University of St Andrews

Learning & Teaching Case Study

Department of Music: Podcast and Remix

In MU2004 Electronic Music the largest component of the assessment has always been the end of semester Electronic Composition submission where the students use Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software to create their work. Recently more assessments using DAW software have been introduced during the semester, namely a learner-created Educational Podcast and a Remix, replacing more traditional forms of assessment. This has resulted in greater student satisfaction in addition to increasing the students’ level of achievement in this core area.

During the 2010/2011 academic year assessment consisted of a traditional end of semester two-hour exam and a written essay in addition to a composition hand-in created through the use of Digital Audio Workstation computer software (Apple Logic). In the same year a bid for additional funding for electronic music software through the FILTA scheme led to an optional, non-assessed, learner-generated Educational Podcast submission that proved popular with the students. This allowed students to receive feedback on their use of the software and encouraged more consistent levels of engagement during the earlier part of the semester. Following this, in the 2011/2012 academic year, the Educational Podcast submission was made into a compulsory, assessed component within the module. The end of year exam was replaced with a shorter class test in order to reflect the changed emphasis. Finally, in the 2012/2013 academic year, a Remix was introduced, replacing the Essay Component. Essay type material was already required in order to construct dialogue for the Educational Podcast submission that combines information on the history and technology behind hardware synthesizers and their software emulations, and written essay material is also preserved in the Class Test element of the assessment. The Remix element of the module required students to take audio material from the Set Work pieces that were studied in lectures and use this to create a new composition. This facilitated the development of skill sets that are required for the end of semester Composition submission, in addition to engaging with the Remix genre of music in general.

Benefits/impact on students/staff: The inclusion of the Podcast has been found to enable the development of significant knowledge of the processes involved in shaping individual sounds on the synthesizers and this has proved especially helpful in preparing the students for their compositions. Levels of attainment also improved with the introduction of the Remix assessment. Staff noticed an increase in students’ interest and level of knowledge with respect to the Set Works due to the process of interacting directly with the material in
order to create their Remix submissions. Before the introduction of Podcasts it was noticed that there were a minority of students who only developed important skills and knowledge to a competent working level shortly before the end of the semester, leading to lower overall levels of attainment. After the introduction of the compulsory Podcast (and later the Remix) the core skills were developed fully at an early stage in the semester leading to more developed compositional processes and in depth knowledge.

**Student feedback:** Student feedback found that students agreed that the module was excellent with an average score of 1.8 (where 1 indicates agree and 5 indicates disagree) in the 2012/2013 sitting of the module. The module was also noted as being well structured according to the students, with an average score of 1.5 on the same scale. The general idea for having a Remix submission was originally suggested by a student in a module evaluation form and this idea, when coupled with the introduction of set works and the podcast assessment component has proved very popular with students and has raised the level of attainment in the final assessment.

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**Date submitted:** June 2013