

# Curriculum and assessment in music education – the research context

An explanation of the process underpinning the production of the ISM materials

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Professor Martin Fautley (Birmingham City University)  
Dr Alison Daubney (University of Sussex)

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## **An explanation of the process underpinning the production of the ISM materials**

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**Professor Martin Fautley**

Director of Research, School of Education and Social Work, Birmingham City University

**Dr Alison Daubney**

Senior Teaching Fellow in Education, School of Education and Social Work, University of Sussex

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4 – 5 Inverness Mews  
London W2 3JQ

T: 020 7221 3499

E: [membership@ism.org](mailto:membership@ism.org)

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## Introduction

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This document provides the research context to the curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy materials written by the authors (Fautley and Daubney, 2015, 2019; Daubney and Fautley 2014, 2019), and published by the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM). It is by no means necessary to read this document before using the resources, however. The intention of this current document is to show some of the research that went into the production of the materials, and to make visible some of the tacit assumptions that space or utility precluded in the original materials. Whilst there is much that is theoretical and literature-based in this document, nonetheless we hope that it will be of use to those practitioners who wish to delve a little deeper into the current thinking about curriculum and assessment in music education.

## Background and context

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Curriculum has long been a contested term and definitions are often unfortunately reductionist, simplistic in their understanding and one-dimensional. In order to establish the foundations upon which these documents have been constructed, it is important to understand that we consider curriculum to be of a multi-faceted and dynamic nature; bespoke to each context and group of students at any particular point in time, drawing upon Cooke and Spruce's (2016) definition of an active set of processes and espousing the complexity and well-roundedness of this definition from Finney:

The music curriculum can be defined as a dynamic set of musical processes and practices framed within historical and contemporary cultural discourse and dialogue that comprise the material musical encounters of pupils and teachers. (Finney, 2017)

Through developing these documents, we have striven to support teachers in developing 'informed agency' (Priestly, Biesta and Robinson, 2015), providing a reflective and practical framework for them to carefully consider how their own values and philosophy can be translated and adapted within the work they plan, lead and assess.

Changes in assessment policy have resulted in a move away from the use of the centrally prescribed system of recording attainment using National Curriculum levels. Schools have been given more freedom to develop and use systems appropriate to their wants and needs. With these freedoms comes the issue of needing to develop local methodologies which are appropriate, relevant, and, importantly, manageable. It is against this backdrop that the current suite of curriculum and assessment materials has been prepared.

Classroom music education in England takes as its premise the generalist education of all pupils in a class at the same time and that it is the place where all children and young people should have access to music education.

This has been predicated in the past on the existence of a National Curriculum for music, however, this has become increasingly less applicable due to Governmental changes over the years (Daubney, Spruce and Annetts, 2019). Given that this is the case, the music curriculum in English schools seems likely to remain founded on three principle pillars of content, namely composing, listening, and performing, as these form the areas of examination assessment later on for pupils aged 16 and 18. It is important to observe that this system exists separately from specialist instrumental tuition, which in the English situation takes place outside of the school-based classroom teaching and learning programme, and is delivered by visiting instrumental and vocal specialists, with a curriculum often focussed on preparing children and young people for graded music examinations, such as those offered by the ABRSM and Trinity College London. Such graded music exams and the specialist teaching for them is beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on the classroom-based music curriculum for all pupils in schools.

## **Section one: Survey of literature**

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Assessment in music education has been researched over many years. This research has taken a number of forms, and draws on an eclectic mixture of domains. Key informants have been work done in general education, and teaching and learning, as well as music-specific work. This survey considers the research that has been done with specific reference to classroom music education, and in particular that which is relevant for primary and lower secondary school education (5-11 and 11-14 years old respectively, in the English context).

The word 'assessment' carries with it a number of different shades of meaning, although there is some debate as to the origin of the word itself, the Oxford English Dictionary ([oed.com](http://oed.com)) traces it from the Latin *ad sedere* - to sit beside - where it was originally a term used in jurisprudence for one who advised a judge, often with relation to fines or levies. Assessment in education usually means "... to judge the extent of students' learning" (Freeman and Lewis, 1998 p.9), However, in music, alongside 'extent', in other words *quantity*, we are also concerned with *quality* of music produced as a result of the learning experiences (Biggs, 1979). This dichotomy has presented problems in some cases for music teachers (DeLuca and Bolden, 2014), is an issue that is sometimes confused in assessment schedules (Ng, 2008), and needs to be borne in mind when considering what the purposes of assessment are.

When pupils are working in classes, the teacher makes judgements concerning their pupils work. What the teacher will be doing is thinking about the learning that has taken place:

A useful function of classroom assessment, therefore, is to determine whether students are moving satisfactorily toward the instructional outcomes the teacher is seeking to promote (Popham, 2011 p.12)

This, however, is underpinned by a notion that assessment is there to help learning, not to be an end in itself:

Assessment in education must, first and foremost, serve the purpose of supporting learning" (Black and Wiliam, 2006 p.9)

In music education, teachers have long understood that, as Swanwick observed "...to teach is to assess" (Swanwick, 1988 p.149).

We have also known for a while that within the overall heading of assessment there are different uses and purposes for assessment. Back in 1988 the report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) delineated four *purposes* for assessment:

- **Formative:** So that the positive achievements of a pupil may be recognised and discussed and the appropriate next steps may be planned
- **Diagnostic:** Through which learning difficulties may be scrutinised and classified so that appropriate remedial help and guidance can be provided
- **Summative:** For the recording of the overall achievement of the student in a systematic way
- **Evaluative:** By means of which some aspects of the work of a school, an LEA or other discrete part of the education service can be assessed and/or reported upon. (TGAT, 1988, para 23)

Arising out of the TGAT four purposes, three primary *uses* for assessment can be noted (Torrance and Pryor, 1998; Black, 1995). These are:

- Certification of student achievement
- Accountability of teachers, schools, and the education system in general
- The enhancement of pupil learning by the provision of appropriate feedback

## **Formative assessment**

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We know that many teachers will be familiar with the notions of formative and summative assessment, and these terms are commonplace in staffroom usage, whereas

some of the other TGAT terms have fallen into disuse, and are beyond the scope of this document to discuss. Formative assessment, as used by all teachers, not just those of music, can be defined as

... that process of appraising, judging or evaluating students' work or performance and using this to shape and improve their competence. In everyday classroom terms this means teachers using their judgements of children's knowledge or understanding to feed back into the teaching process and to determine for individual children whether to re-explain the task/concept, to give further practise on it, or move on to the next stage. (Tunstall and Gipps 1996)

In formative assessment the emphasis is on making judgements which will aid pupils in their future learning requirements. The aim of helping pupils with their learning is to bring about a situation where pupils make progress in moving from one stage to another, where understanding is effected, and where knowledge is acquired (Young, 1999; 2008; Sfard, 1998) and developed. There are many debates here, concerning knowledge, both domain specific (that is appertaining to music), and more generally (Young, 1971; Shepherd et al., 1977; Swanwick, 1988; Swanwick, 1994; Swanwick, 1997; Hutchinson, 1999), but the over-riding concern of formative assessment remains the notion of assisted progression:

Knowing about pupils' existing ideas and skills, and recognising the point reached in development and the necessary next steps to take, constitutes what we understand to be *formative assessment*. (Harlen and James, 1997 p.369)

Harlen and James' understanding captures the quintessential feature of formative assessment, but there are shades of opinion as to the form and nature of it (Harlen, 2005a; Harlen, 2005b; 2006; Tunstall and Gipps, 1996; Black, 1993; 1995; 1999; Black et al., 2003; Black and Wiliam, 1998; Black and Wiliam, 2004; Black and Wiliam, 2012; Sadler, 1989; 2007). For music teachers, formative assessment has long been a strength, indeed, we have long contended that music teachers were 'doing' formative assessment before the term had been invented (Fautley, 2010).

The terminology 'formative assessment' is often used interchangeably with that of 'assessment for learning', or AfL. Members of the Assessment Reform Group, whose work features throughout this research review, set out what they saw as the differences between formative assessment and assessment for learning:

Assessment for learning is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking, or of certifying competence. An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information that teachers and their students can

use as feedback in assessing themselves and one another and in modifying the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes “formative assessment” when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs. (Black et al., 2004 p.10)

It is in this distinction that we can see how music teachers can be seen to have both formative assessment and AfL imbued into their very being. To put it another way,

As they teach, educators incorporate both short-term and long-term learning targets. Within any given instructional sequence – even one meeting of a class – numerous short-term learning targets are the focus of the instruction. These short-term targets influence what materials a teacher selects and what methodologies he or she applies. Feedback received from assessing how the student interacts with the materials and methods will influence what the teacher does next. (Asmus, 1999 p.20)

What this means is that every time a teacher helps a child with a glockenspiel beater, guitar fingering, recorder technique, or breathing whilst singing, that teacher will be undertaking an assessment for learning interaction.

## **Summative assessment**

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Summative assessment differs from formative assessment primarily in intent. The role of summative assessment is to lead towards the making of a summary judgement about the student in the form of a grade, mark, or level. Harlen and James (1997) defined the characteristics of Summative assessment as being sixfold:

- It takes place at certain intervals when achievement has to be reported
- It relates to progression in learning against public criteria
- The results for different pupils may be combined for various purposes because they are based on the same criteria
- It requires methods which are as reliable as possible without endangering validity
- It requires some quality assurance procedures
- It should be based on evidence from the full range of performance relevant to the criteria being used. (Harlen and James, 1997 p.373)

Freeman and Lewis (1998) made an important observation with regards to summative assessment when they noted this:

Summative assessment counts towards, or constitutes, a final grade or qualification. Note the phrase ‘counts towards’ – such assessment does not necessarily occur only at the end of a course. It is defined by its purpose rather than its timing. (Freeman and Lewis, 1998 p.32)



This is an important notion with regard to summative assessment. The mechanisms for summative assessment may be similar to those of formative assessment, but the principle is not at all the same. The idea of being 'defined by purpose' is crucial to delineating one of the differences between formative and summative assessment. The purpose of summative assessment is much more concerned with grading than formative assessment is, and this is an important distinction made with regards to the ISM materials under consideration here. This is because in their day-to-day work classroom music teachers are most likely to be principally concerned with *helping* pupils with learning and creating music; the certification function of summative assessment may well arise from this, particularly when school systems ask for grades, for example. But the key distinction is between assessment *for* learning, in other words the practices of improving musicking in classrooms, and that of documenting grades, often primarily for auditing purposes. This distinction matters, as the importance of everyday assessment is the one which will make the most difference to pupil learning, after all, as the Swanwick citation above (1988 p.149). observed, "to teach is to assess".

## **Assessment in classroom music education**

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Assessment in classroom music education in England has arisen out of a number of separate and sometimes competing structures. The requirements of National Curriculum (NC) levels, which were in operation from the inception of the NC in 1988 until their withdrawal by the Department for Education in 2014, form a significant backdrop to the ways in which classroom assessment is both conceptualised and operationalised. For music education there have been multiple issues associated with assessment for a number of years.

One of the major influencers of the ways in which music teachers thought about assessment and classroom music was the National Curriculum assessment system. This casts a long shadow over the ways in which teachers both think about and operationalise classroom assessment to this day. In the first iteration of the NC, assessment was laid out in scalar fashion taking the form of a series of what were known as "National Curriculum levels," which were designed originally to be used once only at the end of each key stage. Over time custom and practice altered this, so that NC levels, which were normally informally subdivided into sub-levels (there never was a statutory requirement for this) became used with increasing frequency, in some school settings for every piece of work produced by children and young people in their music lessons. Indeed, in some settings it went beyond this, and was used to guide learning processes towards every piece of work produced by the children and young people.

The NC levels were designed to be used holistically, in that they did not distinguish between the various aspects of the music curriculum, composing, listening, and performing. Neither was it clear to classroom teachers how to distinguish between

*process* and *product*. This was often particularly felt to be the case with composing, where summative assessment of performance of the resultant piece of music – of product – was often privileged over any assessment of process of composing. What this meant was that there was considerable variation between awarded levels, and that in order for teachers to make sense of assessment, they had to have a thorough insider working knowledge of the NC programmes of study, as this was the only way to impose order on the level statements:

The level descriptions contain, in themselves, collections of varied attainments that have no necessary unity or coherence. It might be argued that this is a collection of descriptions, not of linked performances, but rather of a typical pupil working at that level. But why should this collection of performances be typical of such a pupil? The answer is that this is a pupil who has been following the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. By teaching the programmes of study, teachers are to impose order upon the attainment targets. (Sainsbury and Sizmur, 1998 p.190)

In order to do this with any degree of sense-making, what tended to happen in many cases was that teachers tended to work backwards from the assessment they had in mind, and then think about what to teach in order to arrive at the assessment point. This is assessment driving the curriculum, or, as some commentators have phrased it, the assessment tail is wagging the curriculum dog! More formally, assessment was having to do what Boud referred to as the 'double duty' of assessment. This is when assessments are required to do two things at the same time:

- They have to encompass formative assessment for learning and summative for certification
- They have to have a focus on the immediate task and on implications for equipping students for ... [the] future (Boud, 2000 p.160)

This 'double duty' has proved to be a particularly thorny issue for music teachers. This is because the amount of time available in the average KS1, 2 and KS3 contexts is very limited. We know that in some primary schools, music, other than Whole Class Ensemble Tuition (also known as Wider Opportunities or First Access) does not necessarily take place with any degree of regularity (Fautley et al., 2017). Likewise we know that in secondary schools classroom music lessons at KS3 are under increasing threat (Daubney and Mackrill, 2017; 2018). What this has meant is that music teachers have had to resort to using Boud's notion of the 'double duty' of assessment for pragmatic reasons relating to time available to undertake all of the teaching, learning and assessment activities required in the classroom. This has had implications for the ways in which teachers think about and operationalise their classroom assessments.

Away from music education, there has been a wealth of activity, research, and guidance which has been available to schools and policy-makers, both local and national, with regard to assessment. In research terms, the impact of the Assessment Group, who were active from 1989 until 2010, has been significant.

The aim of the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) was to ensure that assessment policy and practice at all levels takes account of relevant research evidence. In pursuit of this aim the main targets for the Group's activity were policy-makers in government and its agencies. It also worked closely with teachers, teacher organisations and local education authority staff to advance understanding of the roles, purposes and impacts of assessment (Nuffield, n.d.)

The members of the ARG have been highly influential not only in researching assessment, but also in producing publications and materials that are of help and benefit to classroom teachers. Indeed, their influence can be felt to this day. Some of the key ARG publications helped influence the promotion and widespread adoption of formative assessment practices in schools.

It has already been noted that music teachers have traditionally had strengths in formative assessment; indeed, these strengths are so self-evident in everyday music lessons that when the government of the day was producing guidance materials for teachers of *all* subjects (DfES, 2002), it was to a classroom music lesson in a secondary school that they turned for video exemplification. So 'ordinary' – in the nicest possible way – was this lesson that music teachers up and down the country could not understand what all the fuss was about! But the ramifications of this were significant, and as a result of this and associated NC issues, many schools appointed an assessment manager to coordinate assessment issues across the school. Unfortunately for music, many of these assessment managers had not come from an arts background, and a number had only an unnuanced grasp of the true importance of formative assessment in developing learning. As a result a number of classroom music teachers were told that they were doing formative assessment incorrectly (Fautley, 2012). The ramifications of this were significant, to the extent that Dylan Wiliam, a key assessment researcher, and member of the ARG, noted in an interview published in *The Times Educational Supplement*, that:

The big mistake that Paul Black and I made was calling this stuff 'assessment' . . . Because when you use the word assessment, people think about tests and exams. For me, AfL is all about better teaching. (Stewart, 2012)

This concern that the use of the word *assessment* lies at the root of many of the misunderstandings associated with formative assessment is an important one for teachers and schools to understand. The way that this found its outworking in many schools was that true formative assessment was often replaced by what might be

termed as *the formative use of summative assessment*. This is when formative assessment which is used to help pupil learning, and take the learner on to the next stage of their learning is replaced by a mechanism wherein gathering a grade becomes the most important component of any assessment interaction. This takes formative assessment much closer to the American usage,

In the United States, the term 'formative assessment' is often used to describe assessments that are used to provide information on the likely performance of students on state-mandated tests—a usage that might better be described as 'early warning summative'...(William, 2004 p.4)

The use of formative assessment as a pre-cursor to summative assessment takes away from music teachers a number of aspects of their traditional strengths, and instead focuses attention onto providing information in the form of assessment data which the school can then use for tracking purposes. In the English situation this is how regular 'data drops' have become an overriding feature of the ways in which schools gather attainment information.

The process of collecting ever-increasing amounts of data has become known as the 'datafication' of schooling. Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury (2016) have defined the terminology in this fashion:

The concept of datafication is used to understand the processes and impacts of burgeoning data-based governance and accountability regimes (Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury, 2016, p.1)

It is this 'burgeoning' which causes problems for music teachers. This is because schools have demanded more and more by way of data to show that all pupils are making steady progress.

There is another problem with the confusion of formative with summative assessment, however, and that is that there is not necessarily a difference in the type of assessment that is being used, rather that the usage to which data that arises from the assessment can be put:

Perhaps the most important point here is the distinction between formative and summative in terms of the function the assessment serves, rather than the assessment itself. ... attempting to use the words formative and summative to describe assessments leads to contradiction, since the same assessment instrument, and even the same assessment outcomes, could be used both formatively and summatively. While locating the distinction in terms of the purpose of the assessment overcomes some difficulties, it still leaves open the

possibility that assessment evidence might be collected with the intention of supporting learning, but might never actually do so. (William, 2010 p.24)

With classroom music lessons occupying such a small amount of the overall timetable of any school, there is a real danger that assessment data could be collected which is meant to improve pupil learning, but never actually does. This point was observed with regard to audio recording pupil work in music by Ofsted back in 2009:

Across all the schools visited, audio recording was not used enough as a means of ongoing assessment but tended to be used only at the end of a unit of work. As one pupil said, "It is good we record our work, but it would be better if we could listen to it more and find out how we could improve it". (Ofsted, 2009 p.18)

This seems to be a warning from history, and can equally apply to assessment data gathering that makes little or no difference to the musical work of pupils in schools. It also highlights the potential power of capturing and utilising 'sound' within a musical process so that there is more scope than 'just' real-time engagement in sound, for example through playback and critical reflection building upon actuality rather than just memory (Daubney, 2017).

## **Assessment and curriculum**

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Bernstein (1977) argued that there are three message systems in the classroom, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It is assessment that brings together curriculum and assessment, and it is pedagogy which makes this take place. The importance of curriculum in music education is key in knowing what to assess. There are many purposes of assessment, but one of them should be concerned with how much of a course of learning or programme of study a pupil has absorbed. The implications of this are that for assessment of this nature to take place, the teacher needs to have planned the programme of study, and then worked out how to assess based on this. This relatively uncontentious statement was thrown on its head, however, by the ways in which school interpretations of the NC levels involved prioritising assessment over curriculum. What this meant was that schools were prioritising production of assessment data over what was taught. In one piece of research a music teacher reported that:

SLT don't know what a level 5 or level 6 in music looks or sounds like. As long as you are giving them the levels they require, they are happy (Fautley, 2011)

In another study, observations of, and discussions with, a teacher working in a Key Stage 3 music class demonstrated that a focus on the assessment impacts the decisions made about task design and intervention, which can potentially negatively influence / constrict

musical process and learning, as this comment from an Advanced Skills Teacher demonstrates in relation to a Year 7 composing task:

I am so, if you like, dictatorial about what they can do...I am so structured and so organised that there really is no room for manoeuvre...I've actually got it written down like a Delia Smith recipe - we've got all these ingredients and if you put all these things in a piece, at the end of you stand a chance of getting an A\*.  
(Daubney, 2007)

Whilst in another study, a music teacher was asked about their curriculum, and made the observation that:

...this is the first time that I've ever been asked directly by somebody who's an expert about my musical decisions in my curriculum building really. This is the first time somebody's sat down and said what do you do and why (Anderson, 2019)

This seems to be a very sad state of affairs, and yet one which is likely to be replicated in many schools up and down the country. It may be the case that Ofsted's recently announced interest in curriculum may affect this, but as music curriculum studies is a neglected domain, particularly so since the axing of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, this remains to be seen.

## **The spiral curriculum**

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One of the pervasive aspects of curriculum planning research that has been around for a while is the notion of the *spiral curriculum*. This is usually traced back to the writings of Bruner:

We begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development. (Bruner, 1960 p.13).

This is an important notion for music teachers, as not only are we undertaking teaching and learning in music, we are also *doing* music, being musical. This matters, as when teachers and learners are 'doing' music, they should be being, as Bruner put it, 'intellectually honest', and often times they are, without even realising it. After all, being musical involves creating music:

There is more to music education than learning and memorizing songs, or the technical aspects of playing an instrument. While these are important skills to

develop, there is much more that must be imparted to our music students.  
(Fisher, 2008 p.5)

Bruner later expanded on the idea of the spiral curriculum, and observed:

...I was struck by the fact that successful efforts to teach highly structured bodies of knowledge like mathematics, physical sciences, and even the field of history often took the form of metaphoric spiral in which at some simple level a set of ideas or operations were introduced in a rather intuitive way and, once mastered in that spirit, were then revisited and reconstrued in a more formal or operational way, then being connected with other knowledge, the mastery at this stage then being carried one step higher to a new level of formal or operational rigour and to a broader level of abstraction and comprehensiveness. The end stage of this process was eventual mastery of the connexity and structure of a large body of knowledge... (Bruner, 1975 p.3-4)

This idea of revisiting concepts and topics will be habitual to music educators, as in music education we are familiar with the notion of a spiral curriculum, and many music educators will have come across the famous Swanwick and Tillman (1986) spiral of musical development. One of the early examples in music education was to be found in the works of the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project (MMCP, 1970) where spiral representation of many of what English music educators would recognise as the 'elements of music'. In more recent times, Charanga have also produced a spiral curriculum (Charanga, n.d.) which, like the MMCP version, also builds on the 'elements', but here with a conscious linkage to their appearance in the NC.

## **Attainment and progress**

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The notion of *progress* as an assessment construct has already been mentioned a number of times in this document. Our thinking on the matter in the idea of the spiral curriculum, is that progress in learning and doing happens across two axes; horizontally, in other words breadth of coverage, and vertically, meaning depth of understanding.

In many schools worldwide there is a close focus on the notion of *progress*. Progress can be defined as the speed at which a learner moves through stages of attainment. It is often accompanied by a qualifying term relating to speed, for example 'rapid progress' or 'slow progress'. This relates to the work of single learners, as Newton states:

Individual results are used to decide whether students are making sufficient progress in attainment over time. (Newton, 2007 p.164)

Attainment normally refers to the grades, marks, observations, and comments that a learner has *attained* over the course of a programme of study:

Judgements of educational attainment (based on evidence from performance) range along a continuum from summative to descriptive... (Newton, 2007 p.158)

In many schools it is the summative grading of attainments that counts, and it is in that sense that we will be using the terminology here, progress will refer to moving through a series or sequence of attainments, such as in a medium-term programme of study. We know that Ofsted are interested in looking at progress:

In judging achievement, inspectors will give most weight to pupils' progress. They will take account of pupils' starting points in terms of their prior attainment and age when evaluating progress. Within this, they will give most weight to the progress of pupils currently in the school, taking account of how this compares with the progress of recent cohorts, where there are any. Inspectors will consider the progress of pupils in all year groups, not just those who have taken or are about to take examinations or national tests. As part of pupils' progress, inspectors will consider the growth in pupils' security, breadth and depth of knowledge, understanding and skills. (Ofsted, 2018, Para 187)

This is likely to affect the ways in which schools and teachers think about progress, as they know that Ofsted will be looking at it. However, Ofsted have also said that they are not expecting to see the data presented in a common fashion:

Ofsted does not expect performance and pupil-tracking information to be presented in a particular format. Such information should be provided to inspectors in the format that the school would ordinarily use to monitor the progress of pupils in that school. (Ofsted, 2018 p.14)

In the case of music, Ofsted (2012) commented that many schools 'did not exploit the use of audio and video recording enough' (p.38) both as part of musical learning processes and to support meaningful musical assessment. They suggested the following:

A well-ordered catalogue of recordings, supported by score and commentaries, provides a very effective and compelling way to demonstrate students' musical progress (Ofsted, 2012 p.38)

This is good news for music teachers, as it means that they can argue the case for music not using the same assessment and progression format as other subjects in the school.



## **Hegemony, cultural capital, and value**

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The final section of this literature survey concerns itself with hegemony and the valuing of different types of music. This is a complex area, and can be a minefield for music in and beyond the classroom.

Hegemony concerns itself with issues of dominance, especially of one political group over another. In musical terms this is often taken as being the perceived superiority of Western Classical music over other types:

...the bourgeois aesthetic articulated through the cultural hegemony of Western art music exercises an influence on the music curriculum, pedagogy and assessment ... a consequence of a restricted definition of 'music' and the implicit claims to superiority articulated by the bourgeois aesthetic subverts, particularly through assessment practice, the *explicit* principles of good practice in much music pedagogy and curriculum content. (Spruce, 2001 p.118).

This issue of the supremacy – perceived or otherwise – of Western Classical music is one which causes tensions within the music education community. As Cathy Benedict observes:

Is our understanding of Western music 'as a universal language' actually an attempt to assimilate our students into 'our' musical culture – albeit with the inclusion of diverse musics and cultural contexts? (Benedict, 2006 p.9)

And it is this which is a key issue for music educators, who themselves are statistically most likely to have been trained in western classical traditions (Kokotsaki, 2010), a point also noted by Lamont *et al.* (2003 p.230-1):

Many secondary music specialist teachers have themselves been trained within the Western classical tradition, in which music-making is dominated by the 'professional' career model based largely in conservatoires and university music departments ... This model may be inappropriate for the demands of the secondary school classroom, and teachers from a classical background may be relatively inexperienced with other genres.

And by Finney and Philpott (2010 p.10), who state that:

Music graduates arrive for initial teacher education having acquired habitus where an awareness of the informal moment in musical learning can lie 'buried', even for those who have learned as a stereotypical 'informal' pop musician! Our system of music education (and wider education and culture) has the potential to

subvert the informal, a consequence of which is that what counts as musical knowledge, learning and pedagogy for the musicians who embark on teacher education programmes can often be defined in terms of the formal moment.

Finney and Philpott's invocation of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* takes us to another of Bourdieu's significant contributions to knowledge, this being the notion of *cultural capital*. Cultural capital is akin to money stored in the bank, it is the capital upon which an individual or groups can draw as needed:

Bourdieu (1997) delineates three fundamental forms of capital: economic capital, which is readily convertible; social capital, which is comprised of 'social obligations' or 'connections'; and cultural capital or 'cultural competences', which can be embodied (internalized and intangible), objectified (cultural products), and institutionalized (officially accredited). Bourdieu...sees the forms of capital as mutually constitutive in that economic capital affords the time and resources for investment in the development of children's cultural capital, which is associated with future educational and occupational success. (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014 p.195-6)

Cultural capital can be seen by some to be accumulated more readily in certain types and forms of knowledge than others, and this is where music education can be problematic. For example, a past Secretary of State for Education said this:

...I am unapologetic in arguing that all children have a right to the best. And there is such a thing as the best. Richard Wagner is an artist of sublime genius and his work is incomparably more rewarding - intellectually, sensually and emotionally - than, say, the Arctic Monkeys. (Gove, 2011)

The problem for music education is that whilst those in possession of significant reserves of cultural capital, and a clear hegemonic belief system, many children and young people in school simply do not buy into this belief system. We know that for many young people:

Popular forms of music play a central role in the lifestyle of most teenagers, and indeed constitute a 'badge of identity' for many of them ... Furthermore, positive attitudes to pop music may also be accompanied by lack of interest in 'traditional' forms of music such as 'classical' music (Lamont et al., 2003 p.230)

It has been argued by some that the very structuring of some school music programmes privileges the Western Classical automatically, to greater or lesser extents. Indeed, writing about GCSE examination music Ruth Wright (2008 p.398) noted that:

...many aspects of the programmes of study... could only be taught through examples drawn from it [Western Classical Music]. The terminology of the official curriculum, therefore, e.g. the musical elements, immediately marks out music as pedagogic discourse [different] from music as we relate to it outside school.

However, although most classroom teachers have been trained in Western Classical modalities, as shown by Welch et al's (2010) research, many have worked hard to bring a range of styles, types, and genres of music into their classrooms:

Music educators, along with teachers in many other subjects, have challenged the notion of education as a stable body of knowledge and skills which are unquestioningly possessed by teachers, and which should be imparted to pupils, regardless of whether such knowledge and skills are equally useful, relevant or valid for all pupils, or whether all pupils are equally capable of absorbing them. This challenge has included closing the gap between 'high' and 'low' musical cultures, and between 'Western' and 'non-Western' musics, and has involved recognizing and valuing pupils' 'own' musical cultures by bringing them into the curriculum. (Green, 2008 p.2-3)

This can, however, sometimes place them at odds with governmental and other official thinking, and with moves towards what Young (1971) referred to as 'high status knowledge' becoming increasingly widespread, this can be problematic. We know too that a curriculum is never value-free, and that music curricula in particular can be battlegrounds where culture wars can be played out on a broader stage:

Knowledge is the basis for power and power produces knowledge. Curricular reforms are... examples of a process where there is a close connection between the production of knowledge and power. (Espeland, 1999 p.177)

The placing of hegemony and cultural leads to a valuing of types of knowledge. As time is of the essence in any school curriculum, this will inevitably lead to some being included, and some excluded.

## **From research to new materials**

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This admittedly rapid and selective background investigation of the research literature serves as an informant to the ways in which we locate the assessment materials for primary and secondary we produced for the ISM. In the next section we want to draw more overt linkages to explain how we produced the materials, and what the research background is to them.

## **Section two: The curriculum and assessment materials – from research to practice**

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One of the reasons for us producing the materials is that since the demise of the QCA there has been little co-ordinated thinking about curriculum and assessment in classroom music education. What this has meant in theoretical terms is that classroom music teachers, and school assessment programmes more widely, have not had ready access to a broad range of resources upon which to draw to create their own assessment materials. The general research background to the materials is outlined above, but in this section we drill a little deeper into the production of the ISM materials. As academics working across research and ITE, we are aware of a range of contexts for curriculum and assessment across early years, primary, and secondary music education. Drawing on empirical research we have conducted jointly and separately means that we have been able to bring a range of knowledge and experience to bear on the production of our curriculum and assessment materials.

We began the generation process by thinking about a number of significant principles which would guide the resources we were creating. These were:

1. They should be rooted in contemporary research into teaching, learning, and assessment in primary and secondary schools
2. They should be amenable for local tailoring depending on the contexts in which they were being used
3. They should promote *musical* learning
4. They should be cost-free for teachers to use or discard as they see fit

We hope that these principles shine through the documents!

In promoting the notion of local tailoring we were very keen not to suggest a single curriculum. Our contention is that there are essentially two ways of thinking about assessment; these are that assessment can arise from curriculum, or that curriculum can arise from assessment. The differences between these can be seen in the way that at KS4, for example, the curriculum will be designed to meet the examination requirements at the end of the Key Stage; this is curriculum arising from assessment. However, at KS1, 2 and 3 it is not necessarily the case that assessment should be driving the curriculum (although we do believe that each KS should be preparation for the next), and so here assessment can arise from curriculum. Indeed, it is useful for teachers to really think through what they want children and young people to be able to do, know, and understand throughout the music course they will be following. In other words,

A useful function of classroom assessment, therefore, is to determine whether students are moving satisfactorily toward the instructional outcomes the teacher is seeking to promote. (Popham, 2011 p.12)

The materials we produced take the stance that assessments undertaken will arise from curriculum. For this reason, the KS3 materials are not tied to a subsequent single KS4 programme of study, and those for KS1 and 2 do not try to pre-figure a KS3 constructed in this fashion. What we do use, though, are the musical constructs delineated in the National Curriculum, composing, listening, and performing. However, in order to provide a little more nuancing for busy classroom music teachers, we have broken these up a little further, and provided six basic interlinking strands upon which the majority of the many programmes of study and schemes of work we have seen in schools are built. These are:

- Singing
- Composing
- Improvising
- Playing
- Critical engagement,
- Social, moral, spiritual, and cultural (SMSC)

As with all of these materials we are not being dogmatic about these strands, and we are fully aware that there is a degree of artificiality about separating these out as isolatable assessable constructs, as we explain in the text of the materials:

Singing, composing, improvising, and playing should be self-explanatory. The notion of critical engagement as we are using it encompasses listening, appraising, evaluating, describing, identifying, aural perception and many other aspects of musical learning. Whilst in this framework critical engagement is assessed separately, in practice it can be seen to permeate throughout all aspects of musicking. In a similar vein, SMSC can also be considered as running throughout musical learning like an *idée fixe*. (Fautley and Daubney, 2019 p.8)

A brief history of the spiral curriculum has been provided in section 1, and these six strands we take as the basis for the generation of our own version of the spiral curriculum. We use these strands as ways for teachers to think through how their own curricula are constructed, and from this to be able to produce assessment materials. We used the notion of the spiral curriculum as being important to music education at KS1, KS2 and KS3 (and beyond), and as we were doing so we were mindful of the ways in which learning takes place:

We do not acquire knowledge and then, at some later stage, attain understanding; the two must go hand in hand. Real learning is developmental

rather than linear. The acquisition of knowledge or the transmission of knowledge-content may be linear processes; the development of understanding certainly is not; it is a far more subtle process and much more likely to be brought about by some form of what Jerome Bruner has termed a 'spiral curriculum', where one returns to concepts at ever higher levels of complexity and understanding, than by a 'Thirty-Nine Steps', linear and hierarchical set of offerings. Any view of the learning process that does not recognize this must be regarded as too simplistic to serve as a basis for any but the most unsophisticated of teaching activities. (Kelly, 2009 p.76)

From this view of teaching, learning, and curriculum, we then moved to thinking about how to help teachers conceptualise and operationalise their own curricula, which would then in turn lead to assessment.

The central sections of both the KS1 and 2, and KS3 materials are also available as separate wallcharts, and these sections form the outline of individual tailoring which teachers can use to then build their own assessment materials from. The philosophy behind this is that we feel that in some cases teachers have been presented with what might be described as 'one size fits all' assessment schedules (sometimes purchased by the school as part of a suite of assessment tools), the structure we have provided hopefully helps teachers address questions of what is important to them (we ask questions of this earlier in the materials), and consequently how what is important makes its presence felt in the curriculum, and thence how it is assessed. This central wallchart, then, provides the framing for the ways in which more detailed assessment foci can be constructed.

It is at this point that we move to different modalities for KS1 and 2, and KS3 in the ways in which we suggest that assessment statements are built and used. The reasons for this are that we feel that KS1 and 2, and KS3 are specific things in themselves, which comes from Kant's notion of *Ding an sich*, and that we should treat them as such. We also believe that there are significant contextual differences which need consideration, and we wanted for KS1 and 2 to be working with the full range of teachers, including their own class teachers, music specialists or coordinators teaching across multiple classes and years, to those for whom music might be a foreign country and more familiar with a curriculum with different foci. We felt that this distribution was less likely to be the case at KS3, where music is mostly taught by a specialist teacher employed in a school.

## **Assessment and grading**

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There are two separate constructs in assessment which can be confused, or at least conjoined; these are the separate notions of *assessment* and *grading*. The research background to assessment we have covered in section 1; we are treating grading as the

marks that result from a summative assessment process. This is, admittedly, a simplistic reductionist definition, but we believed that the two should be allied as we wanted to produce assessment criteria that were musical, would work in a variety of contexts, and that had a straightforward grading system. Grading is important in assessment, and clearly is of vital importance in schools, after all,

a focus on numbers is instructive, for it helps us turn our eyes from grand texts of philosophy to the mundane practices of pedagogy, of accounting, of information and polling, and to the mundane knowledges and 'grey sciences' that support them. (Rose, 1999 p.232)

This is clearly the case in schools!

Writing from an American situation, and using the terms 'score' and 'rubrics' (assessment criteria), Koretz had noted that,

What makes a ...score more or less reliable? When scoring is required, improving the consistency of scoring will lessen overall measurement error and increase reliability. This can be done by carefully designing and evaluating the rubrics that raters use to score students' work. (Koretz, 2009 p.162)

We wanted to produce assessment criteria (rubrics, in the US nomenclature) that would be as reliable and valid as we could make them, but at the same time being painfully aware that many music teachers work alone or in small departments (Daubney and Mackrill, 2017), and so inter-rater reliability (where two assessors agree on marks awarded), was less likely to be an issue than intra-rater reliability (where the same assessor gives that same grade to the same piece of work on different occasions).

We began this stage of the generation of new assessment and grading materials by considering the range of complexities we had seen in our research in schools in varying contexts. Back in the days when NC levels were in place, we had seen some highly complex multiple subdivisions. Some of these involved what seemed like excessive amounts of grading to be undertaken by the teacher. These included percentage subdivisions into 100 gradations of each level, which had learning outcomes or assessment criteria associated with each. Ofsted had commented on the inappropriateness of some of these complex systems,

Assessment methods were often inaccurate, over-complex or unmusical, particularly in Key Stage 3. This also limited the time available for practical music-making, and detracted from pupils' musical improvement and enjoyment. (Ofsted, 2012 p.4)

And we certainly did not want to produce anything this complex ourselves. We also took notice of the comments of a previous Ofsted inspector for music, who noted,

A powerful creative act cannot be contained by a neat spreadsheet of numbers and letters. As national curriculum levels disappear, I'd ask you respectfully not to replace them with another set of numbers. (Hammerton, 2014 *in* Daubney and Mackrill, 2018b p.256)

To try and address this matter we decided on a simple three-point grading scale, which we felt would be easily manageable, and which could then be used to track progress over time. The assessment criterion statements we produced would need to be assessable using this three-point scale. This again is a departure from practice we had observed previously in NC days, when each assessment criteria tended to have only one artificially atomised outcome, and progression was marked by a process of accretion in which musical quality was not given due consideration, in other words "and" statements. This relates to our earlier discussions of assessment of *quality* versus assessment of *quantity*. A not untypical set of assessment statements constructed in this fashion would look like this:

Level 1a Can play the keyboard melody with one finger

Level 1b Can play the keyboard melody with two fingers

..and so on up until

Level 3a Can play the keyboard melody and harmony with both hands, using all fingers

Level 3b Can play the keyboard melody and harmony with both hands, using all fingers, and can alter the sounds used

Level 3c Can play the keyboard melody and harmony with both hands, using all fingers, can alter the sounds used, and can play with expression

These exemplify assessment by accretion, and we wanted to try to make life simpler for the busy classroom music teacher, and so our assessment criteria would each be able to be graded using a three-point scale. As we say in the materials:

It is suggested that a three-point scale is used to grade outcomes. What this means is that the assessment criteria statements need to be measurable. This means that the most straightforward way of writing each assessment criterion is to produce one statement in which the outcomes are clearly differentiated by attainment level, not by writing three separate outcome statements.

The three-point scale we produced is predicated on three levels of attainment:

1 is not yet able to... [working towards]

2 is able to... [working at]

3 is confidently able to... [working beyond]



In shorthand, these can be considered as minus (-), equals (=) and, plus (+). In practice writing assessment criterion statements gradable in this fashion is actually quite difficult, as Freeman and Lewis observed some years ago:

Writing good criteria that do not trivialise what is being assessed is difficult. As written criteria look authoritative and then tend to be treated as the right criteria, if they have not been well-conceived, clearly this causes all kinds of problems. (Freeman and Lewis, 1998 p.20)

We also have experiential knowledge from working with our ITE students and teachers on CPD courses that writing criterion statements that can be graded like this takes considerable thought; however, work put in at the early stage means that later operationalisation in the classroom is then made easier.

We know that each school is likely to have its own units of work (UoW) and programmes of study (PoS), and that, as we have noted above, these will be tailored to the staff and learners context in each institution. To this end we suggest writing assessment criteria for each of the strands separately for each PoS. We know that the most common way of organising a music curriculum is by a thematic or topic based approach (Anderson, 2019; Daubney and Mackrill, 2015; 2017; 2018; Fautley, 2016a; b; Fautley et al., 2018 ), and so writing generic or 'catch-all' assessment criteria will not reflect the subtleties and nuances of each musical topic covered. For example, a UoW on singing in parts will have very different success criteria to a UoW on composing on keyboards using blues chords. Each of these topics will need their own assessment criteria statements.

What we have provided in the materials are exemplar statements for each of the suggested strands. We have deliberately included different numbers of examples for each, and we have also deliberately not tried to sequence them, as we were worried about suggesting a potentially inappropriate curriculum sequence for schools by doing this. What we hope is that by providing these statements teachers can then write their own, or take and modify the ones we have suggested for grouping together for each UoW that the music teacher will be using. It also means that for grading purposes some can be omitted, thus if in the examples above there is no composing in the singing unit, or no singing in the film music unit, then there does not need to be assessment criteria for these aspects

## **KS3 grading and radar charts**

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We have discussed attainment and progress in section 1, and one of the guiding principles we were working to in producing these materials was for teachers to be able to show progress in a straightforward fashion. The way we have suggested this for secondary schools is via the use of multi-axis progress diagrams, also known as radar

charts. These have the strands of the spiral curriculum as the multiple axes, and as the teacher scores each assessment criterion statement using the 1-3 grading suggested, these build up over time into radar charts which give a visual representation of the various areas of attainment of learners. These radar charts have a long history of use in education<sup>1</sup>, and can be readily accomplished in computer spreadsheet packages. They have utility in providing visual demonstrations of progression over time.

## **Using the assessment materials**

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To use the curriculum and assessment materials we have produced is hopefully a straightforward process, but one which requires teachers to think about the requirements of their particular contexts. We understand that there is no simple answer to assessment in music education, but we hope that these resources are helpful in refocussing attention on assessment. We know that many schools have taken and used the assessment materials in ways which are appropriate for them, and this modification is something we encourage.

## **Endnote**

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The purpose of this current document was to provide a theoretical underpinning to the curriculum and assessment resources we have produced in conjunction with the ISM. We hope that this will prove to be of use to those teachers undertaking higher degrees in educational research, those who want to undertake classroom research into their own practices, ITE students thinking about musical teaching and learning, and those interested in developing rationales for their own practice, as well as those who may be involved in future curriculum and assessment developments in music education in their own or wider contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> For classroom application, secondary school music teacher Jane Werry has written about the use of radar charts in her blog [werryblog.com](http://werryblog.com)

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## About the authors

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### **Professor Martin Fautley**

Professor Martin Fautley is Director of Research in the School of Education and Social Work at Birmingham City University. He has a wealth of experience in music education, both in terms of pedagogy, and of music education research and evaluation projects.

For many years he was a secondary school music teacher, subsequently undertaking Doctoral research working in the education and music faculties at the University of Cambridge, investigating the teaching, learning and assessment of classroom music making.

He is widely known for his work in researching assessment and is the author of ten books, including *Assessment in Music Education* published by Oxford University Press. He has written and published numerous journal articles, book chapters and academic research papers on a range of aspects of teaching and learning. He is Co-editor of the *British Journal of Music Education*.

### **Dr Alison Daubney**

Dr Alison Daubney has a portfolio career. Having worked as an instrumental and then classroom music teacher, Alison became involved in teacher education and is currently working part time at the University of Sussex.

She completed a PhD at the University of Surrey, exploring how composing is taught in Key Stage 3. Alison has worked extensively in the UK and abroad with University of Cambridge International Examinations on overseas curriculum and assessment development, training and action research. She is on the steering group of her local music education hub, SoundCity: Brighton and Hove. She works with schools, music education hubs, music services and arts organisations, implementing and advising them on training, education, research and evaluation.

Alison has published many materials for music educators. Her book *Teaching Primary Music* was published by SAGE in 2017. In 2018, the ISM Trust published her and Gregory Daubney's (CPsychol, MSc) ground-breaking book *Play: A psychological toolkit for optimal music performance*.

### **Incorporated Society of Musicians**

The ISM is the UK's professional body for musicians and a nationally recognised subject association for music. Since 1882, we have been dedicated to promoting the importance of music and protecting the rights of those working in the music profession. We support over 9,000 members across the UK and Ireland with our unrivalled legal advice and representation, comprehensive insurance and specialist services.



Our members come from all areas of the music profession and from a wide variety of genres and musical backgrounds. As well as working musicians, our membership also includes recent graduates, part-time and full-time music students, and retired musicians.

We campaign tirelessly in support of musicians' rights, music education and the profession as a whole. We are a financially independent not-for-profit organisation with no political affiliation. This independence allows us the freedom to campaign on any issue affecting musicians.