

MUSIC (AQA)



Course Content & Assessment

Students would normally have completed GCSE music as a pre-requisite to A level, although in exceptional circumstances this is not always necessary.

Part 1: Appraising Music – 40%

- The A level covers 3 Areas of Study, one of which is compulsory (Western Classical tradition 1650-1900). Two further Areas of Study are chosen from a wide-ranging list. Recently, the two optional chosen Areas of Study have been Music for Media and Music for Theatre, featuring music from Hans Zimmer, Thomas Newman, Michael Giacchino, Stephen Sondheim, Richard Rodgers and Jason Robert Brown.
- Skills are both subject specific and transferable, and include:
 - Critical appraisal of literary and aural material;
 - The application of historical musical and social context to aural excerpts;
 - Increased aural awareness, and decision-making in relation to unseen material.
- Examined via a 2 hour 30 minute exam paper taken in June of Year 13.

Part 2: Performance – 35%

- Students give a minimum 10-minute recital in the Spring term of Year 13. Assessment is via recording that is sent to the Exam Board. Choice of repertoire is guided by the student's interests and strengths. There is no specific minimum difficulty, although it is expected that students are playing to at least Grade 6 standard on their chosen instrument by the Spring term of Year 13.

Part 3: Composing – 25%

- Students complete two compositions over the course: one is free choice and the other responds to a brief set by the Exam Board in September of year 13. Alongside composing, students learn rudimentary and more advanced harmonization techniques. This is marked externally.

Whilst there is little preparatory reading for A level music, an aural and historical familiarity with the life and work of the named composers featured on the course will stand students in good stead.

Named composers:

Area of Study 1: Western Classical Tradition 1650-1900: Purcell, Vivaldi, Bach, Mozart, Chopin, Brahms, Grieg.

Area of Study 3: Music for Media: Hans Zimmer, Thomas Newman, Bernard Herrmann, Michael Giacchino, Nobuo Uematsu.

Area of Study 4: Music for Theatre: Kurt Weill, Richard Rodgers, Stephen Sondheim, Claude-Michel Schoenberg, Jason Robert Brown.

Beyond the course

There is a wealth of enrichment within the Music Department, and A Level students are expected to play their part in order to refine their own performing and to develop overall musical awareness. Academic enrichment takes the form of trips to concerts and performances, both in line with course content and master classes from visiting professional composers/conductors/performers. Involvement with the leadership of Junior musical ensembles at The Grange is a key additional opportunity afforded to A level Music students wherever possible.

A Level Music students often combine their study with other Arts and critical thinking subjects such as Drama, Design, English, Philosophy and History, or as a complementary subject to more scientific avenues.

Remember! A Level Music does not mean Music at university! The set of critical thinking and decision-making skills that come with A level Music are transferable to almost all undergraduate degrees. The course is so much more than simply performing, and students should recognise that the multi-faceted nature of A level Music can often satisfy a range of interests and skills all within one single subject.

Prospects

A level Music tends to be a high-performing subject. The multi-faceted course means that students can score highly in all areas, whilst making use of the bias of their individual strengths as either a performer, composer or analyst. Coursework marks are often particularly strong.

Those going on to read Music at university or at a conservatoire institution are guided towards the most appropriate course by both the Careers and Music departments. Top destinations include the Universities of Oxford, Durham and York, and conservatoire study at the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal College of Music, the Royal Northern College of Music, and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.



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