

MUSIC

SPECIFICATION

A Level Edexcel Music 9MUO

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

The A Level Music course allows students to develop performance skills to perform with fluency and control, develop skills to write longer, detailed compositions and to develop a better understanding of the development of Music from 1600 to present day. Being able to critically analyse and place Music in its context and make comparisons to other works is an important feature of this course.

CONTENT AND ASSESSMENT

Unit 1 Performance 30%

Students perform an 8 minute recital of 2/3 contrasting pieces or 1 long work to the equivalent of grade 6 - 8 standard. The programme can include solo and ensemble pieces but must be recorded concurrently. The recital is marked as a whole rather than as individual pieces out of 48 and is assessed on the following criteria:

- Technical control for interpretation of musical ideas – 16
- Technical control for accuracy and fluency – 16
- Expressive control, style and context - 16

Total = 48

Students need to have music that is notated and an accompanist must be used where necessary. The recordings take place in Year 13.

Unit 2 Composition 30%

Students produce 2 compositions which total 5 minutes. One of the two tasks is set by the exam board as a composition technique paper, in April of Year 13 and the other can be a free choice piece.

Students also have a choice of briefs, set by the exam board in September to include the following:

- Composing expressively – music which tells a story or conveys pictures
- Variations – ground bass, passacaglia or chaconne
- Words and music – vocal music from madrigals to pop songs
- Text, context and texture – opera, jazz, scat to sprechgesang

Assessment is based on coherence, use of instruments and techniques, development of ideas, harmony, structure, and texture and receives a mark out of 60. The composition is submitted at the end of April for moderation.

Unit 3 Developing Musical Understanding 40%

Students complete a 2 hour combined listening and written examination. This is split into 2 parts: A and B each with equal weighting of 50 marks.

Students will study 13 set works (2/3 from each different area of study):

- Vocal Music
- Instrumental Music
- Music for Film
- Popular Music and Jazz
- Fusions
- New Directions

Part A lasts approximately 45 minutes and consists of listening to the CD and answering questions on the skeleton score, discussing compositional techniques used and identifying musical features based on the focus works.

Part B lasts approximately 75 minutes and students extend their knowledge of the set works by comparing and contrasting features. These could include resources, form, texture, harmony, melody, rhythm, and metre. Students complete 2 essay questions. The first one asks students to draw ideas and facts from their set works to link to an unfamiliar extract. The second essay is a choice of three questions that ask students to evaluate the musical elements, context and key features of one set work. Each option is from a different area of study.

The paper consists of multiple-choice, short, open and extended writing questions.

This exam takes place in June and gives students a real chance to concentrate and focus when the 60% coursework is completed.

METHODS OF STUDY

Students will work independently and in small groups. Discussions will take place involving musical scores; performance skills will be developed through both group work and solo work. Independent study will need to be completed outside the lessons to consolidate the work and to develop listening and aural skills.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE COURSE

Students are encouraged to join the extracurricular activities available and to lead ensembles to enhance Unit 1 skills. Workshops and master classes are offered at external venues, such as the Royal Northern College of Music.

SUBJECTS WHICH COMPLEMENT MUSIC

Traditionally Music has worked well with Science and Maths based subjects, as well as other creative art subjects. It can also be used to provide a balance to any other combination of subjects. Universities such as Cambridge rate Music in their top 8 of academic subjects because of the skills required.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The A Level course is an excellent choice for students who wish to either further their musical development, to use as an intended career / university subject or simply to add variety to other A Level subjects. Students develop skills in communication, problem solving and working with others. Extra-curricular activities enhance the classroom based work including trips to workshops and concerts. Opportunities to use music technology are also available.

