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6 Peer assessment in popular music

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Abstract

This paper discusses the development of a peer-learning and assessment method involving undergraduate popular music students in group performance modules. What is learned through rehearsing and performing in a band is intrinsically collective and this poses problems where we are obliged to give individual participants discrete scores for their contributions. Peer assessment may assist in this and improve student learning in group work. An approach that involves band members assessing each other on the basis of personal attributes is explored.

Introduction: the Learning Context

A climate of change has spread across many features of higher education in recent years and one area in which change has been particularly noticeable is that of assessment. With the increasing transparency of assessment in higher education there have been many interesting developments concerning the involvement of students in the assessment process. Involving students in assessment is not particularly new, however; for example, Brown and Dove (1991) report a number of initiatives involving peer assessment in UK higher education institutions that were taking place prior to 1991. And assessment is now no longer the exclusive domain of the tutor; students, in reviewing the work of their peers (whether awarding marks or not) are also increasingly being invited to share ownership of the assessment criteria.

The considerable benefits that may be obtained through embedding elements of peer assessment in higher education courses are now well-documented. For example, in a study of some 300 self- and peer-assessment initiatives, Falchikov (1998) describes the following perceived benefits to students:

- improvements across a range of skills including transferable, interpersonal, organisational, listening and group-working;
- speedier feedback which is effectively delivered over large numbers of students;
- enabled many students to moderate their learning behaviour and improve their performance;
- a sense of ownership of the assessment process;
- an increase in enthusiasm and motivation, self-confidence, understanding, reflection and intellectual development.

Perceived benefits to staff included:

- increased opportunities to monitor student progress and identify potential problems;
- improvements to the marking systems;
- improved relationships with students.

Such benefits are not necessarily guaranteed; reminders of the pitfalls that may be encountered when using student peer assessment appear in a collection of articles edited by Brown (1998). These accounts illustrate the inherent dangers of using an assessment technique in which the operational experience of tutors is inadequate or the rationale for its use is unclear to its participants.

Nevertheless, given the potential for improving learning, of interest to the author of this paper is the amenability of peer assessment in the context of group rehearsal and performance of popular music. How might peer assessment assist students' group-working skills and learning behaviour while rehearsing in their bands? How might it improve tutor monitoring of individuals within groups? What responses to peer assessment of live performances might popular music students provide?



The Curriculum Context

An important source of information in relation to various aspects of peer assessment is the resource pack, *Peer Learning in Music* (Hunter and Russ, 2000), which contains a number of papers and project descriptions. Although it offers an invaluable survey of various initiatives, both group performance and popular music performance appear to be under-represented. However, Warner contributes an interesting paper outlining the distinctive problems of assessing popular music performance in an academic context. One such problem, he suggests, is defining suitable assessment criteria which adequately address the complexity of popular music performance. Involving the peer group and tutor in developing, discussing and agreeing such criteria was useful and 'assessment by peer group is particularly valuable in the evaluation of popular music performance' (66). Hunter and Russ (1996) explore a number of useful peer-assessment approaches to music performance and Hunter (1999) describes some interesting experiments in obtaining individual marks from group work in seminars. Searby and Ewers (1996, 1997a, 1997b) provide a useful contribution to peer assessment in music, particularly in the area of composition, and comparisons between student and tutor marking. Project POP (University of Salford/HEFCE, 1999) offers a CD ROM staff development resource that aims to assist staff with the development of appropriate assessment strategies for assessing popular music performance; however, peer assessment of group-based performances is not investigated.

Certain learning contexts may be more amenable to peer assessment than others. Topping (1998) indicates that problem-based activities and authentic learning contexts are particularly appropriate to these forms of assessment – group performance of music could certainly be characterised as a problem-based learning experience. Searby and Ewers (in Hunter and Russ, 2000) suggest that, in music, peer assessment seems to work particularly well in performance and composition 'where aesthetic judgements are important and knowledge and reasoning arguably less so'. There is significant evidence (Falchikov 1998, Gibbs 1999, Pope 2001) to support the argument that students tend to work harder when being assessed by their peers. Also interesting are the views of Pearce (in Hunter and Russ, 2000) who suggests that peer learning and assessment within a music curriculum can be designed for the promotion of personal attributes which may in turn grow into 'transferable' skills. What is interesting here are the implications for course design and the identification of peer assessment processes that would best assist the promotion of 'personal attributes'.

Working within groups is an essential part of popular music performance. Within the literature that explores group learning behaviour, there exist several models that typify the dynamics and tensions inherent within student rock bands during the cycle of rehearsing and performing. Popular music students would recognise the phases of group development described by Tuckman (1965) and Tuckman and Jensen (1977). They suggest that all groups pass through four sequential stages of development. These stages may be longer or shorter for each group, but all groups will need to experience them. They are *forming*, *storming*, *norming* and *performing*. Peer assessment may have some impact upon the learning behaviours that Tuckman and Jensen associate with each of these stages. For popular music students, *storming* often appears to be the most decisive stage, typified by tensions arising from individuals' commitment, leadership, creative input, responsibility for their own musical learning and many other behavioural attributes. For some bands, this stage is so protracted that there is very little remaining time for them to resolve their conflicts into the *norming* stage as the moment for the performance assessment approaches. If so, the use of a formative intra-peer assessment may assist bands to proceed more speedily through the critical storming stage of rehearsing. Bennett (1980) also considers theoretical models of interactivity within rock groups that may have an effect upon group cohesion in informal assessment. The self-perception inventory of Belbin (1981) was developed as a means of giving group members a way of assessing their best team roles that arguably has resonance with contemporary popular music group performance. Indeed, Bryan (2001) suggests that this inventory could be adapted towards developing effective group behaviour in performance activities through student peer observation.

What emerges from the literature is that there is a gathering body of evidence that supports the argument that peer assessment in group work activities can improve students' learning behaviour. However, this is by no means uniform or consistent from study to study. What appears also to be required is an investigation into the procedures and mechanics of processes that can assist student performance.






Why Should Peer Assessment be Used in our Group Performance Modules?

The BA (Hons) in Popular Music Studies at Barnsley College (validated by the University of Sheffield) includes a core group performance module (Performance Management) for all first-year students. This module is characterised by students rehearsing and performing as bands. There is a strong vocational ethos to the degree and also to this module: students typically perform in a variety of evening venues and their live performances are also assessed in this public context. Typically, there are on average 30 students who, initially, are allocated to 4- or 5-piece bands by the tutors to rehearse and prepare for a number of gigs. The learning outcomes of the module relate not only to on-stage musical performance but also to those aspects of personal and interpersonal attributes and qualities that are essential for professional musicians working in a band.

There seemed to be a number of attractive reasons for introducing peer assessment in the group performance module of the BA in Popular Music Studies:

- (a) The character of the medium and the kinds of creativity produced by students in popular music performance could be considered as being particularly amenable to peer assessment and in preparing students to make judgements and award marks. The subject area – popular music – has historically played an important part in shaping the cultural and sociological experiences of youngsters, teenagers and, indeed, students. Popular chart music is in general written for and experienced by the youth of today and this medium often plays an influential part in shaping their experiences. This, of course, is also true in other curriculum contexts: sport, media, fashion and computer science. Popular music may be amenable to peer assessment in the sense, therefore, that it can play an influential part in youth experience and peer culture.
- (b) The curriculum area of popular music itself can also be thought of as distinctive in the sense that working in groups is a perfectly usual occurrence in performance, and particularly so in popular music. In this sense, rock bands, boy bands, girl bands, and solo artists with typical back line set-up and backing vocals, and so on, are characterised by group-working rather than as an individual endeavour. That is not to say that group work is not to be found in other curricula: students of history, mathematics, natural science and other disciplines are likely to encounter group-work activities at some stage in their academic careers. The point being made is that, for students of popular music (and for the professional pop musician), working in groups is intrinsic to the medium; it is a natural and real-world activity rather than an artificial or contrived setting for the purpose of fulfilling course requirements. An important learning outcome of the *Performance Management* module guide for the course is to 'critically evaluate the contribution of both yourself and your band members to rehearsing and performing'. Peer assessment might identify and provide an evaluation of each individual student's contribution to the rehearsals which would provide useful formative feedback. The injustice caused through the awarding of the same band marks to everyone, when it is clear that some students are 'free-riders', might thus be minimised. Peer assessment would seem to be an appropriate mechanism to use in order to achieve this.
- (c) The potential for employing peer assessment to assist students' learning (Hunter and Russ, 1996, Brown and Dove, 1991), particularly in group work activities relevant to the *Performance Management* module, is an opportunity which surely cannot be ignored. Group work activities are based around the bands' rehearsal and performance cycle throughout the year. Successful band performances are clearly dependent on the quality of the rehearsing in which students' personal and interpersonal attributes are as much a part of the process as individual musical ability. Developing the kinds of learning behaviour that will assist the quality of each student's contribution to the rehearsing is critical to the teaching of this module. 'Learning behaviour' in this context can be likened to a set of learning outcomes or attributes that are related to group rehearsal and performance (for example: students' creative input, commitment to the band, musical versatility, willingness to compromise, leadership skills, responsibility for learning own part). Enabling students to assess their band members' learning behaviour across an agreed range of personal attributes allows further opportunities for monitoring each individual student's progress and identifying problems. The impact upon and responses to peer



assessment arising from investigating students' personal attributes during band rehearsals will provide much in terms of formative evaluation and feedback. Pearce (in Hunter and Russ, 2000: 46) in fact regards students' personal attributes as an area that is 'central to the educational process' and one meriting investigation as to whether 'the music ensemble awards marks to each other based on...personal attributes'.

- (d) Assessing band performances across various pop music genres is by no means straightforward. Through involving a panel of senior student peer assessors to grade a band's performances one may argue that the reliability of such an assessment increases given the greater number of connoisseur markers.

How Should we Introduce Peer Learning and Assessment?

Wherever possible the advice that is offered through the experiences of other practitioners regarding the implementation of the peer learning and assessment programmes was adopted. The programme was guided by a survey of current practice. The advice offered by Race (1998), Fullerton and Rafik (1998) Habeshaw *et al* (1993) was particularly useful for introducing our peer learning and assessment programmes.

- (i) *Peer assessment is best introduced at or near the beginning of the students' course, ie, in their first year.*

First-year students are unlikely to have preconceptions or strong opinions about what assessment should be like in higher education and are usually open to new ideas. Senior students, on the other hand, may be more resistant to peer assessment if introduced for the first time in year 2 or year 3. Peer assessment consequently was introduced at entry level to the degree.

- (ii) *Ensure that marks which may be awarded through peer assessment are not given an exaggerated weighting within the total marking scheme, particularly if the peer-assessed element counts significantly towards a student's final degree classification.*

BA1 students are assessed at the end of the year on a pass or fail basis. The marks for the year are not carried forward to their final degree classification.

- (iii) *Inform students of the process.*

We strive towards promoting openness and transparency about peer assessment and explain our rationale in involving students in the assessment process. A project brief describing the nature of the task and how it will be assessed accompanies each assignment. Students are responsible for selecting the criteria upon which their performances are assessed.

- (iv) *Use a moderation procedure.*

Tutor moderation is always available for each peer assessment activity. At each performance, either one or two tutors also assess the bands and, where necessary, moderate students' marking if it is felt that the marks are too severe or too lenient.

- (v) *Introduce it gradually.*

In terms of exposure elsewhere to peer assessment, no other modules employ this mode of assessment in BA1. In confining peer assessment to Performance Management only (effectively one sixth of the course), it was felt that no imbalance or distortion of marks would be likely to occur.

Peer Learning and Assessment in Action

Peer assessment in popular music group performance commenced in 1999 at Barnsley College and is a constantly evolving process. Emphasis is placed upon obtaining students' responses to the programme in order to further develop and refine our operational techniques and rationale. This is achieved through class discussion, interviews, questionnaires and focus groups, as appropriate.



Inter-Peer and Intra-Peer Assessment

Peer assessment generally falls into two types which are described by Brown (1999) as *Inter-Peer assessment* and *Intra-Peer assessment*. When students assess other students (for example, when band performances are assessed by other students) this is referred to as an Inter-Peer assessment. Alternatively, when students assess other students with whom they have been working (for example, when a band member assesses the contribution to rehearsals of his other band members), this is known as Intra-Peer assessment.

Inter-Peer Assessment: the Assessors

We arrange for BA3 (and occasionally BA2) performance students to act as assessors for the BA1 band performances. By involving year 2 and year 3 performance students as inter-peer assessors we believe that the performers benefit from receiving assessment and feedback derived from students possessing greater experience in terms of their performance ability and knowledge of performing standards. These senior students are not unfamiliar with evaluating the performances of their peers and providing feedback. They attend a weekly performance workshop class (the '*Rota*') in which students perform to each other and receive peer feedback. A description of this is to be found in Davis and Pulman (2001). It is felt, nevertheless, that some additional training for these student assessors is required. This consists of a multimedia presentation about their role in peer learning and assessment and a discussion about the various issues. There is also a mock assessment and marking session based upon video-recordings of band performances given by former students. The tutor normally determines the composition of the BA2 and BA3 assessment panels on the basis of providing a balance of individual expertise - vocals, guitar, bass, drums and keyboard. Occasionally students themselves are invited to put together their own assessment panel. Usually performances take place in a pub or club and run as a live evening gig, with between four and eight bands performing.

At the end of the performances the student panel meets with the tutors to discuss their feedback and assessments. Student panels regularly impress tutors with the professionalism with which they approach their task of reaching agreement. They also supply written feedback for each band. This is sometimes written up on the night of the performances, but more usually they arrange to meet again to produce a more considered (and legible!) report.

Out of the 100+ band performances that have been peer assessed by panels over the last four years, only in a few instances has significant tutor moderation been required. In fact, there has been a remarkable consistency of agreement between peer- and tutor-marking, which in turn has provided confidence for the student assessors and encouragement for tutors in observing students increasing their knowledge of making judgements based on the assessment criteria.

Inter-Peer Assessment: the Student Bands

The following is a summary of the assessment plan used for the BA1 *Performance Management* module for the academic year 2001-2 involving 50 students:

Table 1

2001-2002	% Weighting	Assignment summary	Assessment
Induction Project	Advisory mark given	The performance of one song selected from a set list of titles	Summative assessment by tutors
Christmas party gig	33%	A 3-song set performed at a local pub	Inter-peer assessment by BA3 Intra-peer review
Venues and audiences	33%	A 15 minute set performed at a local secondary school	Inter-Peer assessment by BA3 Intra-Peer review
70s night and 80s night	34%	A short set themed to 70s or 80s nights in a local pub	Inter-peer assessment by BA3 or BA2 Intra-peer assessment within each band

Initially, students are placed in four- or five-piece bands by the tutor. The assignment brief is discussed and it is explained that BA3 performance students will assess the group performances, with tutors moderating the students' marks should this become necessary. Transparency and ownership of assessment is promoted through students being invited to generate their own assessment criteria. This is achieved via brainstorming; students typically generate an extensive list. Votes are taken whether to retain or discard each criterion (because of duplication or being inappropriate). Students then consider whether any particular criterion should be given extra weighting. Voting (a show of hands) occurs at every step of this process. For a performance assignment in December 2000 (*Christmas Party*) the following assessment criteria were generated by the BA1 Performance Management class (with holistic criteria being favoured over category-weighted criteria):

Table 2

<i>Audience communication</i>
<i>Entertainment value</i>
<i>Enthusiasm</i>
<i>Flow and continuity</i>
<i>Musicality</i>
<i>Presentation</i>
<i>Professionalism</i>
<i>Tightness</i>

By contrast, Table 3 contains the assessment criteria agreed by the BA1 Performance Management class for their assignment in May 2003 (*A Seventies Night*). Again, students adopted a holistic approach rather than specifying individual category-weighted criteria:

Table 3

<i>Technical accuracy</i>
<i>Musical arrangement captures the feel of the eraloriginal recording</i>
<i>Order of songs/set</i>
<i>70s appearance</i>
<i>Stage presence (energy/visual presence)</i>

Intra-Peer Assessments of the Rehearsing

Popular music performance is by no means the only real-world activity where what is to be learned is intrinsically collective and individualistic modes of assessment make little sense, but where, nevertheless, we are obliged to give individual participants discrete scores for their contributions. In order to identify the individual contributions of each band member to the rehearsing, it was decided (from the outset in 1999) to base the intra-peer assessment on the technique adopted by Hunter (1999). An evaluation form is given to each student asking them to rate each band member's contribution to the assignment. If a student believes that there was an uneven contribution within their group, then there should be a comment to explain why an individual was allocated more than or less than the average. The scores are then totalled and expressed as a proportion of the performance mark awarded to the whole band. An example appears in Table 4.

Table 4

Band 1: Funky Macs							
Overall performance band mark awarded by BA3 Peer Panel = 7/16							
Student	SM	FT	MB	CC	Intra-Peer %	% Expressed as a proportion of the performance mark	Individual student mark (rounded)
SM	25	30	20	25	100	7.0	7/16
FT	25	30	40	25	120	8.4	8/16
MB	30	30	30	25	115	8.05	8/16
CC	20	10	10	25	65	4.55	5/16
Totals	100	100	100	100	400		

Table 4 reveals that the student regarded as having the poorest contribution to rehearsing was CC and although that student considered that everybody in the band contributed equally, her colleagues clearly disagreed. Occasionally, band members are asked to complete reports without the opportunity for consultation. Tutors sometimes decide upon this approach when it is suspected that collusion (pre-meditated agreement at the expense of an unpopular student) or some other practice might distort an otherwise impartial intra-peer assessment. Usually, however, groups are encouraged to collaborate to decide upon a fair distribution. (The accompanying student comments are not normally returned for reasons of confidentiality although their marks may indicate the nature of these.) The intra-peer assessment is then factored into the summative band performance mark.



It is interesting to compare intra-peer assessments with the mark that was awarded for the band performance as a whole. For example an Intra-Peer assessment was given to the BA1 class in May 2001, the assignment being an 80s decade tribute. No band marks had been disclosed to the students at this stage thus avoiding any student being influenced by the knowledge of their performance mark.

Table 5

Band	Mark/16	Distribution	Band	Mark/16	Distribution
Band A	6	Equal	Band I	15	Equal
Band B	9	Equal	Band E	14	Equal
Band C	12	Unequal	Band F	12	Unequal
Band K	15	Equal	Band L	9	Unequal
Band G	9	Unequal	Band H	11	Equal
Band J	14	Equal	Band D	13	Equal

There appears to be a relationship between bands whose members *feel* that they had performed well (*ie*, before bands receive their performance mark) and a tendency for these students to distribute their intra-peer marks evenly (indicating all had contributed equally to rehearsals). Conversely, bands whose members *feel* that they had performed less well are more likely to opt for a varied distribution of *intra-peer* marks, indicating an unequal contribution to the rehearsing.

Group Cohesion and Intra-Peer Assessment

There are concerns, however, that the use of this intra-peer mechanism (that requires students to assess their fellow band members) might have a negative effect upon group cohesion. It is desirable to evaluate, in advance, the desirability of maintaining group cohesion against the risks caused by employing this potentially divisive assessment process.

With this in mind, it is appropriate to examine whether a relationship exists between the effects of inter- and intra-peer assessments upon band personnel changes. Table 6 (in which the marks relate to the BA1 assignment of March 2001, *Venues and Audiences*), outlines the personnel changes following performances that were both intra- and inter-peer assessed.

Table 6

Band	Mark/16	Personnel changes	Band	Mark/16	Personnel changes
Band 1	10	2 changes from 5	Band 7	10	1 change from 5
Band 2	10	All 5 unchanged	Band 8	9	All 5 unchanged
Band 3	7	All 5 changed	Band 9	4	1 change from 5
Band 4	9	All 5 unchanged	Band 10	8	All 5 unchanged
Band 5	11	2 changes from 5	Band 11	7	3 changes from 5
Band 6	13	All 5 unchanged	Band 12	4	All 4 changed

The average mark for the bands that decided not to change their line up was higher than those bands that did wish to change. The suggestion (and typical of group comparisons elsewhere) is that the higher the mark, the more probable the band will remain together.





Assessment Criteria, Learning Behaviour and Personal Attributes

Important to our rationale of using peer assessment in popular music group performance is its potential for monitoring and assisting students' learning behaviour. Beginning in 2001, other procedures have been used to promote student-generated assessment criteria. These procedures encourage each student to carefully consider developing a set of learning outcomes that are particular to their rehearsing and personal to themselves and their band. These learning outcomes, based upon rehearsing, can be likened to personal attributes. In doing this, students are being encouraged to extend their personal ownership of the intra-peer-assessment criteria. As a result, a process has been developed in order to generate separate group-derived criteria and subsequently individual student-derived criteria. Typically, following a discussion of the performance project brief, a class brainstorming session produces a substantial list of 'personal attributes' that are thought to be appropriate for them during the rehearsal cycle of the assignment. These are listed on the board. Students working individually then identify five of these attributes (or any others not already named) that they regard as being the most important for them in terms of group-work rehearsing. For the assignment in December 2001 the class produced the following personal attributes (Table 7) ranked in terms of frequency of occurrence:

Table 7

Attendance	18
Enthusiasm	12
Organisation	12
Patience	10
Team working	10
Musicianship	8
Social skills	8
Compromise	8
Musical Versatility	7
Leadership	6
Experience	5
Contribution to ideas	4
Listening skills	4
13 other qualities	<4

If we accept that, when rehearsing in groups, what students learn in this context is intrinsically collective, it was felt appropriate that this should be reflected in a number of group attributes. Each band generates these attributes (typically three) collaboratively as mutually agreeable qualities by which each student is assessed. In order for a student's individual involvement to be reflected, each student generates a further set of attributes which they regard as personal strengths that can be assessed by the rest of their group. Many of these attributes tend to be described in a single word, such as Enthusiasm, Organisation and Attendance, or short phrases such as Contributing to Ideas – all qualities that are highly appropriate to the rehearsing stage of the activity. Additionally, for each of these attributes, students are asked to consider the opposite, eg: Patience-Irritability. Finally, each student then completes a Personal Attributes form as illustrated in Table 8:

Table 8

Agree on the **THREE** most important attributes that identify the quality of each member's individual contribution to **YOUR** group. Identify **THREE** more that are individual to you.

- 1 Group Attribute: Attendance (lack of attendance)
- 2 Group Attribute: Listening skills (ignorance)
- 3 Group Attribute: Enthusiasm (apathy)
- 4 Individual Attribute (personal strength): Organisation (disorganised)
- 5 Individual Attribute (personal strength): Social skills (unsociable)
- 6 Individual Attribute (personal strength): Patience (intolerance)

NAME:

It is then possible to conduct an intra-peer assessment that is based upon each student's chosen personal attributes. The data obtained can be used for a variety of purposes. It is very much a snapshot in time of the learning behaviour of each individual during rehearsals, based upon performance-related personal attributes that they have generated. Table 9 provides an example of this from December 2001. Each student assessed their band members across the grid using a scale of 1 (poor/negative) to 4 (excellent/positive).

Table 9

Band D	Agreed Group Attributes			Individual Attributes (personal strengths)						
Rate each member/ attribute using 4,3,2 or 1	Attendance (Lack of Attendance)	Listening skills (Ignorance)	Enthusiasm (Apathy)	Organisation (Disorganised)	Social skills (Unsociable)	Patience (Intolerance)	Leadership (Shy)	Versatility (Narrow minded)	Experienced (Inexperienced)	Willingness to Compromise (Unwillingness to change)
TK	4	3	3	N/A	N/A	3	4	3	N/A	N/A
DN	2	3	2	N/A	1	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	3
HP	1	3	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	2	N/A	N/A
LA	3	3	3	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A

Name: TK Date: December 2001 (BA1 Performance Management *Christmas Party* assignment)

Student TK completed this grid. The scores of all four band members' grids were then totalled to provide the tutor and students with the complete assessment profile. This approach to peer assessment, which uses personal attributes, can be flexible, depending upon its purpose. Students can complete the assessment grid in private or in collaboration; it may be deployed at the midpoint of the rehearsing cycle (for formative assessment, monitoring or diagnostic purposes) or after the performance; data can be used as marks that contribute towards the final assessment of each individual, or for advisory purposes only.


During the 2003 *Venues and Audiences* assignment the assessment matrix was used twice: initially, mid way through the six-week rehearsal cycle and, subsequently, after the bands had performed the gigs. The purpose of the first assessment was diagnostic – a formative assessment with feedback to each individual. The final assessment, however, contributed towards the students' grade. For this assignment, each student was asked to carefully consider three individual attributes that they felt each could improve upon.

Table 10

March 2003 Band: AMBER	Your Group Attributes			Your Individual Attributes ('Personal Weaknesses') N/A=not applicable to you								TOTAL
Use 1-5 scale 1= negative/poor 3= neutral/average 5= positive/excellent	Professionalism (Unprofessional)	Punctual (Not Punctual)	Organised (Disorganised)	Good timing & rhythm (Poor timing & rhythm)	Memorising chord structures (Not good at memorising)	Being early to set up (Not being early)	Confident (Unconfident)	Stage presence (Poor stage presence)	Communicating with band (Not communicating with band)	Listen to what others are saying (not listening to...)	Creative input into arrangement (No creative input...)	
SD	14/20	13/20	16/20	11/20	11/20	11/20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	76/120
RC	15/20	15/20	17/20	N/A	N/A	N/A	15/20	13/20	16/20	N/A	N/A	91/120
KF	14/20	15/20	15/20	N/A	N/A	N/A	17/20	15/20	N/A	11/20	N/A	87/120
DG	14/20	18/20	16/20	N/A	N/A	N/A	13/20	N/A	11/20	N/A	11/20	83/120

Table 11

KF March 2003	14/20	15/20	15/20	N/A	N/A	N/A	17/20	15/20	N/A	11/20	N/A	87/120
KF April 2003	15/20	17/20	18/20	N/A	N/A	N/A	13/20	15/20	N/A	13/20	N/A	91/120
KF June 2003	16/20	15/20	15/20	N/A	N/A	N/A	14/20	18/20	N/A	14/20	N/A	92/120



In Table 10 these named 'personal weaknesses' appear on the right for each student. The assessment reveals that their personal weaknesses (*Individual Attributes*) are, unsurprisingly, well below their Group Attribute ratings. This particular assessment took place during March 2003. It was repeated in April (after the band had performed at the gig) with very little overall change - in fact some of the ratings had slightly deteriorated! When it was repeated in May, however, the ratings revealed a significant improvement across the *Individual Attributes* (or personal weaknesses). The assessments for *Group Attributes* remained at a similar level throughout all three assessments.

Providing that the band's personnel and their chosen personal attributes remain the same, it is possible to construct a crude longitudinal comparison from assessment to assessment. Table 11 compares the three assessments that took place between early March and late May 2003. The assessments, involving the band AMBER, indicate that student KF has generally improved upon the 'personal weaknesses' set of attributes. Whether indeed this is actually the case may be determined via a tutorial. And, if it is, what has been the impact of peer assessment upon these personal attributes?

Other Comparisons

It is interesting to make comparisons between the band mark that was awarded for the performance and the group's own intra-peer assessments of their personal attributes (both individual and group). Spearman Rank Correlation and Pearson Product Moment tests have been performed on all the assessment data collected during the academic year 2001-2002. For example, there is a fairly strong correlation between groups who had performed well and had produced high group attributes ratings. One interpretation is that a strong group performance at a gig is also reflected in strong mutually shared agreements about what the band feel as a whole is important to them. Conversely, there was little correlation between bands who had performed well and their individual attribute ratings. Does this suggest that being a team player is of greater importance than individual expertise when rehearsing in a band? There is a saying in the music business that success is made up of 20% musical talent and 80% being able to get on with people!

A Peer-Assessment Process Model for Popular Music Group Performance

What seems to be increasingly apparent is that application of the particular peer assessment process itself is having its own effect on students' learning behaviour. Not only is peer assessment of band performances and personal attributes impacting upon this, but the actual operational mechanics of the process also appears to have a contributory effect. Indeed, Lejk and Wyvill (2002), in exploring student responses towards category-based and holistic criteria in a peer assessment, discovered that the actual process chosen had an effect on student behaviour. This effect, which was unforeseen, 'raises the question of whether the method of peer assessment used has some influence on the extent to which students work cooperatively in a group assessment'(577). Process features within the rehearsing and performance cycle of popular music can include:

- sequence and timing of particular assessment activities;
- choice and decision-making (negotiating criteria, for example);
- method/delivery of feedback;
- selection of peer-assessing panels and band personnel;
- decisions regarding the use of formative and/or summative assessment;
- options of intra- and/or inter-peer assessment.

A possible process model for peer assessment of group performance, based on our experiences, is given at Appendix 1.



The Research Perspective

During the academic years 1999-2003 there was a total of 100 Inter- and 90 Intra-Peer group assessments involving BA Popular Music students. A number of research methods are being used, including Action Research and Correlation Analysis. The following is a brief summary of the findings:

- There was a strong consistency of agreement in marking between student panels and that of the tutors.
- The intra-peer assessment method was effective in terms of identifying the individual contributions to group rehearsals and there was evidence (based upon repeated quantitative intra-peer assessments) that certain personal attributes improve between assignments.
- There were concerns that the intra-peer processes being used could damage group cohesion and the use of this assessment approach requires an evaluation of the desirability of maintaining this.
- The context of the performance (public or private) appeared to be of greater significance than the chosen method of assessment. Performances given to a peer audience had a similar effect in terms of improved motivation to that given to a peer assessment panel.
- Popular music students typically generated performance assessment criteria that were holistic rather than in specifically weighted categories.
- Peer panels tended not to adopt a rigid approach in compartmentalising or quantifying the performances according to the criteria in their post-performance discussions.
- When specific weightings were allocated to individual categories of criteria, peer panels discussed the relevant aspects of the performance in broad sweeps (and in fine detail where appropriate) as if they were using holistic criteria.
- There was a fairly strong correlation between bands that had performed well and their intra-peer assessed group attributes. One interpretation was that a strong band performance was also reflected by strongly shared agreements about what the group feel as a whole to be important. Conversely, there was little correlation between bands that had performed well and the rating of their intra-peer assessed individual attributes. This suggested that students' group working attributes were of greater significance than individual attributes during rehearsing.
- The strongest correlation was between both sets of attributes: group and individual. If students assessed their group attributes highly then it probably followed that their individual attributes were on a similar level. Conversely, a band which gave themselves a mediocre group attributes intra-peer assessment – as a consequence, say, of poor attendance or apathy – was also likely to experience a low individual peer-esteem represented by a mediocre rating of their individual attributes.
- The next strongest correlation was between the performance mark of a band and their averaged group attributes. In other words, a band that received a good mark for its performance was likely also to have produced a high group attributes rating.
- There was a fairly strong correlation also between the performance mark obtained by a band and their averaged individual attributes.
- The chosen process itself, when applying an intra-peer assessment, had an effect upon how the students assess their band members.



- There was evidence, through repeating quantitative intra-peer assessments, that students' learning behaviour (based upon their group and individual attributes) generally improved from assignment to assignment.
- Students considered that it was helpful for the peer panel to attend some band rehearsals in order to understand the performance intentions of the band and clarify aspects of the inter-peer assessment.
- Peer panels disliked providing feedback in person to the bands.
- In interviews, peer panels thought that their assessing experiences developed in them: a greater objectivity and impartiality in judging performances, maturity as a musician, ability to partition performance levels through using grading systems and being able to relate criteria to performances, better awareness of what they themselves ought to be considering in their own performances.
- Feedback derived from intra-peer assessment that was sensitive or personal posed ethical problems and in some cases this was withheld.
- A few panel students questioned whether they should be awarding marks as well as providing feedback.
- Most students, after some initial apprehension, felt that awarding marks as well as providing written feedback was appropriate towards understanding how performances might be assessed and was useful in their own performance preparations.
- More input into preparing panel students and equipping them with the skills for assessing was required.
- Student-generated criteria were often variable in quality and clarity. Better communication between student bands and peer panels was required in order for holistic criteria to be explained more clearly.

Conclusion

There is much work to be done in beginning to comprehend the complexities of what is being learned collectively in group work. If the development of personal attributes is considered as being central to the education process, then in the context of group rehearsing, how amenable is peer assessment towards assisting this development?

Peer learning and assessment is continuing to evolve in our group performance modules; the approaches that are being used to assist student learning within groups appear to be having a positive impact in general and this offers some encouragement for future developments.

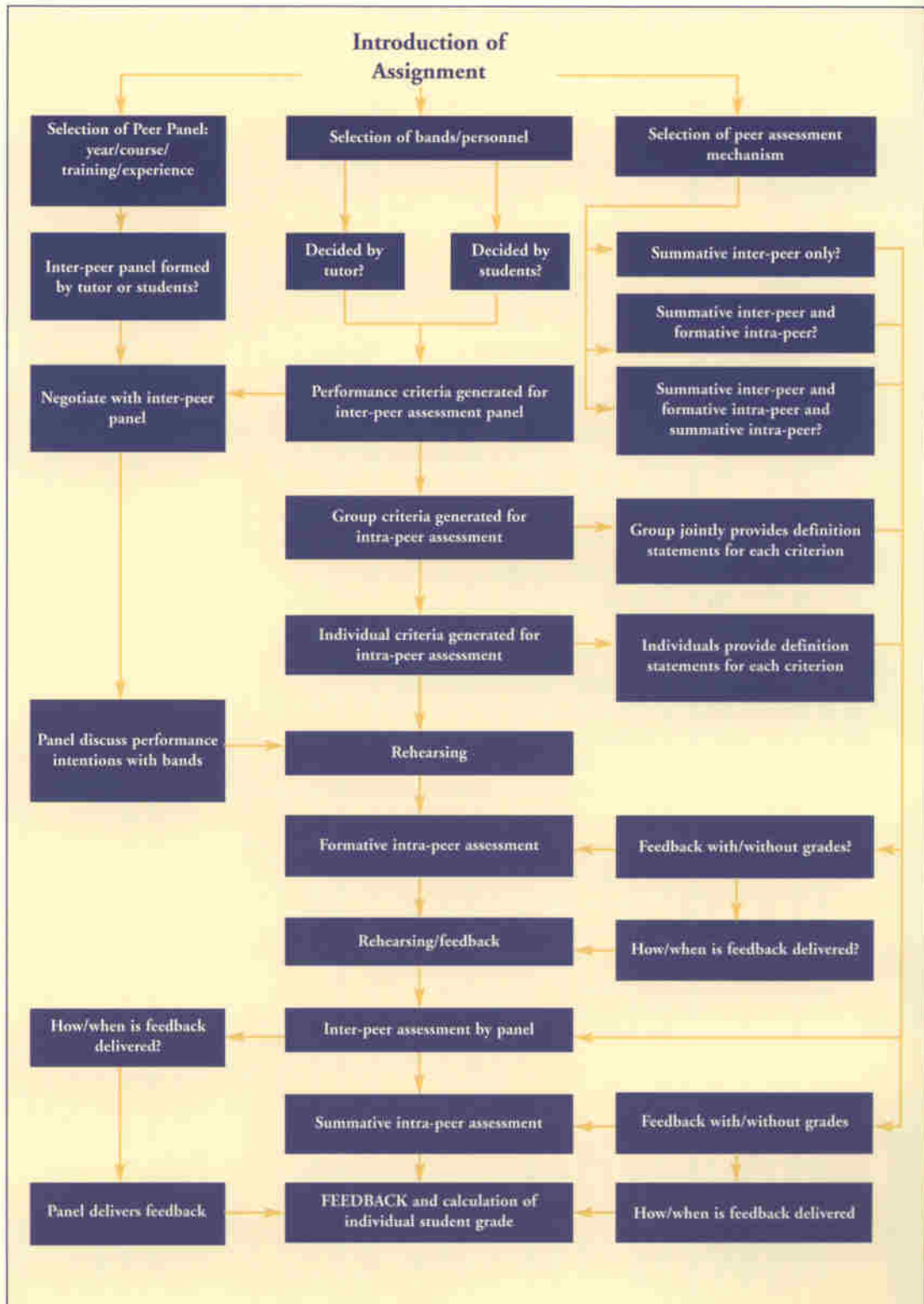
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Appendix 1

Possible Peer-Assessment Process Model for Group Performance



TS

Appendix 2

Including Self Assessments April 2003 Band: The Mincers	Your Group Attributes			Your Individual Attributes (personal weaknesses) N/A = not applicable to you								
Use 1-5 scale 1= negative/poor 3= neutral/average 5= positive/excellent	Attendance (Not turning up)	Learning part (Not learning part)	Punctuality (not on time)	Commitment to group and songs (Not committed to ...)	Good with the arrangement (Not good with arrangement)	Be less self conscious (Being self-conscious)	Keeping calm (Temper)	Creative input (No creative input)	Knowledge of current popular music (Poor knowledge...)	More flexible with technical piano input (Not flexible with technical/piano input)	Teamwork (lack of)	TOTAL
AH	20	20	20	N/A	17	16	N/A	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	109/120
TS	20	19	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	18	18	16	N/A	N/A	111/120
KW	12	13	13	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	14	N/A	16	N/A	81/120
NM	20	20	20	18	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	N/A	N/A	17	112/120

The Attributes that your band members considered the strongest are printed **Bold**

The Attributes that your band members considered the weakest are Underlined and you may wish to improve upon these over the next rehearsals!!

BAND PERFORMANCE MARK=45%

Average Individual Peer Assessment Mark: 103 (=100%)

Your Individual Peer Assessment Mark = 111

Your Mark expressed as a % of the Average = 111 divided by 103 (and multiplied by 100) = 108%

Your Final Mark = Band Mark(45%) multiplied by your individual percentage (108%) and divided by 100.

Your Final Individual Mark for the Venues & Audiences Assignment = 48%

BA1 / Popular Music Studies	Assessment Criteria/ Outcomes and Evidence
Module Title Performance Management	
Project Title Christmas Party	Assessment criteria will be outcomed as follows:
<p>Project Brief</p> <p>You are to organise and provide music for your 'Christmas Party' which is provisionally booked for the evenings of 17th/18th December at The Upstairs Room at The Assembly. You should work within the group in which you have been placed. Each group should prepare a programme of 10-15 minutes' performing time. You should plan your rehearsal time in agreement with the group members and in liaison with your Performance Management tutor. You may use existing music or you may compose your own music especially for the performance. You will need to manage the logistics involved - equipment, setups and sound checks and liaise with the sound engineer.</p> <p>As rehearsal time and space is limited during the class sessions, your group may need to book rehearsal slots additionally at other times either here in Honeywell or elsewhere. Organising your group rehearsals is a key element towards achieving success in the Performance Management module.</p> <p>Students are expected to fully contribute to the many performing opportunities of the Music Department. Participation in concerts and performing events involving the Music Department may provide supporting material such as programmes, posters, press reviews and photographs. The practical nature of this module allows for evidence to be gathered during the regular instrumental or vocal lessons in the form of a lesson diary or log book and other performing material with which the student has been involved.</p>	<p>Students will be peer assessed in bands by BA3 Performance Techniques student panel using the following assessment criteria that you agreed upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of good technical control • Musicality (dynamics/tuning etc) • Continuity • Contrasting set <p>Entertainment value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience communication (visuals) • Stage presence • Composure/Confidence <p>Each band member will also be peer-assessed on their contribution to the rehearsing based upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Agreed Group Attributes • Your Three Individual Attributes <p>These will be numerically assessed and will show your contribution to the rehearsals based upon the six personal attributes.</p> <p>This mark will then be converted into a % representing your contribution out of 100% for the whole band. For example in a four-piece band an average contribution would be equivalent to 25%. In a five-piece band an average contribution would be 20%.</p> <p><u>Your final mark will be calculated from:</u></p> <p>The mark awarded to your band multiplied by your totalled % contribution to the rehearsing by your band members. (e.g. a four piece band may award you 25% + 30% + 25% + 30% = 110%. If your band mark is 55% then your final mark is $55 \times \frac{110}{100} = 60\%$)</p>
Assignment Date: 3 Nov 2002 Submission Date: 17/18th Dec 2002	Return Date: N/A Tutor: MP/DH Ref: BA1PMS