

Music

A Level

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Exam Board: Edexcel



What is this subject about?

Performing, composing, analysing and listening to music. Performance accounts for just under a third of the course, as does composing. Listening and analysis, which involve studying a given set of scores, account for just over a third. The listening and analysis unit also includes some study of harmony, in the form of basic Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass (SATB) writing.

For the AS level you will study:

Solo and Ensemble Performing for coursework and for concerts; Composing to a set brief, and harmony in the form of SATB part-writing; Listening to and analysing familiar and unfamiliar music.

For the A2 level you will study:

Extended performance skills, in the form of a recital; composition using a range of techniques and harmonic styles; extended listening techniques including dictation and chord identification, and analysis of set scores.

How is the course assessed?

Performance and composition are assessed as coursework, and composition will be produced during a set number of supervised hours. Listening, analysis and harmony take the form of written papers.

What skills will I need for this course?

Skills needed include a minimum of Grade 5 performance standard; fluent notation reading skills; creative skill in order to compose; and annotating skills in order to take notes on the Anthology pieces you will be analysing. Basic keyboard skills are also helpful.

Subject combination advice:

In view of the creative element entailed in Music, it may suit partnership with English, Art, and Social Science subjects. However, Music is the sort of course you take because you have a long-held interest in it, so many students tend to opt for it purely on that basis and is not dependent on which other subjects they are choosing.

Do I need Music GCSE to study Music at A level?

No. The skills demanded for A level are very different from those required at GCSE, and not having studied Music GCSE in no way disadvantages you on the A level course. What is important is that you take note of the formal requirements detailed above.

What can the course lead to in terms of higher education and future careers?

Many employers are interested in Music for its artistic and creative aspects, which can lead potential employees into fields such as media and marketing. Other careers stemming from the study of music are teaching, professional performance, and studio-based work including sound engineering (although you may need to undertake relevant work experience or particular studies to secure studio work). The Music Department enjoys a progression agreement with a local Music Technology HE provider. Music at degree level is incredibly varied from institution to institution, so it is necessary to consider which element of music you want to pursue. Some courses focus largely on performance; some on composition; and some on academic, analytical and historical study. If, for example, you love performance but you're not keen on academic music, you might want to apply for a performance diploma at a music college rather than a degree. If you're not a strong performer but you enjoy analysis, a traditional university may have a course which suits this balance.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general entry criteria that the College requires, you will also need to achieve Performance at a minimum level of Grade 5 (you don't have to have taken the Grade 5 exam, but you have to be able to perform at that standard); and the ability to read standard notation, NOT just tab or other notation. It is helpful to have taken Theory to Grade 5 standard.

What extra support / enrichment activities are on offer?

There are regular concerts, facilitating both solo and ensemble performance, choir, concert band, jazz groups, contemporary bands, and the opportunity to form smaller ensembles. There are a number of trips including the chance to attend Opera, Symphony Concerts, Musicals and Jazz Events. There are also workshops on composition and performance techniques led by professionals in their field. Students have individual access to laptops running Sibelius software to assist with composition coursework completion. Additionally, we take students on a Music tour to Europe during Wider Skills Week.

What is the difference between Music and Music Technology?

Music Technology A level is very different from Music A level. Music Technology involves the study of sound recording equipment and methods of studio recording, with some music elements; whereas the ICT element of Music is really a by-product of the course requirements. For example, we use studio equipment to record performances, and we use laptops running music software to work on composition, but we don't study the technical side of this. Music is about performing, composing, listening and analysing.



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