipulated that the music chosen for the performance be of a standard consistent with three years study in a school-based environment.

2.3.2 Composing

The composing content was very similar to the existing syllabus where the students would learn to write a melody to a given text or as a continuation of a given bar/phrase; identify and determine locations in the music where triads can be used; and Higher Level students would undertake learning in cadences/adding backing chords to simple music.

2.3.3 Listening

With the listening component, the student's aural experiences were similar to the existing syllabus and based on set songs, set works, Irish music, a chosen general study and some general listening skills. There were now two groups of prescribed songs and works, as opposed to three, and they were to rotate every three years. The choice song/work question was now omitted from the syllabus and would not form part of the assessment of this syllabus. The students would be expected to undertake the general study as with the previous course.

As Music in the Primary School Curriculum is framed and structured around the three activities of composing, performing and listening, the syllabus strives for a logical follow through from the primary system. The link to senior cycle is also explored, with the shape and the structure of the syllabuses shown to have strong connections and points of familiarity.

Those choosing to study music at Leaving Certificate will encounter a range of familiar activities and key concepts. (NCCA, 2008 (a), p. 17).

A consultation took place on this rebalanced syllabus where the syllabus was broadly welcomed. There was almost *universal approval* for the introduction of a music technology component as a

performance option (NCCA, 2008 (b), p. 11), which is a very popular option at Leaving Certificate level, but there were some concerns at the lack of concrete details on the content of this technology option.

Regarding the Listening component, there was support for the removal of the chosen songs and works. There was support for the change to the dictation element (which was now to be placed in the context of the set songs/works), and this was seen as connecting closer to the Leaving Certificate syllabus. There were criticisms of the absence of 20th century music in the set songs/works and this was seen as a regrettable absence as this would help provide links to music at Leaving Certificate level (NCCA, 2008 (b), p. 9). A reconsideration of the set songs was sought as they were seen as not modern enough and *need to be looked at again by someone who didn't stop listening to the radio in 1980* (NCCA, 2008 (b), p. 17). Comments throughout the consultation noted that the songs should change more frequently, given that teachers might be teaching the same songs to numerous classes for a number of years.

The comments on the general study looked for a reconsideration of its nature and purpose. The concerns expressed were that this has become a memorisation test and in the current form does not provide significant musical benefit. The suggestions varied from scrapping it altogether to expanding the range of topics involved, to developing it into a project to be submitted for examination. Clarification was sought on the content of the Irish Music component and concerns raised that the scope of the section might be too broad, with suggestions for a reduction in the history element of the course and a stronger focus on the transmission of Irish music.

The consultation showed that the rebalanced syllabus was widely supported but came up short in several areas. While there was widespread support for the proposed amendments to the performance component, teachers were looking for a more flexible approach to the prescribed material, and the inclusion of some 21st century music to offer the course a more contemporary feel. They were also looking for new and innovative approaches to the general study and the Irish Music course.

The rebalanced Junior Certificate syllabuses were developed but not introduced. Around the time that the rebalancing process was completed a broader initiative related to junior cycle development became an educational and political priority. However, it is of relevance and significance to the development of the Junior Cycle Music specification now taking place. The feedback gained at that time can offer a lens through which the direction of the new music specification can be considered.

Table 2 compares aspects of the current Junior Certificate syllabus with the draft rebalanced syllabus.

	Junior Certificate (1989)	Draft Rebalanced Junior Certificate (2008)
Performing	7 categories Individual or group based In-school and out-of-school activities No technical exercises Broader unprepared tests	No categories Technological element introduced Further broadening of unprepared tests
Composing	Free composition introduced Backing chords introduced	Little change Rhythm given to support adding melody to text
Listening	Set songs (3 groups) Set works (3 groups) Choice songs (8 categories) Choice works (6 categories) Special study introduced Dictation element to exam	Set songs (8 songs, 2 groups) Set works (5 works, 2 groups) No choice of songs and works Dictation in contextual setting

Table 2: Comparison of the Junior Certificate and the Draft Rebalanced Syllabus (2008)

Section Summary
<p>The Junior Certificate Music syllabus evolved out of the Intermediate Certificate Music and Musicianship course. This Junior Certificate course is structured on the three interrelated components of Performing, Composing and Listening. Since its introduction in 1989 the syllabus hasn't changed, and the aspirations, aims and objectives of the original syllabus are still valid today. However, custom and practice has developed so that the performing categories are largely ignored, and there are concerns around the assessment of the choice songs/works and the special study. Ten or so years ago, a rebalancing process initiated discussions around the appropriateness of the syllabus for junior cycle students and modifications were recommended. While the rebalanced syllabus was developed, it was not introduced in light of wider changes within the junior cycle. Nevertheless, the rebalanced syllabus is relevant and important to the junior cycle developments currently taking place.</p>

3. Experiences of music in junior cycle

Before considering the design of a new music specification, it is necessary to explore the experiences of students, teachers, and others. This chapter commences with a look at the continuum from primary to post-primary education and the challenges posed here. Next, the paper considers relevant research and evaluation reports including an ESRI report, the relevant SEC Chief Examiner's Reports, and a recent report from the Inspectorate, and looks at the implications of these for the development of a new music specification. Throughout this analysis, reference will be made to the views of teachers and students gleaned from other research into their experiences of the Junior Certificate Music course.

3.1: Music in the Primary School Curriculum

Within the Primary School Curriculum, Music is viewed as part of a broader Arts Education curriculum along with Art and Drama. The curriculum states that the arts

...provide for sensory, emotional, intellectual and creative enrichment and contribute to the child's holistic development. Much of what is finest in society is developed through a variety of art forms, which contribute to cultural ethos, and a sense of well being. (DES, 1999, p. 2).

In relation to Music, the curriculum states that

Music is an art form deeply rooted in human nature. It is a discrete body of knowledge, a unique form of communication and a means by which feelings and interests are organised and expressed. Music offers lifelong opportunities for the development of imagination, sensitivity, inventiveness, risk-taking, enjoyment, creativity and self-esteem (DES, 1999, p.5).

At primary level, the Music course comprises three strand units:

- Performing
- Composing
- Listening and responding

Musical activities are suggested within each strand unit that enable the child to develop an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the interrelated elements of music, and to grow in musical understanding. The guidelines state that as the music curriculum is closely linked with other arts subjects and integrated with other areas of the curriculum, the class teacher is the most appropriate person to teach the music course.

The aims and objectives of the Primary School Curriculum align strongly with those of the Junior Certificate syllabus, and this alignment was referenced in the rebalanced syllabus of 2008. The reality of this alignment is somewhat different though, and the evidence from talking with students and from research into teachers' experiences with first year students, suggests this alignment to be of a variable nature. O'Connell (2012) in her research on the current Junior Certificate syllabus, highlights this fractured continuum between music education at primary and post-primary levels. She raises the issue of the lack of consistency in the quantity and the quality of music teaching among primary schools (O'Connell, 2012, p. 1). She claims that most students arrive to secondary school with limited musical experiences of varying quality, and that the frequency of musical instruction can be sporadic (O'Connell, 2012, p. 2). She sees the challenge then to bring

...these students with some experience of performing, less experience of listening, very little experience if any of composing and negligible understanding of literacy, through a musical journey whereby, within three years, they would gain a level of competency and fluency which would enable them to successfully engage with the requirements of the JC music examination. (O'Connell, 2012, p. 2).

This challenge is something that will have to be noted in the development of the new specification.

3.2 ESRI Research

In early 2002, as part of the review of junior cycle, the NCCA commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to conduct a longitudinal study of students' experiences of transfer from primary to post-primary education. The research followed a group of over 900 students in their first three years of post-primary schooling.

The findings from the ESRI report on the experiences of second year students, *Pathways through the Junior Cycle: The Experiences of Second Year Students* offers some insight into student views on Music. Music was one of the subjects most frequently mentioned as liked by students (32%). What is also interesting is that students were asked as part of this research about subjects that they found

useful, difficult and interesting, and Music features in none of these categories. So, while students may like the subject, they appear to feel neither challenged nor interested by it (Smyth, Dunne, McCoy, Darmody, 2006).

The research report on third year, entitled *Gearing up for the Exam?: The Experiences of Junior Certificate Students*, explored the changes in students' attitudes as they moved into third year, their engagement with and experience of the curriculum and the learning process, and their experience of the Junior Certificate examination. In examining their attitudes towards subjects, students were asked about the relative difficulty of subjects, which ones they found interesting, and their perception of the usefulness of the subjects they were taking. Similar to the findings above, Music does not feature on the reported list. Again, it appears to be liked but not regarded as challenging, interesting or particularly useful (Smyth, Dunne, Darmody, McCoy, 2007).

These observations present a challenge for the design of the new specification, as the contradiction between liking the subject and seeing it as unchallenging or uninteresting needs to be addressed.

3.3 Implementation of the Music Syllabus

The views of teachers, students, and other experts are also critical to understanding how the music course is experienced in the classroom. The views of students come from those that are part of the NCCA *Student Voice* initiative (further details of this initiative can be found in Appendix 1).

Table 3 presents the numbers of students taking Junior Certificate Music since 2005 presented as a percentage of all Junior Certificate candidates.

Year	Total number of Junior Certificate students	% of students who sat the music exam
2008	54, 492	17.1
2009	54, 059	17.6
2010	54, 753	17.7
2011	56, 930	17.9
2012	58, 798	18.1
2013	59, 823	18.6
2014	60, 207	18.6
2015	59, 522	18.5

Table 3: Uptake of Music at Junior Certificate

The table indicates that there has been little fluctuation (1.5%) in the numbers taking the subject for Junior Certificate in the last eight years. The recent Chief Examiner's Reports from the State Examinations Commission (SEC, 2003, 2006, 2012) show that four times more students take Higher Level than take Ordinary Level Music. This ratio continues to be one of the highest for all subjects. Equally, the gap between the number of boys and girls taking the subject has remained at roughly four to one in favour of girls, with the most recent report of 2012 showing a slight increase in the percentage uptake by male students.

But what lies behind these statistics? How is music experienced in the classroom? In keeping with the approach undertaken in the reports from the SEC, the structure of the syllabus and other research writings, the findings will be presented under the three components of Performing, Composing and Listening.

3.3.1 Performing

According to the recent SEC reports, while the option of seven performance categories are available in the syllabus, in practice many students and, in particular, most instrumentalists now opt for category seven, where they can choose their own programme. Most Higher Level students opt for two activities in each of two Ordinary Level activities. At both levels, most candidates opt for the aural memory rhythm for the unprepared test. In general, the standard of performance is high across all performing options, both for solo and group activities.

The performance component is currently worth 25% of the marks allocated, and O'Connell (2012) in her research found that the teachers she interviewed supported an increase in this allocation to 35%. The students consulted in the *Student Voice* initiative were also of the view that the practical should attract a greater proportion of marks, as it was considered less stressful than the (written) exam, and it was useful to have it completed earlier. They very much liked the group element of the practical and liked that the teacher could be in the exam room to support them. There was support from the students interviewed for bringing some technology into the exam, as they did some of this in first year, but not in subsequent years.

Overall the comments from the SEC reports and the views of teachers and students on the assessment and experiences of the performance component, are very positive.

3.3.2 Composing

In general, the SEC point out that the skill-based questions in the composing section of the examination (Q. 6, 7 and 8) allow many students to gain almost full marks, in particular with the triads question and the backing chord questions. They do less well in the melodic composition

question. With regard to the free composition option, a small number of candidates attempt this question but, without exception, all of them show a poor understanding of the requirements. As, in nearly all cases, the students had already answered questions 6, 7 and 8, marks gained in this question regularly do not count.

While the exam experience is a positive one for many students, O'Connell (2012) is critical of the language in which the composition requirements are presented as it focuses on skills development and lacks reference to *creativity*.

Composition, as defined in the music literature, advocates the students' exploration, experimentation and expressive problem solving as the starting point. In contrast, the starting point for composing in the JC syllabus would seem to be the development of traditional notation skills and knowledge of the rudiments of music. (O'Connell, p. 117).

Part of the problem, she feels, lies in the brevity of the melody writing exercises, which can be formulaic, and which leave little room for students to engage in the imaginative and creative processes advocated. Student groups that were asked about their experiences with the Junior Certificate Music course echoed this. They commented that if they forgot the formula for writing the melody in the exam, they would think that they would lose all the marks for that question. O'Connell is of the opinion that a change in assessment methods would have a significant impact on transforming approaches to composing, which could include a portfolio approach, as is the case with the GCSE in the UK.

3.3.3 Listening

From the SEC reports, we know that candidates do least well in the Choice Song/Work question. O'Connell (2102) found the teachers she interviewed agreeing with this. She cites a sense of *discontent* that teachers have with this element of the course. This section asks students to answer a question that gives rise to content learning on fourteen items, only one of which will appear in the exam paper. This is regarded widely as being *non-musical* (p. 164), and there is general criticism of the volume of material to be taught in this section.

Regarding the choice of the prescribed songs and works, there is some criticism of the content of this material. Many teachers feel that the music is not age appropriate, that the subject matter is not very suitable for teenagers and is unrelated to their real-life experiences (O'Connell, p. 166). There was support for not having the songs in the popular song category prescribed, as this category is

very transitory by nature. Students' comments echoed these views, expressing a wish to change the set songs to more modern songs, as this would make them easier to learn.

Further concerns emerge when considering the Set Works/Songs content. The SEC reports find that students have difficulty explaining terms with regard to the music heard in the Set Works question and they often struggle with the information required in the Irish music section. Students stated that the Set Work question has too much to learn, and even then only a small amount appears on the exam. Here they are referring to the fact that only one set work out of three will appear on the exam paper, which provides an interesting comparison with the Leaving Certificate listening paper, where all four set works appear, albeit with a greater weighting being attached to one. In a comment from the 2006 SEC report, it is noted that the candidates often find themselves out of their depth when questions move away from what they have learnt off by heart.

O'Connell (2012) suggests that students are asked a great deal about what is happening in the music, and not given sufficient opportunity to discuss the musical effects of these features or why a composer might have chosen to write music in this way (p. 124). Quotes from teachers in her work echo this, pointing out that there is much drilling in terms and not enough discussion of why composers made particular musical choices (p. 160).

Regarding the general study, teachers acknowledge that, by and large, this is often generated by the teachers themselves and handed out to students to learn off. Mirroring the comments from the consultation on the rebalanced syllabus, there is general agreement that there is a disparity between the aims of the syllabus and the reality of practice with reference to this element (O'Connell, 2012).

Looking at the syllabus in discrete sections and in terms of the examination, as above, we get only one view of the course. When we look at what the syllabus espouses and what can take place in reality some significant gaps can emerge.

3.4 Intended and experienced curriculum

In her study of the Junior Certificate Music syllabus, O'Connell (2012) explores this feeling of dissonance that is felt when attempting to bring the syllabus to life in the classroom while always keeping an eye to the exam. The DES report on music inspections highlights that in some schools where the time allocation for Music was limited, the balance between coursework and music education experiences was stymied and sometimes content was taught to the examination without

the exploration of the essence of music (DES, 2008, p. 20). The report further states that this lack of space for musical development and creative initiative is *contrary to the underlying principles of music education*. (2008, p. 20).

O'Connell states that the listing and classification of content constrains teacher and student flexibility in determining the direction of teaching and learning. Teachers found themselves

...caught between two goals: between the desire to engage my students in a holistic and meaningful experience of music education while also obligated to complete the requirements of the JC syllabus. (O'Connell, 2012, p. 3).

The DES report states that it is only when the emphasis in the classroom is on music-making activities that the fundamental aim of music education can be realised (p. 28). It acknowledges the good practice that occurs in classrooms and that the ability to introduce concepts aurally, reinforced through performing and consolidated through composing, is a powerful learning experience (DES, 2008, p. 24). However, it seems this powerful experience is not always present and the new specification provides an opportunity to further consider what powerful learning experiences in the music domain should look like.

Other comments from students that are pertinent to this new specification refer to their enjoyment in experiencing real-life music activities. They like occasions where musicians come to the school and they can witness performances first hand. This comment has particular resonance with the aims of the *Arts in Education Charter*, which will be discussed in the following chapter. The students also remarked favourably on the kind of learning that takes place in the music classroom, as it was different from other subjects, was a more active way to learn, and something they saw as a positive experience.

What is interesting about the research and reports considered is that the course is regularly discussed and experienced through the lens of three discrete activities. Later chapters will explore this concept further in the context of some findings in international literature, and highlight other considerations that may impact on maintaining this structure.

A next step is to look at some relevant innovations in the last decade in the area of the arts and music in Ireland. These innovations, with their intention of broadening the reach of arts and music education to a wider community, provide further prompts for discussion about what a music education at junior cycle should entail.

Section Summary

The various challenges and positives on how music is experienced within the music classroom by both teachers and students have been explored in this chapter.

The initial challenge is managing the variety of musical experiences that students encounter within primary school and thus have on arrival to post primary education. A further challenge is the ambition for teachers to provide a holistic music education that integrates the components of performing, composing and listening, while achieving a balance with the examination requirements. Teachers and students are favourably disposed towards the performance component of the course, but struggle with the listening material, both in its content (old fashioned and lacking in relevance), its breadth, and in the assessment modality which favours recall and lacks responses of a more personal nature.

The findings presented show that the uptake for the subject has been very consistent over the last decade or so and that students like taking the music course. However, despite this, research also shows that they do not find it either useful or seem to be challenged by it.

The findings of this chapter resonate with the findings in the previous one, and in that way provide an important context for discussion of the direction that the new specification should take.

4. National developments in the Arts

There are a wide range of other factors which may impact on the design of a specification for Junior Cycle Music, some directly related to other aspects of the post-primary curriculum and others of a more systemic nature. This section draws attention to some of these factors

- Arts in Education Charter and Portal
- Junior Cycle Short Course in Artistic Performance
- Music Generation
- Arts in the Junior Cycle
- National Strategy for Sustainable Development

4.1: Arts in Education Charter

The Arts in Education Charter (2012) was developed by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills (DES). In generating the Arts in Education Charter, the place of the arts from *Aistear, the Early Childhood curriculum*, through primary and junior cycle into the senior cycle curriculum was reviewed. The Charter has relevance to the development of the new specification for a number of reasons.

- It specifically highlights the integration of the arts as both a method of developing the key skills of Junior Cycle as well as potentially opening up the experiences of students to the real world of the arts and artists
- It both references and proposes a number of arts-related developments which could have a bearing on the development of a specification for Music. Of note, especially, is the development of a portal site, which was launched in May 2015, with the aim of making the portal the key national digital resource of arts and education practice in Ireland. The portal is available at <http://artsineducation.ie/en/home/>
- It mentions that within-school policies and plans at post-primary level should, where possible, contain a commitment to *arts-in-education as an important aspect of enriching the curriculum and the wider life of the school*. (DAHG/DES, 2012, p. 6).

- It echoes the *Framework for Junior Cycle* which highlights the significance of the presence of music on the curriculum. For example the Charter references *creativity and innovation*, one of the eight principles of the Framework, and notes that it *will provide opportunities for students to be creative and innovative*. (DES, 2012, p. 4).

The charter proposes that arts-in-education experiences can take the form of interventions by the arts world into schools and/or through student engagement with the arts in the public domain. These experiences can range from a once-off visit to school by a practicing musician/group of musicians, to collaborative projects that extend over time. Involving parents and community arts organisations and the wider school community further enriches the arts/school relationship. Through the Charter the two departments recognise the

...strong need to build real and virtual networks of skilled and experienced practitioners (teachers and artists) to share good practice and to enhance collaborative approaches to arts-in-education practice (DAHG & DES, 2012, p. 14).

It is important for students to gain not only an understanding of the historical and cultural significance of music, but that they also learn about current practices and practitioners too. This is dealt with in section 4.8 of the Charter

The works of living artists should complement existing curriculum priorities and be referenced as part of the practical realities of classroom teaching. In that regard, the engagement by funded artists and arts' organisation with schools, as outlined earlier, shall be part of the public funding contract (DAHG & DES, 2012, p. 15).

The opportunities afforded by this charter should be explored as part of the new music specification. Specifically, the provision to support arts-in-education experiences and opportunities for students to witness current practice and practitioners could be considered.

The Charter references the potential opportunities for the NCCA, schools and others to create and provide new short courses, within set specifications, which would enhance the arts options available to students. One such short course has been published: *Artistic Performance: Engaging with the Arts*.

4.2: Short Course in Artistic Performance

Short courses are a curriculum component in the new junior cycle. Short courses can be developed by schools in accordance with a template provided by the NCCA. They link directly to the key skills of junior cycle, are designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement and emphasise students' active learning. Nine short courses have already been developed by the NCCA and can be used 'off the shelf' by schools in their junior cycle programme. One such short course is entitled *Artistic Performance: Engaging with the Arts*.

The rationale for the Artistic Performance short course begins with the statement

Learning about and through the arts is fundamental to an education that aspires to support the development of the whole person. (NCCA, 2014, p. 4).

The short course aims to engage students in artistic practices with others by offering a structure that can be used to facilitate collaborative and individual imaginative and creative initiatives, leading to a group performance. Performance can also be read as meaning presentation, event, exhibition or production.

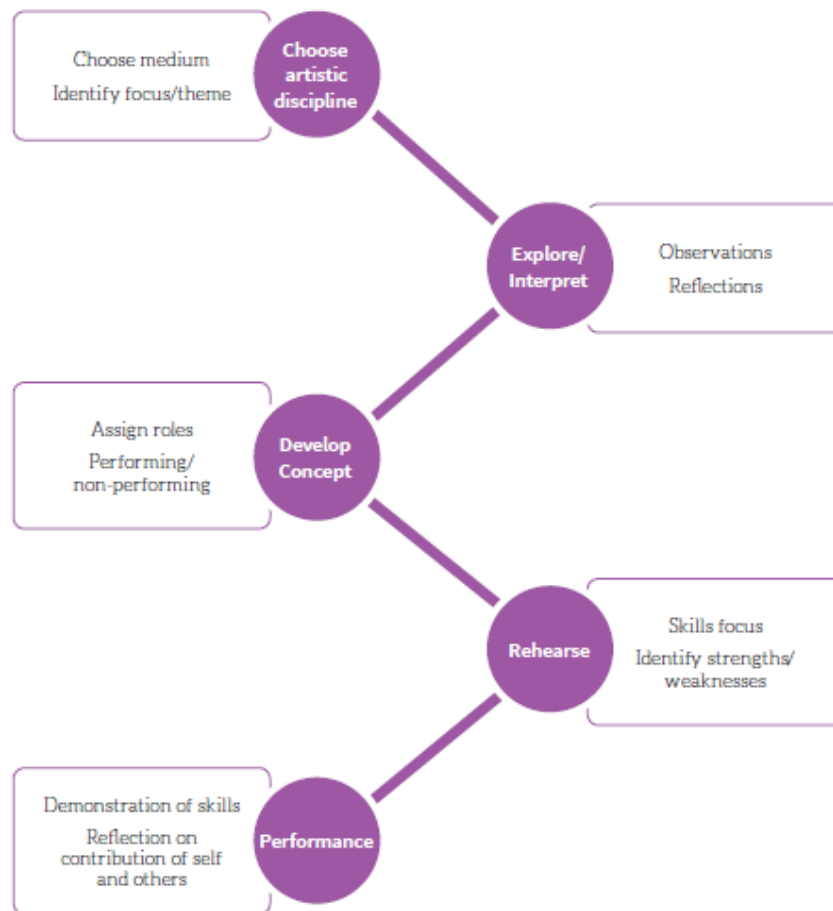
The three strands of this short course allow students to build on their experiences of the arts to create their own performance.

Strand 1: **Experiencing the arts** is designed to give the students direct arts experiences leading to them gaining an insight into various art forms.

Strand 2: **Planning and preparing** involves students in assessing their own strengths as a member of a group in order to decide on the role they will undertake in their group performance.

Strand 3: **Participation and performance** is where students can demonstrate the skills learnt in the chosen art form and communicate this with an audience.

This approach is represented graphically in the diagram:



Assessment in the Artistic Performance short course is made up of a performance and reflection journal.

The reflection journal is created by the students to help them reflect on their experiences of engaging with the arts as they progress through the course. This can be presented in written, digital, visual or audio form, or any other format that is deemed suitable by the student and appropriate for capturing the essence of the reflection. The final group performance should bring all the relevant skills together with evidence of improvement and commitment.

It is worth noting that the Artistic Performance specification makes the point that the short course itself can be seen as a framework-type course. It allows for the flexibility of implementation and interpretation to match the array of artistic disciplines that may be engaged in. There is great opportunity for the activities explored within this short course to supplement and support the knowledge and skills that will be developed through the Music specification.

4.3: Music Generation

In May 2001, the Departments of Education and Skills, and Arts, Sport and Tourism jointly commissioned Music Network to produce a feasibility study to examine how a national system of publicly supported local schools of music might be provided in Ireland.

In 2003, Music Network published a commissioned report, '*A National System of Local Music Education Services – Report of a Feasibility Study 2003*' which was a *blueprint for making musical education available throughout the country and to people of all ages and ranges of talent* (p. 7). The hope was that, if implemented, *talented composers and performers will appear; new audiences will materialise to hear them; and our young people will be educated to enjoy a range of experience that will remain with them for life* (DAST, 2003, p. 7). The report argued for a phased introduction, over more than a decade, of a service that could transform the musical, cultural and community life of towns and townlands throughout the country (DAST, 2003, p. vii).

The report found that in the case of vocal and instrumental tuition, despite some excellent provision in various institutions and schemes

...we lack the kind of systematic provision appropriate to a twenty-first-century European country so distinguished by its cultural achievement and identity (DAST, 2003, p. vii).

The report recommended a pragmatic model of cost-effective service provision which would involve

...the creation of a national system of Local Music Education Services, publicly supported, socially inclusive, community focused, of high quality, to complement the teaching and learning of music in the classroom (DAST, 2003, p. 1).

In July 2009, U2 and The Ireland Funds pledged €7 million to Music Network to allow the roll out of the report's recommendations on a phased basis between 2010 and 2015 and in January 2011, Music Network established Music Generation as a subsidiary company.

Music Generation aims through a partnership model to establish a national music education service of international excellence, where every child and young person in Ireland has local access to high-quality music education. Music Generation believes that it is the right of every child and young person to have inclusive access to performance music education, regardless of circumstances.

What we want to do is really simple. We just want to make sure that everyone, whatever their background, gets access to music tuition. That's the idea. Bono

We had been looking for some time for a way to get involved in an initiative in music education in Ireland. After talking to various people in Ireland about what to do, we came to the conclusion that the Music Network scheme is really well thought out and that we, in partnership with the Ireland Funds, should just get behind it. The Edge

There are currently 11 education partnerships across the country that provide access to music programmes for 26,000 children through 80 different programmes in 360 tuition centres.

While the Music Generation programme exists outside the school system, and is independent of the formal programme offered by schools, the numbers above indicate that the programme has had great success and is contributing to the musical life of many students.

4.4: Arts in Junior Cycle

In 2014 the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) and the Arts Council delivered a series of continuing professional development workshops for teachers of English to support engagement with the arts and learning in junior cycle. The workshops were designed to embody the principles and key skills that underpin the *Framework for Junior Cycle*, and to provide teachers with practical and creative methodologies to use in their classroom.

The workshops were part of a pilot initiative, *Arts in Junior Cycle*, which was guided by the principles expressed in the Arts in Education Charter. Workshops were offered to teachers of English and were co-facilitated by JCT Advisors and artists/arts facilitators from the world of theatre and film.

The pilot centred on a series of four continuing professional development workshops offered to teachers in various locations around the country in March 2014. These were *Speaking Shakespeare* (in association with the Abbey Theatre and Voice Director, Andrea Ainsworth); *Page to Stage/Drama Extracts* (in association with TENDERFOOT, an apprenticeship theatre programme for Transition Year students at the Civic Theatre); *Young Critics* (in association with NAYD); and *Film in Focus* (in association with the Irish Film Institute). An overview of each of these workshops is available at www.artsinjuniorcycle.ie.

A feasibility report following this pilot project was published to consider the way forward with the Arts in Junior Cycle pilot. This report shows a very positive response to the initiative with more than

90% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that they gained a better understanding of how to develop students' key skills. More than 90% of teachers said they would *definitely* or *most likely* apply what they learned in the classroom (Ni Bhriain, 2014).

This report also suggested proposals for the way forward and supported the formation of further strategic partnerships including the creation of a support service for arts at post-primary level that could integrate the arts as a deliberate implementation strategy of the Arts in Education Charter. The role of such partnerships and their potential connection to the music need to be acknowledged in the specification.

4.5: National Strategy for Sustainable Development

The recently released *National Strategy for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020* provides a framework to support the contribution that the education sector is making and will continue to make towards a more sustainable future.

The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development aims to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the 'what'), the key dispositions and skills (the 'how') and the values (the 'why') that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future. (DES, 2014, p. 3).

In referring to education, a key objective of the strategy is to provide learners with the knowledge, dispositions, skills and values that will motivate and empower them to become active citizens and to take measures to live more sustainably. This will be done at post-primary level through the development of key skills and the integration of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) themes across relevant subjects. Music education in the junior cycle should attempt to reflect these possibilities in the appropriate sections.

Section Summary

Since the publication of the Junior Certificate syllabus, there have been several initiatives that will have an impact on the design of the music specification.

The **Arts in Education Charter** cements the place of arts education and arts-in-education in schools, by supporting arts activities both inside and outside school. The Arts in Education Portal is now the key national digital resource of arts in education practices in Ireland. The Charter and the portal have a role to play in linking the community and the school experience of the student.

The short course in **Artistic Performance** allows for the course to be mediated through any arts experience across the spectrum of potential artistic activities. The approach to engaging with the art form and with artists mirrors the intent of the Charter and presents an opportunity for further development in the music subject specification. Likewise the Arts in Junior Cycle initiative, a joint venture with the JCT and the Arts Council, that partnered arts practitioners with JCT advisors to mediate the English specification through arts-based activities, provides similar partnership opportunities.

Music Generation provides a performance-based partnership model of music education in centres all across the country. The numbers of students that are involved in the initiative is considerable and this relationship between in-school and out-of-school activities is a challenge for the development of the specification.

In referencing social policy areas such as the **National Strategy for Sustainable Development**, the specification will make links between the school life and the experience of the student and her/his awareness of and involvement in the wider society.

These initiatives all recognise the fact that music education is impacted by more than what the school curriculum offers and can offer, and that this will influence in significant ways the nature of the specification developed and, by extension, the experience of junior cycle students.

5. Emerging themes in music education research

This section reviews some of the international literature on emerging theories and pedagogical considerations in music education. Two of these themes are identified as being of relevance to music at junior cycle. The first considers the role of technology and its potential impact on music education. The second looks at the tensions between formal and informal learning, or what is often referred to in the literature as in-school and out-of-school music activities and experiences. Some details of curricula developments in other countries are provided to indicate trends in music education elsewhere. The chapter concludes with a consideration of what these might mean for the development of the new music specification when placed alongside other curriculum considerations and priorities.

5.1 New digital technologies

Technology has been an optional medium for the performance component of the Leaving Certificate Music syllabus since the current course came into existence in 1999. Students can be assessed using technology to show that they can input and edit a score, and there are further options to perform to a backing track that they have created previously. However, the place of technology is generally as a medium to present the performance component and is absent in the classroom practice for other aspects of the Leaving Certificate Music course. In the fifteen years since the Leaving Certificate syllabus was published, technology has evolved so much that it now permeates the lives of the students in unprecedented ways, and is ubiquitous in their daily interactions.

With modern sampling and editing technologies, the use of MIDI keyboards, music apps, composing software and online file-sharing capabilities, it is clear that the changes in the technology available in the classroom have been considerable. (Cain, 2004, p 216). Wise et al. (2011) claim that

A particular challenge that technology brings music teachers is that of finding ways to bring into the school setting the knowledge that students develop outside of school about digital music composition and production. (p. 118).

A related challenge is that of moving technology from its position as an 'add-on' in the music curriculum to a position of being embedded within it. As music technology is only experienced for assessment purposes at Leaving Certificate level, there is little opportunity to embed it into the

junior cycle curriculum. This point was made by some of the students in the *Student Voice* initiative – technology was part of their music experience in first year, but once they came to second year, the Junior Certificate syllabus dominated the learning and teaching in the classroom, and the use of technology was sidelined.

In his book *A Basis for Music Education* (1979), Keith Swanwick classified the core musical activities as composing, performing and audience-listening. (Swanwick, 1979, cited in Cain, 2004). This classification had considerable influence on music teaching and is influential in the structure of the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate syllabuses, and the Primary School Curriculum. They each list the performing, composing and listening skills that are appropriate to particular stages of education. Cain (2004) states that technological developments have now rendered this classification problematic and have called into question what we mean by the terms ‘composing’, ‘performing’ and ‘audience-listening’ (p. 217). The world of modern composers is not bound by the formulae and rules that have guided much of the western music tradition and the following questions now arise:

- Does the term ‘composing’ include manipulating sound samples composed or created by other people?
- Can it include ‘real’ sounds?
- How are we to understand recording and mixing tracks – is this a performance technique?
- What is the relationship between performer and listener, when a computer mediates the performance?

Cain states that the distinction between these terms and their concepts is no longer as cut and dried as once thought, and that there needs to be some redefining of these terms. He questions the merit of using these terms anymore and poses the crucial question *To what extent do these (discrete) activities provide meaningful, educational encounters with music?* (Cain, 2004, p. 218)?

5.2 Formal and Informal music experiences

Another debate taking place in current research concerns the relationship between formal and informal learning experiences and environments. According to Legg and Green (2015) we are in what they refer to as the ‘third wave’ of music education. The first wave, they claim

emanated from continental Europe in the early and middle decades of the century, where its origins were in the pedagogical writings of figures such as Kodaly, Dalcroze and, perhaps most influentially, Carl Orff.

Despite their contrasting emphases on singing, music making and rhythmic movement, what the proponents of these new ideas had in common

was a pair of radical and timely ambitions: that music education should be for all, not just for the few; and that active participation, not just appreciation, was central to musical learning (p. 2).

A second wave of developments emerged in the 60s and 70s from the idea that, in addition to being performers of music, pupils could also be composers.

Like their predecessors, educators of this second wave saw music as a universal entitlement, but their new insight was to ascribe value not only to the musical product itself, but also to the creative process of its production (p. 2).

However, in current school practice there is as Gruhn states, *a big gap ... between musical experience in real life and musical experience in a school setting.* (2006, p. 2, cited in Legg and Green, 2015). Paradoxically, this gulf can appear widest at secondary level, where curriculum music lessons are often judged irrelevant and boring despite the critical role that outside musical interests play in shaping students' social identity (D'Amore, 2009, p. 10, cited in Legg and Green, 2015, p.3).

Legg and Green (2015) propose that what we need now is a set of new ideas, or at the very least a radically new way of approaching the existing ones (p. 5). They claim that the wealth of new possibilities for classroom practice that has resulted from the flourishing of digital music may herald a third wave of modern music education in which technology itself is a defining characteristic. This theory obviously resonates with the writers cited in 5.1 above. Or, alternatively, they offer a more compelling proposition for this third wave through the recent move towards informal musical learning. This move is characterised by the deliberate importing of informal learning characteristics into the formal learning environment, and can be seen as a new classroom pedagogy (Legg and Green, 2015, p. 6). Specifically, they see music theatre as having a very strong role to play in this area, as it places learners' musical preferences in the foreground of this new pedagogy and can engage learners in musical traditions of their own choosing (p. 6). Another characteristic of music theatre is the interdisciplinary, or cross-curricular, opportunities that it provides (p. 8).

As Paynter acknowledges, music is different. It does not sit easily with a concept of education that rests mainly upon received factual knowledge.

If we want music to have a role in general education it would seem logical to acknowledge this difference and give prominence to activities that will involve all pupils working directly with music. (2002, pp. 216 – 217, cited in Legg and Green, 2015, p. 10).

The authors see the inclusion of music theatre on the curriculum as giving prominence to such activities. They see music theatre as not just an add-on to the existing curriculum, and not just as a minor 'tweak' to the dominant tradition, but as a potentially significant break from it and something that facilitates the vision of Paynter (p. 13).

Hargreaves et al. (2003) agree with these ideas, but see the relationship between informal and formal music-making as a complex one, as it involves not only the locations and institutions within which learning occurs, but also the relationships between teachers and learners, as well as the ways in which learners view their own role in the process.

Like the third wave referred to above, Hargreaves et al (2003) were proposing the idea of a 'third environment', which refers to social contexts in which musical learning takes place in the absence of parents or teachers. This could refer to off-site locations such as playgrounds, garages, youth clubs, or one's bedroom. Musical activities in the third environment are self-directed, and thereby engender high levels of motivation and commitment. But this in turn engenders a paradox: as soon as schools, teachers, and other adults attempt to become involved in these activities, then they cease to be part of the 'third environment'. The challenge for music teachers in this context is to create scaffolding structures, which are sufficiently integrated with the 'third environment' to provide knowledge, skills, and even resources to support it, yet to remain sufficiently distant from it (Hargreaves et. al, 2003).

Folkestad (2006), sees the terms formal – informal not as a dichotomy, but rather as *the two poles of a continuum* (p. 135), as both these aspects of learning are in various degrees present and interacting. He claims that recent technological developments mean that listening to and creating music constitutes a major and integrated part of many young people's lives. This means that a music teacher never meets musically ignorant, untutored or uneducated pupils:

...on the contrary, when pupils come to school they all possess a rich and in some ways sophisticated musical knowledge, acquired from a variety of outside-school musical activities (Folkestad, 1998, p. 136).

He believes that education is the meeting place for formal and informal learning: formal in the sense that it is organised and led by a teacher, but informal in the sense that the kind of learning that is obtained and the ways in which this is achieved have much in common with the characteristics of everyday learning outside school (Folkestad, 2006, p.139). Therefore, the distinction between formal and informal learning should not be seen as primarily physical, where formal learning is equivalent to learning in school and informal learning is a description of learning outside school. It is rather a question of whether the intentionality of the individuals is directed towards music making or

towards learning about music, and of whether the learning situation is formalised in the sense that someone has taken on the role of being ‘the teacher’, thereby defining the others as ‘students’ (Folkestad, 2006, p. 142).

The following section considers international developments in other music curricula, and how the teaching, learning and assessment procedures and processes are structured.

5.3 International developments in music curricula

GCSE Music (UK)

In the UK, the GCSE Music subject content published by the Department for Education (DfE), sets the framework within which examination authorities design their subject and assessment specifications. The subject content for Music requires students to develop and demonstrate their musicianship skills through performing, appraising and composing. The specification also requires that students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of musical elements, musical contexts and musical language. The elements include pitch, tonality, structure, timbres, texture, tempo and dynamics. The contexts refer to the ‘effect of purpose and intention’ (DfE, 2015) of the performer or the composer on how the music is created, developed and performed. Regarding musical language, students need to develop an understanding of reading and writing using staff notation, understand chord progressions, and recognise and describe music using appropriate vocabulary and terminology. This must all be undertaken in relation to at least four areas of study, which are specified by the examination authorities.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is one such examination body. They have realised the subject content through four units and five areas of study. The four units are:

- Listening to and appraising music
- Composing and appraising music
- Performing music
- Composing music

The five areas of study are

- Rhythm and metre
- Harmony and tonality

- Texture and melody
- Timbre and dynamics
- Structure and form

It is interesting to note the different assessment procedures for each unit. Unit 1 is assessed through a terminal exam, which is based on responding to musical excerpts, and the questions are a combination of structured and extended responses. Unit 2 (Composing and Appraising Music) is under informal supervision by the teacher and over a period of twenty hours. Students are required to compose one piece of music of unspecified length, and demonstrate sufficient development of musical ideas. This is monitored by the teacher so that the work of the student can be authenticated. Students also undertake a written appraisal of the process and the outcome of the composition into an appraisal booklet, and this is conducted under formal supervision. These are submitted to the examination authority and must include a recording of the final composition, and a score that can be in staff, graphic or tab notation.

The performing component requires the student to perform two pieces; one individually and one as part of a group. Technology is permitted for the individual performance. These are then recorded and sent to the examination authority. The fourth unit (Composing Music) differs from the second unit in that it is marked and assessed by the teacher according to a set of assessment criteria.

Scotland

In Scotland, there are key aspects of Curriculum for Excellence that need to be considered when implementing a music course. Citizenship opportunities and experiences through community music projects should be provided to allow students become effective contributors and responsible citizens. There are also recommendations that students develop partnerships with outside agencies within the music industry and through live performances. The aim is that students develop skills for learning, life and work through a coherent music curriculum (SG, 2008).

The development of these skills is outlined in the various music specifications published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). They detail the course content and the assessment procedures so that the values, purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence can be developed. The course is constructed under three mandatory units of performing, composing and understanding music. All assessment for the subject of music are done internally and against a set of prescribed requirements. Schools send samples of the assessments to the SQA for external verification. The specification allows for great flexibility with regards to the composition component. Here, students are actively encouraged to bring what is current and relevant in the music scene into

the classrooms (SQA, 2014). There is recognition that students compose best when they compose sounds they are familiar with and they should be allowed freedom in what they compose, and be encouraged to experiment creatively in unknown territory. To this end, the supporting online documentation for teachers and students promotes the use of technology as a way for students to both create and share their compositions. The guidelines advocate that while there can be some rules applied to composing, that students ultimately need to explore, develop and refine their compositional creativity.

The International Baccalaureate (IB)

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) provides another interesting insight into an international music programme. Music is placed within the broader arts curriculum. There are four objectives for the arts subjects, which are knowing and understanding, developing skills, thinking creatively and responding. These objectives encompass the 'factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive dimensions' of learning (IBO, 2014, p. 10). Each of these objectives is elaborated by a number of strands which all must be addressed in the teaching and learning of the arts subject. Schools are responsible for the development and structuring of their MYP arts courses.

Included in the requirements for the MYP is the compulsory inclusion of a process journal, which is a self-maintained record of progress that students make as they progress through the arts subject. This can be documented in the medium of the student's choice and can include both paper and electronic formats. The purpose of the process journal is for the students to record their critical and creative thinking. The MYP programme also places an emphasis on inquiry based learning, where teachers and students develop statements of inquiry and use inquiry questions to explore the subject.

5.4 A final note: curriculum considerations

Taking into account the concerns within the international research, the insights into other music curricula and the findings arising from how the Junior Certificate is experienced by teachers and students, the final question here, but the first question for the new specification is: what is a music education for? Hargreaves et al. (2003) raise the question of whether music is an end in itself, such that music education presumably ought to promote musical and artistic skills, or whether it has broader personal and cultural aims?

In their paper, which looked at a large-scale comparative review of fifteen countries from around the world, Hargreaves and North (2001) asked eminent music educators in each country to contribute a

chapter structured around the three main themes: aims and objectives, contents and methods, and student issues. A common concern among the writers was the distinction between ‘general’ and ‘specialist’ music education. These categories are established as distinctive educational pathways in many countries, and a common concern is the way in which each should be provided in and out of school, and the balance that should be struck between them (Hargreaves et al. 2003). In many countries, the specialist music education refers to Western classical music, which was seen by some of the consulted expert reviewers as having too dominant an influence. Many of the contributing authors frequently mentioned the need to strike a balance between Western classical music, the all-pervading influence of pop music, and local traditional music, which are being swamped in some countries. This is a concern that has echoes with the thoughts of teachers and students quoted earlier, and will need careful consideration in the specification.

The ubiquitous presence of technology, the balance and tension between formal and informal music making, the role of community and living artists and the segregation of the music syllabus into discrete components all merit considering. What is the best approach for the new specification? How do we create what Wise (2011, p. 121) calls scaffolding structures that will allow students the freedom to express their creativity in contexts that are relevant to them and support this with knowledge, skills and resources appropriate to what they are doing?

Unlike the rebalanced document of 2008, which was aiming to stay faithful to an existing structure and fill it with new content, this restriction is now absent from the next phase in music education.

Plummeridge (1991) advocates that what is *absolutely imperative in musical encounters is the quality of the experience* (O’Connell, P. 63). Swanwick (1994) agrees and states that engaging in music making activities *is not just about doing something, but acquiring something through doing* (O’Connell, p. 64). Musical knowledge and meaning must arise out of the experiences that students undergo. The voices of teachers and students throughout this paper portray these experiences as limited and limiting.

Music teaching and learning should be concerned with deepening a student’s relationship with music in such a way that they develop the ability to perceive, understand, and personally respond to what is going on. In other words, it is about becoming acquainted with music. (O’Connell, 2012, P. 108).

A final challenge lies in the fact that a specification by its very nature insists on the act of formalising music, which is in essence a cultural practice. This can have the impact of restricting the boundaries of the subject, which, as Swanwick purports, can be limiting as there is a tendency to *take short cuts*

in order to arrive at knowledge which can be assessed in examinations. (Swanwick, 1979, p. 54, cited in O'Connell, 2012).

Section Summary

The international research highlighted above helps to throw some light on the potential challenges to be faced with the new music specification. The influx and ubiquitous nature of current and emerging technologies are having a disruptive effect on music education and its place needs to be considered in the new specification.

Equally disruptive is the tension within and the drive for a balance between formal and informal music-making activities and between institutional and community music making. The music experiences of students outside the school environment is becoming further and further removed from that of the in-school experience and this issue will be important to address when considering content and pedagogical approaches.

The insights gained from the review of some international developments in music curricula provide some further guiding principles and challenges. The IB requires students to maintain a process journal and engage in inquiry based learning. In Scotland, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of music in the community and the inclusion of technology as a lever for creative composition. In the UK, students are expected to perform in an individual and a group capacity and there is a wide variety of assessment approaches that include students appraising their own work.

The final challenge is the need to consider the purpose of a music education for our 21st century learners. The current syllabus is framed as three discrete music activities that are assessed separately and with limited reference to each other. Is this format serving the musical needs and developmental potential of all students?

6. Music specification in the new junior cycle

While some may have distinct characteristics, arising from the area of learning involved, all junior cycle specifications, for subjects and short courses, will have a number of features in common. They will:

- Be outcomes based
- Reflect a continuum of learning with a focus on learner progression
- Set out clear expectations for learning
- Provide examples of those expectations
- Include a focus on all eight key skills
- Strive for clarity in language and for consistency in terminology.

To improve the connection with learning and teaching in primary school, these features are shared with the Primary Curriculum. The specification for each junior cycle subject and short course will include:

1	Introduction to junior cycle	This will be common to all specifications and will summarise the main features of the <i>Framework for Junior Cycle</i>
2	Rationale	This will describe the nature and purpose of the subject as well as the general demands and capacities that it will place on, and require of, students. The text will, as appropriate, aim to draw attention to challenges and any access issues associated with study of the subject for students with specific needs or disabilities.
3	Aim	A concise aim for the subject will be presented
4	Links with Statements of learning	How the subject is linked to central features of learning and teaching at junior cycle will be highlighted and

	Key skills	explained.
5	Overview Strands Learning outcomes	An overview of the subject will illustrate how it is organised and will set out the learning involved in strands and learning outcomes.
6	Expectations for students	These will be linked with groups of learning outcomes and will relate to examples of student work. The examples will be annotated, explaining whether the work is in line with, ahead of, or behind expectations for students.
7	Assessment and reporting	<p>This section refers to both formative and summative assessment. It outlines the assessment component/s through which students will present evidence of learning on an ongoing basis, and for the purposes of recording achievement for the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)¹</p> <p>This description of assessment is supplemented by separate assessment guidelines for use in second and third years.</p>

¹ The JCPA is the new award for all junior cycle students. It will replace the current award, the Junior Certificate.

7. Brief for the review of Junior Cycle Music

The review of Junior Cycle Music will lead to the production of a specification in line with the template above.

The specification will be at a common level. It will be designed to be taught and assessed in a minimum of 200 hours and structured or organised around strands and learning outcomes.

The specification will be developed in alignment with the statements of learning, including that the student:

- Creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the process and skills involved
- Appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives
- Values local, national and international heritage, understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change
- Uses appropriate technologies in meeting a design challenge
- Applies practical skills as she/he develop models and products using a variety of materials and technologies
- Brings an idea from conception to realisation
- Uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner

The key skills of junior cycle will be embedded in the learning outcomes of the specification, as appropriate.

It will be completed for autumn 2017.

The development of the new specification will take account of current research and developments in the field of music education, emerging understandings of the content and nature of education in music, and the need for alignment with the ongoing development of the numeracy and literacy strategy.

The development of the new specification will address continuity and progression. It will consider whether music should be taught from a broader, general base in first year with a particular focus on consolidating learning from primary school and on the development of students' understanding of the cross-curricular links, skills and attitudes that music can form when combined with learning in other subjects. For example, the representation of musical ideas through art and other visual media, the understanding of musical culture in historical and other texts, and the impact of music in our daily lives and our wellbeing.

It will consider whether the three areas of composing, performing and listening should remain in place as discrete elements, and/or in the current proportions; especially in light of demands for a greater emphasis on areas such as digital skills, innovation, creativity and the dynamic and evolving nature of the subject.

More specifically, the development of the new specification will address

- The purposes of Junior Cycle Music, making them transparent and evident to students, teachers and parents in the specification
- How practical, inquiry-based teaching and learning will be promoted
- How the course will be organised; whether it will continue to be structured around the three main areas of Composing, Performing and Listening, or whether other thematic approaches can be considered
- Continuity and progression: how to connect with and build on related learning at primary level as well as provide a platform for the study of music in senior cycle
- The use of journals or portfolios to track development in compositional skills
- Should the performance component be expanded to incorporate a technological component
- How to consider the issues of breadth, content and assessment of the listening component
- How the specification, in its presentation and language register, can be strongly student-centred, having a clear focus on what the students can do to develop and demonstrate their musical skills, capabilities and achievements
- How the specification can develop students' creativity, innovation, and collaborative skills
- How the specification can raise student awareness of the historical, personal and social contexts that music is composed and created in

- How the specification can develop students' attitudes towards the practices of music as a technology for expression, storage and communication of important information about society and community.
- The role and the impact of informal music experiences on the development of the specification
- The use of technology and digital media tools in junior cycle music pedagogy as well as in the method of assessment
- The ongoing assessment of student learning as well as the Classroom-Based Assessment and final examination.

The work of the Music Development Group will be based, in the first instance, on this brief. In the course of its work and discussions, elaborations of some of these points and additional points may be added to the brief.

References

Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) (2015) *GCSE Music Specification*. Retrieved September 13 2015 from <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/music/gcse/music-4270/subject-content>

Cain, T. (2004). *Theory, technology and the music curriculum*. British Journal of Music Education, (21), pp. 215-221.

D'Amore, A. (2009). *Musical Futures: An approach to teaching and learning*. London: Paul Hamlyn

Department for Education (DfE). (2015) *Music GCSE subject content*. Retrieved September 13 2015 from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/397559/GCSE_subject_content_for_music.pdf

Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Education and Skills (2012). *Arts in Education Charter*. Retrieved January 10 2014 from <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Arts-In-Education-Charter.pdf>

Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism (2003). *A National System of Local Music Education Services: Report of a Feasibility Study*. Retrieved October 29 2015 from <http://www.musicnetwork.ie/content/files/publications/adminfeasreport.pdf>

Department of Education (DES). (1973). *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools 1973/74*. Dublin: The Stationery Office

Department of Education and Science (DES). (1989). *Junior Certificate Music Syllabus*. Retrieved August 12 2013 from http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Junior-Cycle-/Syllabuses-Guidelines/jc_music_sy.pdf

Department of Education and Science (DES). (1999). *Primary School Curriculum, Music*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Department of Education and Skills (DES). (2008). *Looking at Music: Teaching and Learning in Post Primary Schools*. Dublin: Brunswick Press

Department of Education and Skills (2014). "Education for Sustainability", *The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland, 2014-2020*. Retrieved August 5, 2014 from

<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/National-Strategy-on-Education-for-Sustainable-Development-in-Ireland-2014-2020.pdf>

Folkestad, G. (2006). *Formal and informal learning situations or practices vs. formal and informal ways of learning*. British Journal of Music Education, (21), pp. 135-145

Gruhn, W. (2006). Music Learning in Schools: *Perspectives of a new foundation for music teaching and learning*. Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education, 5(2), pp. 2-27

Hargreaves, D., Marshall, N., and North, A. (2003). *Music education in the twenty-first century: a psychological perspective*. British Journal of Music Education, 20, pp. 147-163

International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) (UK) Ltd. (2014). *Middle Years Programme: Arts Guide*. United Kingdom

Lamont, A., Hargreaves, D., Marshall, N., and Tarrant M. (2003). *Young people's music in and out of school*. British Journal of Music Education, 20, pp. 229-241

Legg, R. & Green, A. (2015): *Music theatre: at the crest of music education's third wave*. The Curriculum Journal, DOI: 10.1080/09585176.2015.1060893

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). (1989). *Junior Certificate Music: Guidelines for Teachers*. Retrieved August 12 2013 from

http://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/9381ae00-3f24-44ed-9fc9-bb8d3a4b9a12/JCSEC20_music_guidelines.pdf

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). (1999). *The Junior Cycle Review – Progress Report: Issue and Options for Development*. Dublin.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). (2005). *Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 1 Final Report with recommendations (Research Report No. 8)*. Dublin: NCCA, 24 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). (2008 (a)). *Draft Syllabus for Consultation*. Retrieved August 10 2015 from

[http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Junior Cycle Review/Music_syll\(2\).pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Junior Cycle Review/Music_syll(2).pdf)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). (2008(b)). *Consultation on rebalanced syllabuses: Music*. Retrieved August 10 2015 from

[http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Junior Cycle Review/Music\(1\).pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Junior Cycle Review/Music(1).pdf)

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2014). Artistic Performance, Engaging with the Arts (Short Course). 2014. Retrieved September 1, 2014 from

<http://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/c3afa023-d41d-4bdb-b396-fbf00b7458b0/11998-NCCA-JC-Short-Course-Artistic-v2.pdf>

Ní Bhriain, S. (2014). Performing Arts Learning Service (PALS): Draft Report on a Feasibility Study.

O'Connell, L. (2012). *Exploring the Challenges of Teaching and Learning Junior Certificate Music: A Collaborative Process of Reflection and Action*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Dublin Institute of Technology, Conservatory of Music and Drama.

Paynter, J. (2002). *Music education in the school curriculum: Why bother?* British Journal of Music Education, 19(3), pp. 215-226

Plummeridge, C. (2001). Music and combined arts. In C. Philpott, & C. Plummeridge (Eds.), *Issues in music teaching* pp. 131-141. London: Routledge.

The Scottish Government (SG) (2008). Curriculum for Excellence. Livingston: Education Scotland, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA

Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) (2014). National 5 Music Course Specification. Retrieved October 1, 2015 from

http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/CfE_CourseSpec_N5_ExpressiveArts_Music.pdf

State Examinations Commission (SEC). 2003. Chief Examiners Report, Junior Certificate Examination 2003: Music. Retrieved 13 August 2013 from

https://www.examinations.ie/archive/examiners_reports/JCMusic03.pdf

State Examinations Commission (SEC). 2006. Chief Examiners Report, Junior Certificate Examination 20036: Music. Retrieved 13 August 2013 from

https://www.examinations.ie/archive/examiners_reports/cer_2006/JuniorCertMusicReport2006.pdf

State Examinations Commission (SEC). 2012. Chief Examiners Report, Junior Certificate Examination 2012: Music. Retrieved 13 August 2013 from

https://www.examinations.ie/archive/examiners_reports/2012_Chief_Examiner_Report_JC_Music.pdf

Smyth, E, Dunne, A, Darmody, M, McCoy, S. (2007). *Gearing Up for the Exam?: The Experience of Junior Certificate Students*. Liffey Press in association with the ESRI: Dublin.

Smyth, E, Dunne, A, McCoy, S, Darmody, M. (2006). *Pathways through the Junior Cycle: the Experience of Second Year Students*. Liffey Press in association with the ESRI: Dublin.

Smyth, E, McCoy, S, Darmody, M. (2004). *Moving Up. The Experiences of First-Year Students in Post-Primary Education*. Liffey Press in association with the ESRI: Dublin.

Swanwick, K. (1979). *A Basis for Music Education*. London: Routledge

Swanwick, K. (1999). *Teaching Music Musically*. London: Routledge

Wise, S., Greenwood, J., and Davis, N. (2011). *Teachers' use of digital technology in secondary music education: illustrations of changing classrooms*. *British Journal of Music Education*, 28, pp. 117-134

Appendix: Student Voice

It is recognised that students have a right to a say in their education through Article 12 of *the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child* and in the *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, National Policy Framework for Children and Young People*. Currently, the NCCA is collaborating with the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) on a research project to establish how best to include the voices and insights of students from the very beginning of developing a specification for the junior cycle.

The Student Voice initiative involves eliciting the perspectives of students in a number of post-primary schools on developments in curriculum and assessment. The purpose of the project is to consult students as experts on their own experience of learning and to access student insights on proposed changes to Music as part of the new junior cycle. In relation to Music, student input is being sought from the very beginning of the development process, starting with this background paper.

The consultation involved meeting with groups of students in a number of schools. The groups comprised students who

- had completed Junior Certificate Music
- are studying Junior Certificate Music in this school year
- had taken the subject up for the first time in senior cycle
- had studied Music in first year and subsequently dropped the subject in second year

The consultation process adopted the same approach across the three schools and sessions were attended at all times by members of the research team.

The discussions with and ideas presented by the students were extremely rich and varied and will help to inform the specification for Junior Cycle Music. It is planned that NCCA will return to these schools and students as the specification is developed in order to get further feedback and to develop this process of integrating curricular co-construction through Student Voice as part of future consultations.

