

music technology

BTEC National Extended Certificate

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Exam board: Pearson Edexcel



What is this subject about?

BTEC Music Technology is a nationally recognised and respected applied learning qualification. This subject provides the opportunity to build understanding of the technical processes and principles that underpin effective use of music technology in creating, performing, recording and producing contemporary music. The course is closely aligned with employers and higher education needs for a skilled workforce. This is a two year course equivalent to one A Level.

What will I study over the two year?

Over the course of the 2 years you will study 5 units that will prepare you for work in the music industry. In the first year, the units may include DAW production, Studio Recording Techniques, and Live Sound assessed through a range of practical assignments. These units focus on giving you an overview of multitrack recording and develop your understanding of how to use DAW to creatively produce music tracks.

In the second year, you will build on the skills you have developed by completing practical assignments which may explore Studio Design and Acoustics, working within a Production Team, and Recording, Editing, Mixing and Mastering techniques.

This course allows you to showcase your skills and apply your knowledge in an appropriate, work-related context.

How is the course assessed?

The course is assessed throughout the two years by a number of coursework assignments. Coursework assignments may include written documents, presentations, practical work or editing files. The internal coursework assignments are centre-assessed and then externally moderated (checked) by the exam board. There will be one 15 hour externally assessed examined assignment.

What skills will I need for this course?

You must have the ability to play an instrument or sing. An existing ability to read notation is desirable but will also be taught as part of the course (reading Guitar TAB will also be useful). You will be required to develop proficiency in sound engineering so will need to have a good ear and ideally a working knowledge of pulse, rhythm, keys and chords. Some experience of music notation software and recording/sequencing software will be useful. You will need to be organised as you will be taking a range of units which will have regular interim deadlines.

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

The National Extended Certificate in Music Technology is widely accepted by higher education providers, and there are many career possibilities for those proficient in handling music technology. Music technology careers could include work as sound engineers, record producers and teachers. Many employers are interested in Music for its artistic and creative aspects, which can also lead potential employees into fields such as media and marketing. The Music Department enjoys a progression agreement with a local Music Technology higher education 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. There are courses in sound design, audio engineering, creative digital arts, production, contemporary music and performance.

What are the formal entry requirements for this course?

Aside from the general entry criteria that the College requires, the ability to read standard music notation and have a good ear is very important. If you are concerned that your music theory is weak then you will be offered additional music theory lessons to support your progress on the course.

What extra support/enrichment activities are on offer?

There are regular concerts and open mic events, facilitating both solo and ensemble performance, Choir, College Band, Jazz groups, College Production, contemporary bands, and the opportunity to form smaller ensembles.

Music Technology students are encouraged to work with students writing their own music on the complementary study Song Writing course, and in the A Level classes, to facilitate recording and to manage the mixing and producing of the final CD and performances. Students have individual access to Macs running Sibelius and Logic software to assist with composition and sequencing coursework completion, and Logic to support multi-track recording.

There are also workshops on music technology, composition and performance techniques, which are led by professionals in their field. There are a number of trips including attending opera, symphony concerts, musicals and jazz events.

Subject combination advice:

BTEC Music Technology National Extended Certificate combines well with Music A Level as skills learnt in both subjects are very complementary. It can also work well alongside Maths, Performing Arts or Media Studies.

Do I need Music Technology GCSE to Study BTEC Music Technology?

It is advisable to have studied Music or Music Technology at GCSE/BTEC Level 2. You should ideally have had some experience of working in a studio and using Digital Audio Workstations. You must have some performance skills and the ability to play an instrument or sing. Aural skills are very important. Most importantly you must be able to hear what is accurate musically and what is not.

What is the difference between Music and Music Technology?

BTEC Music Technology is very different from Music A Level. Music Technology involves the study of software such as Logic and Sibelius and sound recording equipment. It also looks at methods of studio production used in the popular music industry and involves some ensemble performance. In Music A Level we study and read musical notation from all periods of history, give solo recitals, using studio equipment to record performances, and compose with software programmes such as Sibelius.

A Level Music has a formal written exam and externally marked components. Both courses are practical in their approach, but also include some written work, research, reading, and presentation-type assignments. Music A Level and BTEC Music Technology can be taken together as they offer a broad spectrum of musical study which would support any career in Music.