

A young woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a denim jacket, is playing a silver flute. She is looking off to the side with a focused expression. In the background, another student is visible, also playing a brass instrument, possibly a trumpet. The background is softly blurred, suggesting a school music room or rehearsal space.

MUSIC
MARK

A COMMON
APPROACH

A Common Approach

A guide for those involved in training and supporting new vocal and instrumental teachers

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Who is this guide for?

This guide is for everyone involved in supporting those who are new to vocal and instrumental teaching, including:

- universities and conservatoires that train student teachers or include aspects of pedagogy in their music courses;
- organisations that provide qualifications in vocal and instrumental teaching;
- music services and hubs that deliver apprenticeship schemes or induction programmes.

It outlines how Music Mark’s new online vocal and instrumental curriculum, A Common Approach, can be used to support those entering the profession, giving them a solid foundation of knowledge and skills as they embark on their teaching careers.

What is A Common Approach?

A Common Approach is a vocal and instrumental curriculum that provides learning objectives and activities for a range of instruments and instrumental families. These learning objectives can be used by teachers to structure learning in all contexts, including individual, small-group, large-group and whole-class lessons. A Common Approach is available free of charge in an easy-to-access digital format at musicmark.org.uk/a-common-approach.

Discipline-specific content is organised into five Programmes of Study that take learners from beginner to advanced levels. For each Programme of Study, learning objectives and teaching activities are provided, developing a breadth of music skills through six areas of musical learning:

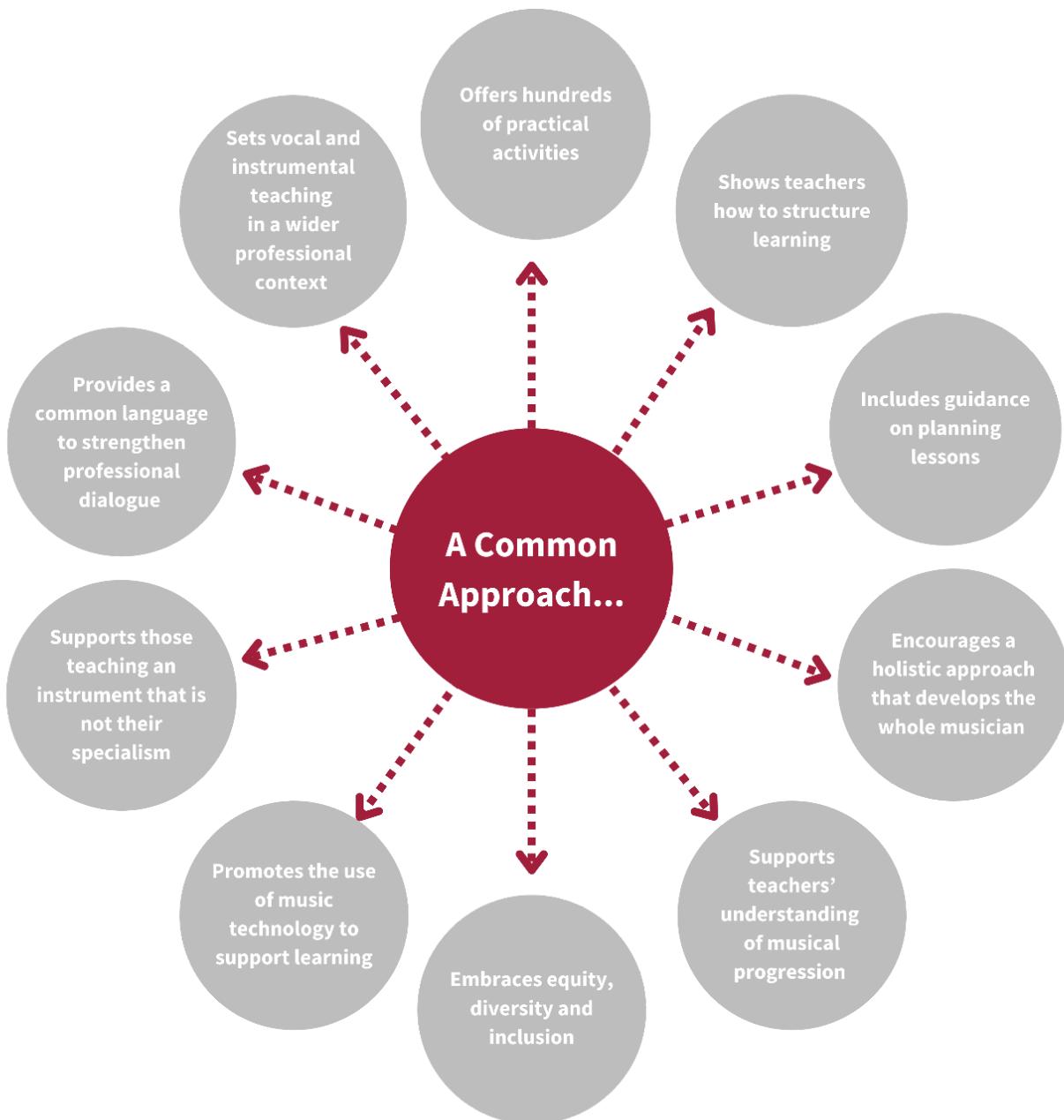
- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| A Listening and internalising | D Playing music |
| B Making & controlling musical sounds | E Playing music with others |
| C Creating & developing musical ideas | F Performing & communicating |

This is complemented by a wealth of guidance and support for vocal and instrumental teachers in areas such as planning and assessment; equity, diversity and inclusion; links to the curriculum; and music technology.

“From a personal perspective, A Common Approach has definitely helped to remind me of the importance of covering all of the areas in order to create a well-rounded and confident musician.”

Instrumental teacher from a Music Hub

How does A Common Approach support new teachers?



“A Common Approach has helped me define what I want to get out of the 20 minutes in a clear, concise way. It also helps me be realistic about the abilities of the beginner students and what they will be able to achieve in this short time.”

PGCE student at the Royal Northern College of Music



Case study: Quench Arts



Quench Arts is a community arts organisation that provides professional development training in vocal and instrumental teaching through its New Horizons programme. This includes the opportunity to complete the Trinity Level 4 Certificate for Music Educators (Trinity CME).

Nicola Briggs, Director of Quench Arts, explains how A Common Approach is used as part of this course.

What is the New Horizons programme?

New Horizons was set up to attract a more diverse cohort of musicians wanting to teach – those who had not been through a traditional university and graded route. The main aim was to address shortage areas that the music service wanted to offer schools – especially associated with ‘World’ music traditions and pop/rock music. Many of the New Horizons ‘graduates’ have gone on to work within local music services and for community music organisations. Since 2021, CME accreditation has been offered through the course, though a free, unaccredited version is also available to ensure that there are no financial barriers for people to attend.

What sort of backgrounds do teachers on the New Horizons programme come from?

Our New Horizons CME course targets technically proficient musicians who have not necessarily had formal training. We target diverse World/Folk musicians and Pop/Rock/Music Technology specialists who may have learnt their instrument or vocal technique through a non-formal route. Our course is focused on inclusion and accessibility, giving opportunities to develop skills and confidence with plenty of practical experience gained through our offer. We also attract graduates and undergraduates, and this always means we have an interesting mix of people from very different backgrounds accessing the course, each bringing different strengths and specialisms. We find that the trainees learn a lot from each other, often skill-swapping to increase their own skills in their own time.

“A Common Approach is a really useful resource, especially for new teachers. It gives a good guide to what should be included in music lessons.”

Sue Buntin, Lead Trainer on the New Horizons programme



How do you use A Common Approach as part of the New Horizons programme?

We signpost trainees to A Common Approach when discussing good quality resources that they can access. We work in partnership with Services for Education (Birmingham's Music Service), and when Music Service guest speakers lead their training session they also speak about how A Common Approach is used by teachers and show examples of this working in practice. Using A Common Approach gives trainees a wealth of ideas to help plan their teaching. It's particularly useful for those with less experience in teaching, especially from beginner standard, as it lays out a potential structure that they can use.

Some of the trainees we have had on New Horizons have never had to think about how to break down the initial steps of teaching their instrument and can find it really difficult to remember what it was like to learn as a complete beginner. This is often the case where we have musicians who have specialised in performance at University or Conservatoire coming to the course. In these instances, the musicians themselves are so technically adept that they can't remember a time when they struggled to make a sound on their instrument, for example. Where this is the case, A Common Approach has been useful as it takes these trainee teachers through some tried and tested ways in which they can approach beginner lessons.

Case study: Inspire Music



Inspire Music, the music service for Nottinghamshire, has an open and accessible recruitment process that encourages applications from both experienced and non-experienced teachers as well as professional musicians that have a passion for music education.

Lucy Reid, Music Services Manager at Inspire Music, explains how A Common Approach is used to support those teachers who are new to the organisation.

How does your organisation develop new teachers?

We are having great success with trainee teacher posts and work experience placements leading to trainee posts. All new teachers have an individual development plan according to their needs and aspirations. We provide the opportunity to engage with the Certificate for Music Educators programme, and we run mentoring programmes and continuous reflection and feedback sessions with line managers. Our trainee programme also includes RSL Level 4 and Level 6 teaching diplomas as a pathway.

How have you used A Common Approach to support new teachers?

A Common Approach is part of a resource kit for all our teachers, new and old. We use A Common Approach to support and encourage holistic vocal and instrumental teaching. We are including it on

our training days to spark investigative planning and discussion points.

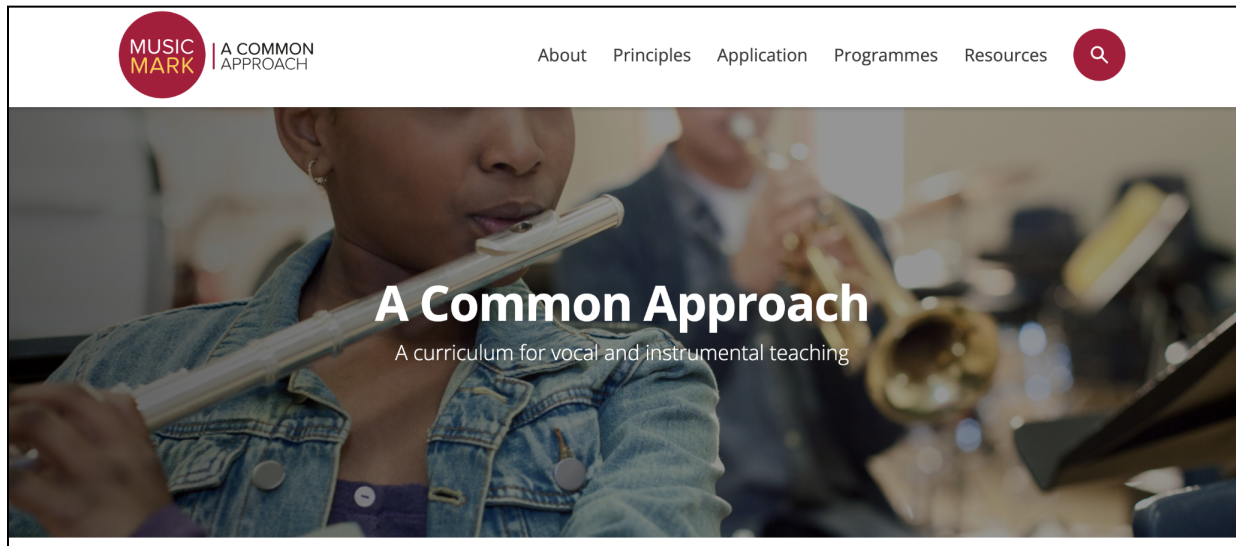
What do you think new teachers gain from being introduced to A Common Approach?

New teachers that have come from a background of traditional teaching have naturally leaned towards what they have experienced themselves - a step by step, page by page, narrow path of learning. A Common Approach opens a whole new world of creative thinking, exciting planning and holistic teaching, with just enough structure that new teachers feel safe to develop their teaching skills. It gives the teachers a long-term plan for them to adapt and

create an exciting path of progression that is bespoke to each learner's needs, setting them off on a structured lesson approach which will never leave them.

“A Common Approach opens a whole new world of creative thinking, exciting planning and holistic teaching, with just enough structure that new teachers feel safe to develop their teaching skills.”

Using the universal content to support teacher development



The A Common Approach homepage: www.musicmark.org.uk/a-common-approach

The first three tabs at the top of the homepage – About, Principles, and Application – lead to universal content which:

- explains the structure of A Common Approach;
- makes links to the music curricula of the four UK nations;
- provides guidance on lifelong learning and equity, diversity and inclusion;
- gives advice on general aspects of vocal and instrumental teaching such as planning, assessment and practice.

Prompts for using the universal content to support teacher development

🔍 Read...

A Holistic Approach to Teaching and Learning

Technology

Practising

💡 Reflect...

Choose a song or piece of music you would use in your vocal or instrumental lessons. Plan a lesson or sequence of lessons that use some of the ideas presented here.

Choose a familiar teaching activity that doesn't use technology. Explore ways in which this activity could be enhanced through the use of technology to improve learning, increase engagement, or make it more accessible.

How can you support learners to get the most from their individual practice? Consider how to advise them about structuring their practice, developing practice techniques, and systems for communicating about practice.

Using the discipline-specific content to support teacher development

The fourth tab, Programmes, leads to the discipline-specific Programmes of Study, which provide learning objectives for each of the six areas of musical learning together with suggested activities.

You can choose to explore by Programme of Study (1 to 5) or by Area (A to F).

The strings curriculum contains learning objectives and activities that are suitable for all bowed string instruments, including the violin, viola, cello and double bass.

EXPLORE BY PROGRAMME **EXPLORE BY AREA**

- Programme of Study 1** +
- Programme of Study 2** +
- Programme of Study 3** +

Explore by Programme

The strings curriculum contains learning objectives and activities that are suitable for all bowed string instruments, including the violin, viola, cello and double bass.

EXPLORE BY PROGRAMME **EXPLORE BY AREA**

- A Listening and internalising** +
- B Making and controlling musical sounds** +
- C Creating and developing musical ideas** +

Explore by Area

Click on the cross to display the learning objectives for a particular section.

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About Principles Application Programmes Resources

Programmes > Strings

Programme of Study 2

A Listening and internalising

- A1 - Listen to music with concentration and understanding in and out of lessons, enjoying their experiences and building on them
- A2 - Have some aural perception of the music to be played, including some feeling of the expressive characteristics
- A3 - Recognise and discriminate between the musical elements, including aspects of articulation, phrasing and quality of tone
- A4 - Recognise and convey simple structures in their playing, e.g. repetition of rhythmic and melodic phrases
- A5 - Hear some elements of the music internally when using notation/symbol, e.g. tempo, pitch, rhythm, dynamics

Learning objectives in Strings Programme of Study 2

By clicking on an individual learning objective, you are taken to a new page which displays the learning objective at the top and suggested activities underneath.

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About Principles Application Programmes Resources

Programmes > Strings > P2 - D1

P2 - D1

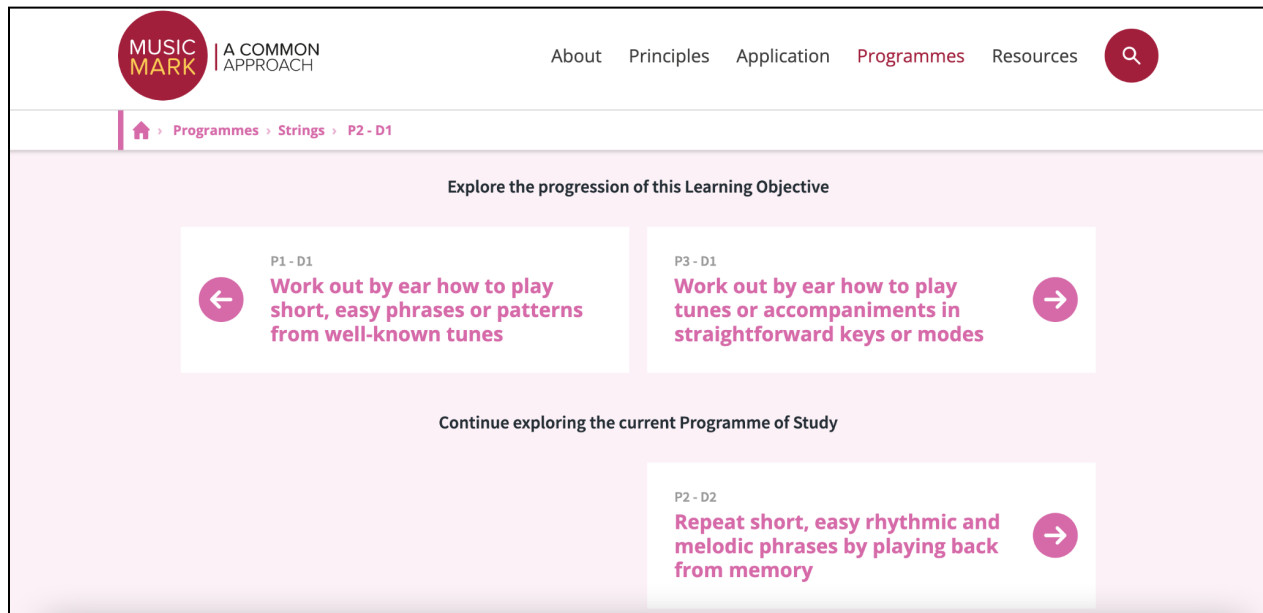
Work out by ear how to play short, easy well-known tunes or accompaniments using a limited range of notes

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.

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

An example of a learning objective page from the Strings Programme of Study 2

At the bottom of each learning objective page, there are arrows to help you navigate between learning objectives.



An example of the navigation options at the bottom of a learning objective page

“The way that the learning objectives section is laid out so that you can see the gradual increase of musical skills is very useful.”

PGCE Student at the Royal Northern College of Music

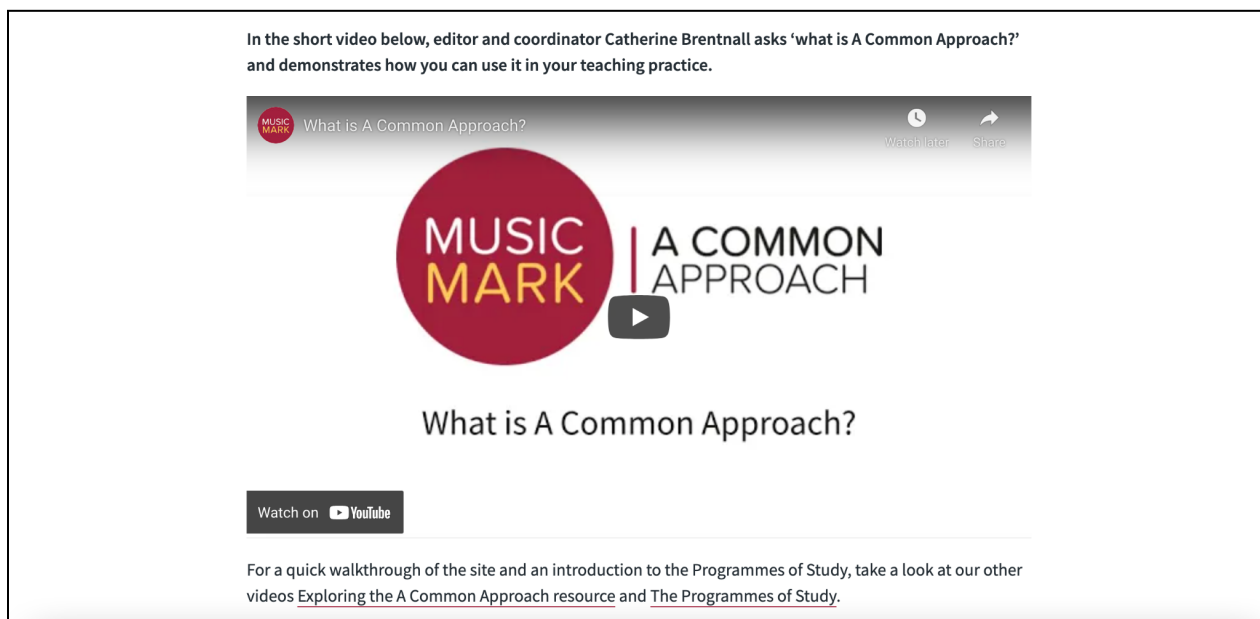


Prompts for using the discipline-specific content to support teacher development

- ▶ Look through Programme of Study 1 for your instrument/voice and identify some objectives and activities you could use with a beginner in the first six weeks of learning.
- ▶ Look at Area B: Making and controlling musical sounds. Choose one aspect of technique listed here, e.g. embouchure, intonation, articulation etc., and use the forward and backward arrows to explore the development of this learning objective from one Programme of Study to the next.
- ▶ Choose one learner or group of learners you are working with. Identify one aspect of their playing or singing you would like to develop over the next few months, and find some suitable activities to use.

Further support using the website

For more information about how to use the A Common Approach resource, scroll down the homepage and click on the introductory video, What is A Common Approach? Further videos are included to explain how to explore the website and to demonstrate the Programmes of Study.



The introductory video on the A Common Approach homepage



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Tel: 02036339863

Email: info@musicmark.org.uk