

## A-level Music: aims of the subject

The Edexcel Advanced GCE in Music is a stimulating and enriching course. As with GCSE, pupils will experience the three key areas of performance, composition and appraisal. 60% of the course is based on practical controlled assessment, much of which is internally marked; the remaining 40% is based on a written examination at the end of each year which focuses on a series of set works from a variety of musical styles, genres and cultures.

The full GCE course is excellent preparation for higher education courses in music, but is equally valuable for non-specialists as a second or third area of study. For those wishing to develop their skills further, the A level qualification can lead to a wide range of careers in performance, composition, primary and secondary teaching, music therapy, publishing, promotion and marketing, journalism, and many other areas associated with the music industry.

Throughout the course pupils will develop their skills as performers (leading to a recital at the end of Year 13) and composer (composing to a brief and technical studies). Listening skills are focused on through the study of familiar and unfamiliar music, and understanding how it works.

# Controlled assessments overview

## **Component 1: Performing (\*Component code: 9MU0/01)**

*Non-examined assessment: externally assessed*

*30% of the qualification*

*60 marks*

### **Assessment overview**

- A public performance of one or more pieces, performed as a solo recital.
- The total performance time across all pieces must be a minimum of eight 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)**

*Non-examined assessment: externally assessed*

*30% of the qualification*

*60 marks*

### **Assessment overview**

- 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 four minutes in duration.
- One composition is a set of two Bach Chorale harmonisation tasks drawn from a list of briefs assessing compositional technique, carrying 20 marks for this component.
- Total time across both submissions must be a minimum of six minutes.

# Examination overview

## Component 3: Appraising (\*Component code: 9MU0/03)

*Written examination: 2 hours*

*40% of the qualification*

*100 marks*

### Content overview

- 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.
  - Vocal Music,
  - Instrumental Music,
  - Music for Film,
  - Popular Music and Jazz,
  - Fusions,
  - New Directions.
  - Application of knowledge to unfamiliar works.
- The areas of study are: Vocal Music, Instrumental Music, Music for Film, Popular Music and Jazz, Fusions, New Directions.

### Assessment overview

- 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 pupil.
- This paper comprises two sections:
  - Section A: Areas of study and dictation (50 marks)
    - Three questions related to the set works (audio and skeleton score provided).
    - One short melody/rhythm completion exercise.
  - Section B: Extended response
    - Two essay questions – essay one (20 marks) and essay two (30 marks)
    - Essay one asks pupils 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 pupils to evaluate the musical elements, context and language of one set work. Each option will be from a different area of study.

# Course timeline summary

## Year 12 (2019 onwards)

Half term	Topics covered	Assessment
1	Music theory basics and harmonic analysis	In-class tests End-of-unit test
	Aural skills	In-class tests
	Set works: Courtney Pine & Bach	Homework essays
	Question 5 example: Jazz Fusion	Homework essay
	Performance	In-class assessment
2	Composition	On-going controlled assessment
	Performance	In-class assessment
	Set works: Mozart, Kate Bush, Danny Elfman	Homework essays
	Question 5 examples: baroque sacred, 80s popular, film music	Homework essays
3	<b>MOCK EXAM</b>	
	Composition	On-going CA
	Performance	In-class assessment
	Set works: Saariaho & Cage	Homework essays
	Question 5 examples: experimentalism (instrumental/vocal)	Homework essays
4	Composition	On-going CA
	Performance	In-class assessment
	Set works: Portman & Debussy	Homework essays
	Question 5 examples: film music, impressionism	Homework essays
5	<b>MOCK EXAM</b>	
	Composition	On-going CA
	Performance	In-class assessment
	Set works: Vivaldi & Schumann	Homework essays
	Question 5 examples: baroque instrumental, romantic piano	Homework essays

Half term	Topic covered	Assessment
6	Composition	On-going CA
	Performance	In-class assessment
	Set work: Familia Valera Miranda	Homework essay
	Question 5 examples	Homework essays & timed essay

## Year 13 (2019-20)

*The set works and associated question 5 examples given below are different to those planned for future years. From September 2020 onwards, the Year 13 cohort will cover The Beatles, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams, Berlioz, Herrmann and Shankar, having covered the other 12 set works in Year 12.*

Half term	Topics covered	Assessment
1	Performance	In-class assessment
	Composition	One-to-one review
	Technical composition: Bach Chorales	Homework tasks
	Set works: Mozart & Cage	Homework essays
	Question 5 examples: opera choruses, baroque	Homework essays
2	Performance	In-class assessment
	Composition	One-to-one review
	Technical composition: Bach Chorales	Homework tasks & Mock exam
	Set works: Debussy & Saariaho	Homework essay & timed essay
	Question 5 examples: impressionism	Homework essays

Half term	Topics covered	Assessment
3	<b>MOCK EXAM</b>	
	Performance	In-class assessment
	Composition	One-to-one review
	Technical composition: Bach Chorales	Homework tasks & Mock exam
	Set work: Familia Valera Miranda	Homework essays
	Question 5 examples: 80s popular	Homework essay & timed essay
4	Performance	In-class assessment
	Composition	One-to-one review & final deadline
	Technical composition: Bach Chorales	Homework tasks & Mock exam
	Set works: exam preparation	Homework essays
	Question 5 examples: exam preparation	Homework essays & timed essay
5	Performance	FINAL RECITAL
	Technical composition: Bach Chorales	CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT (6 hours)
	Set works: exam preparation	Homework essays
	Question 5 examples: exam preparation	Homework essays & timed essay

# Suggestions for wider reading

## **Unit 1: Performance**

John Rink, *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)

## **Unit 2: Composition and technical study**

Samuel Adler, *The study of orchestration* (Norton, 2002)

Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 3rd edition (Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2002)

R. O. Morris and Howard Ferguson, *Preparatory Exercises in Score Reading* (Oxford University Press, 1931)

Anna Butterworth, *Stylistic harmony* (Oxford University Press, 1994)

## **Unit 3: Listening and analysis**

BBC Music magazine

Darren Henley and Sam Jackson, *50 moments that rocked the classical music world* (Elliot and Thompson, 2014)

Nicholas Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis* (Oxford University Press, 1994)

Nicholas Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2000)

Andrew Gant, *Ideas in profile: Music* (Profile Books, 2017)