

## **Tackling the 'full' music technology option in the Leaving Certificate practical examination: A longitudinal case study.**

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Leaving Certificate students who choose the 'full' music technology option for their practical examination are required to make a backing track, perform to it and demonstrate how they used the software to achieve a musical result. Teachers who have no studio experience have been reluctant to promote this activity due to the high-stakes nature of the Leaving Certificate, their own lack of training in the area and the possibility of following more conventional routes. This paper focuses on the work of one teacher who has tackled the option head-on and who has, to date, prepared thirty-four students for practical examination through it. A longitudinal case study was chosen as a suitable methodology for tracing the development of her pedagogy, while addressing the research question, "How can a classically-trained music teacher help students to create and perform to a backing track in the Leaving Certificate examination?" Over a period of eleven years, data were gathered using qualitative tools including observation, semi-structured interviews and analysis of the musical artefacts in relation to syllabus criteria. The emerging pedagogy fell into three phases, coinciding with the availability of sequencers, notation programmes and audio editors. Findings show that for a musically-effective performance, certain key variables underpin creative choices. These include different musical genres, instruments and computer programmes, the student's performing ability and the teacher's arranging experience. In the allied discussion, learning outcomes are examined, student achievement is noted and the teacher's openness to musical experimentation is highlighted. Finally, recommendations are made regarding assessment procedures.