

# MUSIC

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| Qualification Level   | A Level  |
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## What's A level Music about?

A level Music is exciting and rewarding, unique in its combination of academic study and creative opportunity. The course is based around developing three key skills; performing, composing and listening, and appraising. You build on your knowledge of musical theory, gain a solid understanding of the basic principles of performance, refine your practical skills, study and practice composition, and expand your knowledge of music history through listening and appraisal.

Within these areas of study, A level Music offers you the opportunity to develop your ability to use musical devices and conventions through composition, engage with and increase awareness and appreciation of the diverse heritage of music, and develop critical evaluation skills through appraising your own and other's music.

A level Music is essential if you are considering a job in the music industry, whether you plan to go down an academic or creative career path, and a strong choice if you are passionate about music.

## What sort of work is involved?

The considerable range of skills that A level Music aims to develop means that day to day work is varied. The performance element involves much practice and refinement of your ability to make music with your instrument(s) of choice, with particular focus on certain musical styles and pieces as you draw nearer to your exam. Learning how to compose music requires research and study of pieces of music in order to build knowledge and skills as you learn to compose your own pieces. Listening and appraising involves study of a broad range of pieces, practicing listening but also producing written work to describe your analysis of pieces of music.

## What background do I need?

Ideally, to study A level Music you will have a GCSE in Music at grade 7 or above. However, this is not strictly necessary providing you have musical experience separate to your academic studies (If you have taken a musical instrument up to grade 5) and thus have a good grounding in musical theory and are a strong performer in either instrumental or vocal music.

As in all subjects, it is a big step up from the GCSE to A level Music so a genuine interest and passion not just for listening to music but also to understand the technicalities, theory and creation of music is essential. Students tend to do best at the subjects they enjoy, so make sure you fully understand what the course involves and asks of you!

### **Where can it lead?**

A level Music is a highly regarded subject, either alongside other creative courses or in demonstrating a broader range of skills next to Science, Maths or other non-creative subjects.

Whilst Music can be a useful subject for Arts and Media courses at university, the most obvious degree pathway is going on to a degree in Music, which can lead to a range of exciting career options, including becoming a professional musician, a sound technician, a music therapist, a teacher, or a private tutor. Jobs that are less directly related a Music degree, but where a Music degree could be very valuable include arts administration, and work in radio, theatre and events management.

### **Assessment**

A level Music focuses on the three key skills of Performance, Composition and Listening, and Appraising. Performance and Composition are assessed via coursework. The Performance element includes both a solo and ensemble performance. Within these performances, you will be assessed on how ambitious your choice of performance piece is, your technical and expressive control, your ability to interpret written music, and the overall quality of your performance.

The Composition element requires you to compose pieces in response to briefs, either self-set or set by the examination board. Your compositions will be assessed based on the originality, fluency and consistency of the piece created, the quality of the accompanying written score and the variety of the musical elements used. Listening and Appraising is assessed by exam at the end of the course. The exam asks you to respond to aural pieces, with a mix of multiple choice, short and longer written answers. In these questions you must analyse and evaluate both familiar and unfamiliar pieces of music, demonstrating your knowledge and understanding of musical elements and languages across multiple styles and genres.

### **Entry requirements**

Ideally, to study A level Music you will have a GCSE in Music at grade 6 or above. However, this is not strictly necessary providing you have musical experience separate to your academic studies (If you have taken a musical instrument up to grade 5) and thus have a good grounding in musical theory and are a strong performer in either instrumental or vocal music.