



The piano curriculum aims to help give structure and direction to teachers and pupils when exploring the considerable repertoire available to the instrument at all stages of learning.

Each Programme of Study has its contents grouped under the following Areas:

- A** Listening and internalising
- B** Making and controlling musical sounds
- C** Creating and developing musical ideas
- D** Playing music
- E** Playing music with others
- F** Performing and communicating

Programme of Study 1

A Listening and internalising

P1 - A1

Listen and respond to music in and out of lessons, enjoying their experiences and building on them

Introduce learners to a wide variety of music during lessons.



Listening should be an enjoyable, active experience. As well as enhancing musical learning, it supports the development of lifelong skills of enjoying and appreciating music as a listener/audience member.

Encourage and plan for a range of responses when listening to music: movement, actions, discussion, writing, drawing, etc.

Encourage learners to share and talk about music that they enjoy listening to.



This helps to develop an inclusive lesson culture where learners feel that their music is valued and respected.

Encourage learners to develop their verbal responses through structured activities that include questions to focus their listening, e.g. how would you describe the character of this melody/rhythm?

Ask learners to listen and respond to different pieces of music in their own time and then describe them in the lesson, including aspects of dynamics, instrumentation, character, etc.



Learners should be encouraged to listen to music from a wide variety of styles and cultures.

P1 - A2

Have some aural perception of the music to be played

Perform a piece to be learnt. Ask learners to describe its character using appropriate questions to unlock their creative response, e.g. Before listening to the music: 'How do you feel right now?' And afterwards: 'Did listening to the music change your mood at all?'



It is important that listening is approached in a relaxed and enjoyable way.

P1 - A3

Recognise and discriminate between the musical elements of pulse, pitch, rhythm, tempo, dynamics and texture

Encourage learners to mark the pulse of music played by the teacher or other learners by clapping, tapping different parts of the body, walking around the room etc.



Listening games can be linked to all the pieces being learnt in the early stages.

Ask learners to respond physically to music being played, i.e. moving in time or beating time to music with a regular pulse. Repeat at different tempi.

Go through the piece again with learners, using gestures or actions to indicate rests.



Ensure that learners understand the difference between tempo, pulse and rhythm. There are many online tools for exploring these elements, such as Chrome Music Lab (Rhythm and Song Maker).

Help learners to sing/play short, simple rhythmic/melodic phrases by ear.

Ask learners simple questions about pulse, pitch, rhythm, dynamics, etc.



Further ideas in developing aural acuity can be found in the approaches of Kodaly and Dalcroze (Eurhythmics).

Ask learners to sing songs they know well, singing some phrases in their heads at a given signal from the teacher. When learners sing aloud again, they should be singing at the correct pitch and pulse.



The main aim is to internalise the sound before relating it to a symbol.

Ask learners to sing the final note to complete a melodic phrase played/sung by the teacher.



In the first instance, it helps if the penultimate note is either the leading note or the supertonic.

P1 - A4

Recognise and convey in their playing simple melodic patterns, e.g. repetition of main tune

Ask learners how many phrases there are in a short piece. Where do they start and finish?



Encourage learners to match physical movements to the structure when listening to the piece, e.g. tap the pulse on their knees for the first phrase, their heads for the second phrase, etc.

Listen to other short pieces and ask learners to indicate when the main tune is repeated: count the number of times it is repeated and describe what happens in between.



There are many opportunities to use a wide range of musical styles from around the world.

P1 - A5

Using appropriate notation, make links between sounds and symbols, e.g. shape of the melody, repetition

Encourage learners to create graphic scores of music they listen to.



Instead of using paper, this activity can also be done on an interactive whiteboard or tablet, either using a drawing app or a specific graphic score app.

Display two or more rhythms. Perform one and ask learners to identify which they heard.



In group or whole-class lessons, learners can lead this activity. Notation can also be dragged into position to create different rhythms on an interactive whiteboard or tablet, using a presentation program such as PowerPoint or Google Slides. Learners can then create their own rhythms to work with.

Using notation, ask learners to clap/play/sing/say short phrases of a piece and count silent bars in their heads, e.g. bars 1–2 clapped/ played/sung/said, bars 3–4 counted and bars 5–6 clapped/played/sung said.

Using notation, ask learners to describe the main features of a piece before playing/singing it – e.g. shape of melody and obvious repetitions.

Play a familiar piece incorrectly. Ask learners to spot the mistakes.



Notation must be appropriate and take into consideration the learner, the instrument and the genre. Notations may include staff notation, rhythm grids, dot notation and graphic scores.



Music from all parts of the world is appropriate for these activities.

Programme of Study 1

B Making and controlling musical sounds

P1 - B1

Posture, freedom of movement, and keyboard geography

Posture and freedom of movement:

- Play with physical freedom and ease, without unnecessary tension:
 - across a comfortable range of the instrument
 - developing a comfortable and balanced position with appropriate forearm, wrist and hand position

Keyboard geography:

- Understand the layout of the keyboard
- Identify the letter names of the keys
- Observe the repeating pattern of the keyboard and relate that to aural considerations
- Begin to develop awareness of the visual and aural differences between whole and half tones

Posture and freedom of movement:

Explain to learners the benefits of positioning themselves an appropriate distance from the keyboard, and of keeping wrists supple and arms relaxed.

Demonstrate a variety of both successful and less successful approaches to posture and ask learners to make observations.



Demonstrate a variety of both successful and less successful approaches to posture and ask learners to make observations.



Be aware of learners' individual physical characteristics and make adaptations as appropriate.



Encourage self-evaluation by use of a mirror. Video-recording could also be used for this purpose, but it is vital to check the policy of the school or other organisation you are working in with regards to any form of recording. Children must never be videoed without parental consent and all policies regarding use and storage of recordings must be adhered to.

Encourage the use of the entire range of the keyboard, sitting and/or standing.

Ask learners to swing their arms while standing in a relaxed manner and explain how this relates to having relaxed arms whilst playing.



Creating effective exercises and drills to enable learners to adopt appropriate posture is invaluable in large-group and whole-class teaching. It promotes independence, giving learners the necessary skills to recreate the desired posture in their individual practice.

Demonstrate various ways in which learners can achieve a relaxed and comfortable hand shape.



Possibilities include allowing the hands to hang naturally to the side of the body, observing the shape, and transferring this to the keyboard, or asking learners to place their hands face-up on their laps, then turn them over and transfer them to the keyboard.

If learners have photographic permission, encourage them to take photos of themselves and annotate them to identify elements of good posture. This can be done with a photo editing app or presentation programs such as PowerPoint or Google Slides.

Keyboard geography:

Ask learners to observe and comment on the layout of black and white keys.

Ask learners to find and play all of the groups of two and then three black keys.

Explain the letter names for white keys, relating them to the nearby groups of black keys.



It may be best to start with a limited group, e.g. C/D/E.

Ask learners to comment on the aural similarity between notes of the same letter name, and explain to them the repetitive pattern of the keyboard.

Play games where learners locate, name and play notes across the range of the keyboard, as specified by the teacher, e.g. 'Find all of the Ds, starting with the highest and working down.'

Ask learners to identify the letter names of notes played randomly, using the whole range of the keyboard.

Illustrate whole and half tones, asking learners to comment on the difference.

P1 - B2

Fingering and coordination

- Play in a single five-finger hand position, hands separately
 - developing a hand shape incorporating naturally curved fingers
- Play, at a steady pulse, short, simple phrases, hands separately and together
 - dividing melodies between the hands
- Play rhythmically when passing from hand to hand
- Play two notes simultaneously with one hand
- Recognise and use finger numbering
- Use appropriate fingering, initially within various single hand positions

Explain and demonstrate finger numbers, using both hands.

Ask learners to draw the outline of hands and invite them to insert the numbers of fingers.

Give learners examples of pairs of fingers for ‘walking’ exercises. Ask them to choose, and name, pairs of fingers for steps/jumps.



Examples might include C-D in different octaves, using 2-3 (right hand) and 3-2 (left hand), or D-F using 2-4 (right hand) and 4-2 (left hand).

Encourage learners to play individual notes within a suitable range, using fingers indicated by the teacher, e.g. ‘Find a black key and play it using the third finger, right hand.’

Ask learners to play within single hand positions, hands separately and then hands together, short, simple phrases.



Use the single hand position with a variety of starting notes, so as to avoid learners thinking that 1 is always the same note.



Gradually extend the range to cover a fifth. Small extensions may be used in order that melodies spanning a sixth can be played.

Ask learners to play two notes simultaneously with one hand, e.g. play the interval of a fifth with 1 and 5. This could then serve as a drone accompaniment.

P1 - B3

Tone quality, sound production and articulation

- Play with a focused, clear sound:
 - using some dynamic contrast
 - developing some control over changes in dynamics
 - developing an awareness of the need for different dynamic levels in each hand e.g. in melody and accompaniment textures
 - shaping short melodic phrases
- Play non-legato and legato
- Explore the effects of both pedals
- Begin to develop awareness of how different instruments respond differently, e.g. different acoustic pianos, electric pianos etc.

Play and sing very simple phrases with a variety of dynamics and articulations. Ask learners to imitate and to identify the different characteristics used.



Nature or animal images can be useful to explore a range of associated textures and musical characteristics. Both sustaining and una corda pedals could be used to enhance effects.

Demonstrate 'sound pictures' and encourage learners to create their own, developing tonal imagination and awareness.

Discuss the fact that the piano used in lessons may 'feel' different from the piano a learner practises on at home.

Programme of Study 1

C Creating and developing musical ideas

P1 - C1

Improvise by exploring different sounds and creating repeated musical patterns or phrases

Ask learners to explore different ways of making musical sounds on the instrument in response to an imaginative or pictorial idea.



The teacher can promote learners' confidence by:

- demonstrating how to experiment with musical ideas
- providing step-by-step assistance with models, patterns and procedures
- emphasising the open-ended nature of the activity – all outcomes are valued and enjoyed

Help learners to make up short and simple rhythmic/melodic patterns from suggested musical starting points, e.g. pentatonic phrases, drones, ostinati. Abstract or pictorial ideas could also be used.



Rather than starting with complete scales, it may be more appropriate to choose two notes from a scale, increasing the number of notes gradually.

Repeat the process, selecting and discarding ideas and aiming for musical coherence.

Lead learners in a discussion about the musical effect of their improvisations.

Play 'Follow my Leader': one player plays three or four notes, then the next player plays three or four more, starting on the last note of the first player, and so on.

P1 - C2

Make use of instrumental skills when beginning to compose

Ask learners to compose short pieces from a given starting point, e.g. a story, poem, theme, picture, or one of the musical techniques suggested in C1. Discuss the outcomes. Initially, this could consist of asking

learners to write down their improvisations as an aid to memory, perhaps using their own forms of shorthand as a precursor to staff notation.



Through composing, learners are able to explore the music from the inside. Composing is valid in its own right, but it can also be used to develop performing skills, knowledge and understanding. It may be necessary to score ideas for them since their creative imagination may run ahead of their ability to write down their ideas, at least where staff notation is concerned.



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Provide opportunities for learners to perform their compositions to others.

Encourage learners to use the piano in creative activities in the classroom, applying technical skills already acquired.



Productive links with general classroom work should be made wherever possible.

Programme of Study 1

D Playing music

P1 - D1

Work out by ear how to play short, easy phrases or patterns from well-known tunes

Choosing appropriate starting notes, play short, simple tunes with a limited range of notes, e.g. television jingles, folk-tunes, nursery rhymes. Ask learners to select one and explore it away from the instrument by:

- singing the melody
- drawing the melodic contour in the air
- clapping the rhythm

Next, ask learners to work out separate phrases by ear on their instrument, gradually building up the complete tune.

Ask learners to play the complete tune expressively to others.

As an extension activity, ask learners to teach the tune to other learners.



Many learners experiment with tunes they know before starting formal instrumental lessons.



Teachers should select tunes carefully, bearing in mind the implications of starting on different notes.

P1 - D2

Repeat short, easy rhythmic and melodic patterns by playing back from memory

Perform a piece and ask learners to respond to the music by clapping, tapping or moving with a regular pulse and at a variety of tempi.

Repeat, with learners substituting a different sound, gesture or action to indicate rests.



There is always scope to design new musical games in order to develop learners' short-term memory. These can often be invented together as the activity proceeds, building on prior learning.

Engage learners in 'copycat' exercises, either with or without notation, maintaining a secure pulse and rhythm. Incorporate different musical effects, such as contrasts of dynamics and articulation.

Ask learners to sing easy intervals and match them to notes on their instruments where appropriate.



At first, limit the phrase to be copied to possibly two bars of 2/4 or equivalent, using only two notes.

P1 - D3

Play short, easy pieces from appropriate notation/ symbols



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Select pieces for learners from a range of different times and places, and in a variety of styles. Take into account:

- the musical and technical skills that will be needed
- opportunities to develop musical ideas
- learners' prior experience
- their personal response to the music
- their general musical interests

Show learners how to practise their pieces and make improvements.



Adopt the holistic approach to teaching and learning.

P1 - D4

Memorise with accuracy selected short, simple pieces from their repertoire

Help learners to memorise selected pieces from their repertoire by:

- building up short sections at a time
- identifying and remembering rhythmic patterns and the shape of the melody
- noting where repetitions and contrasts occur
- focusing on expressive details

From time to time, teach a short piece away from the music, only referring to the notation once it is learnt.

Encourage learners to play from memory to other learners.



Promote confidence by making memorisation of whole pieces a natural part of the learning process. Bear in mind that they are unlikely to be memorised properly until the performance is technically fluent. Some objectives are:

- to strengthen learners' confidence
- to focus on the expressive qualities of the music
- to enable learners to communicate more freely without having the constraints of notation

P1 - D5

Read and play at sight short, simple phrases at a regular pulse; begin to make links between sound and symbol



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Play short, simple rhythmic/melodic patterns and ask learners to copy them.

Using flash cards, help learners to:

- recognise different note values and their rests
- clap, sing and play simple rhythmic/melodic patterns, maintaining a regular pulse, perhaps at different tempi
- name notes and find them on the instrument (note recognition)
- read and play simple dynamics
- read and play staccato and legato



Presentation programs such as PowerPoint or Google Slides can be used to make flash cards to display on a tablet or interactive whiteboard. These have the advantage of being easily editable, so new rhythms and melodic patterns can be created as required by either the teacher or the learners.



The maxim 'sound before symbol' is as important now as ever. Reading notation is a means to making music, not an end in itself. Different forms of notation can be used, e.g. staff, graphic, as an aid to learning. Consider carefully whether notation is a help or hindrance in learning music from aural/oral traditions.



The overall aim is to help learners to develop instant recall of notes and rhythms, thus heightening musical memory. Help learners to gain enthusiasm for learning pieces, using notation when appropriate. Ensure that its use is encouraging rather than discouraging.

Devise a variety of games to explain staff notation to young beginners, e.g.:

- use a large stave with movable notes (in the shape of small, furry toys)
- space permitting, play 'note jumping': mark out five lines on the floor with masking tape and ask learners to step or jump between them, calling out the note names and perhaps singing them as well
- play the 'musical alphabet' game: a learner says/sings a note name, the next learner says/sings the next one, and so on, up and down. Do the same missing out a note – G/B/D, etc.

P1 - D6

Begin to interpret music with some expression and with a sense of its intended effect; talk about its mood and how it is sung or played and suggest improvements to convey the character of the music

Show learners how to experiment with different ways of playing pieces, perhaps in relation to dynamics, tempi and articulation. Ask them to listen and decide which way of playing is most appropriate to the character of the music.

Involving all learners in the group, discuss ways of improving the interpretation, particularly in pieces that have few expressive indications.



Interpretation is the creative dimension of performing. At the earliest stage, learners should be encouraged to make expressive musical decisions, either intuitively or by evaluating their work. The teacher can help by being an informed listener, giving feedback and encouragement.

Programme of Study 1

E Playing music with others

P1 - E1

Play with the teacher and/or other learners, demonstrating some basic ensemble skills by listening, watching and keeping in time with the group

Create opportunities for learners to:

- play with an accompaniment, provided either by the teacher or by recorded means
- play in a small ensemble



In addition to their lessons, all learners should be provided with opportunities for participation in ensembles. By playing with others, they are likely to:

- increase their motivation and interest
- quicken their rate of progress
- widen their performing skills
- improve their personal and social skills



With carefully differentiated parts, even those at the earliest stages of learning can enjoy the sense of achievement of playing as part of an ensemble.

Ask learners to follow someone beating time.



This can be a fun activity, with the teacher or learners beating time at a variety of tempi.

P1 - E2

Explore and discuss the character of the music and the expressive possibilities

Discuss the mood of the music and how it can be conveyed.

With learners, assess their ensemble playing, identifying strengths and areas for further development. Make a recording for this purpose, if appropriate.

Programme of Study 1

F Performing and communicating

P1 - F1

Perform music to others, e.g. parents/carers, teachers, fellow learners and friends, demonstrating an awareness of the mood of the music

Organise opportunities for informal performances in lessons and for parents/carers, relatives and friends at home.



Performance is a key skill that should be a natural part of the learning process from the earliest lessons. Simulated performances in instrumental lessons are particularly beneficial, helping learners gain confidence. For young learners, performing to teddy bears can be an excellent first step to build confidence.

Ask learners to revise pieces already learnt and to perform them with expression.



Allow plenty of time so that the music is thoroughly prepared. Learners should be well prepared for every performance so that it is a positive experience for everyone.

Encourage learners to perform from memory where this will enhance confidence, musical awareness and communication.



Pieces need to be chosen with care so that they are well within learners' capabilities.

Demonstrate to learners where and how to stand or sit, and help them to practise walking on and off stage. If notation is used, ensure that stands are appropriately placed and at the correct height.



References to nerves can be counter-productive. If learners are thoroughly prepared, however, nerves can be viewed as an aid to concentration. Encourage learners to have a sense of anticipation and enjoyment about performing.

Discuss the quality of their playing and, with guidance, learn from their performance

Help learners to evaluate each performance and suggest ways of making improvements and building up confidence. Promote self-evaluation as much as possible.



Ensure feedback is balanced, with an expectation that positives will be found. It can be very effective to sometimes focus only on what went well.

Where appropriate, use technology to make audio or video recordings during lessons so that learners can listen/watch back and evaluate their performance.



It is vital to check the policy of the school or other organisation you are working in with regards to any form of recording. Children must never be videoed without parental consent and all policies regarding use and storage of recordings must be adhered to.

Encourage learners to develop their own library of pieces that can be repeated in future.

Programme of Study 2

A Listening and internalising

P2 - A1

Listen to music with concentration and understanding in and out of lessons, enjoying their experiences and building on them

Engage learners in a wide variety of structured listening activities during lessons, continuing to encourage a range of responses as in Programme of Study 1 (e.g. physical, verbal, written or pictorial).

Ask learners to listen with concentration to different pieces of music in their own time and then describe them in the lesson, including aspects of dynamics, instrumentation, character, etc.



Support learners in their own listening by modelling questioning and other exploratory activities during lessons.

Continue to ask learners to share music that they enjoy with other learners.



Encourage learners to discuss their feelings about music they have chosen through questioning, e.g. 'Why are you drawn to this music?' 'Why is this music meaningful to you?'

Referring to the musical elements, ask learners to describe what they liked and disliked about the music they have listened to.

P2 - A2

Have some aural perception of the music to be played, including some feeling of the expressive characteristics

Perform pieces to be learnt and ask learners to discuss appropriate features, e.g. tempo, rhythm, range of melody, dynamics, in relation to the character of the music.



When teaching musical vocabulary it is important that the focus is on understanding the concept rather than simply recalling a word. Musical understanding must be developed for the terminology to be meaningful.

Perform pieces in different ways, e.g. with different tempi, dynamics and articulation. Ask learners to discuss the effect on the mood and character.



Playing to learners provides an immediate way of modelling, i.e. demonstrating musical ideas and techniques, as well as developing aural skills. Learners can also experiment with the effect that tempo has on the mood and character of music by using a tempo changing app, either using pre-recorded music or making their own recording for this purpose.

P2 - A3

Recognise and discriminate between the musical elements, including aspects of articulation, phrasing and quality of tone

Play short rhythmic phrases from pieces to be learnt and ask learners to clap back the pulse and/or rhythm.



Other body percussion sounds can be substituted for clapping for variety. These activities also work well on instruments, e.g. performing the rhythm on one note.

Ask learners to identify note lengths aurally, e.g. crotchets and minims or quavers and crotchets.

In groups or whole classes, ask some learners to tap the pulse of simple phrases while others tap the rhythm. Different body percussion sounds can be used, e.g. stamping, tapping knees, clapping etc.

Help learners to sing/play short melodic phrases of pieces by ear, and to identify the differences either between half steps and whole steps or between different types of larger intervals.



A virtual keyboard can be a useful tool for exploring pitch and intervals with all instrumental and vocal learners. Some allow multiple learners to collaborate, such as the Shared Piano on Chrome Music Lab.

Perform pieces to learners and ask simple questions about the musical elements, including articulation, phrasing and quality of tone.

P2 - A4

Recognise and convey simple structures in their playing, e.g. repetition of rhythmic and melodic phrases

Ask learners questions on the phrasing and structure of pieces.



Recording instruments live using a digital audio workstation such as Audacity provides a way of splitting up and re-ordering phrases to further explore structure.

Improvise some rhythmic patterns with learners, perhaps related to the pieces being learnt.

Contrast long and short notes and link to a mood, occasion or story.



All musical activities, including improvisation, are interrelated and can therefore be taught simultaneously.

P2 - A5

Hear some elements of the music internally when using notation/symbol, e.g. tempo, pitch, rhythm, dynamics

Using notation, ask learners to work out the rhythm of phrases in their heads, then clap it.

Using notation, help learners to trace the contour of phrases, then compare it with the actual sound when played.

Ask learners to clap/hum/sing/say simple phrases at sight.



Music examples for all these activities can easily be created with online notation tools, such as Flat or Noteflight.

Using notation, perform pieces with some deliberate mistakes or deviations inserted. Ask learners to identify the differences.



This activity can be adapted to an aural one only, by asking learners to memorise the main melody and then asking them to identify any deviations.



Music from all parts of the world is appropriate for these activities.

Programme of Study 2

B Making and controlling musical sounds

P2 - B1

Posture and freedom of movement

- Maintain physical freedom and ease, without unnecessary tension:
 - across a comfortable range of the instrument
 - playing with a comfortable and balanced position which ensures flexibility when playing hands
 - separately and together
 - developing free and confident movement, maintaining appropriate forearm, wrist and hand positions

Demonstrate exercises for moderately rapid, free movement across the keyboard, e.g. playing single notes or intervals in different octaves, encouraging free movement of the arm. This can be combined with hand crossing. Ask learners to incorporate these into their practice routines.

Explain and demonstrate a range of physical warm-ups, at and away from the keyboard, to encourage relaxed shoulders, a supported spine, supple wrists, etc.

Fingering and coordination

- Play comfortably in extended hand positions:
 - maintaining a hand shape incorporating naturally curved fingers
 - connecting different hand positions by the passing of the thumb
- Play, at a steady pulse, short, simple phrases and exercises, hands separately and together, ensuring that the hands are coordinated
- Play rhythmically when passing from hand to hand
- Play three-note chords with one hand
- Play with some independence of:
 - hands
 - fingers within one hand
 - articulation between hands, e.g. legato in one hand and non-legato in the other
- Recognise and use consistent fingering
- Use appropriate fingering for scales, arpeggios and chords

Move beyond single hand positions, introducing learners to the concept of thumb passing. Provide demonstrations of how this works, e.g. play the beginning of a scale to the point where the thumb passes under. Repeat the segment, ascending and descending. Apply the same principle to the top half of the scale.

Ask learners to play appropriate exercises to reinforce fingering patterns used in scales/arpeggios/broken chords.

Help learners to devise similar exercises independently.

Encourage learners to describe fingering patterns observed in scales.



With learners, keep records of scales learnt, e.g. scale charts.

Show how these patterns can be applied to other simple keys.

Demonstrate how learners can play in extended hand positions, involving greater stretches between individual fingers, e.g. stretches of a fourth played by 1-2 in the left hand, often found in simple baroque dances.



If learners find the stretches difficult, repeat the same stretch up the scale.

Explain to learners the need to play rhythmically and with careful attention to tonal control when passing melodies between the hands.

Teach exercises for chordal playing (three-note chords in close position) and encourage learners to incorporate these into their practice routines.



Teachers may wish to introduce chordal playing by using the interval of a fifth and adding the third later, gradually developing ease of coordination.

Demonstrate some strategies for dealing with passages requiring rhythmic independence, e.g. tapping the rhythm for the left hand while playing the right hand; miming one hand while playing the other.

Discuss some strategies for dealing with passages using step-wise movement in one hand and larger intervals in the other.



Always encourage learners to have a thorough and consistent approach to fingering in their practice.

Using particular passages, discuss various fingering solutions.

Tone quality, sound production and articulation

- Play with a focused, clear sound:
 - using some dynamic contrast
 - controlling changes in dynamics with more ease
 - shaping and defining phrases
 - developing some independence of dynamic levels between the hands
 - developing an awareness of tone quality when joining or changing hand position
- Play with non-legato and legato articulation, including slurring
- Incorporate direct pedalling and pedalling for effect as appropriate
- Further develop awareness of how different instruments respond differently, and begin to adjust playing accordingly

Demonstrate examples of well-rounded tone and contrast this with examples of poorly produced tone (both unfocussed and overly harsh), using the same passage. Invite learners to comment on the differences.



'Good tone' only becomes meaningful in the context of well-shaped musical phrases.

Provide some simple explanations of the physical origins of well-rounded tone.

Demonstrate and explain the physical movements required for legato and staccato.



To some extent, different articulations will have occurred in Programme of Study 1, but perhaps a fuller explanation is useful at this stage. There are a variety of equally successful approaches to the introduction of staccato. It is useful to make clear links between the sound and the physical movements required.

Help learners to make audio recordings of their playing as a tool for evaluating their tone, using an audio recording app.

When performing on an unfamiliar piano, e.g. in a concert, support learners to adjust their playing accordingly.

Programme of Study 2

C Creating and developing musical ideas

P2 - C1

Improvise rhythmic and melodic phrases freely or within given structures, individually or as part of a group

Ask learners to improvise musical sounds and phrases freely in response to a picture or story.

Ask learners to improvise using modal/blues scales or call-and-response ideas. Focus on musical coherence and an increasing awareness of expressive possibilities, including articulation and dynamics.



Teachers might like to use this as an opportunity to reinforce attention to phrasing and melodic shaping.

Demonstrate the idea of a 'sandwich rondo' and how episodes can be created in between the main tune. Ask learners to improvise the main tune whilst the teacher plays the episode. Swap roles: teacher plays rondo and learner improvises episodes. In group lessons, learners can share the roles.

P2 - C2

Compose by developing musical ideas within simple given structures and applying instrumental skills

Show learners how to build on ideas from pieces and improvisations and develop individual or group compositions. Starting points can be musical devices, structures found in repertoire, e.g. ostinati/riffs, ABA patterns, pieces listened to, or literary or visual stimuli.



Whilst instrumental lessons are not a substitute for curriculum music, they do provide opportunities for learners to extend ideas that originate from classroom lessons. Instrumental teachers have particular expertise that helps learners to explore the technical and expressive potential of the instrument.

Ask learners to explore musical ideas using their instruments, jotting down the main points.

Encourage learners to evaluate their work during their lessons. Give specific feedback about musical details and help them to overcome particular problems.

Help learners to refine and notate their compositions, possibly using technology if appropriate.



Notation programs and digital audio workstations are useful tools to support the recording and refining process. Structural coherence and balance are more important than how many notes or bars a piece contains. What matters most, however, is that musical creativity becomes a habit – and one that learners enjoy.

Promote opportunities for learners' compositions to be performed alongside other pieces that they are learning.

Set activities over a number of weeks. These can be undertaken as part of learners' practice and reviewed in each lesson.

Programme of Study 2

D Playing music

P2 - D1

Work out by ear how to play short, easy well-known tunes or accompaniments using a limited range of notes

Show learners how to work out the notes and rhythms of simple, well-known pieces by ear and ask them to play them to others.

Demonstrate how learners can use fifths and sixths to provide a simple but effective harmonic backing for pieces learnt by ear.

Ask learners to work out straightforward scale patterns, arpeggios and broken chords by ear, giving them a suitable starting note.

P2 - D2

Repeat short, easy rhythmic and melodic phrases by playing back from memory

Play a simple piece and ask learners to recall the melody by humming or singing it. At this stage, melodies can include simple leaps, e.g. the notes of a tonic triad, but aim to keep the overall range within an octave.

Engage learners in more extended 'copycat' exercises, i.e. more notes, longer phrases, greater expressive detail.

P2 - D3

Play a variety of short, easy pieces from notation/symbols



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Building on the musical skills, knowledge and understanding acquired in Programme of Study 1, extend the range of pieces to be taught, ensuring that the chosen repertoire relates to the full range of learning objectives.

Encourage learners to apply their own creative ideas, e.g. using ideas in the piece to generate their own improvisations or compositions.

Show learners how to practise their pieces and make improvements.



Continue to use the holistic approach to teaching and learning. Choose a wide range of repertoire that:

- consolidates and extends technical skills and knowledge
- uses simple key signatures
- possibly includes compound time
- includes a larger variety of rhythmic groupings
- includes a more extended pitch range

P2 - D4

Play from memory, and to others, selected contrasting pieces from their repertoire

Help learners to learn selected pieces from memory, showing them ways to remember the music by:

- encouraging them to identify overall shapes and structures and important 'crossroads' in pieces
- encouraging them to associate ideas or images with particular passages
- asking them to identify 'safety net' points in pieces being memorised



Build up memorisation skills regularly and systematically so that learners gain confidence and are able to perform to others from memory.

Read and play at sight short, easy pieces at a regular pulse, beginning to hear some of the elements internally and attending to expressive details, including articulation and dynamics



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Encourage learners to read short, simple passages/pieces at sight (mostly avoiding changes of hand position or hands-together reading), making sure that they are well within their technical range.

Before playing through passages/pieces for the first time, help learners to hear in their heads the overall sound of the music by asking them to:

- identify important notational features of the music, e.g. time signature, key signature, accidentals, dynamics
- clap or tap rhythmic patterns
- tap the pulse while other learners tap the rhythm, and vice versa
- note the shape of the melody and the melodic range
- identify, from the notation, intervals larger than a second
- sing/hum the larger intervals, having given them one of the two pitches.



There are many online tools for practising interval recognition, such as Teoria.

Emphasise the importance of steady, fluent reading, i.e. maintaining a regular pulse, and of allowing mistakes to pass without hesitating.

Ask learners to sight-read in small groups (in unison) or in parts, perhaps with simplified filler lines.



Point out to learners that when first playing a piece of music from notation, they are always 'sight-reading' it. Sight-reading, therefore, should not be regarded as a separate activity, but rather as an integral part of learning new music.

Interpret music by making choices in relation to tempo, dynamics, phrasing, articulation, colour, etc. in order to achieve an intended effect and convey the expressive characteristics; describe and evaluate the music using appropriate musical vocabulary

When learning new pieces, encourage learners to make independent decisions about expressive features, such as dynamics, tempi, phrasing, articulation, and tone quality.

Show learners how to apply their listening skills and respond to the musical features of the music.

Tease out learners' understanding in questions about the music.

Encourage learners to perform the music intuitively and to explore different interpretations, even at a simple level.

Demonstrate alternatives for learners to discuss and evaluate.



Some learners interpret music intuitively, with little intervention from the teacher. Others need a more structured approach. All learners should be encouraged to analyse how they make their musical decisions.

Programme of Study 2

E Playing music with others

P2 - E1

Play with others, helping to maintain a separate part and showing awareness of their role within the ensemble

Ask learners to play a variety of ensemble pieces together, maintaining a regular pulse and listening to the other players.

Remind learners to sit/stand so that they can clearly watch the leader or conductor.

Ask learners to play different parts of a piece (with differentiated levels of difficulty) in turn, discovering which part is the most significant in any particular passage and noting how the parts fit together.

Encourage different learners to take a lead, perhaps by counting in, selecting the tempi or suggesting expressive contrasts.

Encourage learners to participate in an appropriate ensemble, playing in unison with others initially, later maintaining a separate part.



Regular ensemble experiences provide a focus for making music. Taking part in a group promotes quicker progression and increased motivation and helps learners to develop social and personal skills.

P2 - E2

Explore, discuss and convey the character of the music

Ask learners to discuss the character of the music and how this influences the choice of tempi, dynamics, etc.

Discuss with learners how further improvements can be made to their playing.

Programme of Study 2

F Performing and communicating

P2 - F1

Perform to others with a sense of occasion, e.g. in a concert, school assembly, examination, projecting the character of the music and acknowledging audience applause

Organise opportunities for performances with others of a similar standard in lessons, and occasionally for parents/carers, relatives and friends.



Performance enables learners to convey their music to others, building on a range of acquired skills, knowledge and understanding. Simulated performances in lessons help to develop these skills before playing to larger audiences.

Using their growing library of pieces, prepare learners so that they are able to perform with fluency and expression.



Allow plenty of time so that the music is thoroughly prepared. Learners should be well prepared for every performance so that it is a positive, enjoyable experience for everyone – performer(s) and audience.

Encourage learners to perform from memory where this will enhance confidence, musical awareness and communication.



Fluency is key to developing confidence in performing. Pieces therefore need to be chosen with care to ensure that they are well within learners' capabilities.

Remind learners where and how to stand or sit to perform. If notation is used, ensure that stands are appropriately placed and at the correct height.

Show learners how to respond to applause and walk on and off stage.

Refine pieces through simulated performances during instrumental lessons.



Aim to give understanding and meaning to the music. Stimulate creative thinking in preparing for performance. Learners should consider different ways of communicating the character of the music.



It should be remembered that people respond differently to the idea of performing. It is important to look out for signs of performance anxiety and support learners in developing strategies to address this. Learners should be encouraged to have a sense of anticipation and enjoyment about performing.

P2 - F2

Evaluate the quality of their performance in relation to the character of the music, suggesting improvements and commenting on how the intentions were achieved

Lead learners in reflecting on and evaluating each performance. Help them to build confidence and make further improvements.

Discuss strategies for overcoming nerves and solving problems.



References to nerves can be counter-productive. If learners are thoroughly prepared, however, nerves can be viewed as an aid to concentration. Encourage a sense of anticipation and enjoyment about performing.

Encourage learners to revise pieces from their repertoire.

Continue to use technology where appropriate to make audio or video recordings so that learners can listen/watch back and evaluate their performance.



It is vital to check the policy of the school or other organisation you are working in with regards to any form of recording. Children must never be videoed without parental consent and all policies regarding use and storage of recordings must be adhered to.

Programme of Study 3

A Listening and internalising

P3 - A1

Listen with attention to detail, responding to the expressive character of music, using their experiences to inform their playing

Ask learners to listen to music in a variety of styles and then describe the expressive character of the music with reference to the musical elements.

Ask learners to listen to music that is similar in period, genre, etc. to pieces they are learning. Ask them to point out similarities and differences.

P3 - A2

Develop their aural perception of the music to be played, including some feeling and understanding of the expressive characteristics

Perform pieces to be learnt. Ask learners to describe the overall character using appropriate vocabulary.

Ask learners to compare and contrast new pieces with pieces already known.

Perform pieces in different ways. Ask learners to describe how changes to the dynamics, articulation, phrasing, tone quality, etc. affect the expressive character of the music.



As their knowledge increases, learners are able to use a larger musical vocabulary.

P3 - A3

Recognise and discriminate between the musical elements, including more refined aspects of articulation, phrasing, quality/variety of tone

Play appropriate rhythms from pieces. Ask learners to clap them back and identify the note values.

In groups or whole classes ask some learners to tap the pulse of phrases while others tap the rhythm. As an extension, ask learners to tap the pulse with one hand and the rhythm with the other, or the pulse with the feet and the rhythm with the hands.

Help learners to sing/play by ear short phrases from pieces to be learnt. Ask them to analyse some of the melodic intervals.



There are many online tools for practising interval recognition, such as Teoria.

Play phrases in major and minor keys, ending on the tonic, dominant or submediant. Ask learners to identify the mode of the music and the finishing note.

Perform pieces to learners and ask questions about the musical elements, including more detailed focus on articulation, phrasing and quality of tone.

P3 - A4

Recognise and convey structural features and compositional devices in their playing, e.g. A A B A, sequence

Ask learners to identify the main sections of more extended pieces. Ask further questions on rhythmic/melodic features, use of sequence, tonality, modulations, etc.

Ask learners to prepare short pieces using various compositional techniques as appropriate, e.g. glissandi, suitable scales or modes such as pentatonic or whole-tone, and describe their effect.

Encourage learners to improvise short pieces using similar techniques.

P3 - A5

Hear simple music internally when using notation/symbols, including repetitions, contrasts, changes to melodic and rhythmic patterns

Using notation, ask learners to work out in their heads:

- the rhythm of phrases
- the sound of melodies, e.g. hum/sing simple phrases and then compare with the actual sound when played.

Using notation, ask learners to describe the main characteristics of pieces to be learnt: refer to musical elements, articulation, phrasing, use of sequence, tonality, structure, expressive features, etc.

Ask learners to clap/hum/sing/say appropriate phrases at sight.

Using notation, perform pieces with a range of deliberate mistakes, e.g. rhythmic, melodic, dynamic. Ask learners to identify the differences.



Music from all parts of the world is appropriate for these activities.

Programme of Study 3

B Making and controlling musical sounds

P3 - B1

Posture and freedom of movement

- Maintain physical freedom and ease, without unnecessary tension:
 - across a comfortable range of the instrument, with some awareness of posture, physiology and movement
 - playing with a comfortable and balanced position which ensures flexibility when playing hands separately and together
 - playing with free and confident movement
 - playing with economy of movement when tackling more demanding pianistic passages

Show learners 'gymnastic' exercises, e.g. those which encourage simultaneous movements in contrary motion, aiming for a supported and flexible upper body.



These movements could be applied to particular pieces, e.g. Bach's *Musette* in D major which requires lateral freedom.

Demonstrate and consolidate a range of physical warm-ups, at and away from the keyboard, to encourage free shoulders, a supported spine, supple wrists, etc.

Encourage learners to use video recordings, mirrors, etc. to check their own posture in between lessons.

Fingering and coordination

- Play comfortably in a variety of extended hand positions:
 - maintaining appropriate hand shape
 - connecting different hand positions by passing the thumb with greater fluency
- Play, at a steady pulse, with clarity and control, short exercises which have more rhythmic independence between the hands
- Play rhythmically when passing from hand to hand at a variety of tempi
- Play major and minor chords, hands separately and together, moving cleanly from one chord to the next
- Play with more independence of:
 - movement of hands and arms
 - fingers
 - articulation between hands and within one hand
- Use consistent fingering, particularly in more demanding passages
- Use appropriate fingering for scales, arpeggios and chords
- Begin to suggest fingering for short phrases

Demonstrate to learners the phrasing implications of particular choices of fingering, e.g. how the phrasing for a series of couplets might be achieved by the repeated use of the same pair of fingers.



Supervision of fingering is important, at least in the early stages of learning, in order that unhelpful habits are avoided.

With learners, identify passages in which fluency depends upon comfortable and organised fingering. Provide a solution to use as a model.


Show learners alternative fingerings for a given passage, discussing the musical outcomes.

Encourage learners to adopt careful practice strategies that reinforce considered and consistent fingering, e.g. short groups stopping on a particular finger or beat of the bar.


Demonstrate and explain exercises that address the particular challenges encountered when tackling scales hands together, e.g. stopping at the half-way point in two-octave scales.



Point out that in the majority of major scales starting on white keys, at the half-way point, 4 goes over in the left hand ascending, and in the right hand descending.




Ask learners to identify scale patterns and apply them with increasing independence to other keys.



Show learners the physical movements required for smooth thumb passing in hands-separate arpeggios/arpeggio figures, paying due attention to the thumb, wrist, arm and elbow.



As always, learners should be encouraged to develop aural discrimination as a way of checking how successfully this is being done.



Explain and demonstrate comfortable fingerings for three- and four-note chords. Ask learners to incorporate these into their practice routines.



Issues such as the size of learners' hands and stretches between fingers need to be taken into account.



Provide learners with simple fingering solutions for ornaments and ask them to practise exercises based on ornamentation, e.g. repeating a mordent, starting on the successive notes of a scale.

Tone quality, sound production and articulation

- Play with a focused, clear sound:
 - using a larger range of dynamics
 - controlling changes in dynamics
 - shaping and defining phrases
 - controlling the dynamic levels of each hand with more ease
 - controlling the tone quality when joining or changing hand position
 - using an appropriate range of accent and emphasis
 - highlighting the top note of a chord
- Play with non-legato and legato articulation, including slurring and staccato
- Use direct pedalling, pedalling for effect and legato pedalling where musically appropriate
- Adjust various aspects of playing technique according to the instrument and venue with guidance from the teacher

Provide learners with simple demonstrations and explanations of the physical movements required for particular articulations and ask them to apply these to particular pieces.

Show learners how to develop even staccato touch at a range of dynamic levels and at different tempi and ask them to comment on the musical effects.



Staccato touch can originate at the finger, hand (wrist), or arm (though the latter is unlikely at this stage).

Demonstrate the effects of good and poor balance, both between and within hands, and invite learners to comment on the results.

Illustrate exercises for chordal balance, playing the top note of the chord *f*, followed shortly after by the rest of the chord *p*, and with the lower notes followed by the top note.

Demonstrate playing the lower notes of a chord and singing the top, encouraging learners to incorporate this into their practice routines.

Select, demonstrate and discuss repertoire, e.g. the sets *For Children* by Bartok, *Easy and Progressive Studies* op. 100 by Burgmüller, *Thirty Pieces for Children* op. 27 by Kabalevsky, that emphasises clear contrasts of dynamics and articulation, including a developing range of tenuto, staccato, etc. Ask learners to comment on the various effects.

Illustrate and explain simple exercises for the introduction of legato pedalling, asking learners to imitate these and to apply them to short passages in pieces.

When performing on an unfamiliar piano and/or in a new venue, encourage learners to identify how to adjust their playing according to the instrument and acoustics.

Programme of Study 3

C Creating and developing musical ideas

P3 - C1

Improvise in a variety of genres and styles, sustaining and developing musical ideas and achieving different intended musical effects with the instrument

Regularly ask learners to make up improvisations:

- in particular styles, e.g. rags, marches, folk-songs; draw on relevant musical devices from pieces being learnt, where appropriate
- by varying a theme, exploring contrasts of elements, e.g. pitch, rhythm, tonality, dynamics
- using a free theme based on the mood or character of a piece, e.g. sense of autumn, clouds, jollity, sadness, open space, speed, night time



Improvisation provides opportunities for learners to extend their own musical ideas within the context of what they have learned. As instrumental skills and knowledge develop, so should fluency in improvisation. Improvisation enables musicians to gain a deeper insight into musical styles as well as encouraging them to express their own feelings. It should, above all, be an enjoyable activity, undertaken in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere, with the teacher joining in.

Discuss the results of the improvisations with learners, perhaps considering the appropriateness of style, development of ideas, use of musical elements, structure and overall outcome.

Suggest and demonstrate further ways of developing and refining ideas, whilst building up learners' confidence.

Make a recording, if possible.



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Apply knowledge and understanding of the instrument in order to compose with an understanding of musical idiom

Ask learners to compose short pieces of music for their own (and perhaps other) instruments, developing the work in Programme of Study 2.



Notation is likely to be used as a memory aid, first in shorthand (or graphic form) and then for performance. Some learners may be composing for GCSE/Nationals/BTEC/RSL or other qualifications. There are many natural ways in which instrumental teachers can liaise with classroom colleagues for mutual support.

Ask learners to create a multi-layered piece by using technology to create a beat then adding an instrumental part over the top.



Song Maker on Chrome Music Lab would work well for this.

Encourage learners to use a range of musical devices appropriate to their technical and musical understanding, e.g. repetition, sequence, contrast.

Literary, visual or emotional starting points can be used, but the process of composing should focus on how effectively the musical ideas are developed within the genre.

Help learners to refine their pieces within the chosen style, discussing their progress and suggesting ideas for improvement and development.



Some programs allow learners to share their compositions digitally with other learners, with the facility for learners to comment on each other's work. Ensure that you adhere to your organisation's safeguarding policy with regards to the use of online platforms.

Provide opportunities for learners to perform their compositions, perhaps involving other musicians.

Programme of Study 3

D Playing music

P3 - D1

Work out by ear how to play tunes or accompaniments in straightforward keys or modes

Play learners melodies based on the first six notes of the scale, or on the lower leading note and first five notes of the scale. Explain how simple versions of the primary chords can be used to provide a harmonic backing.



Using I, IVc and V7b involves minimal changes of hand position, and allows for simple harmonisations with satisfactory voice leading.

Ask learners to work out by ear familiar tunes that are more challenging, e.g. longer, larger range, perhaps including some chromatic notes.

Encourage some use of harmonic backing where possible.

Playing by ear, introduce learners to different modes, scales, blues patterns, etc. Ask them to experiment with various starting notes and to work out the key, structure, etc.



Sustain opportunities for playing by ear – it brings together many skills.

P3 - D2

Repeat moderately short musical phrases (melodic and rhythmic) from memory

Ask learners to repeat moderately short phrases, of appropriate difficulty, performed by the teacher or other learners. Include music with a variety of time signatures, including compound time, and tunes with a wider range.

Ask learners to clap/tap the pulse while the phrases are being played and possibly identify some musical features.

Play scales in canon, e.g. the teacher or a learner starts, other learners begin two notes later – playing in consecutive thirds.

Extend a call-and-response sequence, repeating phrases or improvising new ones, always aiming for a musical performance.

P3 - D3

Play a variety of moderately easy pieces from different styles and traditions



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Approach new pieces from different angles – perhaps aurally, or through improvisation, listening, notation, etc.

Ask learners to identify challenging passages and to make suggestions for solving problems.

Building on their own suggestions (if appropriate), show learners how to practise challenging passages and make improvements.

Make the process as creative as possible, always aiming to prompt learners' imagination and curiosity.



Continue to use the holistic approach, aiming for simultaneous learning through interrelated activities and processes.



Choose a wide range of repertoire that builds on learners' technique, musical understanding and creativity. Ensure that it is relevant to their stage of development and interests.

P3 - D4

Memorise a variety of pieces from their repertoire of increasing length and complexity

Building on strategies suggested in Programme of Study 2, help learners to commit selected pieces to memory.

Once pieces are memorised, encourage learners to try them out in front of others.

Discuss problems and possible solutions in respect of playing from memory.

Provide opportunities for learners to play from memory in a group. Note any new perspectives that this brings, e.g. the opportunity to listen more acutely and to pick up visual cues more easily.



Aim to develop musical memory in a number of ways, e.g. automatic, aural, visual, cognitive, kinaesthetic. Remind learners that a performance is secure when it is learnt thoroughly from memory, but they should guard against it becoming mechanical. Beware of the tendency to increase the speed of the beat as pieces become more familiar.

P3 - D5

Read and play at sight a variety of short, straightforward pieces at a regular pulse, using an increasing rhythmic, melodic and tonal range



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Develop sight-reading skills by regularly asking learners to play at sight music that is well within their technical range and in familiar keys or modes.

Extend the structured approach outlined in Programme of Study 2. Thus, before playing through pieces for the first time, help learners to hear in their heads the overall sound of the music by asking them to:

- identify important notational features of the music, e.g. tempo, time signature, key signature, accidentals
- note articulation, phrasing and dynamics
- clap or tap rhythmic patterns, perhaps including syncopated patterns
- tap the pulse while other learners tap the rhythm, and vice versa (and extend by challenging learners to tap the pulse with one hand and the rhythm with the other)
- notice the shape of the melody and the melodic range
- identify, from the notation, a range of intervals
- sing/hum a variety of intervals taken from the melodic line
- sing/hum the melodic line of appropriate phrases



There are many online tools for practising interval recognition, such as Teoria.

Ask learners to sight-read in small groups, each learner maintaining a separate part individually (the parts possibly having differentiated levels of difficulty). Emphasise the importance of keeping going and maintaining a regular pulse.



Sight-reading can always be connected to learning repertoire because the skills are applied when reading pieces for the first time. Promote enjoyment and confidence by using metaphors to describe phrases and discussing the character of the music and the intended effect.

P3 - D6

Interpret music with an understanding of the musical style, structure and idiom; communicate the character of the music and the intentions of the composer, making improvements to their work in the light of their knowledge about the music

Discuss interpretative ideas with learners as pieces are being learned. Build on an intuitive response to the music.

Encourage learners to think about the nature of performance and how they can communicate musical ideas to others. Particular strategies may include:

- listening to different interpretations of music being learnt and discussing the effects, e.g. by the teacher demonstrating and/or the use of recordings
- analysing the structure of music being learnt and the implications for communicating this in performance
- discussing mood, meaning and emotions

- making links between technique and interpretation
- emphasising expressive features



Interpretation is not a separate activity. Learners should be encouraged to make interpretative decisions in all their playing, even when learning the notes. Considerations of interpretation often inform the way passages are learnt, e.g. in relation to phrasing, fingering, articulation, tempo.

Programme of Study 3

E Playing music with others

P3 - E1

Play with others, independently maintaining an individual part, demonstrating awareness of their role within the ensemble and leading the ensemble where appropriate

Increase the frequency and range of ensemble experiences. These could include both instruments and voices.

Ask learners to consider the best layout for particular ensembles, ensuring that all participants can clearly watch the leader or conductor.

Ask learners to maintain a separate part individually.



Help learners to learn their parts for new ensemble pieces by providing time in lessons.

Encourage learners to develop their listening skills, e.g. awareness of ensemble, balance, tuning, when playing with others.



Aim to extend and develop the necessary listening skills for playing with others.

Encourage learners to lead the ensemble, e.g. by counting in.

P3 - E2

Contribute to collective decisions, e.g. tempo, ensemble, tuning, balance, conveying the character of the music

Promote more musical independence by encouraging learners to take the lead and make decisions relating

to the character of the music.

Ask learners to reflect on and evaluate their progress and discuss ways of making further improvements.



Adopt a creative, problem-solving approach which gives learners the responsibility for overcoming the challenges of playing with others.

Programme of Study 3

F Performing and communicating

P3 - F1

Perform to others with increasing awareness and assurance, communicating the character of the music and their musical intentions to the audience

Organise opportunities for performance with others of a similar standard at various occasions and venues.



To promote self-confidence, help learners to develop their own library of repertoire pieces, i.e. pieces which once learned and performed can be repeated.

Ask learners to perform, over time, pieces from a variety of styles.



Ensure that learners perform music from different styles and genres so that confidence and experience can be developed across a range of repertoire.

Prepare learners so that they are able to perform with fluency, expression and understanding.

Encourage learners to perform some or all of their pieces from memory where this will enhance confidence, musical awareness and communication.



Encourage learners to retain pieces that they can perform at short notice, i.e. to build up an internalised music library.

Make sure that learners know where and how to stand or sit to perform. If notation is used, check the position and height of stands.

Ensure that learners know how to respond to applause and walk on and off stage.

Refine pieces through simulated performances in lessons, during performances at school and as part of concerts to the wider community.



Aim to stimulate creative thinking when preparing for performance. Encourage learners to consider different ways of communicating the character of the music.



It should be remembered that people respond differently to the idea of performing. It is important to look out for signs of performance anxiety and support learners in developing strategies to address this. Learners should be encouraged to have a sense of anticipation and enjoyment about performing.

P3 - F2

Evaluate with perception and some independence the quality of their performance and respond to ideas from others

Ask learners to reflect on and evaluate each performance in order to make further improvements and build up confidence.

Organise opportunities for learners to join and perform with directed groups, e.g. bands, orchestras, choirs, large ensembles, ensuring that their musical needs and stage of development are sensitively taken into account.

Continue to use technology where appropriate to make audio or video recordings so that learners can listen/watch back and evaluate their performance.



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Programme of Study 4

A Listening and internalising

P4 - A1

Use their listening skills and experiences of a variety of musical styles and traditions to inform their interpretations, e.g. use of rubato, shaping of phrases, variety of tone

Ask learners to listen to a variety of music from different styles and traditions, using more extended and complex structures. Ask them to describe the expressive character of the music, referring to the musical elements, phrasing, etc. and noting how composers and performers use repetition and contrast.



Apps such as GarageBand, Soundtrap and BandLab provide lots of opportunity to learn about structure by exploring sections, repetition and looping.

Ask learners to listen to music that is similar in period, genre, etc. to pieces they are learning. Ask them to compare pieces using appropriate vocabulary.



Use a framework of open and closed questions that lead learners step by step.



These activities may link with GCSE/Nationals/BTEC Level 2/RSL Level 2 or other qualifications.

P4 - A2

Further develop their aural perception of the music to be played, including some feeling and understanding of the expressive and stylistic characteristics

Perform pieces to be learnt. Ask learners to describe the overall character and style of the music, referring to the musical elements, phrasing, articulation, tonality, etc.

With learners, compare performances of the same piece, looking at shaping of phrases, articulation, use of

rubato, quality/variety of tone, etc.

P4 - A3

Identify and incorporate subtle changes to the musical elements in their playing, e.g. tempo, articulation, phrasing

Help learners to sing/play by ear appropriate phrases from pieces to be learnt, e.g. irregular phrases, melodies containing chromatic notes/embellishments.

Enable learners to discuss and explore the harmonic context of melodies that they play.

When playing with others, ask learners to note the differences between homophonic and contrapuntal passages.



Whenever possible, use ensemble opportunities to explore different textures.

Encourage learners to think about and experiment with alternatives in tempi, articulation, phrasing, dynamics, etc., listening to the effect and deciding which approach meets the musical intentions most successfully.



The emphasis is on intuition, imagination and curiosity.

P4 - A4

Recognise and convey more extended structures and techniques in pieces being studied, e.g. rondo, raga, dance forms, simple modulations

Discuss new repertoire with learners, listening to structure, compositional devices, tonality and melodic lines in order to promote better aural perception.

Discuss the roles of solo and accompaniment in pieces being learnt.

Use an element of a piece as the starting point for a short improvisation.



When appropriate, ensure that learners are thoroughly familiar with accompaniments. If these are instrumental reductions, take the opportunity to listen to the full version.

P4 - A5

Hear simple music internally with increasing accuracy and fluency when using notation/symbols

Using notation, ask learners to work out in their heads the sound of phrases, then compare with the actual sound when played.

Using notation, ask learners to describe the overall character of pieces, referring to style, structure, phrasing, dynamic range, texture, etc. Suggest how they affect the mood of the music.

Ask learners to clap/hum/sing/say at sight appropriate phrases from pieces to be learnt.

Using notation, perform extracts with deliberate deviations in rhythm, articulation, phrasing, dynamics, etc. inserted. Ask learners to point out the mistakes.



Music from all parts of the world is appropriate for these activities.

Programme of Study 4

B Making and controlling musical sounds

P4 - B1

Posture and freedom of movement

- Maintain physical freedom and ease, without unnecessary tension:
 - across a larger range of the instrument, indicating awareness of the whole body as a balanced playing mechanism
 - playing with a comfortable and balanced position which ensures flexibility when playing hands separately and together
 - playing with free and confident movement
 - playing with economy of movement when tackling fast scale passages, wider intervals, widely spaced textures, etc.

Demonstrate and reinforce the importance of a comfortable playing position. Encourage learners to evaluate this in their own playing.

Encourage learners to develop ease in executing free and quick movement across the keyboard, with increasing reliability and accuracy, e.g. rapid leaps.

Help learners to develop a greater awareness of the benefits of a supported and flexible upper body in scales, arpeggios and pieces covering a wider range of the keyboard.

Ask learners to identify any points of possible tension, e.g. shoulders, elbows, wrists, knuckles.

Show learners how to place their feet appropriately in preparation for legato pedalling. Encourage them to remember this when they apply pedalling.

Illustrate rotary and lateral movements, asking learners to describe what they see and imitate the movements.

Demonstrate to learners the difference between positive and negative body language when performing.



An occasional lesson in a large space can help to encourage projection.

Encourage learners to reflect on their body language and to observe others performing, noting the effects of posture on communication.



Encourage learners to attend live performances where possible, and/or watch live performances online.

P4 - B2

Fingering and coordination

- Play comfortably in a variety of extended hand positions:
 - maintaining appropriate hand shape when playing across a larger range
 - moving between hand positions with greater fluency and confidence at a variety of tempi
- Play, at a steady pulse, with clarity and control, a variety of independent rhythmic exercises between the hands, including 2 against 3
- Play rhythmically when passing from hand to hand at a variety of tempi, including when crossing hands
- Play a range of chords, hands separately and together, controlling the movement between chords
- Play with more independence of:
 - movement of hands and arms
 - fingers
 - articulation between hands and within one hand
- Observe and adhere to chosen fingering, particularly in more demanding passages
- Use standard fingering in a wide range of scales, arpeggios and chords
- Suggest fingering for short phrases
- Use the thumb on black notes where necessary
- Use some finger substitution
- Explore unconventional fingering in scalar passages in response to the musical context

Provide learners with models for fingering an increasingly complex range of scales and arpeggios (including arpeggios starting on black keys, contrary motion arpeggios) and ask them to apply them systematically.



At this stage, learners should be able to apply fingering patterns to similar keys/starting notes with increasing independence.

Explain the need for secure fingering in passages of increasing intricacy. Demonstrate practice strategies for reinforcing fingering, stopping on thumbs, stopping on the note after a thumb, etc. Ask learners to identify passages where this approach is needed.



This provides a useful opportunity to make links with physical/muscular memory.

Using appropriate repertoire, indicate some basic principles of fingering, e.g. avoiding the thumb on black keys in continuous scalar figurations, considering carefully the frequency of using the thumb to link hand positions. Ask learners to apply these principles to particularly problematic passages.



This is not to suggest a didactic or inflexible approach, but rather one in which some justification for fingering choices is given as the basis for encouraging learners to develop a more independent approach.

Show learners a variety of fingering solutions for particular chords and melodic shapes, encouraging them to evaluate the musical outcomes.

Explain the principle of finger substitution and encourage learners to use it in appropriate passages.

Demonstrate hand crossing to learners and ask them to comment on, and imitate, the physical movements required. Provide them with practice strategies to aid smooth and comfortable hand crossing.

Provide learners with a range of exercises to deal with two against three rhythms, e.g. ask them to tap one hand and play the other, then reverse the activity.

Tone quality, sound production and articulation

- Play with a focused, clear tone:
 - using a dynamic range appropriate to the musical requirements
 - controlling changes in dynamics with confidence
 - shaping and defining phrases with more dynamic subtlety
 - controlling the dynamic levels of each hand with ease
 - controlling the tone quality when negotiating more demanding movements around the keyboard
 - using a range of accent and emphasis appropriate to the style
 - exercising tonal control between the hands in simple (two-part) polyphonic textures and within one hand
 - balancing a chord, highlighting one or two notes as appropriate
- Play with some variety of non-legato and legato articulation at a variety of tempi
- Use direct pedalling, pedalling for effect, legato pedalling and the una corda pedal where appropriate
- Adjust various aspects of playing technique according to the instrument and venue with greater independence

Demonstrate a wide range of physical approaches to accents/tenuto and select repertoire to explore this aspect of playing. Ask learners to experiment with different approaches to given passages and to assess the effects aurally.

Encourage the development of tonal control in two-part polyphony, asking learners to use deliberate contrasts of articulation and dynamic between hands, i.e. one hand playing *f* with the other playing *p*, as a preliminary exercise in developing independent control.

Show learners the physical approaches required for playing at *p/pp* dynamic levels without the use of the una corda pedal. Ask them to describe what they observe.

Explain the mechanics of the una corda pedal. Ask learners to listen to and describe the resulting changes of tone colour.



Learners should understand that on a grand piano the una corda changes the nature of the sound, not just the volume.

Discuss the need for developing a wider tonal range. Ask learners to practise concentrating on control at lower dynamic levels with the una corda pedal.

Ask learners to suggest places where the una corda might be appropriate, bearing in mind that it has the potential to change both the quality and quantity of tone.

Give learners carefully structured exercises in order for them to develop control in legato pedalling.

Explain a variety of approaches to pedal notation and ask learners to insert pedalling indications in appropriate passages.

Play phrases with more, or less, subtle phrasing and ask learners to comment on the effect. Encourage them to consider where the use of more refined nuances will enhance their performances.

When performing on an unfamiliar piano and/or in a new venue, encourage learners to develop their independence in identifying how to adjust their playing according to the instrument and acoustics.



If performing on a grand piano, remind learners that the music stand is further away than on an upright.

Programme of Study 4

C Creating and developing musical ideas

P4 - C1

Improvise with freedom in a wide range of musical structures genres, styles and traditions, drawing on internalised sounds

Ask learners to improvise melodies above predetermined harmonic patterns, using conventions and techniques within the chosen style, e.g. melodies in Aeolian mode above a simple chord sequence.



A chord sequence of Am7/Dm7/Em7/Am7 provides a suitable accompaniment. The Aeolian mode would be A B C D E F G A.

Ask learners to improvise short melodies using a variety of scales, e.g. major, minor, pentatonic, whole-tone, blues, chromatic.



Modes, e.g. Aeolian, Dorian, are useful in that they can be represented as white key scales on the piano.



Focus on developing an awareness of style by relating the particular scale or mode to repertoire being studied.

Ask learners to improvise with others by embellishing a melody, e.g. the pentatonic Raga Bhupali.



Raga Bhupali



Research less-familiar musics from around the world and make links with curriculum music where appropriate.

Help learners to develop confidence by improvising frequently, doing a little at a time.

Make recordings of improvisations and discuss the outcomes with learners.



The best improvisations have a coherent, well-phrased, vocal quality. Singing the ideas before trying to play them provides learners with an internal template. This allows their improvisations to be head-led not finger-led and will help prevent them from getting musically 'stuck'.



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P4 - C2

Compose in different styles, creating and selecting musical ideas by exploring the characteristics of their chosen resources

Ask learners to compose some pieces over an extended period of time in a variety of traditional and contemporary styles. This could include:

- a solo piece for piano within a given structure, aiming for consistency of style
- a short piece for an ensemble, including piano
- a solo piece for piano, possibly evoking moods or feelings, e.g. clouds, pyramids, the evening, rush hour, dreams



Ensure that time is allowed for reviewing progress of compositions. It may be appropriate to select particular times of the year when it is possible to focus more on composing, e.g. in the summer term after examinations. Group compositions can be useful for developing ensemble skills.

Help learners to refine their pieces within the chosen style and idiom.



Rehearsing, interpreting and performing the compositions are essential parts of this process.

Programme of Study 4

D Playing music

P4 - D1

Work out by ear how to play moderately easy tunes or accompaniments, e.g. with a wider range of intervals and different octaves/positions

Ask learners to play by ear familiar tunes that include some simple chromatic writing and modulations.

Discuss the effect of accidentals and what needs to be done in order to modulate from one key to another.

Ask learners to work out some of the underlying harmonies. Discuss possible alternatives. Explain that chromatic writing may be decorative and therefore does not require harmonisation.

Ask learners to vary tunes by using alternative melodic and/or rhythmic patterns. Discuss the variations.

Improvise on the given tune and extend the piece for fun.



Regular playing by ear helps to build confidence. Familiar tunes can be worked out during individual practice and then played again in the lesson.

P4 - D2

Repeat phrases of a moderate length and complexity in a variety of styles

Develop further call-and-response or echo exercises, perhaps using more challenging keys and a wider variety of styles and forms, e.g. waltz, Latin-American rhythms, riffs.

Play scales in canon, e.g. one learner starts, the next begins two notes later, the third a further two notes on, thus producing a sequence of chords. Discuss whether the chords are major, minor, diminished, etc.

Play arpeggios in canon, learners starting on successive notes. Discuss whether the resulting chords are in root position, first inversion, etc.

Play simple pieces in canon, with either the teacher or other members of the group leading. The second group repeats the part played by the first group.

Continue the activity in pairs, with the second player decorating the line or improvising answering phrases in the style of the first. Whole pieces can be built up in this manner.

P4 - D3

Play a variety of pieces of moderate difficulty



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

When learners are learning new pieces, ask them to identify and discuss structural relationships, e.g. repetitions, contrasts, deviations, developments. Ask them to describe the musical effects of these features.

Encourage learners to learn pieces more independently, identifying and solving problems, and making musical decisions.

Continue to advise learners on practising strategies.

Encourage learners to learn pieces away from the instrument in order to consider the overall character, the shape of phrases, subtleties of tempo, etc.



As learners develop their own responses to pieces, so the teacher's input can be reduced.



Encourage learners to use the holistic approach by prompting them to apply listening skills, solve technical and musical problems and use their imaginations.

P4 - D4

Memorise a variety of pieces from their repertoire in different styles and traditions, featuring a range of musical devices and structures

Encourage learners to read the score away from the instrument, as another way to help with memorising pieces.

Ask learners to memorise short pieces or sections of music this way, then play them without using the music.



This is a challenging activity that depends on internalising the music, making links to notation and memorising patterns and structures.



As an aid to memorisation, ask learners to imagine playing the piece with their eyes closed, including all performance details.



Try to include some aspect of memorising in each lesson.

P4 - D5

Read and play at sight moderately easy pieces in different styles at a regular pulse; internalise and incorporate less-familiar musical features, e.g. time signatures, variety of tempi, keys



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Continue to develop sight-reading skills by regularly asking learners to play appropriate music at sight, using the structured approach outlined in Programme of Study 3, i.e. before playing through pieces for the first time, help learners to gain a clear internal picture of the overall shape and character of the music.



Encourage learners to develop greater independence between the hands.

Using carefully structured questions, lead learners to make observations about the musical language, e.g. cadences, passages that are diatonic, chromatic, consonant, dissonant.

Ask learners to sight-read appropriate music in small groups, each learner maintaining a separate part individually (the parts possibly having differentiated levels of difficulty). Emphasise the importance of learners listening to each other in respect of ensemble, tuning, balance, etc.



Use a wide range of styles from different times and places.



As in previous programmes, sight-reading should have fluent, musical outcomes. Attention to rhythmic accuracy and expression will help to project the music.

P4 - D6

Interpret music with understanding and insight, developing a personal response through sustained study of and reflection on the music, applying their knowledge of style, characteristics and historical/social background; evaluate how their interpretation reflects the context in which the music was created and is performed and heard

Building on Programme of Study 3, discuss the interpretation of pieces being studied, especially how learners can convey their own personal responses within the stylistic conventions and the composer's markings.

Encourage learners to be aware of stylistic, structural and idiomatic features of pieces, e.g. musical forms, repetition, contrast, development techniques, and to communicate their feelings and understanding in their playing.



Developing an interpretation is the crux of a personal performance and should be the focus of discussion. Listening to various recordings of the same piece can stimulate discussion and provide a way to develop learners' interpretations.

Programme of Study 4

E Playing music with others

P4 - E1

Play with others, independently maintaining an individual part with sensitivity, responding to others and leading where appropriate, demonstrating awareness of their role within the ensemble

Encourage more independence by promoting unsupervised rehearsals and by asking learners to take the lead.

Encourage learners to use eye contact when playing in small ensembles.

Discuss ways of using rehearsal time effectively, e.g. marking scores and parts, tuning procedures, dealing with challenging passages.

Encourage learners, through careful listening, to develop greater sensitivity in respect of balance, ensemble, tuning, shaping of phrases, etc.

Encourage learners to be responsive in situations where an ensemble performance is not together, taking action to get the performance back on track.

Ensure there are a variety of opportunities for ensembles/groups to perform to audiences and to each other.



Bear in mind that it can take considerable time and effort to organise ensemble opportunities. It is helpful, therefore, to work in close collaboration with school music departments, Music Services/Hubs, local performing groups and/or other appropriate organisations.

Contribute to collective decisions, e.g. balance, ensemble, interpretation, conveying the character and style of the music

Encourage all learners to contribute to discussions on interpretative issues, e.g. communicating and projecting the style and character of the music.

Invite learners to discuss, using appropriate vocabulary, how further refinements can be made.

Programme of Study 4

F Performing and communicating

P4 - F1

Perform to others with growing confidence, responding to the audience, venue and occasion, communicating the character and style of the music through their own/shared interpretation

Organise performing opportunities at a variety of occasions and venues, e.g. school events, concerts in the wider community.



Aim to give learners a range of performing experiences, e.g. solo, with others, directed, non-directed.

Ask learners to perform, over time, pieces from a range of musical styles and traditions.



Ensure that learners perform music from a range of musical styles and genres so that confidence and experience is developed across a range of repertoire.

Prepare learners to perform with fluency and understanding, encouraging them to communicate their personal feelings within the style of the music and the composer's markings.



Through performance, learners demonstrate their ability to absorb a range of musical and technical skills, knowledge and understanding.

Ask learners to research some background information on pieces, e.g. details of style, the historical/social context.

Encourage learners to perform some or all of their pieces from memory where this will enhance confidence, musical awareness and communication.

Refine pieces through simulated performances in lessons, during performances at school and as part of concerts to the wider community.



Aim to stimulate creative thinking in preparing for performance. Learners should explore a range of possibilities in their quest to communicate the expressive intentions of the composer.

Encourage learners to perform music with others independently of the teacher, e.g. duets or small ensembles.



It should be remembered that people respond differently to the idea of performing. It is important to look out for signs of performance anxiety and support learners in developing strategies to address this. Learners should be encouraged to have a sense of anticipation and enjoyment about performing.

P4 - F2

Evaluate with perception the quality of their performance, using their knowledge of performing conventions, including the performances of distinguished musicians

Ask learners to reflect on and evaluate each performance in order to make further improvements and build up confidence.

Encourage learners to devise their own criteria for self-assessment.

Continue to use technology where appropriate to make audio or video recordings so that learners can listen/watch back and evaluate their performance.



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Organise opportunities for learners to perform with directed groups by encouraging them to join bands, orchestras, choirs, large ensembles, etc. that are appropriate to their needs.

Programme of Study 5

A Listening and internalising

P5 - A1

Listen systematically and critically to a wide variety of music from different styles and traditions to develop their own independent interpretations

Ask learners to listen to and identify music from a variety of styles and traditions, including extended pieces with complex structures. Ask them to compare and contrast various pieces, referring to form, texture, harmonic language, instrumentation, tonality, etc.

Ask learners to listen to music that is related in style and tradition to the pieces they are learning. Ask them to compare and contrast the range of musical ideas/devices and observe how they are used in the music.



It is important for learners to be challenged by a range of relevant questions. Use a framework of open and closed questions that lead learners step by step.



These activities may link with A Level/Highers/BTEC Level 3/RSL Level 3 or other qualifications.

P5 - A2

Have a clear aural perception of the music to be played, conveying their feeling and understanding of the expressive and stylistic features in practice and performance

Perform pieces to be learnt and/or listen to recorded/live performances. Ask learners to describe the overall character and style of the music.

Ask learners to compare the performances, noting subtleties of tempo, phrasing, articulation, dynamics, quality/variety of tone, etc.

P5 - A3

Identify and incorporate subtle changes to the musical elements in their playing, interpreting music both personally and idiomatically

Help learners to sing/play by ear more extended and/or complex phrases, e.g. those featuring wider leaps and/or challenging rhythms, from pieces to be learnt. Look at how these phrases fit into the whole piece.

Ask learners to explore the effects of varying the tempi, articulation, phrasing, dynamics, etc. in pieces from different styles and traditions. Encourage them to develop personal interpretations and to use their understanding of the characteristics of the instrument.

Discuss the musical effects of more advanced technical devices, e.g. glissandi, finger substitution, and ask learners to experiment with different ways of using them in pieces being studied.

Encourage learners to ensure consistency of tempo in extended pieces and large-scale movements.

P5 - A4

Recognise and convey in their interpretative decisions a wide variety of musical structures and compositional techniques

Discuss new repertoire with learners, noting structure, tonality, modulations, technically demanding passages, nature of the accompaniment, etc.

Encourage learners to improvise in various styles. This could include making up a short cadenza or adding ornamentation.

P5 - A5

Hear a wider range of music internally when using notation/symbols, anticipating the sound in their heads

Using notation, ask learners to work out in their heads the sound of:

- phrases/pieces
- simple chords

then compare these with the actual sound when played.

Using notation, ask learners to describe the overall character of pieces, referring to style, structure, harmonic language, dynamic range, texture, etc. Suggest how they affect the mood of the music.

Ask learners to clap/hum/sing/say at sight appropriate phrases from pieces to be learnt.

Play extracts with subtle deviations from the text in terms of pitch, rhythm, articulation, phrasing, harmonies, dynamics, etc. Ask learners to point out the differences.



Music from all parts of the world is appropriate for these activities.

Programme of Study 5

B Making and controlling musical sounds

P5 - B1

Posture and freedom of movement

- Maintain physical freedom and ease, without unnecessary tension:
 - across the full range of the instrument, indicating awareness and understanding of the whole body as a balanced playing mechanism
 - playing with a comfortable and balanced position which ensures flexibility when playing hands separately and together
 - playing with free and confident movement
 - playing with economy of movement when tackling challenging and demanding passages

Encourage learners to evaluate their posture, using video recordings and mirrors where appropriate.



Some learners with poor posture and/or tension problems find relaxation methods useful, e.g. yoga, Alexander Technique.

Ask learners to devise their own checklist of the main sources of tension. Discuss how tension can be alleviated.

Encourage learners to find solutions for complex pianistic passages.

Demonstrate approaches such as a rotation and lateral movement, providing preliminary exercises for their use in repertoire. Ask learners to identify passages where these approaches are appropriate.

Invite learners to devise their own exercises for dealing with the rapid, free movement required by fast leaps in pieces.

Continue to encourage positive body language when performing.

Encourage learners to use imagery in order to convey the character and mood of the music. Discuss how

posture may contribute towards communication.

Provide opportunities for learners to observe how others communicate in performance, e.g. masterclasses, concerts.



Encourage learners to attend a wide range of live performances where possible, and/or watch live performances online.

Help learners to use their posture to communicate musical intention, e.g. beginning and/or changing tempo in an ensemble.

Discuss ways in which learners can develop the physical and mental stamina required to play longer, more demanding pieces.

Fingering and coordination

- Play comfortably in a wide variety of hand positions:
 - maintaining appropriate hand shape when playing across the full range of the instrument
 - moving between hand positions with fluency and confidence at a variety of tempi
- Play, at a steady pulse, with clarity and control, a wide variety of complex rhythmic exercises, including cross rhythms between the hands and within one hand
- Play rhythmically when passing from hand to hand at a large variety of tempi, including when crossing hands
- Play a wide range of chords, hands separately and together, controlling the movement between chords at a variety of tempi
- Play with independence of:
 - movement of hands and arms across the full range of the instrument
 - fingers
 - articulation between hands and within one hand
- Observe and adhere to chosen fingering, particularly in technically challenging passages
- Use standard and alternative fingering in a wide range of scales, arpeggios and chords, including scales in thirds and sixths
- Suggest fingering for passages
- Use the thumb on black notes where necessary
- Use finger substitution with ease
- Explore unconventional fingering in scalar passages in response to the musical context

Encourage learners to develop an increasing awareness of the relationship between choice of fingering and tempo, dynamic level, texture, etc.

Assign passages in which the fingering is problematic and ask learners to arrive at solutions for further discussion.



Even at this stage, there may be many passages in which the fingering is directed primarily by the teacher.

Encourage learners to 'filter' and assess printed fingerings, adopting those that appear to be appropriate and discarding those that are not.



This provides an opportunity to discuss (albeit superficially) the role of the editor, and the importance of factors such as the size of the hand.

Illustrate a range of fingering solutions to repeated-note figures, asking learners to experiment and to consider musical outcomes.



Factors such as speed, touch, musical character, etc. influence decisions as to whether to change fingers.

Explain fingerings for scales with hands a third or sixth apart, asking learners to apply patterns to similar keys.



An underlying principle is that learners should evaluate and reflect on the tonal quality of their scale and arpeggio playing, e.g. evenness of touch, dynamic level.

Show learners fingerings for first- and second-inversion arpeggios, dominant and diminished sevenths. Ask them to develop charts to record their progress in learning arpeggios and to think in terms of patterns that can be applied to a range of keys.



New arpeggio fingering patterns could be reinforced by introductory 'solid' chord exercises. Where at all possible, scale and arpeggio fingerings at this level should be dealt with in groups, according to keyboard layout and fingering pattern.

Demonstrate the fingering and physical movements for a selected range of hands-separate staccato scales in thirds and sixths, asking learners to comment on what they observe.

Discuss with learners the need to use 'alternative' scale and arpeggio fingerings in certain musical contexts, discussing the reasons for making such choices.



For example, a 'white key' fingering for a 'black key' passage, where greater dexterity and speed are required.

Encourage learners to use finger substitution, and explain how this can assist in creating a legato effect.

Provide learners with a range of exercises to deal with various cross-rhythms, and ask them to devise their

own.

Demonstrate exercises to encourage increasingly energetic trill technique. Ask learners to consider trills in their musical context.

P5 - B3

Tone quality, sound production and articulation

- Play with a focused, clear tone:
 - using a dynamic range appropriate to the musical requirements, taking into account the acoustics
 - controlling changes in dynamics with confidence
 - defining the phrases and overall structure of the music through dynamic shaping and rhythmic flexibility
 - controlling the dynamic levels of each hand with confidence
 - controlling the tone quality when negotiating demanding movements around the keyboard
 - using a range of accent and emphasis appropriate to the style
 - exercising tonal control between the hands and within one hand in polyphonic textures
 - controlling the tonal balance within a chord or a succession of chords
- Play with more variety of non-legato and legato articulation at a variety of tempi
- Use a variety of pedal techniques, including half-pedalling and pedalling in advance
- Adjust various aspects of playing technique according to the instrument and venue independently

Demonstrate Impressionist repertoire to allow for greater exploration of a range of pedalling techniques (vibrato pedalling and half-pedalling, use of the *una corda*) and for a more refined approach to tonal balance. Encourage learners to consider tonal subtleties, and the increasingly subtle relationship between notation and implied pedalling.



Learners should be encouraged to listen independently to a wide range of piano, orchestral and operatic repertoire at this stage, e.g. Debussy preludes and *Suite Bergamasque*; Ravel *Sonatine*; Grovlez *L'Almanach aux Images*; Brahms intermezzos; Chopin nocturnes, preludes and mazurkas.

Ask learners to prepare lyrical 19th- and 20th-century repertoire for developing cantabile control, tonal refinement and rubato.

Encourage learners to mould phrases of a sustained nature carefully and sensitively, paying particular attention to the challenge of control after long notes.

Use audio recordings to consider tone and pedalling in different acoustics.



Encourage learners to listen to *Three Rondos on Folk Tunes* and *Mikrokosmos* Volumes 5 and 6 by Bartok, and *Études* and *Polkas* by Martinu.

Ask learners to listen to, and prepare, 20th- and 21st-century pieces of a predominantly rhythmic nature, and to develop a range of accentuation, e.g. tenuto, varying degrees of staccato, strength of accent.

Encourage learners to discover various strategies for creating legato effects in passages where legato fingering may not be an option.



In most cases, the sustaining pedal will have an important but not exclusive role to play.

Show learners a range of practice strategies for dealing with fugal textures, e.g. practising with various combinations of voices, practising with exaggerated differences of tone and articulation.

After listening together to suitable examples, ask learners to consider how articulation and legato phrasing are approached on different instruments, and what these consciously applied expressive qualities contribute to the overall effect of the music, e.g. making a dance movement seem more animated or a melodic piece more song-like. Explore ways for learners to recreate what they have heard in these examples in their own playing.



Listening to other instruments' means of expression can broaden learners' musical awareness. Some instruments have a more natural capacity for legato, i.e. through playing several notes in one bow or breath, and non-legato, i.e. through changing bow or tonguing between notes. Internalising different phrasing characteristics through vocal imitation is a good place to start, followed by playing short passages by ear.

With learners, choose an item of repertoire in which articulations, slurs and phrase marks are specified in the text, e.g. a 20th- or 21st-century piece. Ask them to internalise and apply these expressive qualities from the start of the learning process, using the appropriate techniques.

Next, select together an item of repertoire in which articulations, slurs and phrase marks are not specified, e.g. a baroque dance. From the start of the learning process, ask learners to incorporate these expressive qualities, using their knowledge and understanding of musical style, etc., and combining the appropriate techniques with an awareness of phrasing and structure.

When performing on an unfamiliar piano and/or in a new venue, encourage learners to independently identify how to adjust their playing according to the instrument and acoustics.

Programme of Study 5

C Creating and developing musical ideas

P5 - C1

Improvise extended musical ideas with a sense of direction and shape as they develop their own personal style

Ask learners to improvise a piece involving a simple modulation, possibly within a given structure, e.g. A (tonic) B (dominant) A (tonic). Explore techniques involved in modulating and apply them in other improvisations.



Ensure that technical points are fully understood and absorbed, e.g. modulations to relative keys.

Continue to link improvisations to repertoire being studied, e.g. learners improvise a short piece in the style of a well-known composer.

Ask learners, or possibly teacher and learner, to extend a melody by improvising in turn, each player basing the improvisation on the previous section. Aim for coherence and expression within an agreed style.

Encourage learners to improvise a cadenza for a concerto or ornaments for a baroque or classical solo piece.



Improvisation provides an obvious and enjoyable way of exploring musical devices and conventions. It often provides the groundwork for more extended compositions. These advanced improvisations can be as challenging for the teacher as the learner!

Teach a well-known jazz standard, e.g. 'I Got Rhythm':

- play learners a recording of the piece
- familiarise them with the 32-bar A A B A form and teach them the chords and melody. Play it with them as a learner/teacher duo, swapping roles
- demonstrate how to embellish the melody freely and encourage learners to do the same when their turn comes
- finally, ask them to improvise over the chords, making fewer references to the original melody



Latin-American jazz styles also provide an accessible way into jazz improvisation. The samba employs 'straight' as opposed to 'swung' quaver rhythms, while the use of 'chord tones' as a stock improvisational device, i.e. playing the notes of the chords rather than scales, limits the number of notes learners need to hear and use at any given point.

Ask learners to devise/use a graphic score as the basis for a free improvisation in a contemporary style.

P5 - C2

Compose with consistency of style, coherence of musical ideas and a degree of individuality, and by making the most of the instrumental resources

Ask learners to compose pieces for more than one instrument, e.g. piano duet, piano and other instruments, piano and voice.



Compositions for more than one instrument provide opportunities for learners to explore different textures. Learners can use techniques associated with pieces being learnt. These may include contrapuntal textures and more complex structures, and can involve a higher level of technical difficulty for the performer. Alternatively, limitations may be imposed, e.g. thematic, structural, technical. Encourage learners to exploit the idiomatic potential of instruments.

Support learners in refining, notating and evaluating their ideas.

Provide guidance on writing for other instruments/voices.

Provide opportunities for learners' compositions to be performed, if possible in public, and make recordings to help evaluation.



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Ask learners to write programme notes for their pieces, including details of background, style, intention and outcomes.

Programme of Study 5

D Playing music

P5 - D1

Work out by ear how to play pieces of increasing complexity

Demonstrate how to play melodies by ear in different keys. Initially, let learners take the most natural key and then transpose to another.

As an extension activity, encourage learners to play a well-known tune in a 'difficult' key and note the problems that need solving.

Ask learners to practise playing a familiar piece, e.g. 'Happy Birthday', in a variety of keys.

Help learners to internalise both melodic and harmonic elements by ear.

Ask learners to make up some variations on well-known tunes by ear, using a range of melodic and/or rhythmic patterns.

Ask learners to work out by ear some possible harmonies for well-known tunes.



An awareness of transposition is important for the advanced musician.

P5 - D2

Repeat longer and more complex phrases, involving different tempi, keys, tonality, and transpositions where appropriate

Encourage learners to play back longer and more complex musical extracts from memory, using a wide range of styles, e.g. ritornello, raga, hooks and riffs.

Ask learners to practise repeating patterns that may include augmented and diminished intervals,

asymmetrical phrases and irregular rhythms.

Play a three- or four-part chord or simple chord progression and ask learners to play the upper, inner and lower parts in turn, or the complete progression.



Before playing chords, it may help to sing or hum the notes/individual parts.

As an extension activity, discuss whether the chords are major, minor, diminished, etc. and which position/inversion they are in.

P5 - D3

Play a range of pieces from different styles and periods that are technically and musically advanced



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Continue the holistic approach to learning new pieces by:

- enabling learners to research background knowledge of style, period, etc.
- discussing the structure, harmonic language, etc.
- ensuring that technical skills are applied to the musical context
- devising related listening exercises that support the learning and memorisation of key features of the music
- enriching learners' understanding by structuring improvisations based on ideas from the pieces being learnt
- providing opportunities for self- and peer-evaluation, using criteria that have been devised by learners themselves

Continue to encourage learners to learn pieces away from the instrument in order to consider the overall character, the shape of phrases, subtleties of tempo, etc.

Continue to suggest appropriate practising strategies.

P5 - D4

Memorise systematically and independently pieces from their repertoire with refinement and expressive subtlety, demonstrating a personal response to the music

Help learners to memorise selected pieces from the repertoire being learnt. Offer particular strategies for dealing with longer and more complex pieces, so that learners remember music in different ways. These could include:

- devising ways of visualising the music, ranging from imagining a simple picture outline to a more photographic image
- relating memory to touch and movement, e.g. finger movement, hand position and patterns of notes
- supporting learners in knowing the sound in their heads
- analysing the structure of the music, e.g. counting the number of times a phrase occurs, noting key changes and sequences, consciously remembering deviations and exit points



The aim should be for the eyes, ears and hands to work together as an integral unit.

Provide opportunities for repeated playing and testing in order for learners to develop complete security.



By memorising the music, many performers are able to:

- focus more intimately on the music
- have greater freedom in their playing
- communicate more directly

However, if a musician is not comfortable performing in public without notation then this is by no means essential.

P5 - D5

Read and play at sight a range of pieces in a variety of styles containing elements of surprise and deviation: internalise and incorporate a wide range of time signatures and tempi, rhythmic patterns, melodic range, intervals, tonality and expression



Many genres of music are traditionally learnt exclusively by ear. Where it would support learning, you may wish to create notation systems that are appropriate to your teaching context, e.g. word rhythms, symbols, numbers, or vocal sounds. However, this may not be necessary or desirable for all musics. Music passed on orally/aurally naturally evolves as it spreads and being fixed in notation can hinder this.

Provide sight-reading practice in music that features a wide range of rhythmic and melodic devices, e.g. syncopated jazz rhythms and a variety of subdivisions where the rhythms are 'straight'. Include pieces that contain elements of surprise and, with learners, formulate strategies for dealing with them.

Ensure learners look through the music first, adopting the structured approach described in earlier programmes, in order to internalise the overall sound and character, and spot potential problems.

Discuss the overall character and style of sight-reading pieces with learners, emphasising the importance of communicating this to others.

Encourage learners to sight-read straightforward, standard repertoire rather than sight-reading exercises.



It is often useful to return to simple music to develop sight-reading skills and, in particular, the ability to read at sight quickly and fluently. This also helps to build up confidence.



Promote the value of sight-reading as a way of accessing and gaining greater familiarity with a wide range of music.

P5 - D6

Interpret music personally with consistency of style, and an understanding of idiomatic performing conventions; make independent, critical judgements about their interpretation

Ask learners to evaluate their approach to the interpretation of pieces being studied, justifying musical decisions by referring to musical styles, conventions and personal feelings.

Explore alternative ways of interpreting the directions of the composer.

With learners, discuss the interpretations of others, possibly including professional performances and

those of their peers, and compare them with their own.

Encourage learners to respond imaginatively to their own playing, and that of others, as performances unfold.

Encourage learners to explore alternative ways of interpreting pieces, taking into account their knowledge of genre and period, e.g. approaches to ornaments, cadences, phrasing and articulation, tone quality, etc.

Encourage learners to communicate their feelings, within their knowledge and understanding of the style, with more freedom, conviction and independence.

Programme of Study 5

E Playing music with others

P5 - E1

Play with others with assurance and sensitivity, demonstrating an empathy with other performers and musical leadership

Provide ensemble opportunities that make increasing musical and technical demands on learners.

Help learners to develop more sensitivity and subtlety in their playing, e.g. shaping of phrases, variety of articulation, rhythmic flexibility, through increasing musical awareness and communication within the group.

Invite individual learners to take the lead and direct others.

Acknowledge unexpected musical outcomes.

Provide a variety of performing opportunities.



Bear in mind that it can take considerable time and effort to organise ensemble opportunities. It is helpful, therefore, to work in close collaboration with school music departments, Music Services/Hubs, local performing groups and/or other appropriate organisations.

P5 - E2

Contribute their own interpretative ideas and respond to those of others, conveying the character and style of the music

Encourage learners to use their knowledge, understanding and relevant musical experience to inform their discussions as they seek to develop a shared interpretation.

Encourage all learners to contribute to a shared interpretation that is developed and refined as the piece is practised and performed.

Programme of Study 5

F Performing and communicating

P5 - F1

Perform music to others with confidence and conviction, communicating the character and style of the music; demonstrate empathy with other performers and with the audience

Organise performing opportunities at a variety of occasions and venues, e.g. school events, concerts in the wider community.



It should be remembered that people respond differently to the idea of performing. For some it will be rewarding and motivating, but for others it can be stressful to the extent that they may be ill or wish to give up playing. In preparing for a performance, the following should be taken into account:

- the physical and psychological well-being of the learner
- the learner's motivation
- the perceived importance of the performance
- social relationships with other members of the group

Bear in mind that some learners may not wish to perform in public.

Where appropriate, ask learners to research information on each piece, e.g. details on the style of music, the composer's life, the historical/social context, and prepare a short talk/introduction to each piece.

Give learners opportunities to practise their presentational skills.



In addition to other skills of presentation already acquired, learners should practise projecting their voices and slowing down delivery when talking to an audience.

During lessons, encourage learners to develop their own personal interpretations through discussion and debate. Ask them to justify their decisions using appropriate musical vocabulary.

Encourage learners to perform some or all of their pieces from memory where this will enhance confidence,

musical awareness and communication.

Refine pieces through simulated performances in lessons and by performances to others in preparation for concerts within the wider community.

Continue to encourage learners to make music and perform with others, both in directed and non-directed groups.

P5 - F2

Make informed evaluations about their performance in the light of their knowledge about the music and the interpretations of distinguished musicians

Ask learners to evaluate their performances critically, identifying strengths and areas for development.

Continue to use technology where appropriate to make audio or video recordings so that learners can listen/watch back and evaluate their performance.



It is vital to check the policy of the school or other organisation you are working in with regards to any form of recording. Children must never be videoed without parental consent and all policies regarding use and storage of recordings must be adhered to.

Provide opportunities for learners to perform to distinguished musicians/teachers in a masterclass situation.



It can be valuable for learners to hear positive, constructive guidance from someone other than their own teacher.



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