

United Kingdom, A Common Approach 2002

A Common Approach 2002 (ACA 2002) provides an Instrumental / Vocal Curriculum. It does not intend to be prescriptive but aims to improve the quality of musical experience for all pupils by encouraging instrumental / vocal teachers to reflect on, develop and improve their professional skills, knowledge and understanding.

Background

During the 1990s the disparity between Music Services in respect of the instrumental / vocal curriculum they provided became more evident, both in terms of content and delivery. At the same time, the Department for Education and Skills started to exert more pressure in order to raise standards in all areas of education. In response, some Music Services started to develop their own schemes of work with a view to achieving more consistency and coherence within their Service. In 1996 the Federation of Music Services and the National Association of Music Educators decided to build on these schemes of work and to produce a document at national level. Eventually, in 1998, A Common Approach - a framework for an instrumental / vocal curriculum - was produced. This, however, only provided a generic framework and did not go as far as offering family-specific programmes of study, units of work, etc. In response to requests from instrumental / vocal teachers for more guidance with family-specific issues, therefore, the Federation of Music Services and the National Association of Music Educators with the help of a generous grant from The Leverhulme Trust, embarked on a long period of consultation with instrumental / vocal teachers, with a view to building on the original document and taking it a stage further.

Concept

As far as known, it is for the first time an instrumental / vocal curriculum has been drawn together at national level and has been built on the expertise and experience of many teachers nationally.

ACA 2002 includes a generic section (section one) and nine 'family' sections (section two). All the sections can be purchased separately or in any combination. The generic section is presented as a separate booklet and the various families are provided in a ringed binder. The intention is to offer maximum flexibility.

Section two uses the framework and thinking of section one to develop five long-term 'family'-specific programmes of study. Each of the five programmes of study contains learning objectives and related musical/teaching activities. Next, examples of units of work illustrate how the objectives and activities can be brought together in a holistic approach to teaching and learning. Finally, some summaries of outcomes are provided to help with assessment and tracking pupils' progress.

Objectives

The overall aim of ACA 2002 is to improve the quality of musical experience for all pupils by encouraging teachers to reflect on, develop and improve their professional skills, knowledge and understanding. More detailed objectives include:

- to provide broad and balanced 'family'-specific programmes of study
- to encourage an holistic approach to teaching and learning
- to suggest learning objectives and related musical / teaching activities
- to seek to strengthen agreed levels and standards of pupil attainment
- to illustrate how musical/teaching activities can be integrated within units of work
- to provide models of long-, medium- and short-term planning
- to offer guidance on planning and assessment

ACA 2002 also seeks to encourage: engaging, harnessing and deepening pupils' feelings towards music at all stages of learning (developing intrinsic motivation), proactive teaching, recognising and building on pupil autonomy, developing pupils' musical independence and greater coherence and consistency in approach.

Description

ACA 2002 is targeted primarily at instrumental / vocal teachers, although Heads of School Music Departments and Junior Departments of Conservatoires, classroom music teachers, primary music co-ordinators and organisations involved in the training of instrumental / vocal teachers may find it illuminating as well.

The generic section includes:

- a rationale for instrumental / vocal teaching
- a statement on inclusion: learning opportunities for all children
- thoughts on: commitment, the critical importance of listening, continuity and progression, assessment, recording and reporting, teaching young children and adults, lifelong learning, the uses of information and communication technology
- a generic framework (developed from the original Common Approach of 1998), an exemplar of an holistic approach to teaching and learning
- templates for: a unit of work, short-term planning
- issues relating to practising - independent learning
- notes on accommodation, health and safety, etc.

The family sections include:

- five family-specific programmes of study, each programme containing: a brief summary, learning objectives, possible related musical/teaching activities, points to note
- specimen units of work for each programme
- summaries of learning outcomes
- a summary of learning objectives

Most of the family sections have a glossary of terms as well.

The learning objectives have been categorised into six interrelated areas:

- listening and internalising
- making and controlling musical sounds: developing technique
- creating, developing and interpreting musical ideas
- playing / singing music
- playing / singing music with others
- performing and communicating

Four themes recur throughout the five programmes: 1. expressing feelings and ideas 2. using creativity, imagination and intuition 3. developing skills, knowledge and understanding 4. reflecting on and evaluating progress.

Organisation

ACA 2002 was written by instrumental / vocal teachers for instrumental / vocal teachers. Some 60 teachers were directly involved in the nine family-specific working parties, the co-ordinators of which formed part of a wider steering group. In addition there was a consultative group chaired by the director of the Royal College of Music. Many more teachers, however, participated in the consultative process either by responding to draft documentation and / or by contributing to discussions up and down the country.

Publicity

A Common Approach 2002 is distributed exclusively throughout the world by Faber Music Distribution, +44 1279828982, sales@fabermusic.com.

Results

The response to ACA 2002 has been very enthusiastic and encouraging. It is recognised that in many ways ACA 2002 is only a starting point. Indeed, several suggestions have already been received in respect of future developments and investigation, like adapting world music and music technology.

Information

For more information: Royal College of Music, www.rcm.ac.uk / Federation of Music Services, www.federationmusic.org.uk / National Association of Music Educators, www.name.org.uk.

Source: Richard Hickman Project Co-ordinator / Chief Executive, Federation of Music Services, February 2003