

Music A-Level

Welcome to the course!

This booklet is designed as a basic introduction to the course. It sets out the course content as well as how it will run. It also outlines the expectations we have of you and what you can expect from us.

Over the course of A-level music you will be given the opportunity to make massive strides in your musicianship both practically and academically.

You **will** need to approach this course with an open mind and a willingness to work **very** hard (even on musical topics which don't immediately blow you away); it's not a 'doss' subject...

You **will** need basic staff notation literacy (the ability to read and write in those funny little dots and lines – see the summer assignments page).

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Course outline

The course is divided into three main units:

1. Performing
30%

2. Composing
30%

3. Appraising
40%

What's involved in each unit?

Performing (30%)

- a performance of music of your choice lasting at least eight minutes
 - several pieces or one long piece if it demonstrates enough of your technique
- can be solo, ensemble or a combination of both
- recorded at any point during the course
- more than one attempt is acceptable but the whole recital must be recorded together
- externally assessed (recorded and sent off to an examiner)

Composing (30%)

- two compositions; one fairly creative based on a brief and one more technical study
 - the composition based on a brief will be four minutes long under one of the following headings
 - vocal music
 - instrumental music
 - music for film
 - popular music and Jazz
 - fusion
 - new directions
 - free composition
 - the technical study lasting one minute is based on
 - Bach chorale
 - 2-part counterpoint
 - arrangement
 - remix

Composition will take place throughout the course to prepare the skills needed.

Appraising (40%)

- in depth study of 18 set works (music of different styles/periods - see Set Works)
- two hour exam
 - A: areas of study and dictation
 - extracts from the set works played on CD – short answer questions
 - one short melody/rhythm dictation exercise
 - B: extended response
 - two longer answer questions:
 - 20 mark question based on comparing an unfamiliar piece heard on CD to one of the studied set works
 - 30 mark analysis of one of the set works

Don't believe me? Check out the syllabus yourself! (next page...)

Component 1: Performing (*Component code: 9MU0/01)
<i>Non-examined assessment: externally assessed</i>
<i>30% of the qualification</i>
<i>60 marks</i>
Content overview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches to performing
Assessment overview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A public performance of one or more pieces, performed as a recital. Performance can be playing or singing solo, in an ensemble, improvising, or realising music using music technology. The total performance time across all pieces must be a minimum of 8 minutes. Performances must be recorded after 1 March in the year of certification and all materials for assessment submitted to arrive by 15 May in the year of certification.

Component 2: Composing (*Component code: 9MU0/02)
<i>Non-examined assessment: externally assessed</i>
<i>30% of the qualification</i>
<i>60 marks</i>
Content overview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches to composing
Assessment overview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total of two compositions, one to a brief set by Pearson and one either free composition or also to a brief. One composition must be from either a list of briefs related to the areas of study, or a free composition, carrying 40 marks for this component. This composition must be at least 4 minutes in duration. One composition must be from a list of briefs assessing compositional technique, carrying 20 marks for this component. This composition must be at least 1 minute in duration, unless the brief specifies a longer minimum duration. Total time across both submissions must be a minimum of 6 minutes.

Component 3: Appraising (*Component code: 9MU0/03)
<i>Written examination: 2 hours</i>
<i>40% of the qualification</i>
<i>100 marks</i>
Content overview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge and understanding of musical elements, contexts and language. Application of knowledge through the context of six areas of study, each with three set works. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, Music for Film, Popular Music and Jazz, Fusions, New Directions. Application of knowledge to unfamiliar works. <p>The areas of study are: Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, Music for Film, Popular Music and Jazz, Fusions, New Directions.</p> <p>Full details of the areas of study and set works can be found on pages 59-61.</p>
Assessment overview
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One written paper of 2 hours, with a total of 100 marks. One audio CD with the extracts to accompany questions on the paper will be provided per student. This paper comprises two sections: A and B. <p>Section A: Areas of study and dictation (50 marks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three questions related to the set works (audio and skeleton score provided). One short melody/rhythm completion exercise. <p>Section B: Extended response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two essay questions – essay one (20 marks) and essay two (30 marks) Essay one asks students to draw links from their study of the set works to the music heard as an unfamiliar extract. Essay two gives a choice of three questions that ask students to evaluate the musical elements, context and language of one set work. Each option will be from a different area of study.

Set works

As previously mentioned you will be studying 18 set works which have been chosen by Edexcel as a broad representation of different musical styles and historical periods.

We will be placing them in their historical/social context and analysing them in depth. By the time you sit the exam you will need to be able to recall, explain and analyse all 18 in relation to:

- organisation of pitch (melody and harmony)
- tonality
- structure
- sonority (timbres and instrumental techniques)
- texture
- tempo, rhythm and metre
- dynamics

You will also learn how to apply this knowledge to similar, unfamiliar music (i.e. pieces that we haven't specifically analysed but which use the same compositional language).

For each set work we will provide you with:

- a score (printed music) of each piece
- notes/analyses
- access to recordings (via Office365)

It will be your responsibility to take notes and annotate the scores (and keep them safe and filed) and bring them to all your lessons (see section on folder organisation/equipment). These are the works you will be studying:

Area of study	Set works
Vocal music	J.S. Bach: Cantata, Ein feste Burg Mozart: The Magic Flute Vaughan Williams: On Wenlock Edge
Instrumental music	Vivaldi: Concerto in D minor, Op. 3 No. 11 Clara Wieck Schumann: Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17: movement 1 Berlioz: Symphonie Fantastique
Music for film	Danny Elfman: Batman Returns Rachel Portman: The Duchess Bernard Herrmann: Psycho
Popular music and jazz	Courtney Pine: Back in the Day Kate Bush: Hounds of Love Beatles: Revolver
Fusions	Debussy: Estampes Familia Valera Miranda: Caña Querna Anoushka Shankar: Breathing Under Water
New directions	Cage: Three Dances for Two Prepared Pianos Kaija Saariaho: Petals for Violoncello and Live Electronics Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring

At A-level there is a far greater emphasis on independence regarding both your studies and your ability to be organized and properly equipped.

Equipment

Needed for **all** music lessons:

- working pen
- sharp HB pencil
- eraser
- lever-arch folder (with dividers)

Additional, but very useful:

- coloured pens/highlighter
- external hard drive/USB memory stick

Folder organisation

It is very easy to find yourself ‘drowning’ in paper within a few weeks of beginning this course so it is incredibly important to establish a filing system and then keep on top of it. You do not want to lose anything you are given! The following folder structure can work well:

- **Theory**
 - Any general notes on keys, chords, cadences, notation, general terminology, dictation
- **History**
 - historical overview (we’ll be covering this in September)
 - set works (filed within the structure of the Areas of Study - see previous page)
 - practice papers/questions
- **Performing**
 - copies of scores of performances
 - mark sheets completed after assessed ‘practice’ performances
- **Composing**
 - background notes on different styles of composition
 - composition ‘sketches’, ideas, records of influences

Deadlines

It is an expectation that **all** deadlines will be met whether it is a small research project, preparation for a performance (i.e. arriving with instrument, music, backing etc.), practice essays or the main coursework deadlines.

You will need to keep a diary/planner. ‘I forgot’ is never a valid excuse...

Assessment

Throughout the course

Your work will be assessed regularly throughout the course. These assessments will include:

- informal checking of written notes on the set works
- essays in the format used in the exam
- practice performances (solo or ensemble; assessed against the proper criteria)
- practice papers

The final assessments

Unit 1: Performing

- solo/ensemble performance(s) lasting eight minutes
- needs to be performed to an audience of at least two people (including me)
- recorded by the department
- assessed externally (CD and scores sent to an examiner)
- due end of April of the second year

Unit 2: Composing

- four minute composition on a theme/brief set by the exam board based on the areas of study
- one minute technical study
- preparation and planning will be completed throughout the course
- the recording and score are all sent away to be assessed externally
- due end of April of the second year

Unit 3: Appraising

- two hour exam
 - A: areas of study and dictation
 - extracts from the set works played on CD – short answer questions
 - one short melody/rhythm dictation exercise
 - B: Extended response
 - two longer answer questions
 - 20 mark question based on comparing an unfamiliar piece heard on CD to one of the studied set works
 - 30 mark analysis of one of the set works

Summer assignment

No doubt you are desperate to make a start with your studies over the summer holidays so here is what you need to do, to be completed by the first day of term in September:

1. Prepare a solo performance to be presented within the first three weeks of the new term in September (date to be arranged once we all have our timetables)
2. Create short composer/artist profiles for each of the set works
3. Complete a listening log for each of the composer/artists in (2)
4. Polish up on notation reading skills

Preparing a solo performance

Pick a piece you are confident playing – it doesn't have to be 'showy' or crazy-long. If it requires accompaniment either find a backing track (CD or mp3/WAV – not iTunes) or provide Mr Boulter with the piano accompaniment in the first week of September. Bring in a photocopy of the score (or a recording of the original track if you learnt it aurally).

Create short composer/artist profiles

The set works are listed in this booklet - the composer/group is listed before the title. For each work include on one piece of paper:

- composer/group name
- dates of birth/death
- country of birth/working life
- known for what style of music
- a list of four or five most famous works
- a few points of social or historical context (what was going on in the world during their lives that may have affected their work?)

Complete a listening log for each composer/artist

Listen to a few pieces of music by each composer (not necessarily the set work) and try to note down some of the key musical features:

- what is unique about their work?
- comment on instrumentation/style/mood
- what is it about the music that people still find interesting or engaging?
- you could include this as part of the composer profile if you wish

Polish up notation reading/writing

There is no avoiding this issue: to do well in this course you will need to be able to read music. This doesn't necessarily mean you need to be able to sight read or score-read for full orchestra but you will need to be able to read treble and bass clef and basic rhythm notation. If this is an issue for you, now is the time to do something about it. There are many websites devoted to teaching young children how to read music. They may be patronising but it will be worth it in the end. There are also many free android apps available. Here are a couple to start you off:

http://www.learninggamesforkids.com/featuredgames/music_and_art_games_musical_notes.html

<http://musicteachersgames.com/linesSpaces>